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August 12, 2022

Sexual abuse lawsuit filed against Los Banos Unified School District, Merced County Office of Education

Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard law firm claims two alleged victims of former Los Banos teachers Gary Bettencourt and Dusty Norris seek to hold the enablers of their predators accountable for their sexual abuse.

Bettencourt currently serving an eight-year, four-month sentence; Norris' case is pending

Los Banos, CA – On July 21, 2022, the law firm of Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard filed a sexual abuse lawsuit in Merced County Superior Court alleging that former Los Banos High School teachers, Gary Bettencourt and Dusty Norris, sexually abused two young students. (please place complaint, here)

Identified as Jane Doe 1 in the lawsuit, the complaint alleges that Norris abused her during the 2004-2005 school year. At the time Norris was employed

by the Merced County of Education (MCOE) as an Regional Occupational Program (ROP) teacher at Los Banos High School. He is also a former Los Banos Police Officer.

The lawsuit also identifies Jane Doe 2 as a victim of both Norris and Bettencourt. Norris is still awaiting trial on charges that he allegedly sexually abused Jane Doe 1 and Jane Doe 2 while he was an ROP instructor. The abuse occurred with touching of Jane Doe 1 in class, and while driving her to job sites.

Former Los Banos and Pacheco High School drama and English teacher Bettencourt entered a no contest plea in 2016 to sexually abusing Jane Doe 2 along with two other students. He was sentenced to eight years, four months in prison.

“Bettencourt started at Los Banos High and molested a victim there, and then was transferred to Pacheco High

See Abuse p.2

Mayor Faria doesn't file, Llanez only candidate for Los Banos mayor, so far, filing extended until Wednesday

Martinez, challenger file for school board Trustee Area 7; three other trustees, Councilman Jones, city clerk get free ride to re-election; filing for city treasurer also extended

By Allen D. Payton

Los Banos Mayor Tom Faria will not run for re-election, this year. According to



Mayor Tom Faria

the list of candidates dated August 12, 2022, at 5:41 p.m. on the Merced County Elections office website (see page 12), he did not pull or file nomination papers that were due by 5:00 p.m., yesterday. Only one candidate did, businessman Paul Llanez. The filing period

has now been extended by five calendar days until next Wednesday, August 17 at 5:00 p.m.

When reached for comment about the race Llanez said, “I’m just gearing up for campaign season. I don’t know who my opponent will be. Either way I’m going to give it all I’ve got.”

He is the president and CEO for a statewide company that provides emergency training, mainly active shooter training. A majority of their clients are school districts, he shared.

In addition, District 2 Councilman Refugio LLamas filed his papers on Friday and will face one challenger, teacher Doug Begonia (the son, not the father) who also filed, as previously reported.

“I still think I have things that I can contribute and things that still need to be done,” he said when reached for comment on Thursday morning, Aug. 11.

“Los Banos is at a crossroads,” LLamas

See Mayor p.2

Chamber of Commerce celebrates local crop during 10th Annual Los Banos Tomato Festival in downtown

Sponsored by Sutter Health
Article and photos by Andy English

The annual Los Banos Tomato Festival is the main annual event that celebrates the local tomato harvest. Tomatoes are a fruit that is one of the most famous local cash crops that gets exported to our

global communities as the base ingredients for internationally well-known brands of ketchup, pizza sauce, and tomato paste for example. This year Michelle Sandoval, executive director of the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce (COC), had a particularly challenging job of combining the



Social Economic Workers from the 4Life booth with Tommy, the official LB Tomato Festival mascot.

themed attractions.

The first booth I visited was the Ingomar Packing Company booth where a senior employee and HR manager displayed their large pouches of tomato paste that get processed into other previously

mentioned tomato-based products around the world. They are also hiring key employees for this year’s tomato season. The next booth was the LB Power Volleyball club with a raffle of Sandoval Wood Creations and Savannah Chuvien’s beautiful renditions of Pokeman artwork

along with an invitation to their upcoming “Side Out” Carnival at Pacheco Park on August 27th that will have even more local vendor booths to support their cause. Next was the Los Banos High School Marching Band’s fried green tomatoes

booth, ably coordinated by director Kate Gaines and helpers to deliver a

panko-encrusted sliced green tomato, deep fried to perfection and reminiscent of the popular southern state cuisine of Louisiana.

