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Kitchen Savvy Mama
Jeanelle Jones





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CALENDAR

Lisa Keosouphanh

SOCIAL MEDIA

Callie Collins, Lisa Keosouphanh

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Callie Collins,
Lisa Keosouphanh, Andrea Rose,
Vaun Thygeron,
and Julie Willis

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WEB

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E-MAIL

kcfm@kerncountyfamily.com



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MEMBERS OF



10



ON THE COVER: Eveander Gatzka, age 3, from Buttonwillow shows his love for fresh fruits and veggies so much that he ate the tops off the carrots before we snapped the picture. **HEATHER HAFEN PHOTOGRAPHY**
COVER DESIGN BY JINGER BELCHER DESIGNS

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HUMOR @ HOME



Vaun Thygerson
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A few months ago, I received a wonderful surprise in the mail. My son, who is away at college in San Francisco, had sent me a letter: a good, old-fashioned letter, handwritten in blue ink and tucked into a sealed, stamped, carefully addressed envelope. Inside was a simple note describing his life and asking how we were doing. It was one of the most touching gestures I've ever received. I love getting thank-you notes or invitations, but a just-because letter via snail mail hasn't arrived for me in a long time.

It's amazing how many young adults have never written or received a letter. In a world of snaps, posts, and texts, the art of letter writing deserves renewed attention. Growing up, I had a pen pal named Jennifer Walsh from Boone, North Carolina. We met one summer while I was visiting the Blue Ridge Mountains, and for many years we shared our lives through the letters we exchanged. Especially during my junior high years, I would ignore my homework just so I could write her a novel about a boy I was crushing on.

Finding excuses to avoid homework is something most teenagers can relate to. In Julie Willis' Humor at Home article, "Flour, Sugar, and Zero Motivation: A High Schooler's Masterclass in Avoiding Assignments," on page 20, she writes about this cultural phenomenon. Her daughter recently used baking cinnamon rolls as an excuse not to make up her class assignments, and Julie can relate to this logic, as she loves baking and eating sweet treats as a distraction.

Baking and childhood often go hand in hand, as Kern County's youngest residents recently discovered during the six-week

national food education program, Charlie Cart. In the article, "Cooking Up Confidence: Charlie Cart Comes to Kern County," readers can learn how this hands-on experience at the Beale Memorial Library empowered local youth while teaching them valuable kitchen skills and nutrition knowledge.

In partnership with Charlie Cart, this month's "Happy Mama" helped bring the unique program to life. In "Hello Happy (Kitchen-Savvy) Mama" Callie Collins highlights the dedicated mom's contributions to food, her family, and the community. Jones serves as the Supervisor of Catering Services and Special Projects for the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), where she works alongside the central kitchen team to prepare 3,000-6,000 meals each day for local students. To read all about her love of food, family, and connection, turn to page 14.

To celebrate Women's History Month, KCFM is sharing a few book recommendations that celebrate the achievements and impact of women. In the article, "Yes, We Still Can" on page 16, Andrea Rose suggests books that showcase iconic women who changed the world, from the first woman millionaire to dare-devils to women who invented television.

As the weather warms and flowers begin to bloom this month, take a moment to show your appreciation for someone you care about. I challenge you to write a letter to a loved one: a good, old-fashioned handwritten note sent through the mail. I promise it will be fun to write and even more meaningful for the person who receives it. I'll be using Bakersfield-inspired notecards I recently purchased, featuring artwork created by members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Bakersfield, to write to my two sons who are away at college. And if you'd like to make your letter even more special, consider including a pressed blossom inside.

Happy Spring!

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BCHS Launches Fundraising for New Aquatics Center and Athletic Facility



RENDERINGS COURTESY BAKERSFIELD CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Bakersfield Christian High School (BCHS) announces the launch of fundraising efforts for a new Aquatics Center and Wrestling & Athletic Flex Facility, a transformational campus project designed to expand athletic opportunities, enhance student wellness, and serve the broader Bakersfield community.

The planned facility will feature a competition-grade 25-yard by 38-meter outdoor stretch pool with a movable bulkhead, allowing the pool to be configured for swim meets, water polo, and team practices. Adjacent to the pool will be a 4,000-square-foot indoor flex space primarily designed for wrestling, with support for cheer, fitness training, meetings, and other multi-use programming.

“This project represents far more than a pool,” says Matthew Guinn, President of BCBS. “It’s an investment in our students, our programs, and our future. These facilities will create meaningful opportunities for growth, teamwork, and excellence, while strengthening our campus and community for generations to come.”

Fundraising efforts are now underway, and if you want more information, please contact Raj Cheshire, BCBS Vice President of Advancement at 661-410-7000.



North of the River Announces New NOR Rec Pass



The North of the River Recreation & Park District (NOR) is introducing a new monthly membership program,

the NOR Rec Pass, launching in March. The pass is designed to make recreation and enrichment programs easier to access, with additional classes and activities planned as the program grows.

“The NOR Rec Pass is about making recreation easier, more accessible, and more welcoming for everyone,” says Lauren Cronk, NOR Director of Recreation. “Introducing it during our Foundation’s scholarship fundraiser and free community event reflected exactly what this membership is meant to support – opportunity and belonging.”

Membership options include individual and family plans. Benefits include unlimited access to select drop-in classes, Open Gym Basketball, program discounts, member prize entries, and participation in the Net Zero Carbon Club, a sustainability-focused series offered in partnership with California Resources Corporation (CRC). Early offerings include Skateboard Sessions and other low-carbon recreation activities.

Residents who enroll by May 1 will receive a bonus hour on a three-hour picnic shelter rental.

More information is available at www.NORfun.org



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PHOTO COURTESY KERN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

KernBHRS Earns State Award for Crisis Communications Program

Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (KernBHRS) was recently awarded a 2025 Challenge Award from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) for its Mobile Evaluation Team (MET) Communications Program, which embeds behavioral health staff directly in 911 dispatch centers across Kern County.

“Kern Behavioral and Recovery Services is proud to receive this CSAC Challenge Award. The award belongs to the many staff across behavioral health, dispatch, and our law enforcement partners who make this work possible every day,” says Director of KernBHRS Alison Burrowes. “By embedding behavioral health professionals directly in 911 dispatch centers, we are responding differently to crisis calls and improving access to care for community members who need it most. This program reflects how working

together across city and county agencies leads to meaningful improvements in how we support our community members in crisis.”

The MET Communications Center Program was created collaboratively with behavioral health, dispatch, and law enforcement leadership to assist with behavioral-health-related emergency calls to 911. With KernBHRS staff assisting at these dispatch centers, over 6,500 calls over a four-year period were transferred to the Mobile Evaluative Team, and 75 percent of those calls did not require a traditional law enforcement response. This not only improved access to care in emergency situations but also reduced unnecessary responses, leading to cost savings for the community.

For more information, please visit www.kernbhhs.org.

John Mendiburu Inducted into CSUB Alumni Hall of Fame

Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) Superintendent John Mendiburu was recently inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame for California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB). Mendiburu received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from CSUB, as well as a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of LaVerne in 2010.

With a 30-year career in education, Mendiburu worked as a teacher, principal, and superintendent at the Rosedale Union School District (RUSD). In 2019, he joined KCSOS as an associate superintendent, and in 2023, he was appointed by the county Board of Education to serve in his current role as superintendent.

The other inductees to the CSUB Hall of Fame include retired California Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Jennifer Barrera, Migrant Education Director Janie Flores, retired Kern Medical Chief Financial Officer Fred Plane, and Kern County Superior Court Judge David Zulfa.



