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**MURAL STORIES**  
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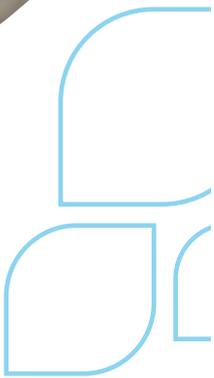


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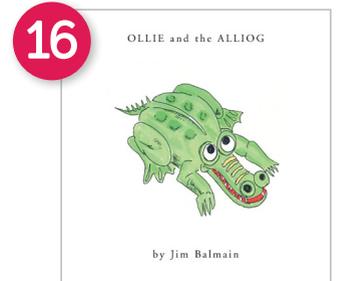
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**ON THE COVER:** Becky Cruz, her husband Adrian Cruz and granddaughter Journey. **ABOVE:** Becky and her daughter Brooke Torres at a football game. **PHOTOS COURTESY BECKY CRUZ**



**READERS RESPOND**



**KCFM RECOMMENDS**



**HUMOR @ HOME**

## Plus

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Vaun Thygerson  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I love a good tea party, especially for Galentine's Day, which is ironic, considering I don't even like tea. What I adore is the tradition itself. Everything about it feels delightful, from dressing up and using antique china to enjoying the dainty, crustless sandwiches, especially ones with cucumber and cream cheese, to eating chocolate-covered treats of every kind. Over the years, I have attended many elegant and exciting tea parties, including a few at the now-closed

Hallie Rose Tea Room at the East Hills Mall, as well as one at the Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, which provided the perfect setting for my best friend's daughter's bridal shower, thanks to its artful ambiance and menu. Last summer, I visited the OG tea party in England at The Orangery, located in the royal greenhouse overlooking Kensington Palace's gardens. For the full experience, I even sipped Earl Grey tea.

One of my all-time favorite tea parties was one we hosted for KCMF in 2012, when we invited some of my children's friends over and featured them in the magazine. All those adorable six-year-old girls were dressed in their best, frilly dresses and drank pink lemonade as "tea." Seeing this tradition through the eyes of children who had never experienced it before was pure magic. With this being the month of love and romance, it's the perfect time to host tea time for yourself, for your littles, or for a charming party with friends for Galentine's Day.

Traditions are a huge part of life, especially for Gen Xers, who remember what life was like before the internet and social media. In Julie Willis's Humor at Home article, "**Tech-Challenged and Totally Fine: Confessions of a Gen Xer**," she spills the proverbial "tea"

on life in a tech desert as a mom of a certain age. As a fellow Gen Xer, I can relate to her examples in every way. To read about all her media mishaps and how her children really feel about her tech skills, turn to page 20.

Special thanks to this month's mama for her strength and compassion during her own and others' grief journeys. In the article, "**Hello, Happy (Devoted) Mama: Becky Cruz**," on page 14, Callie Collins writes about how Becky turned her loss of her daughter, due to an accidental overdose, into a way to help people in the community who are grieving. A retired hairdresser who is now a pistachio-selling entrepreneur under the company City-girl Loves Farmboy, she received her certification in Death and Grief Studies, and now facilitates support groups through Hoffman Hospice for moms like her. Becky keeps her daughter's legacy alive through her business and roles as wife, mother, and grandmother.

Andrea Rose's book recommendations for this month showcase local authors who have written a variety of books for all kinds of interests. In the article, "**Locally Grown Stories for Little Minds**," on page 16, she features books ranging from fun, whimsical children's tales to a Kern Kaper mystery series to historical nonfiction. Check out the titles, and you might find out your favorite author is also your neighbor.

This month, as we celebrate all things Valentine's Day, whether you are having a romantic dinner with your significant other or sipping tea with your pinky extended while you spill "tea" with your friends, the important thing to remember is to cherish those in your life! They are the true meaning of love and connection.

**Wishing you all a Happy Valentine's and Galentine's Day!**

# HELLO HAPPY MAMA CONTEST!

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PHOTO COURTESY BGCKC

## Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County Announce Summer Jobs Registration

Local high school teens (ages 15 to 18) can register for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County's 2026 Summer Jobs Program. Since 2013, nearly 2,500 local high school students have received workforce training, and 510 have secured paid internships through the Club's Summer Jobs Program.

The Career Launch, workforce readiness training portion, will run from February 23, through May 7, at the E.L. Jack and Monica Armstrong Youth Center at 801 Niles Street, Bakersfield, Stockdale Boys & Girls Club, 5207 Young Street, Bakersfield, and Lamont Boys & Girls Club, 8301 Segrue Road, Lamont. Teens will attend one day per week from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Career Launch curriculum offers a variety of activities to hone teens' decision-making, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. This comprehensive program introduces young people to the world of work and equips them with the tools to prepare for a future career.

After the training, participants will have the opportunity to apply for and interview for a paid Summer Internship with local employers through the Summer Jobs Program from June 8 through July 10. Employers provide interns with mentorship and hands-on experience in various occupations. The interns work at their internship sites for five weeks after completing one week of youth employee onboarding. On Fridays, the interns will participate in professional development activities covering financial literacy, business, dining, cell phone etiquette, First Aid, CPR & AED, and food handler certification.

Applicants must apply through the online portal at [www.bgckc.org/summerjob-sprogram](http://www.bgckc.org/summerjob-sprogram) through Friday, February 13.

**For more information about the BGCKC Workforce Readiness Program, please contact Ramiro Martinez at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County at 661-325-3730 ext. 265 or [summerjobprogram@bgckc.org](mailto:summerjobprogram@bgckc.org)**

## Grand Reopening Celebration for Arvin Branch Library

Kern County Library's Arvin Branch recently reopened in January and has announced a grand reopening celebration on Thursday, February 19. Following improvements to the facility, the branch is welcoming the community back. This event will feature remarks from Kern County leadership, library administration, and community partners, followed by a celebration inviting residents to reconnect with their library. Community members will have the opportunity to tour the space, enjoy family-friendly activities, and learn more about upcoming programs and services.

**For more information about the reopening and upcoming events, please visit [kernlibrary.org](http://kernlibrary.org) or contact 661-868-0701.**

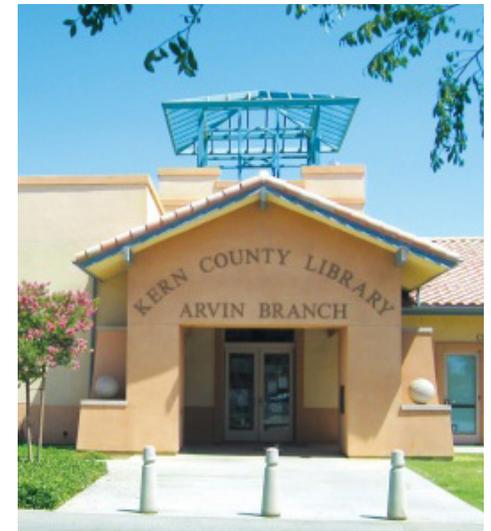


PHOTO COURTESY KERN COUNTY LIBRARY

## Second Annual Volunteer Big Kern

Sign up to volunteer for your favorite nonprofit on March 7 for the second annual Volunteer Big Kern. This community-wide day of service, organized by the Kern Community Founda-



tion and the Blue Zones Project Bakersfield, connects individuals and groups across Kern County with nonprofits for impactful volunteer projects.