On the same food theme was the Smokin’ Chris

See Tomato p.3



Correction: Former Merced County Sheriff Mark Pazin faces Fresno Councilwoman Esmerelda Soria in Assembly District 27 race

By Allen D. Payton

Third time is a charm. Our apologies. In the correction article about the race for State Assembly published in the July 29th issue of the Enterprise, we had the correct candidates and the correct Assembly District in the article but had it wrong in the headline. They’re running in District 27 not 22. In the future we will strive and work harder to get it right the first time.

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Abuse from p.1 School,” attorney Lauren Cerri said. “That’s where he and his girlfriend molested another victim for which they were convicted.”

According to an ABC30 news report at the time of their arrest at their Turlock home on February 3, 2016, Bettencourt was 40 years old and his girlfriend, Devyn Egan was 22 years old.

“There are three victims of Bettencourt, one back in 2004. Then there’s Jane Doe 2 who is a party to this lawsuit,” Cerri explained. “There’s a third, let’s call her Jane Doe 3, who was the victim at Pacheco High. But she is not part of this lawsuit. He was convicted for all three.” (See related article)

“Bettencourt should have never made it to Pacheco High School,” the attorney stated. “Bells and whistles should have been going off. There were rumors that students knew about it. They knew or should have known that this guy shouldn’t have been teaching high school students as far back as 2004.”

In late 2017, attorneys for Jane Doe

1 and Jane Doe 2 withdrew a lawsuit against the Los Banos Unified School District due to an adverse California State Supreme Court ruling. The Court ruled that victims of sexual abuse prior to 2008, such as Doe 1 and 2, were required to provide school districts notice that they were going to file a lawsuit within six months of the date they were last abused.

The law was changed in 2020 with the passage of Assembly Bill 218. It did away with the claim requirement and allowed victims, no matter when they were abused, three years to bring a lawsuit. The three years expires Dec. 31, 2022.

“The 2017 Supreme Court ruling re-victimized a countless number of sexual abuse victims by holding young victims to an unjust six-month notice requirement,” Cerri said. “Even though the state legislature immediately tried to clarify the law, school districts continued to enforce a six-month claim filing procedure until the passage of AB 218 explicitly eliminated all legal loopholes for claims against public institutions.”

The alleged victims are seeking

monetary damages.

“But the purpose of the lawsuit is to hold the government agencies accountable and protects future victims, so it doesn’t happen, again,” their attorney stated. “The school district failed these students and enabled these predators by turning a blind eye.”

When Bettencourt was sentenced in 2016, attorney Robert Allard stated, “multiple warning signs or ‘red flags’ were presented but district employees either ignored them or were not sufficiently trained to identify them. It is only when this district is forced to accept full responsibility for its actions, or more appropriately inactions, that other school districts across our country will take the steps to ensure that this never happens again to another student.”

“No hearing date for the lawsuit has been set. Following discovery, a trial will be set,” Cerri explained.

Norris’ criminal case for his alleged abuse of both Jane Doe’s 1 and 2 is still pending and has an upcoming preliminary hearing.

When reached for comment LBUSD Superintendent Dr. Mark Marshall responded, “Los Banos Unified School District (LBUSD) is in receipt of a complaint alleging that former students were subjected to sexual abuse from 2005-2007 by a District employee and a school resource officer, employed by the Los Banos Police Department. The employee who worked for the District left District employment in 2016. The District is currently in the process of reviewing the

lawsuit, but due to the nature of the allegations, LBUSD is unable to provide any additional information at this time.”