Mendiburu visits students in Wasco.
PHOTO COURTESY CSUB

Frontier Trail and Kernville Community Protection Plan

The Kern Fire Safe Council was recently awarded a CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant in the amount of \$816,677.12. Known as the Frontier Trail & Kernville Community Protection Plan, these funds will support critical wildfire mitigation efforts over a three-year timeframe on

the western edge of Kernville, primarily within the Frontier Trail community. The work will be done in collaboration with the Kern County Fire Department, the United States Forest Service (Kern River Ranger District), and the Frontier Trail Home Owners Association.

This project aims to reduce wildfire risk and improve safety for the town of Kernville and the surrounding Sequoia National Forest.

For more information, please visit www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov.

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Nutrient-Rich Choices for a Healthier You

MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION

MONTH, a timely reminder that low-calorie, nutrient-rich foods can support overall health when paired with regular exercise. The Mayo Clinic notes that most vegetables are naturally low in calories but high in water and fiber, helping people feel fuller longer and curb snacking. High-volume, low-calorie options include salad greens, asparagus, carrots, tomatoes, broccoli and zucchini.

The Mayo Clinic recommends adding vegetables to pasta dishes in place of meat and cheese and choosing carrots or broccoli over chips or baked goods for snacks.

Fruits also play a key role, though some are higher in calories. Healthline reports that avocados contain 161 calories per ½ cup mashed (about half a medium avocado), while a medium banana contains

Lower-calorie fruit alternatives

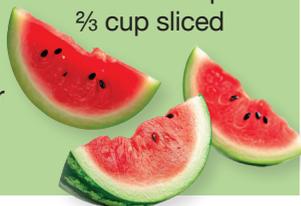
Strawberries:
32 calories per
¾ cup sliced

Honeydew:
36 calories per
¾ cup diced

Watermelon:
30 calories per
¾ cup diced

Peaches:
39 calories per
¾ cup sliced

Cantaloupe:
34 calories per
¾ cup diced



105 calories and roughly 1 cup sliced. Both are nutritious but higher-calorie choices.

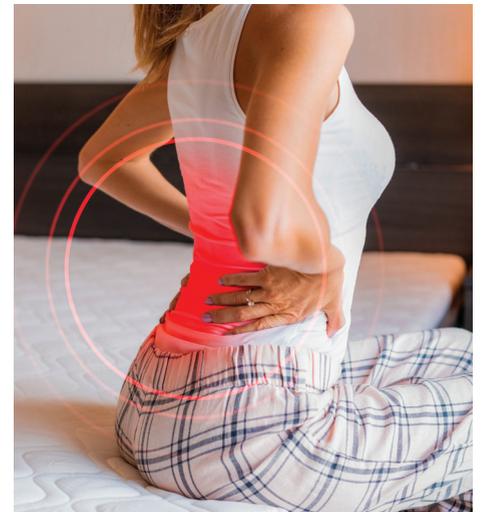
Eating right during National Nutrition Month—and beyond—starts with fruits and vegetables that are naturally low in calories and rich in nutrients.

Kidney Pain or Back Pain?

The Cleveland Clinic notes that kidney pain is often mistaken for back pain. Those unsure of what's causing their discomfort should know there are some notable differences between kidney pain and back pain.

Back pain typically affects the middle of the back over the spine and leads to discomfort in the lower back. Kidney pain typically occurs to the right or left of the spine just below the rib cage where the kidneys are located. Kidney pain may feel deeper than back pain, and can radiate to other areas of the body, including the abdomen or groin. If back pain goes beyond the initial area, it tends to radiate down the legs.

Individuals experiencing pain sufficient enough to feel discomfort that does not subside are urged to speak with a physician to determine if the pain is indicative of a back problem or an issue with their kidneys.



Peanut Allergy Awareness Is Up

Parents of school-aged children are likely familiar with “nut-free” classrooms and cafeterias. The growing number of these environments can give the impression that peanut allergies are rapidly increasing. While awareness has certainly risen, the picture is more nuanced.

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology notes that rising public

awareness can make peanut allergy seem more common than it is. A major 2017 study found a 21% increase in prevalence since 2010, though researchers say improved recognition and diagnosis likely explain part of that rise.

Studies from 2024–2025 point to environmental exposures and early-introduc-



tion feeding guidelines as key factors in both persistence and prevention. Emerging evidence also links certain environmental conditions to a higher chance that peanut allergy persists into later childhood.

Despite the nuances in prevalence, the seriousness of peanut allergies is unmistakable.

20
26



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Saddle Up: Readers Go Country — and Get Quirky

OUR READERS NEVER DISAPPOINT! We asked, “If you had to invent the quirkiest country music song title ever, what would it be?” and you all rose to the challenge in the best way. The answers were delightfully off-beat—and too good not to share.

“Just Me, My Cow, My Truck
and the Open Road”

– *Riley Sosa*

“She Left But Took the Wi-Fi”

– *Chellie Malley*

“The Only Thing Loyal
'Round Here Is My
Rusty Chevy”

– *Amanda Prado*

“Whiskey Don't Judge Me,
But the Neighbors Do”

– *Andrea Morales*

“My Heart's in Nashville,
My Ex Is in Jail”

– *Gabriella Bustamante*

“Gooseneckin'
Two-Steppin'”

– *Robyn Lace*

“I Lost My Truck,
My Dog Found Jesus”

– *Margaret Cushine*

“Kern County Kinda
Heartbreak”

– *Serena Denogean*

“The Chicken on my
Porch, Dog in the Truck,
and Cow in My Way”

– *Yadira Cadena*

“Tan Lines and
Questionable Life Choices”

– *Karen Orellana*

“Pardon Me, I'm Just
Country, Yeee Hawww!”

– *Phyllis Jackson*

“Everything Won't Be
the Same Since You
Got a New Last Name”

– *Richard Remillard,*
father of Carlianne Hodges

“Nobody Touches
my Horse”

– *Cecilia Brown*

“Ima Bakin' in Bakersfield”