In just one day last year, 800-plus volunteers showed up to

make an incredible impact for over 40 Kern County nonprofits, logging 3,000 volunteer hours. And coordinators want to make this year even bigger!

**To sign up and stay up to date for how to get involved, please visit [www.givebigkern.org](http://www.givebigkern.org).**

# Adventist Health Named Best Hospital for Maternity Care

U.S. News & World Report has recognized Adventist Health Bakersfield as a 2026 High-Performing hospital for Maternity Care for its support of safe births and high-quality care. This is the highest award a hospital can earn as part of U.S.



for Maternity Care annual study, now in its fifth edition. For the 2026 edition, approximately 900 hospitals nationwide submitted maternity data for evaluation. Best Hospitals for Maternity Care ratings are intended to assist expectant parents, in consultation with their prenatal care providers, in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity services that best meet their family's needs.

Adventist Health Bakersfield earned a High Performing designation for its strong performance in key maternity care measures, including low rates of severe unexpected newborn complications, lower C-section rates among lower-risk pregnancies, high



FREPIK

exclusive breast milk feeding rates, and birthing-friendly practices.

“This recognition is a reflection of the passion, training, and teamwork of our 120 registered nurses, our obstetricians, neonatologists, pediatricians, dedicated

certified registered nurse anesthetists, and our entire Maternity Care team who show up every day to deliver babies and excellence,” says Kelly Zielsdorf, BSN, RN, Maternal Child Care multi-site director, Adventist Health Bakersfield.

## Happy Valentine's Day

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## Tiny Teeth, Big Timing



Regular dental visits are essential for oral health. While many people schedule bi-annual checkups, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend at least one dental visit per year, with some individuals needing more frequent care. Brushing and flossing remove much of the bacterial film and plaque on teeth, but not all of it—professional cleanings address what’s left behind. According to Penn Dental Medicine, dental visits also allow providers to detect early signs of oral and other cancers and offer guidance on overall oral care.

Both children and adults benefit from consistent checkups, and February’s Children’s Dental Health Month is the perfect reminder to help kids build strong, lifelong habits. Parents often wonder when to begin focusing on their child’s oral hygiene, and this timeline offers helpful direction.

**Before teeth erupt:** Keep your baby’s mouth clean by gently wiping the gums, tongue, and inner cheeks with a damp washcloth or gauze after feeding to remove bacteria and help them get used to oral care.

**When the first tooth arrives:** The Better Health Channel notes that the first tooth typically appears around six months. Brush it twice daily with a soft children’s

toothbrush and water. Ask a pediatrician before introducing fluoride toothpaste. As more teeth come in, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and supervise brushing until age seven or eight, per the American Dental Association.

**Visiting the dentist:** Stanford Children’s Health recommends a first dental visit by 12 months or within six months of the first tooth. Dentists will discuss baby bottle tooth decay, feeding practices, teething, pacifiers, and finger-sucking. Children are generally advised to see a dentist every six months.

It is essential that parents emphasize strong oral health care skills, so kids grow accustomed to visiting the dentist at an early age. This can set children up for a lifetime of oral health.

### Brushing tips

Kids should brush twice a day for two minutes and get a new toothbrush about every three months—or sooner if the bristles fray or after an illness. Fresh bristles clean better, protect gums, and help keep cavities away.

## The Healing Power of a Hug

A simple hug does far more than warm the heart. Research shows that hugging releases oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin—neurochemicals that help us feel calm, connected, and cared for.

**Physical Benefits:** Hugging lowers cortisol, reduces stress, and helps the body relax. It can also lower blood pressure and heart rate, supporting heart health. Studies show frequent huggers catch fewer colds and have milder symptoms. Endorphins released during a hug may also ease pain and inflammation.

**Emotional Benefits:** A meaningful embrace can soothe fear, quiet anxiety, and lift mood. Dopamine and serotonin help counter loneliness and support healthy self-esteem. Across all ages, physical touch plays a key role in emotional regulation and resilience.

**Making the Most of It:** Experts suggest several hugs a day—ideally around 20 seconds—to boost oxytocin’s calming effects. Even 8–12 hugs can support overall well-being, though any affectionate touch helps. For those without a hug partner, simple self-soothing gestures like placing a hand on your heart can offer similar comfort.



## Cherries: Small Fruit, Big Benefits

A colorful, nutrient-rich diet is a cornerstone of good health, and cherries easily earn their place in the spotlight. These small stone fruits—grown largely in Michigan for sour varieties and in Washington, California and Oregon for sweet types—deliver an impressive range of benefits.

Cherries are packed with antioxidants, including polyphenols and anthocyanins, which help combat cell-damaging free radicals. They also contain vitamins A, C and E. Those same plant compounds play a role in reducing inflammation, a welcome advantage for people managing



arthritis or gout.

Tart cherries offer another perk: natural sleep-supporting compounds such as melatonin, serotonin and tryptophan. And with their low glycemic index, cherries can be a smart choice for people monitoring blood sugar when eaten in moderation.

Wash cherries well, remove pits—especially for kids—and look for plump, dark fruit with bright green stems. Sweet or tart, cherries are an easy way to boost everyday wellness.

## A Month to Celebrate the Mighty Can

Canned Food Month reminds us just how much America relies on the humble can. Nearly 97% of Americans have eaten canned food in the past month, and more than half say it's essential for preparing affordable, nutritious meals, according to cancentral.com. It's not just pantry staples, either. Canned fruits

and vegetables now account for nearly one-third of all produce consumed in U.S. households.

For families balancing cost, convenience and nutrition, the can remains one of the most dependable tools in the kitchen—quietly doing its job, one meal at a time.



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# LET'S PLAY!

## Local Parents Share Their Play Date Hangouts

**PARENTS ACROSS KERN COUNTY** know the magic of a good play date—fresh air, room to run, and a spot where kids can just be kids. So we asked local families to share their go-to places for meetups, the best times to visit, and when play dates tend to work best for their crew. Their insights were thoughtful, practical, and full of local love—and they just might inspire your next outing.

“Local libraries: Springtime and weekends.”