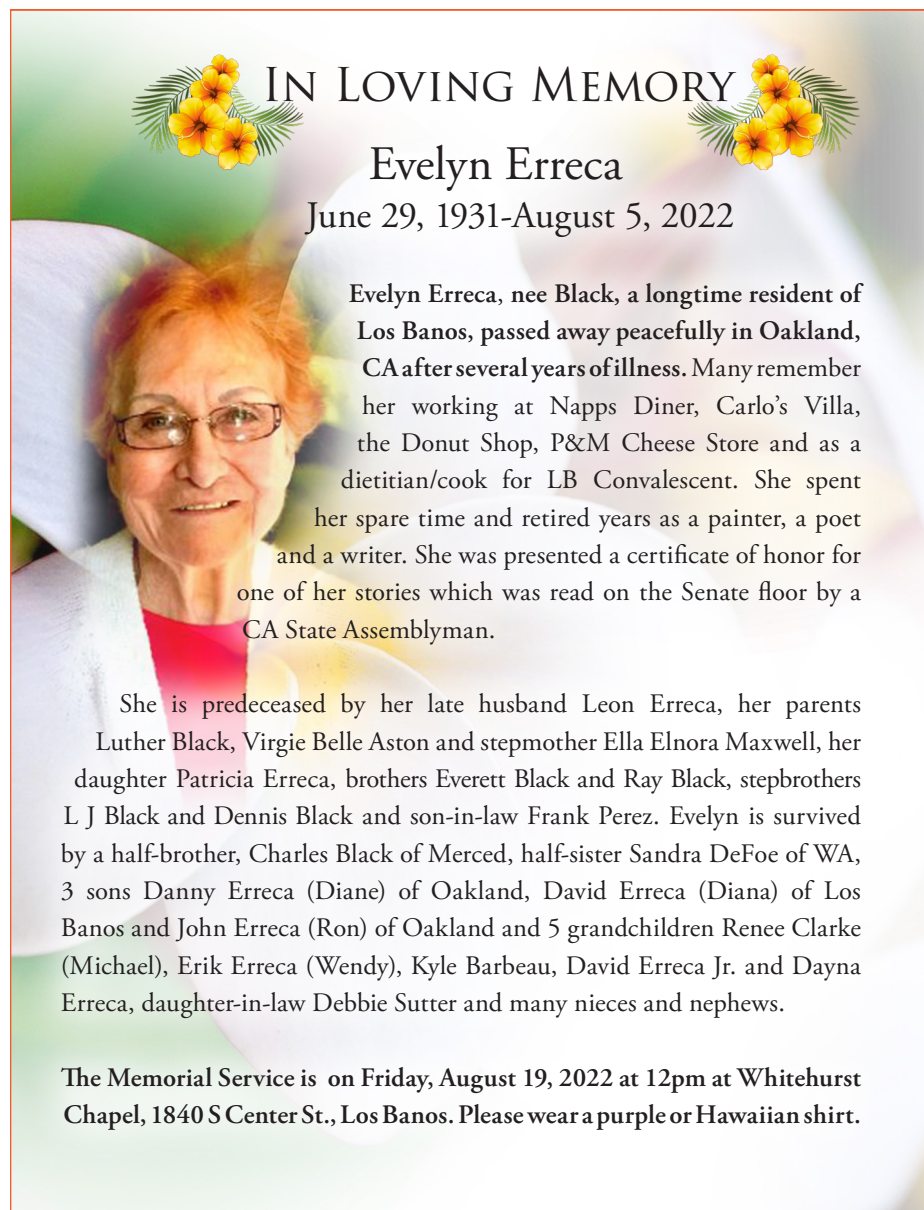
Merced County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Steve Tietjen responded with, “The safety of our students and staff are our highest priority. Los Banos Unified School District and Merced County Office of Education have fully cooperated with the law enforcement investigation. As this is pending litigation, we have no further comment.”

The attorneys for Jane Doe’s 1 and 2 are seeking help from those with information on the case. Please contact the law firm at 408-289-1417.

About Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard

The sexual abuse legal team at Corsiglia, McMahon & Allard has a national reputation and proven record of helping survivors and their families recover from childhood sexual abuse. The firm’s \$65 million jury verdict in a sexual abuse case against a public school is believed to be the largest single plaintiff verdict ever in California and the U.S. In May 2022, the law firm obtained a \$10 million jury verdict for the 2003 sexual abuse of a then-high school tennis player abused by his coach. And earlier this year, the firm secured \$7.5 million for five men sexually abused by their teacher in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s.