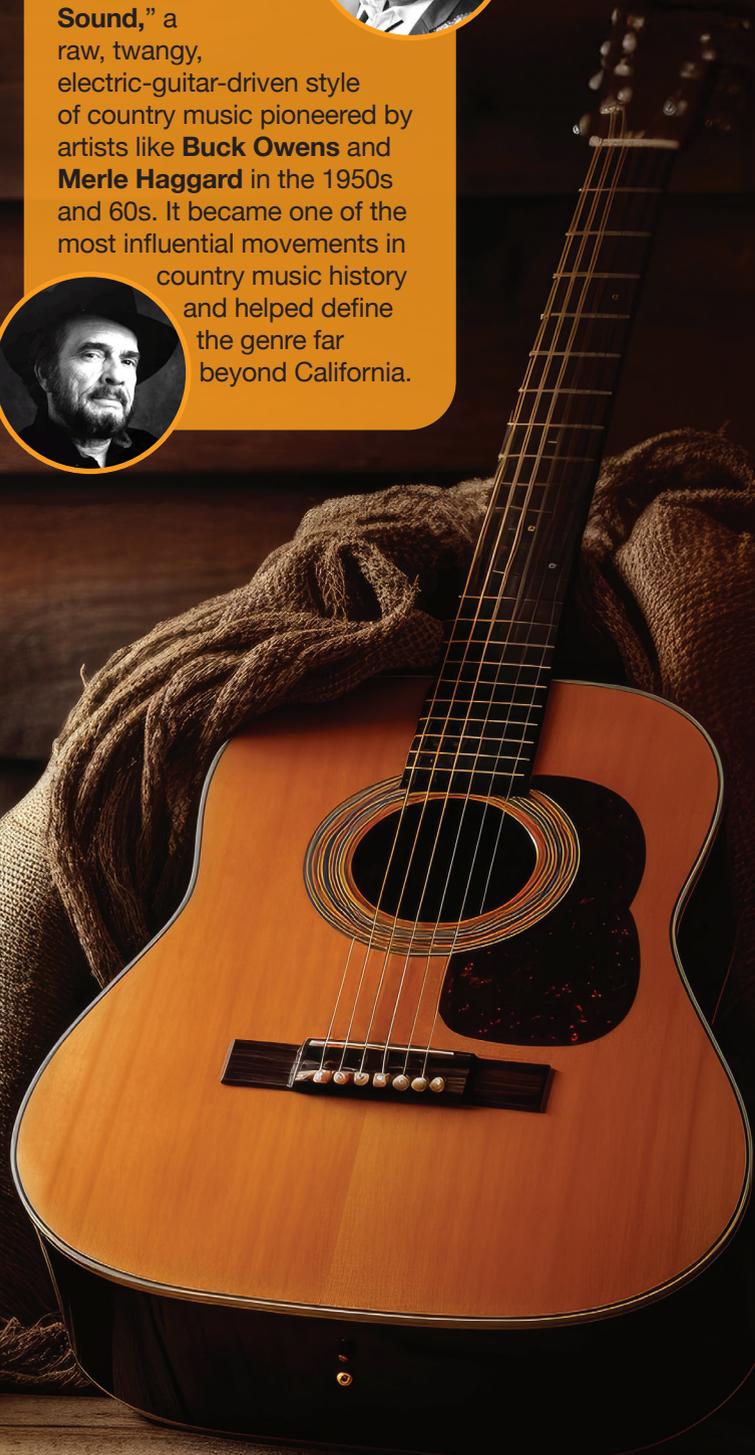
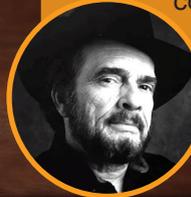
– *Barbara Ansolabehere*

“Can't Find My Hog
in the Fog”

– *Anna Boss*

DID YOU KNOW?

Bakersfield is the birthplace of the “Bakersfield Sound,” a raw, twangy, electric-guitar-driven style of country music pioneered by artists like **Buck Owens** and **Merle Haggard** in the 1950s and 60s. It became one of the most influential movements in country music history and helped define the genre far beyond California.





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HEALTHY MARCH



Can you spot all the action words?
Find each word going across, down,
or diagonal!

- BRIGHT
- BUILD
- CARRY
- DRAW
- FAST
- JUMP
- KIND
- LOOK
- PLAY
- QUIET
- SMILE
- THINK

K	I	N	D	W	P	H	U	R	D
W	W	E	M	R	L	O	O	K	C
Q	U	I	E	T	A	W	W	X	O
B	F	L	S	H	Y	W	W	U	Y
D	U	A	M	I	T	E	X	R	Q
Q	F	I	I	N	O	G	R	T	A
B	P	E	L	K	C	A	F	C	P
X	T	R	E	D	C	J	U	M	P
N	S	G	U	J	M	S	A	I	R
U	O	B	R	I	G	H	T	N	K



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Jeanelle Jones and family. PHOTO COURTESY JEANELLE JONES

HELLO, HAPPY KITCHEN-SAVVY MAMA

From KCSOS school kitchens to community classes, nourishing Kern County — one meal at a time.

JEANELLE JONES knows about food, family and community, which characterize her life and work.

As the sun went down in Kern County on a recent Wednesday night, Jeanelle could be found carrying items to her car after leading a Charlie Cart program session at Beale Memorial Library.

She had taught an afternoon class into the evening, over the dinner hour, after a day's work as supervisor of Catering

Services and Special Projects for Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS).

Food & Nutrition Services, a department within the KCSOS Division of Operational Support, includes its central kitchen, where Jeanelle works with the professionals who prepare between 3,000 and 6,000 meals each day for local students.

“At our house, all meals are completely unplugged, no phones allowed at the

About Jeanelle

• A graduate of Ridgeview High School, Jeanelle moved to Oregon, where she graduated from Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts. After a divorce, she returned to Bakersfield with her son to be near family.

• Through a mutual friend, Jeanelle met her husband, Kyle, and they married in 2020. The family enjoys time together around the table.



table,” said Jeanelle, who has also shared her skills at home. “My son is 15 but he’s been cooking since age 9 and he wants to be a chef. Now, he cooks for us every Sunday night. He’ll go through a recipe and ask to go shopping for missing ingredients.”

Although she had previously cooked in restaurants, Jeanelle shifted to working with Panama-Buena Vista Union School District. She then applied for a job at KCSOS but didn’t get the position. In 2024, she helped a Stockdale High School team participate in Kern County Fair’s Chopped Challenge, a Blue Zones Project student cooking competition. When Stockdale won with a chipotle salad featuring jackfruit, soy chorizo and purple sweet potatoes, Senior Director Rafael Juarez offered her the supervisor role.

While food is pivotal for Jeanelle, she is also acutely aware of food insecurity and what it means for individuals.

More than 117,000 people in Kern County don’t always have enough to eat, with an average of one out of every five children going to bed hungry, according to Kern Public Health.

The programs Jeanelle helps make possible, in addition to other KCSOS and nonprofit initiatives, aim to bridge the food distribution gap.

• **KCSOS** provides food for Supper and Snacks in the Stacks, a free program available at most Kern County branch libraries for ages 2-18, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Find participating locations, schedules and menus at <https://kerncountylibrary.org/snacks-in-the-stacks/>

• **A collaboration** between KCSOS, Blue Zones Project Bakersfield and Charlie



Jeanelle Jones demonstrating at The Charlie Cart Project event. PHOTO COURTESY BIANKA PANTOJA

Cart recently finished its first six-week program offered at the Kern County Library's Beale Memorial location. Charlie Cart features a mobile kitchen, which fosters a hands-on experience plus healthy eating information, partially framed through storytelling. Produce is sourced locally and a free meal is served from what's prepared. The program is currently seeking sponsors to be able to be hosted again in Kern County.

Find more information at <https://charliecart.org/>

- **KCSOS** has also worked with Blue Zones Project Bakersfield to facilitate cooking demonstrations at high schools and junior high schools.
- **Partnerships** with area food banks allow prepared food that goes unused during the school day to be kept safe according to established procedures and redistributed.

Find more information about KCSOS's programs and outreach at <https://kern.org/food-nutrition-services/>

Q&A WITH JEANELLE JONES

Q. What should our readers know more about KCSOS and Kern County Library offerings?

All Suppers and Snacks in the Stacks meals are free. When you don't know what to do for food, most Kern County libraries do offer a snack or meal.

Q. What advice do you have for women going through difficult times,

Fill-in-the-blank questions:

Favorite local restaurant: Pizz-A Perfection; it's Indian/Italian fusion cuisine [8500 Harris Road, Suite H]

Hidden talents: Photography, art and making wedding cakes.

One ingredient you'll always find in my pantry: Garlic. Powdered, minced, whole cloves — you can never can go wrong. Garlic enhances any dish.

Best book you've read lately: "Illusions" by Richard Bach, with its quote, "The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

Favorite musical group: The Moody Blues

Best advice: Never judge a book by its cover; you never know what someone is going through.

particularly food insecurity?

Don't give up. There are resources to help you. Cooking is so worthwhile, especially if your kids can help. You don't have to make a five-star meal; it can be a \$5 meal and there are people who will gladly show you how here in Kern County or on YouTube.