– **Ashley Morrow**

“One of our great parks in Bakersfield during Spring and on weekends.”

– **Kathy Gillis**

“Mount Pinos Nordic Base: The best time of year here is impossible to pinpoint. Winter is great for snow play, spring for wildflowers and waterfall streams, summer for a heat escape and amazing stargazing, and also fall is great for fresh air and beautiful trees in a full array of colors. I think that is why Mount Pinos is such a great place, it has the benefit of year round joy.”

– **Angela Kkolis**

“Tin Cup or Lori Brock Center: Anytime and every time!”

– **Clarissa Del Toro**

“I love Riverwalk because it has so much of nature in one place and the kids love walking over to grab a quick snack while still enjoying the outdoors. Beautiful to visit year-round.”

– **Yadira Cadena**

“My favorite family play date meet up spot is at Wind Wolves.”

– **Maria Pulido**

“Dignity Health Arena for a Bakersfield Condors Game during playoffs and on weekends!”

– **Keith Koski**

“The local park for a free, beautiful space. Fall & Spring. Afterschool.”

– **Kristen Felkins**

“Buena Vista Museum of Natural History & Science. Anytime & Summer Break.”

– **Lindsey Moritz**

“Wind Wolves Preserve. Weekends in Spring & Winter.”

– **Lindsey Panick**

### TOP PICKS

Kern County Museum  
John's Incredible Pizza  
CALM Zoo  
Flight Adventure Park  
Hart Park

Lake Ming  
The BLVD  
Kern County Libraries  
Dave & Busters  
The Park at River Walk

### PLAY DATE BENEFITS

Research shows kids move more when playing with peers, enjoy longer-lasting mood boosts from time outdoors, and build social skills that help with school and everyday life.





# Hello, neighbor.

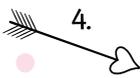
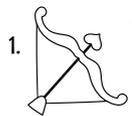
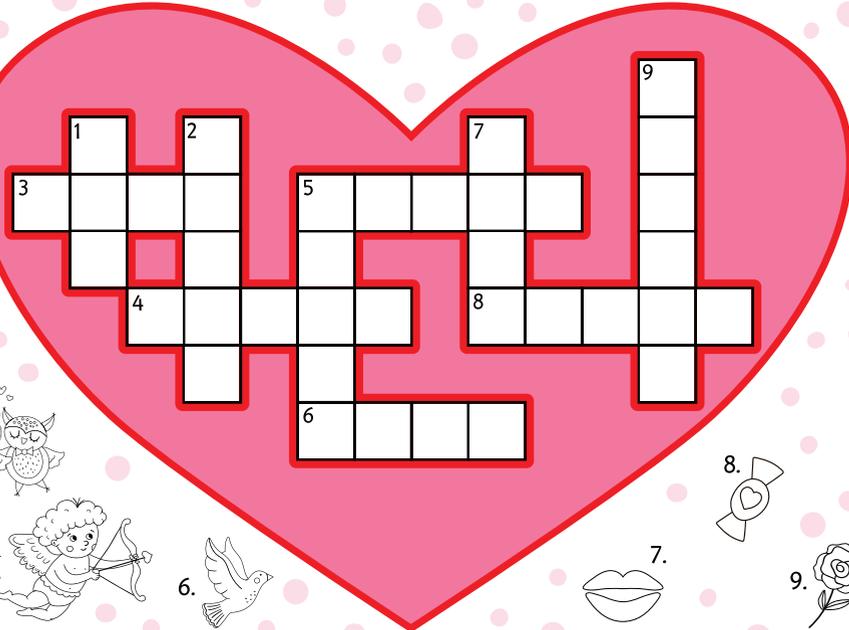
Close enough to be your neighbor, caring enough to be your family.

## FILL IN THE WORD THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THE NUMBER



For answers to this month's puzzle, scan the QR code, or go to: [omnifamilyhealth.org/puzzle-answer-key/](http://omnifamilyhealth.org/puzzle-answer-key/)

Happy Valentine's Day



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# HELLO, HAPPY DEVOTED MAMA



In Cabo, which Becky Cruz describes as “Our family’s happy place.” Left to right: Adult son, Cristopher, Mom, Becky, granddaughter, Journey, and Becky’s husband, Adrian. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BECKY CRUZ

## From tragedy to advocacy, a mother builds connection, healing, and community support

**B**ecky Cruz describes herself as a farmer’s wife. Retired after doing hair for more than 25 years, she now cultivates and sells pistachios. Becky is also a mother who lost a daughter to an accidental overdose. Through it all, she is determined to honor her daughter’s life, help other parents grieve and reduce the stigma surrounding addiction.

The topic of loved ones struggling with addiction has shaped Becky’s relationship with her community. She now leads grief counseling specifically for families who have experienced what she has. Becky met her husband, Adrian Cruz,

at a Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce gala in 2018. The couple, who married in 2023, splits their time between Bakersfield, and Terra Bella, where they also farm oranges, in addition to trucking and hauling aspects of the business.

Becky created the enterprise Citygirl Loves Farmboy, featuring the tagline “Love Them Nuts,” with pistachios sold online and to local businesses like Moo Creamery and Sully’s.

“It’s a little bit crazy but a whole lot of love. I spend a lot of time with my son, Cristopher, and granddaughter,



Becky Cruz and her daughter Brooke Torres.

Journey,” said Becky, of their blended family. “My Mom and I live in the same neighborhood. I’m close with my nieces. It’s always something, it seems like.”

Becky’s daughter, Brooke Torres, died in 2019 at age 33. Addiction was not part of Brooke’s youth. Brooke was going to college in Fresno when she had a panic attack while driving in fog.

After that incident, she started therapy. “Brooke’s therapist prescribed Xanax. From there, she moved on to Oxycontin and had a pill problem,” said Becky. “She went to rehab. At one point, I thought ‘If Brooke just does these things, she’ll move on with her life and be fine.’”

It was not that simple.

“No one knew Brooke worked very hard on being sober. She was part of the community, always worked and was going to school at Cal State to help others as a drug and alcohol counselor,” said Becky. “Brooke was known and loved and had a full life, very connected to families in the community.”

Becky describes Brooke as her best friend, with Tuesdays as movie nights together. She also volunteered regularly and stayed active.

Becky and her family were out of town when the accidental overdose took place. Brooke had stayed home to be able to continue with work and school.

“Brooke’s loss was devastating to our family. I thought ‘How am I going to live without my daughter?,’” said Becky. “But you have to pick yourself and keep going.”

The book “Understanding Your Grief after a Drug Overdose Death” by Dr. Alan Woolfelt became an important part of Becky’s life. She emailed its author, who runs the Center for Loss & Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado to ask to attend his seminar about seven months after Brooke’s passing. He turned her down after hearing how recent her loss was but eventually relented.