Allen D. Payton contributed to this report.



IN LOVING MEMORY

Evelyn Erreca
June 29, 1931-August 5, 2022

Evelyn Erreca, nee Black, a longtime resident of Los Banos, passed away peacefully in Oakland, CA after several years of illness. Many remember her working at Napps Diner, Carlo’s Villa, the Donut Shop, P&M Cheese Store and as a dietitian/cook for LB Convalescent. She spent her spare time and retired years as a painter, a poet and a writer. She was presented a certificate of honor for one of her stories which was read on the Senate floor by a CA State Assemblyman.

She is predeceased by her late husband Leon Erreca, her parents Luther Black, Virgie Belle Aston and stepmother Ella Elnora Maxwell, her daughter Patricia Erreca, brothers Everett Black and Ray Black, stepbrothers L J Black and Dennis Black and son-in-law Frank Perez. Evelyn is survived by a half-brother, Charles Black of Merced, half-sister Sandra DeFoe of WA, 3 sons Danny Erreca (Diane) of Oakland, David Erreca (Diana) of Los Banos and John Erreca (Ron) of Oakland and 5 grandchildren Renee Clarke (Michael), Erik Erreca (Wendy), Kyle Barbeau, David Erreca Jr. and Dayna Erreca, daughter-in-law Debbie Sutter and many nieces and nephews.

The Memorial Service is on Friday, August 19, 2022 at 12pm at Whitehurst Chapel, 1840 S Center St., Los Banos. Please wear a purple or Hawaiian shirt.

Mayor from p.1 added before having to cut the conversation short as he had to return to work at his new job.

Incumbent City Clerk Lucy Mallonee was the only candidate to file in her race, but no one had yet to file to run for city treasurer as of Friday at 5:00 p.m. So, the filing deadline to run for that position was also extended by five days.

There was speculation whether or not Faria would seek re-election since he hadn’t yet pulled papers and a for sale sign was seen in his yard on Thursday morning, August 11, 2022. Faria has yet to respond to questions if he is moving out of the city now that he retired from teaching, this year. (See related article at losbanosenterprise.com)

Area 7 Only Race in School Board Elections

In the Los Banos school board elections, three trustees, Gene Lieb in Area 1, Marlene Smith in Area 3 and Anthony Perreira in Area 5 face no challengers. But in Area 7, both incumbent trustee and current Board President Ray Martinez and challenger Dayna Valadao, a retired teacher, filed their nomination papers to run in time for Friday’s deadline.

Faria, Tomas Can’t File During Extension Period

However, there has been some

confusion about the filing deadlines and to whom they apply, and a belief expressed by some residents that Faria could still file during the extension period.

Mallonee was asked if incumbents had only until Friday at 5:00 p.m. to file and if they didn’t file by then that’s it for them and that the deadline is extended five more days only for other candidates to file by Wednesday, August 17 at 5:00 p.m. She directed this reporter to page 13 of the Merced County Candidate Handbook & Resource Guide.

There it reads: “If an incumbent, eligible to be elected, fails to file a Declaration of Candidacy by the close of business on the 88th day prior to Election Day, any person, other than the person who was the incumbent on the 88th day, may file a Declaration of Candidacy not later than the close of business on the 83rd day.”

The 88th day prior to Election Day on November 8 was yesterday, Friday, Aug. 12. The 83rd day before the election is next Wednesday, Aug. 17.

So, that means neither Faria nor City Treasurer Kim Tomas can file during the extension period and seek re-election. Only other candidates for those positions can file by the August 17th deadline.

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Los Banos Power Volleyball club to host Side Out Carnival August 27

Come dressed to impress cosplay and costume - it's a family fun day!

Listen to music, see our local vendors, watch the dances and eat good food. **Pacheco Park, 903 E. Pacheco Blvd., Los Banos 9 AM – 4 PM**

Free Event

Talent Show - come sign up and share with the community your special talent. Ages 7-10, 11-14, and 15 and up with awards at the end of the show given out at 3pm show starts at 1:30pm.