Q. What is your parenting PSA?

No matter how old your child is, spend time with them so they'll know you will be there no matter what. Don't neglect family game nights or just five minutes to sit down without your phone in your hand to have a conversation.

HELLO HAPPY MAMA CONTEST

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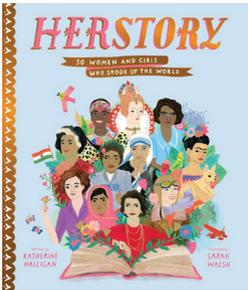
Enter by midnight on March 24!

Scan Here to Enter!



Yes, We Still Can

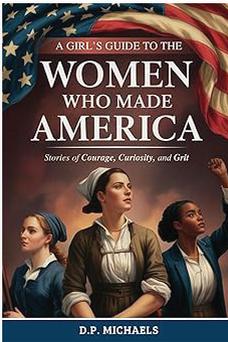
THIS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH, celebrate the resilience, determination, and impact of women whose stories remind us what's possible — no matter what the age.



Herstory: 50 Women & Girls Who Shook Up the World

By Katherine Halligan & Sarah Walsh
\$11.91; Ages: 6-10
Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

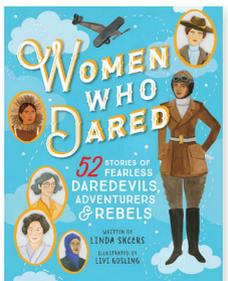
Amazon.com
History tells us what some women did to change the world, but this book goes deeper into the stories of what the women went through to reach their goals.



A Girl's Guide to the Women Who Made America: Courage, Curiosity & Grit

By D.P. Michaels
\$15.95; Ages: 8-12
Publisher: Independently published Amazon.com

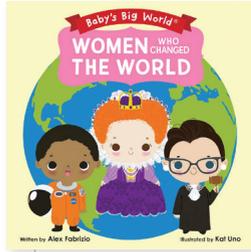
This new book takes girls behind the titles and headlines and into the world of some of the strongest women who went before them, on the field, in the office and beyond.



Women Who Dared: 52 Stories of Fearless Daredevils, Adventurers & Rebels

By Linda Skeers & Livi Gosling
\$8.47; Ages: 9-12

Publisher: Sourcebooks Explore
Amazon.com
From the first woman in space to the first to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, this book tells the story of women who were adventurous and persistent and inspiring.



Women Who Changed the World

By Alex Fabrizio & Kat Uno
\$8.99; Ages: 0-3
Publisher: Little Hero Amazon.com

Part of the Baby's Big World series, this board book introduces little ones to female scientists, world leaders and more.



Think Big, Little One

By Vashti Harrison
\$7.02; Ages: 0-3
Publisher: LB Kids Amazon.com

The lives of 18 inspiring women are explored, including artist Mary Blair, environmental activist Wangari Maathai and architect Zaha Hadid.



A is for Awesome!: 23 Iconic Women Who Changed the World

By Eva Chen & Derek Desierto
\$6.04; Ages: 1-5
Publisher: Feiwel & Friends Amazon.com

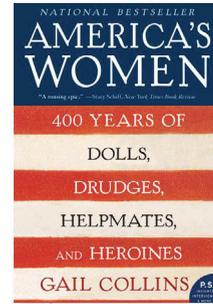
It's an alphabet book with a twist! Each letter represents the name of a woman who made history.



When Women Invented Television

By Jennifer Keishin Armstrong
\$22.16; Ages: Adult
Publisher: Harper Amazon.com

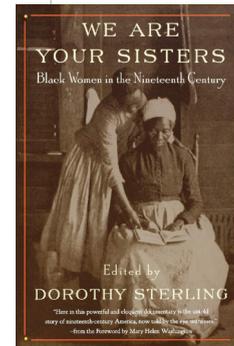
The Untold Story of the Female Powerhouses Who Pioneered the Way We Watch Today puts the lens on four women who became pioneers of TV.



America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates & Heroines

By Gail Collins
\$14.92; Ages: Adult
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks

Amazon.com
This chronological telling of women's history focuses on American women from the Pilgrims to today, including a look into the feminist movement of the 1970s. It's not light reading, but covers a lot of ground.



We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the 19th Century

By Dorothy Sterling & Mary Helen Washington
\$27.68; Ages: Adult
Publisher: WW Norton & Co. Amazon.com

Using a collection of historical documents, this book details black women who lived in the 1800s and shows how they lived, loved and survived.



The First Woman Millionaire

By K.S. Horne & Natalia Berezina
\$10.97; Ages: 3-5
Publisher: Independently published

Amazon.com
Madame CJ Walker was raised in poverty on a Louisiana plantation. She went on to start her own haircare company and ended up being the first female self-made millionaire in America in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Building Tomorrow's Leaders

Young Leaders Shine at BGCKC Legacy Gala

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County (BGCKC) recently honored two outstanding young members at its annual Youth of the Year Legacy Gala. Shayra Castillo, a junior, was named Youth of the Year, while Christopher Roman, a seventh grader, received the first-ever Junior Youth of the Year award. Both were selected for their exemplary character, dedication to their Club's programs, and commitment to supporting their peers.

"The Boys & Girls Clubs' Youth of the Year program is important to the community because it provides recognition, scholarship funds, and opportunities for young leaders to develop skills, have a voice, and share their message on a local, regional, and national platform," said Zane Smith, BGCKC Executive Director. "Our program helps shape the future and quality of life for every youth involved."

Shayra excels both at BGCKC and in school. At the Club, she has demonstrated strong leadership through the Workforce Readiness Program, completed internships at Beale Memorial Library and Dress for Success, and earned certifications in CPR, First Aid, and Food Handling. At South High School, she participates in ASB, Link Crew, and The Connection Project.

In her acceptance speech, Shayra reflected on overcoming personal challenges and finding hope and purpose through BGCKC. She now uses her voice to inspire others and advocate for peers struggling with depression.

Presented by the Bakersfield North Rotary Foundation, BGCKC also honored Kristin Monsibais, partner at Williams, Adams & Company, as a Legacy Board of Directors Inductee. During her tenure with BGCKC, she served in several leadership roles, including Treasurer, Vice President, and President. As President, she guided the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic with thoughtful



HONORING EXCELLENCE: Left: Joseph, 2025 Youth of the Year, with keynote speaker NaTasha "T" Johnson. Right: Shayra, 2026 Youth of the Year, and Christopher, 2026 Junior Youth of the Year. PHOTOS COURTESY BGCKC



Executive Director Zane Smith with KCFM contributing writer Vaun Thygerson and Publisher LJ Radon.

leadership, ensuring stability, continuity, and ongoing support for the youth and families the Clubs serve.

The evening's keynote speaker was NaTasha "T" Johnson, a respected community leader, educator, and advocate focused on expanding opportunity and empowering young people to lead with purpose. She is the owner of Upside Production Management, a woman-owned strategic partnership consulting firm founded in 2011 and serves as Founder and Executive Direc-

tor of Upside Academy, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to youth development through volunteerism, civic engagement, and leadership training.

In her keynote address, Johnson emphasized that "community isn't geography — it's relationships." Raised in Bakersfield by a single mother of four girls, Johnson said her mother instilled in her a deep commitment to service. She often reminded her daughters, "Never let a problem introduce itself without asking what opportunities it carries."

Johnson stressed that communities grow not by accident, but through intention and trust. She encouraged attendees to adopt a stewardship mindset: one that embraces ownership and a commitment to leaving the community better than they found it. Every role matters, she noted, and young people pay more attention to what we do than what we say. "Community doesn't just need participants," she said. "We need stewards, and it starts with you."