Becky spent the next two years traveling to five-day seminars there and to an affiliated location in Arizona to earn her certificate in Death and Grief Studies.

“I had looked for other support groups but there was nothing for this situation. There was a lot for people overcoming

**Fill-in-the-blank questions:**

**I’m always laughing at:** My husband and my granddaughter

**In my pantry, you will always find:** Shells for sopita for my granddaughter

**My favorite music group is:** Brooks and Dunn

**The best book I’ve read lately is:** “The Let Them Theory” by Mel Robbins

the loss of their elderly parents or with specific illnesses but nothing for parents like me,” said Becky.

Becky reached out to Hoffman Hospice and asked if she could facilitate the kind of group she had needed. Now, she leads a support group each year in the fall-into-winter season held intentionally before the holidays.

“I just wanted to help other moms,” she explained. “I recommend reaching out for help from those who have been there.” When it comes to how to handle a family member living with addiction, Becky suggested families keep a key tenant in mind: “Do what you can live with,” she said. “You will have to look back and know you did what the right thing was for yourself and your family. Sometimes no one else can tell you what that is, so do what you know you will be able to live with having done.”

Now settled after such an intense period of change, Becky honors Brooke’s legacy as she continues her business and her roles as a wife, grandmother and mother.

**Q&A WITH BECKY CRUZ**

**Q. What should families in the Kern County area know more about in their community?**

Families should be more aware of the dangers of Fentanyl, especially our youth. It isn’t necessarily a pattern of addiction. One pill can kill your child.

**Q. What is your parenting PSA? If you could rent a billboard in Kern County all parents would see, what would that message be?**

Hug your children and tell them you love them!

# HELLO HAPPY MAMA CONTEST

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Enter now for your  
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Bakersfield  
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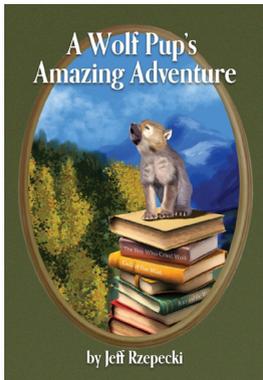
Enter by midnight  
on February 19!

Scan Here  
to Enter!



# Locally Grown Stories for Little Minds

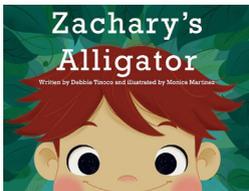
THE WRITER OF YOUR FAVORITE BOOK may not just be an unknown person—the author may be your neighbor! Here are a few books by Kern County authors. Get to know them and their stories!



## A Wolf Pup's Amazing Adventure

By Jeff Rzepecki  
\$29.99; Ages: 5-10  
Publisher: Dorrance Pub Co.  
Amazon.com  
Inspired by his nephew, Patrick, who has Down Syndrome, Rzepecki, a sales-

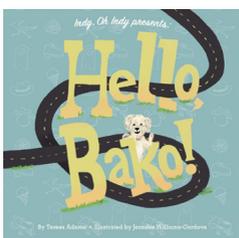
man-turned-teacher, penned this book about how learning to read can change a life. It tells the tale of Golden Eagle, who discovers a wolf pup struggling to survive on his own, and the two forge a bond of friendship and survival.



## Zachary's Alligator

By Debbie Tinoco & Monica Martinez  
\$10.10; Ages: 3-6  
Publisher: 1127 Press  
Amazon.com

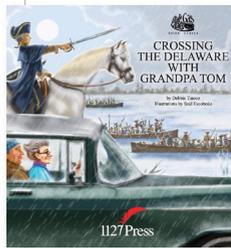
Bakersfield native Tinoco penned the story of Zachary and his friends, who encounter a charming group of reptiles who lead kids on a new alphabet discovery!



## Indy, Oh Indy Presents: Hello, Bako!

By Teresa Adamo & Jennifer Williams-Cordova  
\$9.95; Ages: 3-6  
Publisher: f/8 Press  
Amazon.com

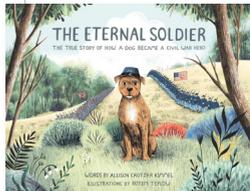
Shafter resident Adamo penned several books in homage to her terri-doodle, Indy. In this installment, Indy wanders the streets of Bakersfield to meet and greet the locals.



## Crossing the Delaware with Grandpa Tom

By Debbie Tinoco & Saul Escobedo  
\$12.99; Ages: 5-8  
Publisher: BookBaby  
Amazon.com  
Tinoco, author of

“Zachary’s Alligator,” also penned a series of multicultural books, “Dale Gas Carmen.” This installment tells the tale of the Castillo family as they prepare to make tamales for Christmas—and maybe George Washington.



## The Eternal Soldier: The True Story of How a Dog Became a Civil War Hero

By Allison Crotzer Kimmel & Rotem Teplow

\$15.16; Ages: 6-9  
Publisher: Little Bee Books  
Amazon.com  
allisoncrotzerkimmel.com

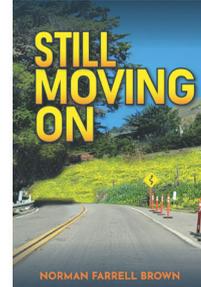
Local author Kimmel introduces children to history with this tale of a dog who became a Civil War hero during the Battle of Gettysburg. The true story is depicted in a statue at Gettysburg by the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry.



## The Four Queens of the Buttonbush Museum: A Novel

By Beth Brookhart  
\$19; Ages: adult  
Publisher: Sibylline Press  
Amazon.com  
https://bethbrookhart.com/  
Brookhart’s debut novel was inspired

by her years of service on the Kern County Museum’s board of directors. Set in rural California in the 1950s, four women are determined to save the museum’s budget crisis—but it’s not about the money. The fun comes with the personalities of the women who rally against what society expects them to be.



## Still Moving On

By Norman Farrell Brown

\$19.99; Ages: adult  
Publisher: Fig Factor Media Publishing  
Amazon.com  
www.kernliteracy.org  
Brown had a traumatic childhood, including being a victim

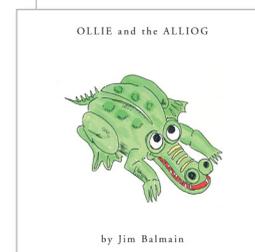
of abuse, substance abuse, suicide attempts, arrests, and homelessness. But he wasn’t ready to give up. He knew he could do better—and he has done better. He’s involved in the Kern County Literacy Council and the Model T Club and has set an example of how a bad start doesn’t have to lead to a bad finish.