Free Family Field Day Events

Tug of War: Gather your crew, family or friends and see who can out pull the other in a game of Tug of War

Potato Sack Race: That's right. Grab a bag of potatoes and hop on down the line the fastest

3-Legged Race: Grab a buddy and try to work as one.



Relay Race: Make a mad dash down the line, tag your friend who will balance

their egg and run as fast as they can, but do not drop it or you will have to start

over. Once to the other side your friends will race across the way, wheelbarrow-style to finish the race.

Sponge Toss: That's right. We will fill sponges and toss it to the other side where your teammates will fill a cup and rush it back to be tossed again.

Fun Zone

Bring the little ones and buy an unlimited bounce house and Obstacle course bracelet and play in the Fun Zone all day for \$25 from PJ Mascots and Sandoval Wood Creations.

Motorcycle Show

Check out the Motorcycle Show and see all the amazing motorcycles, cruisers and sports bikes alike. One will win Best in Show – so, hang around to see which motorcycle is chosen.

Come and see all the cosplay outfits and costume, and even dress up yourself and have a good time!

Tomato from p.1 BBQ stand with the very young pit boss Christopher Mendoza and team delivering a Texas style tri-tip slice encrusted with beautiful smoke rings that was so tender that it fell apart in the mouth. Further discussion determined that his 'smoker' mentor was Councilman Ken Lambert at Biggin's Texas BBQ in Los Banos so we can only look forward to great cuisine from Ken's 'student' moving forward. To clear the palate was a southern style banana pudding which makes fruit yoghurt seem boring by comparison.

On the other side of the street were some local Social Economic Networkers (SEN) from 4Life health products who were displaying their fountain of youth supplements and creams while their little girl was also quickly selling her beautiful hand-made bead bracelets.

Finally in the afternoon, I



The best raffle prize from the best tomato-themed decorated booth by the KW Property Team.

visited the KW Property Team's beautifully tomato-themed realtor's booth with an extravagant raffle prize of a basket of gourmet tomato-based and Mediterranean food items. As I filled out the raffle ticket, a member of the Los Banos COC came

up and told them they had won the best tomato-themed decorated booth with some very generous COC prizes. Such a beautiful ending to such a traditional event!

I look forward to an even more successful and traditional Tomato Festival next year.



Naomi Townsend
Los Banos Realtor® DRE 01828933

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Welcome Back to School Tigers & Panthers!!!



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Kate Gaines, director of the LB High School Marching Band, holding the fried green tomatoes and sauce.

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National Night Out 2022 – Los Banos continues safe, annual tradition

By Andy “Panchito” English,
Community Contributor

National Night Out (NNO) is a nationwide community event that has been held in the early evening on the first Tuesday in August at local communities across the U.S. since 1984. NNO is a well-organized “annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie”. To that end, NNO has been a long-standing tradition in Los Banos and the Los Banos Police Department teams up with local businesses and organizations to provide the local population a fun night out. This Los Banos ‘party’ is held at the confluence of the

streets near city hall and the police department where the festivities begin with a locally popular band performing and continue with a food truck throwdown and various side activities on both streets. Finally, the event culminates with a free raffle of high-value brand-new prizes donated by local businesses.

This was my third NNO in Los Banos and at the last two annual events I have helped community activist and State Farm Insurance agent, Joe Gutierrez stage manage the bands. This year I had the privilege to cover all the key events for our community newspaper.

The festivities started with Joe announcing the very popular



Community gathered for Los Banos National Night Out 2022 on 5th and J Streets.
Photos by Andy English

regional band he sponsored, Exito Norteño, a danceable style of Mexican music loved in Los Banos. Juan Mendoza and his very tight, quartet band consisting of

guitar, bass, drums, and of course, an accordion played a twenty-five-minute set until a break for the first raffle. The band recently added the very capable Michael from Los Banos to play bass.

The raffle prizes were brought out by the Los Banos Police Explorers and set up on a table adjacent to the band stage. The initial prizes ranged from children’s colorful backpacks, high-end travel cold mugs and Apple tablets. Of note of personal emotion here were local children whose parents couldn’t afford such relative luxuries and showing extreme happiness with receiving their prizes, since some of their families are struggling with the rising costs of housing, food and energy.