In Kern County, BGCKC operates 75 locations, positively impacting thousands of children each year. For more information, visit www.bgckc.org

Cooking Up Confidence



Kern County Supervisor Leticia Perez (center) takes part in a Charlie Cart cooking demonstration focused on early food education at Beale Memorial Library. PHOTOS COURTESY OF BIANKA PANTOJA

The Charlie Cart Project Comes to Kern County

Jessica Yanez, known on Instagram and TikTok as The Bakersfield Mom, loves cooking at home with her three-year-old son. That's why it was especially meaningful for them to share their passion with others by preparing a healthy meal at Beale Memorial Library through the Charlie Cart program. Part of a national food education initiative, Charlie Cart, a kitchen on wheels, was offered for six weeks locally through a collaboration between the Blue Zones Project of Bakersfield, the Kern County Library (KCL), and the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS).

Yanez explains that the Charlie Cart experience gives children the opportunity to learn new skills and gain independence in the kitchen, while also introducing them to healthy foods and vegetables they may not have tried before. She says, "This program gives children more confidence in the kitchen: not just with tools, but with food and nutrition. If you feed and nourish yourself better, it gives you a better life in general, and this helps give



Jeanelle Jones supervisor of Catering Services and Special Projects for the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

them that foundation."

KCSOS' supervisor of Catering Services and Special Projects, Jeanelle Jones, says they try to match a recipe and lesson plan to a story each week. "It is so much fun and rewarding to watch

kids see new fruits and veggies they may have never tried. It warms my heart to see the joy in their eyes when they see something new or learn something," Jones says.

When Yanez and her son arrived for their Charlie Cart experience, the children gathered for story time, enjoying a food-themed alphabet book before splitting into groups to contribute to the meal in age-appropriate ways. Dressed in aprons, chef hats, and gloves for sanitation, the children worked together to prepare a Chopped Greek Salad. "Each group had something that matched their skill set," she says. "For the younger kids, it was more of a sensory experience."

During a recent press conference for Charlie Cart, Karina Funez, Policy Supervisor for the Blue Zones Project of Bakersfield, says that according to their data, children in Bakersfield lack access to early food education and basic food skills. This program directly addresses this need by making it free and accessible, meeting families where they are in a safe, trusted public space.

She says, "This program is designed to give our youngest community members something incredibly important: the skills, confidence to build healthy relationships with food early in life. Blue Zones Project focuses on creating environments where the healthy choice is the easy choice."

This free, six-week program concluded in February, but Fahra Daredia, KCL's Marketing and Promotions Associate, wants to see these types of installations continue in Kern County. "In the future, we would love to see more programs with the Charlie Cart and the Library, especially with early learners, teens, adults, and seniors," she says. "Empowering our community with these skills early on helps invest in their future and teach them lifelong skills."

For more information, you can visit www.charliecart.org, www.bluezone-project.com, www.kerncountylibrary.org, and www.kern.org.



JOIN US!

AGES 2-18

NOW SERVING FREE SUPPER & SNACKS!



In partnership with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, the Kern County Library is offering a FREE meal, snack, and space to do homework for children ages 2-18.

SERVING SUPPER 3-5PM & SNACKS 5-6PM

SERVING LOCATIONS:

Arvin Branch Library

201 Campus Drive, Arvin
Tuesday - Friday

McFarland Branch Library

500 West Kern Ave, McFarland
Tuesday - Friday

Baker Branch Library

1400 Baker Street, Bakersfield
Tuesday - Friday

Northeast Branch Library

2671 Oswell St. Suite B, Bakersfield
Tuesday - Friday

Beale Memorial Library

701 Truxtun Ave, Bakersfield
Monday - Friday

Rathbun Branch Library

200 W. China Grade Loop, Bakersfield
Tuesday - Friday

Delano Branch Library

925 Tenth Ave, Delano
Wednesday - Friday

Southwest Branch Library

8301 Ming Ave, Bakersfield
Monday - Friday

Frazier Park Branch Library

3732 Park Drive, Frazier Park
Tuesday - Friday

Southwest Branch Library

8301 Ming Ave, Bakersfield
Monday - Friday

Holloway-Gonzales Branch Library

506 E Brundage Ln, Bakersfield
Tuesday - Friday

Taft Branch Library

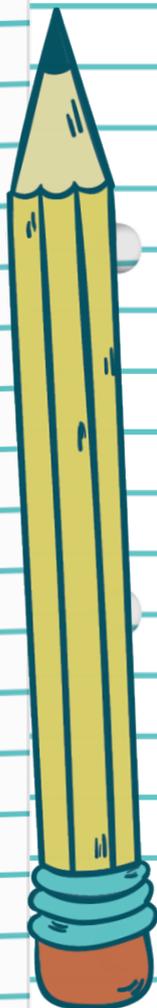
27 Cougar Ct, Taft
Monday - Wednesday

Lamont Branch Library

8304 Segrue Rd, Lamont
Tuesday - Friday

Wilson Branch Library

1901 Wilson Road, Bakersfield
Tuesday - Friday



Stay Connected 

follow us @kerncountylibrary
For more information, visit us at kernlibrary.org

This program is supported in whole or in part by funding provided by the State of California, administered by the California State Library.

Flour, Sugar, and Zero Motivation

A High Schooler's Masterclass in Avoiding Assignments



ILLUSTRATION BY COPILOT

I was a teacher before I was a mom. Therefore, I knew that I would “never” let my kids miss school for any reason other than serious illness. Or at least a fever and a good amount of snot.

Which is why, the first chance I got, I took my kids out of school for a two-week vacation in the middle of the school year.

It did not go well. And for all the reasons you might imagine. The kids got behind on their school work (surprise). They got sick (of course) and missed more school. And they came home with less than zero motivation.

My high schooler was the worst. She seemed to freeze at the thought of doing her work. My 4.0 child has... well, she probably doesn't want me to tell you her current grades. But I will say that if she pulls off straight Cs this semester, I'll be impressed.

I came home yesterday to find her in the kitchen, making cinnamon rolls.

Now, I love a cinnamon roll as much as the next person. Maybe even more. In fact, I may have eaten more than my share of said cinnamon rolls.

But the point is, she was supposed to be doing homework.

I try not to nag. There is only so much you can say to a kid who knows exactly what she needs to do.

But I did have to ask: “You're not working on homework?”

“No, Mom. It's ok. I have the whole day! There is plenty of time. I just really wanted cinnamon rolls. I'll do my work after.”

Which I get because I, too, used to bake when I just “really wanted” some yummy baked goods. That is what you do when you don't have a car: You bake your own treats at home.

I once made blueberry muffins and then when I was at the grocery store and my mom asked if we had any muffin mix left, I said that indeed we did because I did not make any muffins any time in the recent past even though I knew full well that the muffin tin was still dirty in the dishwasher because not only did I bake the last of the muffins but I also ate every single one of them and threw the box away underneath other trash and put the muffin pan in the dishwasher. Myself. That very morning.

In any case, how could I be mad at my own teenager when I myself was the prime guilty party when it came to baking sweets because I can't drive to the store myself to buy some?

So my daughter made the cinnamon rolls, we ate them together, and then she promptly took a nap. Because... well, you know.... all that baking.

She has now done no schoolwork since we got home. When you add on the two weeks of work she never did to begin with, you end up with... well, I won't disclose the exact amount, but it is closer to zero than I would like.

OK, it is zero.

This is not a kid who is going to fail. She has moments of lucidity where she panics about her grades.

I just wonder how she will pull it off.