## Body in the Orchard: Kern Kapers Mystery #1

By Phyllis Wachob  
\$11.73; Ages: teen-adult  
Publisher: Phyllis Wachob  
Amazon.com  
https://phylliswachob.com

When a body turns up in a local orchard, a retired school librarian barely makes note of it—until she realizes she may have a tie to the dead guy. Now, the days of shelving books seem dull compared to her new job digging up clues, tracing missing persons, and solving crimes. The first in a series of Kern Kapers books, penned by Wachob, a retired English teacher.



## Ollie and the Allig

By Jim Balmain  
\$17.99; Ages: 5-6  
Publisher: Xlibris  
Amazon.com  
From local Bakersfield author Jim

Balmain of Smith’s Bakery comes a heartfelt Southern adventure about courage, friendship, and finding your place in the world.

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# WE LOVE IT!

By Lisa Keosouphanh

## Sweet Picks Mom & Baby Will Love

February is the perfect moment to celebrate the bond between mom and baby. These smart, everyday essentials deliver ease, comfort, and confidence.

1. Juniper™ Compact Stroller with Cup Holder \$239.99, [us.britax.com](http://us.britax.com)
2. Evenflo Pocket Pump: \$189.99, [target.com](http://target.com)
3. Evenflo Feeding Balance + Glass Baby Bottles: 3 pack \$26.99, [target.com](http://target.com)



2



3



THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF KERN COUNTY'S STAGE DOOR ACADEMY PRESENTS

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AM CAST                      PM CAST  
 JUNE 1 - 28, 2026    JUNE 1 - 28, 2026  
 9:00AM-12:00PM    1:00PM-4:00PM

IS PRESENTED THROUGH SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL (MTI). ALL AUTHORIZED PERFORMANCE MATERIALS ARE ALSO SUPPLIED BY MTI. WWW.MTISHOWS.COM



JUNE 29 - JULY 25, 2026  
 9:00PM-12:00PM

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JULY 6 - AUGUST 9, 2026  
 9:00PM-12:00PM

BASED ON THE MUSIC PERFORMED AND RECORDED BY BRITNEY SPEARS BOOK BY JON HARTMERE



Join us this summer in collaboration with Stars at Fillbrandt and The Empty Space, as our talented young performers take the stage!  
 Visit [bgkc.org/stagedooracademy](http://bgkc.org/stagedooracademy) or scan the QR Code to register.

Tuition fees are non-refundable.





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*TK-12 Enrollment  
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[legacychristianbakersfield.org](http://legacychristianbakersfield.org)

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# Tech-Challenged and Totally Fine: Confessions of a Gen Xer



ILLUSTRATION BY COPILOT

I am Gen X; of course I don't remember my Netflix password. That is why I have children. My movie-watching days will end when they move out. I can picture them as adults: on the phone with me, rolling their eyes, trying to explain how to turn off my phone's flashlight or how to access that kindle book I bought.

My lack of tech skills spills into the photography department: I don't take a lot of pictures on my phone. This is because:

**1.** When my kids were younger—before they had phones of their own—they took thousands of pictures of plastic horses on my phone. I couldn't locate a picture I was looking for if I wanted because I

would have to dig through all those horse pictures. Horses in the grass. Horses on the rug. Every combination of horses together and apart.

**2.** My kids are now in a phase where they do not want their pictures taken. And what else would I take pictures of? So, the camera on my phone is basically useless.

**3.** I don't know how to find my pictures after I've taken them. I can see them on my phone right after I take them, but I mean in the long run, like when I get a new phone. I know my pictures are "in the cloud," whatever that means. I am starting to think it means that my pictures have gone to heaven and will never be seen again.

But that is ok because, according to my 15-year-old, all I have on my phone are "three random pictures of black phoebees," which are a dapper flycatcher birds of the western US, which sounds lame but isn't actually but all that bad, apparently, because, according to her, "all Dad has on his phone are pictures of bad welding jobs, like he drives around town and whenever he sees something that isn't welded right, he takes a picture of it."

So here we all are, on vacation in Japan, and we are somehow sharing photos to an album. Now, I can't do that on my own, of course. I have to go back to the email where the album was shared with me to click on the link to get to the album to add to it. Well, that is not quite true; I don't have much to contribute, so it is more like I go to the album to see what everyone else has added.

My daughter caught me trying to google "google photos" because I forgot there is an app I can directly go to without having to search for it on google. That is how Gen X I am.

The only pictures of my kids in Japan are of the backs of their heads because they do not want to have their pictures taken. Well, someone (not me, obviously) shared the album with my mom, who has been asking where the kids are. I am tech-savvy enough to be able to zoom in on the back of a head or a familiar purse, so she can tell that those are, in fact, my actual children with me; I'm not just taking pictures of the backs of random strangers.

So yes, one day my kids will move out, and I will forget my passwords. I will lose access to streaming services and photo albums. I will call them for help, and they will very patiently tell me I'm doing it wrong.

But for now, they're still here. They're in the photos. Technically. Somewhere. In the cloud.

You Can Do It | By Lisa Keosouphanh

# A Warm Boost for a Berry Good Morning

**STRAWBERRY MONTH** meets Hot Breakfast Month is the perfect excuse to brighten up your morning routine with something fresh, colorful, and irresistibly fun. This simple, wholesome toast (or bagel) is a delicious way for families to enjoy a warm start packed with energy and fresh flavor.



## Strawberry Breakfast Toast (or Bagel)

### INGREDIENTS

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 slice whole wheat bread | 3 large strawberries, chopped                     |
| 1 tbsp pine nuts          | Drizzle of balsamic vinegar or balsamic reduction |
| Cooking spray             | 2-3 basil leaves, chopped                         |
| 1 egg white               | 1/8 tsp salt                                      |
| 1/2 avocado               |   |

### INSTRUCTIONS

Toast a slice of bread (or bagel) to desired level.

In a small pan, lightly toast the pine nuts over medium heat for about 2 minutes, or until golden brown.

Spray another pan with cooking spray and place on the stove over medium heat. Cook egg whites to desired level.

Smash 1/2 of a ripe avocado onto the toast. Then add egg white and chopped strawberries.

Drizzle with balsamic vinegar or reduction, then top with basil and pine nuts.

Add a pinch of salt and enjoy!

— Recipe courtesy [www.californiastrawberries.com/](http://www.californiastrawberries.com/)

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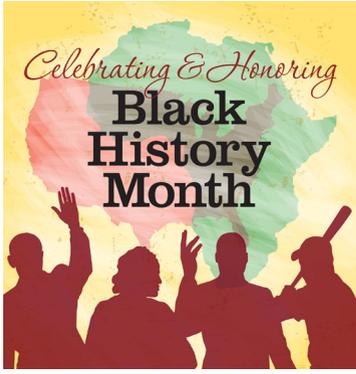
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Bakersfield, CA 93311  
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## FEBRUARY 1

### ADAPTIdance Recital

The ADAPTIdance Recital celebrates the creativity and talent of dancers in partnership with Kern Dance Alliance. Tickets are coming soon.