The band returned to play another longer set as people started dancing in the crowd. Those in attendance were also enjoying visiting the various community sponsored booths like the Los Banos Chamber of Commerce, the Los Banos Police and Fire Departments, the Merced County Sheriff’s Department, and many other contributing organizations. Others were visiting the side shows of bull riding, tug-of-war and various fun games provided by local school and other organizations. Still others were visiting the myriad of regional taco trucks lined up to serve their community donated, one dollar street tacos with such eclectic flavors like seasoned and grilled asada, chorizo, and many other flavorful meats mixed with fresh cilantro, **See Night Out p.5**

Raymond Artadi Talbott

Los Banos native, lifelong sheepman

April 20, 1938 - August 11, 2022

Ray passed away at home in Los Banos surrounded by family on August 11th, 2022. He was 84 years old. Born in Los Banos, California in 1938 to Ramon and Elena Talbott, he was the youngest of their two boys. Ray attended Los Banos Elementary followed by Los Banos High School. After losing his father his senior year, Ray attended the University of California Davis for two years, before returning to Los Banos to work alongside his mother and brother James (Jim) to run Talbott Sheep Co. Ray was a sheepman all his life. He served on the board of many industry associations and was typically the quietest man in the room, but when he did speak, everyone paid attention.

Ray met Teresa Iribarren at the Reno Basque Picnic in 1959. The two were married in 1965. Together they had two girls, Michelle and Andrée. He was so proud of the strong women that they are. Ray and Terry ran Talbott Sheep Co. together for many years. He often clarified that they wouldn’t still have the business if it wasn’t for Terry.

Ray and Terry have four grandchildren. He truly loved to watch each of them grow up and was very proud to see the successful young adults they’ve all become. He was a friend to many, and quick to listen to your story and step into your shoes. Ray was very proud of his family history and Basque Culture. He was heavily impacted by the stories of his parents’ upbringing and their dedication to working hard and creating a family and life they were proud of. He carried that drive, grace and wisdom with him all his life.

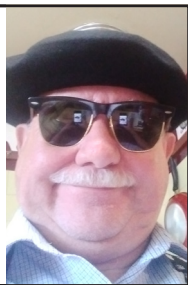
Ray was preceded in death by his mother and father, Elena Celayeta Talbott and Ramon Artadi Talbott; and his brother, James Artadi Talbott. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Teresa (Terry) Iribarren Talbott; his daughters, Michelle Artadi (Darrell) DiGiovanni and Andrée Artadi Soares; his four grandchildren, Mia and Gianna Artadi Digiovanni and Bianca Artadi and Tristan Talbott Soares; and many nieces and nephews.

Ray’s family would like to thank its team of caregivers for their compassionate care for Ray and Terry over the last couple years. Memorial contributions can be made to The Los Banos Basque Club, P.O. Box 123 Los Banos, CA 93635; Our Lady of Fatima School Memorial Fund, 1625 Center Ave, Los Banos, CA 93635; or California Wool Growers Association Memorial Fund 25 Cadillac Drive, Suite 214, Sacramento, CA 95825.

Visitation will be from 5-7 pm on Tuesday, August 16 at Whitehurst Funeral Chapel, 1840 S. Center Avenue, Los Banos, CA 93635 followed by recitation of the Rosary at 7 p.m. Funeral Mass will be conducted at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 17 at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, 1621 Center Avenue, Los Banos, CA 93635. Interment will follow at Los Banos Cemetery.