March Into Healthy Eating With Pasta Primavera

MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH, the perfect time to enjoy meals that are both wholesome and full of flavor. Pasta becomes a balanced, feel-good option when paired with fresh, nutrient-rich ingredients. This light, colorful recipe is a delicious example of how simple ingredients can come together to create a nourishing meal fit for any day of the year.



Pasta Primavera

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 16 ounces fusilli pasta | 8 ounces cherry tomatoes, quartered |
| 3 tablespoons of olive oil | Salt |
| 1 small leek, thinly sliced, washed and drained | Freshly ground black pepper |
| 9 ounces asparagus, trimmed and halved | Optional for serving: 5 tablespoons grated parmesan and thyme |
| 11 ounces frozen peas, thawed | |

INSTRUCTIONS

For the pasta: Cook the fusilli in a large saucepan of salted, boiling water until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large sauté pan set over medium heat until hot. Add the leek and a pinch of salt and sweat for 5 to 6 minutes until softened.

Add the asparagus and peas and cover the pan with a lid. Cook for a further 3 to 4 minutes until the green vegetables are tender to

the point of a knife. Drain the fusilli, reserving 1 cup of the cooking liquid.

Add the fusilli to the vegetables along with the cherry tomatoes, some salt and pepper, and a splash of the reserved cooking water.

Cook for a further 2 minutes until the pasta looks glossy.

Divide between bowls, sprinkle with the parmesan and garnish with some thyme.

— Recipe courtesy of Lines+Angles

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Ages 2yrs-6yrs (non-potty trained welcome)
Snacks and Lunch Provided

(661) 665-7713
11300 Campus Park Dr
Bakersfield, CA 93311
www.trinitybakersfield.com
LIC # 153810005



March

Volunteer BIG Kern is happening on March 7! Visit www.givebigkern.org to sign up for volunteer opportunities!

MARCH 4

FREE Community Health Screening

FREE Community Health Screenings are offered to anyone 18 years & older; screening for blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and hemoglobin.

9 – 11 a.m.
661-632-5788
www.dignityhealth.org/

MARCH 6

Arts Council of Kern's First Friday ArtWalk

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

5 – 9 p.m.
661-324-9000
<https://kernarts.org/artwalk/>

MARCH 7

Volunteer BIG Kern Day

Volunteer Big Kern brings our community together for a one-day push to support local nonprofits and the missions they rely on volunteers to achieve. Register to volunteer today!

661-325-5346
info@kernfoundation.org
<https://www.givebigkern.org/p/vbk>

12th Annual Honor Run

Run to remember, honor, and support. The event brings together community, public safety professionals and families together for a day of fitness, remembrance, and unity. Register today!

7 a.m.
<https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Bakersfield/HonorRunKCSEBA>

Youth Color Run

Lace up your running shoes and get ready for some colorful fun! For ages 5-13. Pre-registration required by March 4!



MARCH 1



and local patients awaiting organ transplants in Kern County. Arrive early to claim your table!

7 p.m.
661-489-4430
www.facebook.com/jjslegacy

MARCH 2

JJ's Legacy Temblor Bingo Fundraiser

Grab your dabbers and rally your friends for a fun-filled night benefiting JJ's Legacy



9:30 a.m.
661-326-3866
www.bakersfieldcity.us/

MARCH 8



MARCH 10, 17 & 24

March Mini Makers Art Class

Young artists dive into joyful, hands-on art experiences that nurture imagination, confidence, and social-emotional growth. Sign up today.

3:30 - 5 p.m.
hello@theplayfulspacebakersfield.com
http://www.theplayfulspacebakersfield.com/



MARCH 14

Baskets, Bunnies & Blessings

Senator Shannon Grove & CityServe host Baskets, Bunnies & Blessings, a free event offering Easter baskets, treats, and bunny photos for foster, at-risk youth, and families in need.

11a.m. - 1 p.m.
City Serve
3201 F Street
Bakersfield
661-323-0433
<https://www.instagram.com/kernbridgesyouthhomes/>

MARCH 15

Easter Fun Run 5K

Reyes Running Series presents the 1st Annual Easter Fun Run! Choose the 5K or 2-mile walk, enjoy a family-friendly egg hunt with categories for all ages, and finish with tacos and aguas frescas for every participant.

8 a.m.
Yokuts Park
4200 Empire Dr

Bakersfield
<https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Bakersfield/EASTERHALFMARATHON>
5KBAKERSFIELD

MARCH 21

Cherry Acres Spring Festival

Celebrate spring with a fun day on the farm featuring food trucks, local shopping, sweet treats, games, and hands-on activities for all ages. Enjoy flowers, face painting, animal feeding, a slingshot range, and Easter Bunny photo ops for a full day of family fun.

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Cherry Acres
4011 Wegis Avenue
Bakersfield
cherryacresteam@gmail.com
https://www.instagram.com/cherry_acres/

MARCH 27

MLK Eggstravaganza

Hop on over for some fun! Easter Bunny, games, prizes, and resources for

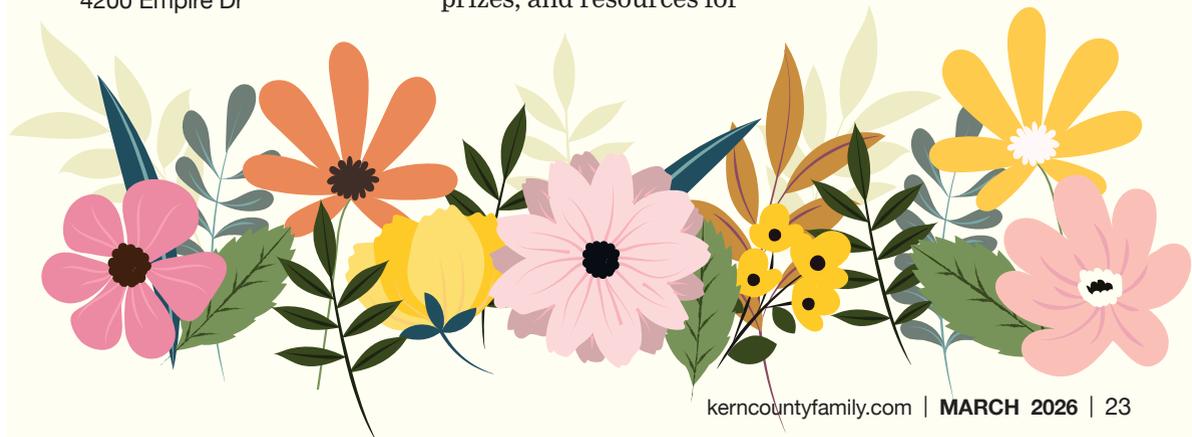
the whole family!
2 - 4 p.m.
MLK Community Center
1000 South Owens Street
Bakersfield
661-322-9874
www.bakersfieldcity.us/

MARCH 28 & APRIL 4

NOR Easter Egg Hunts

A FREE egg hunt for children ages 1-10 years old. Bring your Easter basket and enjoy a morning filled with excitement! Don't forget your camera for photo opportunities with the Easter Bunny!

10 a.m.
March 28: Riverview Community Park
401 Willow Dr, Bakersfield
April 4: Emerald Cove Community Park
4303 Patton Way, Bakersfield
661-392-2000
<https://www.norfun.org/easter-egg-hunt>



MARCH 11

Bakersfield Job Fest

Discover new career opportunities, make valuable connections, and more!

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

661-631-6069

<https://www.jobfestkern.com/home-jobfest>

MARCH 13

Kern Down Syndrome Network Parent & Me Support Group

Bring your little one for a supportive and friendly morning. This group is a safe space to connect, share, and build community with other parents who understand the journey.