3 p.m.

<https://kerndance.org/adaptidance/>

### Love Your Park Fun Run & 5K

A community celebration that brings neighbors together for a great cause — supporting the Youth Scholarship Fund!

8 – 11 a.m.

[www.norfun.org/](http://www.norfun.org/)



# February

This year's "Love Your Park Fun Run & 5K" is happening on February 1. PHOTO COURTESY NOR

## FEBRUARY 2



## FEBRUARY 4

### PBVUSD's 8th Annual Casting Call Hiring Fair

Attendees can explore open positions, meet hiring managers face-to-face, and learn about career pathways in a welcoming, community-focused environment.

4 – 7 p.m.

<https://www.pbvUSD.k12.ca.us/>



ACK's First Friday ArtWalk brings art to the streets of Downtown Bakersfield every first Friday of the month! PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTS COUNCIL OF KERN

## FEBRUARY 4 & 9–11

### Galentine's Paint Nights

Galentine's Paint Night with heart planters, succulents, paint supplies, photobooth fun, and all-ages creative vibes for just \$20 per person.

6 – 10 p.m.

<https://www.instagram.com/jerrypizzapub/>

## FEBRUARY 6

### Arts Council of Kern's First Friday ArtWalk

Celebrate creativity with artists, artisans, and vendors, offering hands-on experiences like jewelry making and storytelling in a vibrant, engaging atmosphere.

5 – 9 p.m.

<https://kernarts.org/artwalk/>

FEBRUARY 6-22



MILANO CORTINA  
2026



FEBRUARY 7



Take Your Child  
to the Library Day

World Ballet Company:  
Swan Lake

From moonlit lakes to glittering palace halls, this iconic ballet captures the power of love, the pull of destiny, and the beauty of classical dance in its most captivating form.

7 - 9:30 p.m.

<https://www.tixr.com/groups/bakersfieldfoxtheater>

FEBRUARY 11

Yoga at NOR

Find your balance with mindful movement and breathwork designed to build strength, flexibility, and focus.

4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

<https://www.norfun.org/>

FEBRUARY 12

Swing & Country  
Dance Lessons

Whether you are a beginner

or intermediate dancer or just want to dust off your technique after a long layoff, these classes are fun and all ages are welcome.

6 - 9 p.m.

<https://bakersfielddanceconnection.com/>

FEBRUARY 13-16

69th Annual  
Whiskey Flat Days

Dust off your boots, grab your lassos, and enjoy a weekend full of western charm, family fun, and Kernville pride!

<https://whiskeyflatdays.com/>

FEBRUARY 14



Bakersfield Water  
Lantern Festival

Love, friendship, family... and lanterns! The perfect Valentine's mix! Enjoy food trucks, live music, vendors, a scavenger hunt, and the lantern launch.

3 - 7 p.m.

<https://www.waterlanternfestival.com/events/bakersfield>

FEBRUARY 14-15

2X Monster Trucks  
Live Tour

Experience an adrenaline-fueled show as high-flying monster trucks compete in non-stop ground-pounding competition!

2 p.m.

<https://www.2xmonstertrucks.com/upcoming-events/tehachapi-ca-2026>



Teen issues are family issues.  
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Where to Find Us



BOOKMOBILE  
SATURDAY SCHEDULE

The Kern County Library Bookmobile is rolling into your neighborhood with something for everyone!

Explore our scheduled stops, including:

- Book selection
- Storytimes
- Craft kits
- Free Wifi

Make your next Saturday adventure a stop at one of our Bookmobile locations!



Thanks to funding from Measure K, Kern County's Unincorporated Public Safety, Vital Services, and Local Control Measure, the Library Department is able to provide additional materials, programs, technology, and staff reinforcing the library's commitment to prioritizing literacy and creative learning opportunities for all ages.

## Hello Kitty Valentine's Paint Night

Perfect for kids, families & Hello Kitty lovers of all ages! RSVP today!

**Saturday: 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**Sunday: 2:30 – 5 p.m.**

<https://www.instagram.com/jerrypizzapub/>



## FEBRUARY 16



## Presidential Polar Plunge

Empower local youth with life-saving swim skills—take the Presidential Polar Plunge to support water safety and drowning prevention in our community.

**9 a.m.**

<https://www.tvrpd.org/presidential-polar-plunge>

## 5th Annual Fat Tuesday Food Truck Extravaganza

This lunchtime event at Garces Memorial draws a hungry crowd and highlights some of the best eats in Bakersfield.

**12:45 – 1:45 p.m.**

<https://www.instagram.com/garces.memorial/>

## Mariachi and Folklorico Showdown

This vibrant celebration will bring together outstanding mariachi and folklórico programs from across KHSD, each showcasing their very best talent on one spectacular stage.

**6 p.m.**

<https://www.bakersfieldlive.com/>

## FEBRUARY 17



## FEBRUARY 18

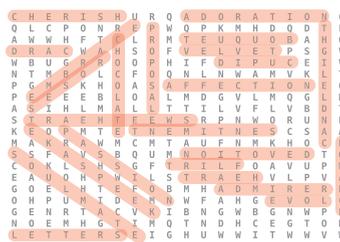


# ACTIVITY CORNER ANSWERS

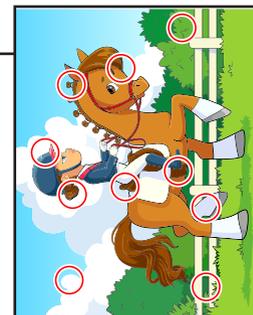
ACTIVITY CORNER: PAGES 29 & 31

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- Down**
- 1. Kittles
  - 2. Tall
  - 3. Lift
  - 4. Entwine
  - 7. Clap
- Across**
- 1. Kittles
  - 5. Throw
  - 6. SC
  - 8. Spindle



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Valentine's Day Water Lantern Festival Event. PHOTO COURTESY WATER LANTERN FESTIVAL

## FEBRUARY 20

## Cutting Edge: Art Off the Wall Opening

A gallery spotlighting alternative and unconventional artforms! This gallery highlights metalworks, custom skate decks, mixed material creations, sculptural builds, and more centered on work that pushes beyond traditional mediums.

<https://kernarts.org/cutting-edge/>

“No Way!” moves, 100 Years of “Wow!” moments, and 100 Years of basketball thrills.