10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

661-246-3200

<https://kerndsn.org/>

A Night for Bakersfield ARC

An Italian-inspired Spring evening, celebrating community, connection, and impact. This special event supports critical programs that provide stability, inclusion, and opportunity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

5 p.m.

661-834-2272

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

MARCH 14

Arts Council of Kern's Second Saturday

It's a fun and creative opportunity for artists, makers, and



Wind Wolves Preserve's Annual Spring Festival is happening March 21-22. Get ready for a beautiful day of outdoor family fun! PHOTO COURTESY WIND WOLVES PRESERVE

vendors to sell their work, meet the community, and even create live during the event.

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

661-324-9000

<https://kernarts.org/>



MARCH 14 – 15

Annual Collectors Showcase Antique Sale & Show

Sponsored by the Glass & China Collectors of Bakersfield. Featuring: glassware, pottery, vintage cloths, jewelry, lamps, clocks, primitives. \$6. per person, free parking.

10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

661-979-5638

MARCH 17



MARCH 15 – 21



MARCH 20



ACTIVITY CORNER ANSWERS

ACTIVITY CORNER: PAGES 29 & 31

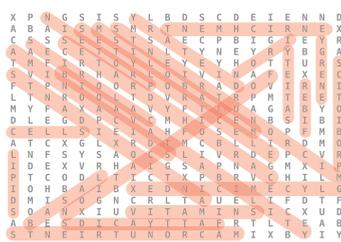
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Down

- Upside
- Rolliest
- Lacrosse
- Ability

Across

- Umbrella
- Inc.
- Icon
- Erne
- Sit
- Weather



WORD SEARCH SPONSORED BY:



Streets of Bakersfield Gala

A fun night of live music, silent and live auctions, dancing and delicious food from Luigi's! Theme of the night is Savannah, Georgia meets Kentucky Derby bring southern charm, class and style.

6 p.m.
orliesshoedrive@gmail.com
<https://www.orliesshoedrive.com/>

MARCH 21

Got the Dot Walk-a-Thon

Walk-a-Thon aims to raise awareness for the Got the Dot leadership program and increase Donor Registration to save lives.

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
 661-489-4430
<https://www.instagram.com/gotthedotclub/>

MARCH 21 – 22

11th Annual Spring Nature Festival- Wind Wolves Preserve

The 11th Annual Spring Nature Festival invites families to explore Wind Wolves Preserve through guided hikes, wildlife exhibits, and hands-on nature activities.

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
 661-858-1115
<https://wildlandsconservancy.org/preserves/windwolves/springnaturefestival>

MARCH 22

Bakersfield Youth Symphony Orchestra Spring Concert

Join BYSO at the BC Performing Arts Center Indoor Simonsen Theater for their Spring Concert! They will perform works by Sibelius, Vaughn Williams, Bunch and Dvorak, and more!

5 - 6 p.m.

bysomanager@gmail.com
bysorocks.org

MARCH 28



Bakersfield Donut Run

Run or walk and show your passion for donuts, get out there with your friends and family on our 5k timed or 2k non-timed courses and earn those delicious donuts!

8 a.m.
<https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Bakersfield/DonutRun>

2nd Annual Date Night Comedy

Storm Breakers is proud to present the 2nd Annual Date Night Comedy, a special fundraising evening designed for 150 couples to enjoy dinner, laughter, and fellowships, culminating in an exciting auction!

6 - 9 p.m.
 661-282-1616
<https://www.givebutter.com/c/2026dnc>

MARCH 31

2nd Annual Signs & Safari

Annual event celebrating Deaf History Month and National ASL Day! Enjoy all activities and exhibits in ASL with B-GLAD and Lion's Wilderness Camp for Deaf Children!

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 661-325-1063
https://www.instagram.com/ilckc_dhh/



Find more happenings at www.kerncountyfamily.com

ONGOING HAPPENINGS



SATURDAYS

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/

RiverLakes Farmers Market

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

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
www.instagram.com/riverlakes_farmers_market/

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.
 Through March 8
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/

SECOND & FOURTH SUNDAYS

Riverwalk Artisan Fair

Discover unique goods, delicious snacks, and a bustling community at this bi-weekly Sunday market.

8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
www.officialartisanfairs.com/

WEDNESDAYS

Walking Moai at The Park at River Walk

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6 p.m.
 Through March 18
www.bakersfield.bluezonesproject.com/events/

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www.homedepot.com/c/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/

FIRST & THIRD SATURDAYS

Tractor Supply Farmers Market: Rosedale Artisan Fair

On the first Saturday and the third Explore seasonal produce, handmade goods, and family-friendly fun.

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

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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

Parent Support Group Meeting: Wednesday, March 11th @ 6 pm.
To register, visit our website kernautism.org

Female Support Group Gathering Sunday, March 19th @ 6 pm.
To register, please contact our office for details.

Father's Virtual Group Meeting: Saturday, March 21st @ 2:30 pm.
via Zoom Register via www.kernautism.org

Autism Family Festival and Car Parade & the Easter Bunny @ Beach Park.
March 28th, 10am to 1 pm. Register @ kernautism.org

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

EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM:

- Delayed language development
- Repetitive language
- Little or no eye contact
- Repetitive mannerisms
- Inflexible routines or rituals
- Preoccupation with object parts
- Little interest in friendships

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Worship Guide

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The Miracle in the Ordinary

Ordinary days are still miraculous, and God is still working. Even when nothing flashy seems to be happening. We wake up, follow familiar routines, handle small responsibilities, and call it "just another day." But hidden inside those hours is grace doing quiet work. Breath is sustained. Strength is given. Patience is stretched. Mercy resets itself each morning without being asked. God doesn't limit Himself to mountaintop moments. He moves in the mundane: in conversations that soften hearts, in delays that protect us, in routines that keep us grounded. While we're waiting for signs or breakthroughs, He's shaping character, healing wounds we don't talk about, and aligning things we can't yet see. Silence doesn't mean absence. Stillness doesn't mean inactivity. Ordinary days are where faith is practiced, not just proclaimed. They're where obedience looks like showing up, loving people imperfectly, choosing kindness again, and trusting God without constant reassurance. Miracles aren't always loud. Sometimes they look like peace instead of panic, endurance instead of escape, or hope that quietly refuses to disappear. If today feels uneventful, that doesn't mean it's empty. God is still present, still intentional, still writing the story. Ordinary days are proof that He isn't done yet.

— By Jon Engen



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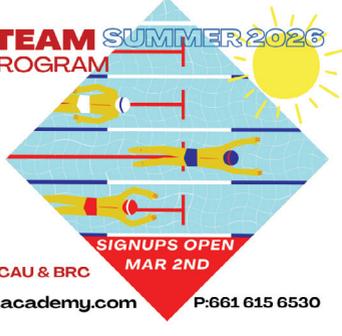
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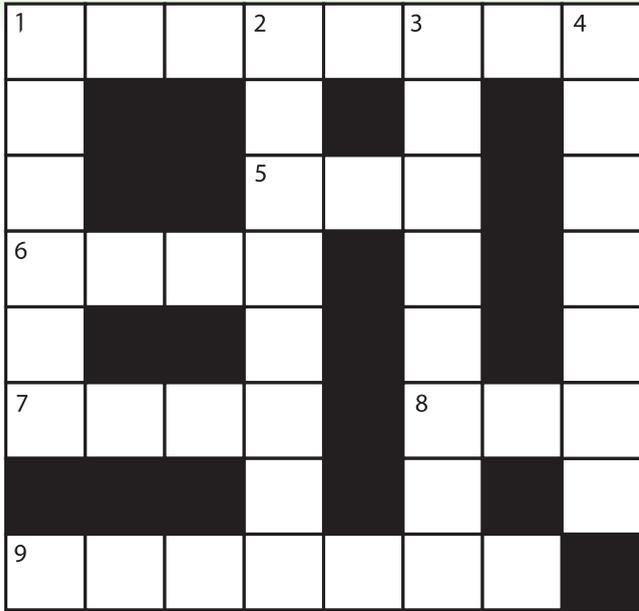
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MARCH ACTIVITY CORNER