**2 p.m.**

<https://www.harlemglobetrotters.com/world-tour/schedule/dignity-health-arena/>

## FEBRUARY 25

## Rooted in Faith: Christ at the Center

Kern Catholic and Garces Memorial High School invite all of Bakersfield to an inspiring afternoon with Fr. Mike Schmitz. Bring family, friends, and neighbors—all are welcome!

**12 – 3 p.m.**

<https://garces.org/v1/index.aspx>

## FEBRUARY 21

## Harlem Globetrotters 100 Year Tour



This centennial season is a once-in-a-century celebration of 100 Years of jaw-dropping

## FEBRUARY 26

## ILCKC's Beginner ASL Class

FREE Beginning American Sign Language Class at Northeast Library Branch. Open to all ages!

**4 p.m.**  
[https://www.instagram.com/ilckc\\_dhh/](https://www.instagram.com/ilckc_dhh/)

### Kern Literacy Council's Wine & Words

An engaging evening of wine, light appetizers, conversation, and storytelling with guest author Beth Brookhart-Pandol.

**5:30 – 8:30p.m.**  
<https://www.kernliteracy.org/>

## FEBRUARY 27

### NOR's Daddy Daughter Dance: 90s Rewind

Break out the denim, scrunchies, and classic jams for a night of throwback fun! This event is expected to sell out quickly, so register today!

**6 – 8 p.m.**  
<https://www.norfun.org/>

### Bakersfield SPCA "Furry Paws & Foggy Nights"

Bid on unique silent and live auction items while enjoying some of the best music around. Dine on scrumptious food and enjoy wonderful cocktails and more!

**6 – 10 p.m.**  
<https://bakersfieldspca.org/furry-paws/>

## FEBRUARY 28

### Black American History Month Parade

This year's theme is "Celebrate In Unity, We Are One Focus". A celebration of community unity and African American mentorship, honoring those who champion youth education and opportunity.

**10 a.m.**  
<https://www.facebook.com/BakersfieldBlackAmericanHistoryParade>

Find more happenings at [www.kerncountyfamily.com](http://www.kerncountyfamily.com)

## ONGOING HAPPENINGS

### TUESDAYS

#### GED Testing Lab

Employers' Training Resource offers GED Testing through GED Pearson-Vue Authorized Testing Center.

Register at [www.GED.com](http://www.GED.com)

[www.employestrainingresource.com/job-seekers/resources/ged-testing](http://www.employestrainingresource.com/job-seekers/resources/ged-testing)

### WEDNESDAYS

#### Walking Moai at The Park at River Walk

Move naturally and connect with new friends. All ages and fitness levels are welcome—come enjoy good company and gentle movement in a beautiful outdoor space.

**6 p.m.**  
[www.bakersfield.bluezonesproject.com/events/](http://www.bakersfield.bluezonesproject.com/events/)

### SATURDAYS

#### Kern County Library Bookmobile

The Kern County Library Bookmobile is back on the road with books for all ages, free Wi-Fi, on-the-go check-outs and returns, and easy on-site library card sign-ups for visitors.

**Panorama Park: 9 - 10:30 a.m.**  
**Hart Park: 11:30 a.m.- 1 p.m.**  
**Polo Park: 2:30 - 4 p.m.**  
<https://kerncountylibrary.org/bookmobile/>

#### F Street Farmers Market

Bakersfield's longest-running Farmers Market! Accepts cash, card & EBT Snap.

**7:45 a.m. – 12 p.m.**  
[www.fstfarmersmarket.com/](http://www.fstfarmersmarket.com/)

#### RiverLakes Farmers Market

Farm to Table, fresh produce! Our certified farmers bring you the freshest fruits and vegetables.

**9 a.m. – 1 p.m.**



Kern County Library Bookmobile is back! Visit [www.kerncountyfamily.com](http://www.kerncountyfamily.com) to find out more!

[www.instagram.com/riverlakes\\_farmers\\_market/](https://www.instagram.com/riverlakes_farmers_market/)

### FIRST SATURDAYS

#### Home Depot Kids Workshops

FREE in-store kids' activities and crafts workshops. While supplies last. Register today!

**9 a.m.– 12 p.m.**  
<https://www.homedepot.com/kids-workshop>

#### The Market at Tejon

A vibrant community gathering for families, friends, and food lovers to enjoy local flavor, fun, and connection.

**4 – 8 p.m.**  
[www.tejonoutlets.com/events-promotions/](http://www.tejonoutlets.com/events-promotions/)

### FIRST & THIRD SATURDAYS

#### Tractor Supply Farmers Market: Rosedale Artisan Fair

Explore seasonal produce, handmade goods, and family-friendly fun—all brought to you by neighbors and small businesses in your area.

**9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.**  
[www.officialartisanfairs.com/](http://www.officialartisanfairs.com/)

### SUNDAYS

#### FREE Junk Journaling & Scrapbooking

Free Junk Journaling Moai, a mindful, creative meetup with rotating supplies, inspiring prompts and community connection!

**11 a.m. – 1 p.m.**  
[www.bakersfield.bluezonesproject.com/events/](http://www.bakersfield.bluezonesproject.com/events/)

#### Haggin Oaks Farmers Market

Visit over 70 different vendors at the biggest Farmers Market in town.

**9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**  
[www.instagram.com/hagginoaksfarmersmarket/](https://www.instagram.com/hagginoaksfarmersmarket/)

### SECOND & FOURTH SUNDAYS

#### Riverwalk Artisan Fair

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*"Kern Autism Network Inc. provides support, awareness, information and education to families and the public throughout Kern County"*

**Happy Valentine's Day!**

**Adults on the Spectrum Gathering: Saturday, February 7th.**  
To register, please contact our office for details.

**Parent Support Group Meeting: Wednesday, February 11th @ 6 pm.**  
To register, visit our website [kernautism.org](http://kernautism.org)

**Female Support Group Gathering Thursday, February 12th @ 6 pm.**  
To register, please contact our office for details.

**Chess Club for Teens Sunday, February 15th from 11 am to noon.**  
To register visit our website [www.kernautism.org](http://www.kernautism.org)

**Father's Virtual Group Meeting: Saturday, February 21st @ 2:30 p.m.**  
via Zoom Register via [www.kernautism.org](http://www.kernautism.org)

To read more about the organization, follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

<p><b>EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed language development</li> <li>• Repetitive language</li> <li>• Little or no eye contact</li> <li>• Repetitive mannerisms</li> <li>• Inflexible routines or rituals</li> <li>• Preoccupation with object parts</li> <li>• Little interest in friendships</li> </ul>	<p><b>SERVICES OFFERED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly Parent Support Groups</li> <li>• Adults on the Spectrum Support Group</li> <li>• Law Enforcement Trainings</li> <li>• Autism/Asperger Workshops-Seminars</li> <li>• Local Resources, Community Projects</li> <li>• Camps &amp; Activity Scholarships</li> <li>• Evening &amp; Weekend Phone support</li> </ul>
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# Worship Guide