PUZZLE ANSWERS
PAGE 24

Crossword



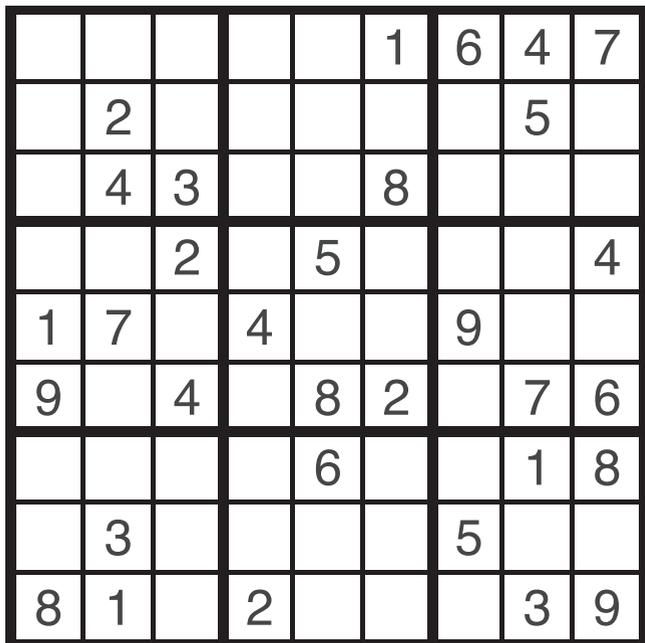
ACROSS

1. Rainy day tool
5. Incorporated
6. Widely admired
7. A sea eagle
8. Opposite of stand
9. State of atmosphere

DOWN

1. Positive notion
2. Most rain
3. Sport with netted stick
4. Means or skill

Sudoku



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



DID YOU KNOW?

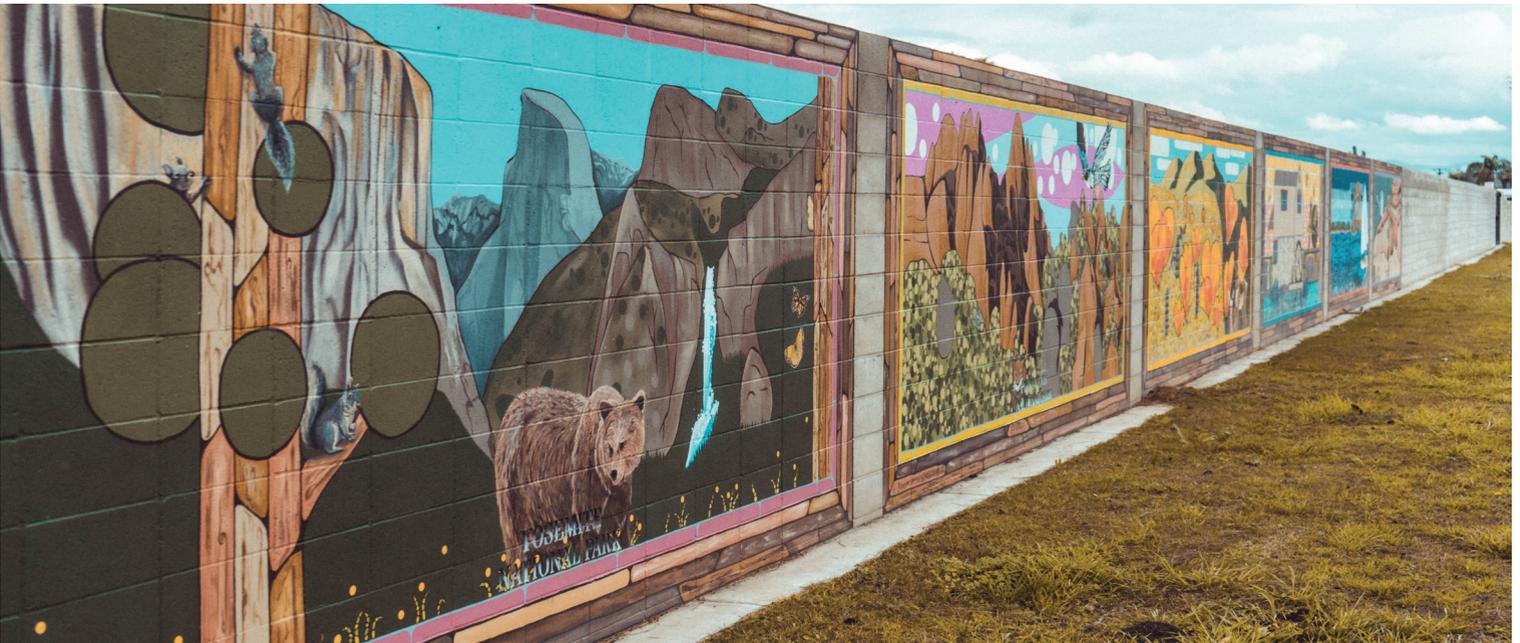


Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Leprechauns hide their gold in a pot at the end of a rainbow because the rainbow keeps moving — making the treasure almost impossible to find!



SEE NINE PARKS IN ONE MURAL



Wendy Johnson's murals highlight Mono Basin, Yosemite, Pinnacles, Mill Creek City Park, Morro Bay, and Red Rock Canyon. PHOTO BY SEAN NAVEJAS

Artist Wendy Johnson and her Art with HeART team captured the attention of the Arts in California Parks program, earning the opportunity to design murals selected by public input. Over two years, from concept to completion, the project was funded by a State Parks grant submitted by the Bakersfield Parks & Recreation Department.

In partnership with the City of Bakersfield and the Arts Council of Kern, six community events celebrated national, state, and local parks. The murals highlight the Sacramento State Capitol, Mono Basin, Yosemite, Pinnacles, Mill Creek City Park, Morro Bay, and Red Rock Canyon. Each scene features indigenous plants, wildlife, and creatures that fly, crawl, and slither, bringing these popular California

WHERE TO SEE IT

Saunders Park
3300 Palm Street
Bakersfield

the Arts in California Parks grant. Giving back to my city is part of my soul. When I learned I would lead all six community events, I knew I would make them memorable for the families who visited." Visit they did! and still do!

Saunders Park was chosen as a time-honored gathering place. The neighboring firehouse participated over the months enthusiastically, alongside hundreds of residents, media, and

landscapes vividly to life.

Johnson reflects, "It was an honor to have my mural design approved through

elected officials. The City of Bakersfield worked diligently alongside the partners to bring notable improvements to the park, among them, a new path, refreshed grass, new walls and shade trees.

The project extended beyond the featured murals. The pavilion has fresh teal-painted walls and 15 miniature murals painted with the help of neighbors, strengthening the park's sense of shared responsibility and unity.

Asked to summarize the whole project, Johnson said, "I'm forever grateful to those who saw my worth and trusted my capacity to help make this project come to life. It will continue to draw attention to the beauty that is revered by those who protect and preserve the natural beauty of California. "

MARCH ACTIVITY CORNER

PUZZLE ANSWERS
PAGE 24

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