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## Held by a Love That Never Lets Go

Love for us is the truest love story, written not with roses or chocolates, but with sacrifice, faithfulness, and unending passion. Valentine's Day celebrates affection and romance, yet it only hints at a deeper reality: we are already fully known and deeply loved by God. His love is not fragile or fleeting. It is intentional, steadfast, and personal. Scripture reminds us that God's love pursues us. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Long before we could earn it—or even recognize it—God's heart was set on us. His passion is not driven by emotion alone but by commitment. In Christ, God demonstrated a love willing to suffer, to forgive, and to restore what was broken. The cross stands as the ultimate declaration: there is no distance God would not cross to bring us back to Himself. On Valentine's Day, when love is measured by cards and gestures, God invites us to remember a greater truth. We are cherished beyond measure, chosen on purpose, and loved without condition. His love does not fade with time or fail in weakness. It remains constant, transforming our hearts and teaching us how to love others with the same grace we have received.

— By Jon Engen



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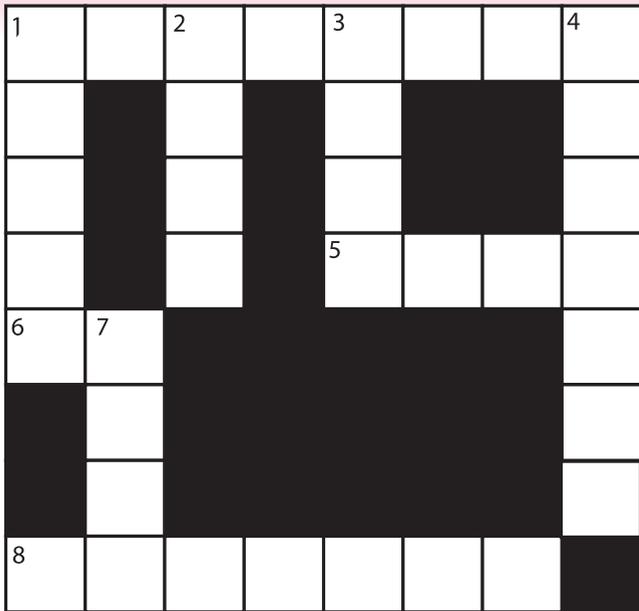


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# FEBRUARY ACTIVITY CORNER

**PUZZLE ANSWERS**  
PAGE 24

## Crossword



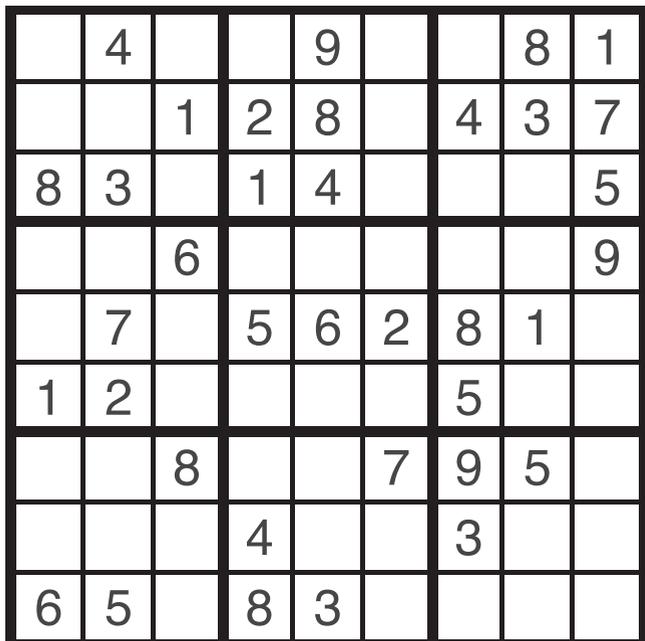
### ACROSS

- 1. Connects kite to person
- 5. Defrost
- 6. Southern U.S. state
- 8. Hand spinning tool

### DOWN

- 1. Flying devices
- 2. Part of a kite
- 3. Gain height
- 4. Twist together
- 7. Slap hands together

## Sudoku



There are 10 differences in the pictures below. Can you find them all?



## DID YOU KNOW?



### Birds Are Descendants of Dinosaurs

Birds share a common ancestry with theropod dinosaurs like the Velociraptor. In fact, scientists consider modern birds to be living dinosaurs!



# Dream Center Youth Mural



**ROAD SIGNS FOR LIFE:** This mural was created through a partnership between Kern County Superintendent of Schools, The Dream Center, Muralist-illustrator Jennifer Williams Cordova, and direct participation from Dream Center youth. PHOTO BY SEAN NAVEJAS, ARTS COUNCIL OF KERN

**T**he mural reads like a road map with directional signs pointing to your past, dreams, and healing.

Above them, a monarch butterfly hovers, the universal symbol of transformation. Anchoring the composition is a simple but radical declaration: YOU.

Facing Wall Street (the alley between 18th and 19th at G St.) this mural insists on possibility.

Created through a partnership between Kern County Superintendent of Schools, The Dream Center, and Muralist-illustrator Jennifer Williams Cordova, with direct participation from Dream Center youth, it is less decoration than declaration: a testament to the resilience of Kern's young people.

The work emerged through informal "pizza chats," where participants shared hopes and lived experience. Cordova lis-

tened and translated their voices into lasting form.

"Dream Center clients evolved the concept and final design," Cordova says.

"The concept and final design approval came directly from the Dream Center youth, and I put the pieces together. Together we all painted stars. The duality of light and dark, struggle and hope, was important for them to express through art."

The Dream Center serves foster-involved young people up to age 25, supporting those facing housing and food instability, workforce barriers, and uncertain futures.

## WHERE TO SEE IT:

**Kern County Network for Children's complex:**

1801 19th St.  
Mural located between 18th and 19th on Wall Street, facing G Street.

With access to dozens of resources, clients move forward with dignity toward balanced adult lives. "The services are individualized, not prescriptive," notes Bryanna Wood of The Center. "It's practical and creative dream-building."

Arts Council staff member Angel Gutierrez, who has foster experience himself, reflects: "There is hope at the end of the road—and more paths, more options, in life."

Supported by KCSOS, Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County, and the Arts Council of Kern, this mural is an invitation. To pause. To look. To believe that today's challenges are already shaping tomorrow's promise.

**For more information on their diverse services:** <https://kern.org/kern-county-network-children/dream-center/>

# FEBRUARY ACTIVITY CORNER

**PUZZLE ANSWERS**  
PAGE 24

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 W B U G R R O O P H I F D I P U C E I V  
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