The Restaurant Whisperer
Andy English



Led by 2nd generation owner of long-time restaurateur

The Black Bear Diner (BBD) is a great and historical place to start our culinary journey in Los Banos since it has been a destination for decades of well-known diners at this same location, ranging from Sambos and Seasons up until the mid-eighties. Sacramento restaurateur Bob Rose, who was educated in accounting and business, helped guide the early growth of Sambo's restaurants in the mid-sixties. In the early seventies he was noticed and hired by Carrow's restaurants to grow their business from a few Santa Barbara area locations to about five hundred national restaurants. Finally in the late eighties he had an opportunity to start his own business with his wife Stella in the Central Valley and chose Los Banos, the geographic center of California, for his strategic initial location. The first all-day breakfast, lunch, and dinner-themed Ryan's Place, aptly named after his son Ryan, opened in 1986. I first frequented Ryan's Place upon moving to Los Banos from the Bay Area in 1989 for lower cost housing. I was astounded by the number and variety of the breakfast, lunch and dinner items on the menu. I had started commuting to

From Sambo's to Seasons to Ryan's Place, Black Bear Diner serves broad menu at west entrance to city

the Bay Area to my previous job and was always greeted by Bob or more usually Dave Alvarez when I arrived back in town after the long commute to join my wife and our new baby for early dinner, that was served almost any time after four in the afternoon at Ryan's. In those days there was a mascot chef named Ry-Guy and a number of my favorite, immigrant inspired dishes on the menu like pork chops with Portuguese beans and linguica served by my favorite servers Anna Silva and Javier (Javi) Arriola.



Server 'Bella Bear' with 'Biscuit Bear' mascot at the counter of the LB Black Bear Diner.

There was also my favorite signature nutritional sandwich named the Pacheco Pass, to help the Bay Area commuters safely to and from the Bay Area on state route 152 so they wouldn't starve when there was an accident delay on the commute.

Of particular note was when Bob was there, and at his table adjacent to the front door, there was usually his little daughter Amy with long braided pigtails, running around the restaurant with great energy. In 2012 Bob converted all of his multi-location and family-owned Ryan's restaurants to the Black Bear Diner format, a franchise that originally started in Mt. Shasta in Northern California in 1995. With Bob's help and strategic locations, BBD expanded into the Central Valley with his family-owned locations.

The Los Banos BBD was Bob's and Amy's favorite location and where Amy inspired the signature and healthy avocado toast breakfast dish with two eggs and fresh fruit. The BBD immediately became very popular with Bob's value-driven portions of fresh cooked-to-order food and no compromise on the quality or service. Local families lined-up to wait for a booth or a table along with commuters and travelers who stopped at this still-first and last stop in town for a delicious meal.

Fast-forward to today and you will still see Dave as manager, Javi, Tiffini and Adriana as loyal and experienced servers exhibiting the same energy as Amy does, along with the mascot Biscuit Bear and the more modern version of a Wurlitzer juke box belting out rock and roll favorites. Amy grew into her father's business and took over the seven or so remaining Ryan's

and Black Bears and now is a very busy entrepreneur with a successful restaurant of her own.

The Pacheco Pass sandwich is



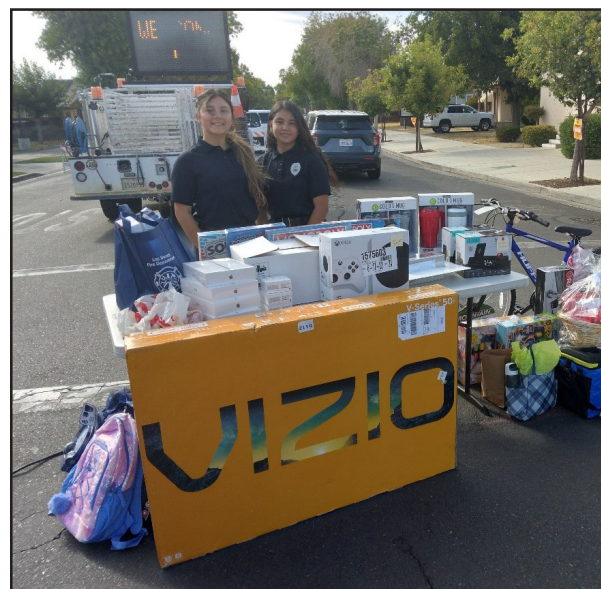
Sammy, the executive cook and chef exhibiting that he's 'bringing home the bacon'.

still on the 'secret' menu and locals, commuters and travelers alike still frequent this popular location. For me, since I am on healthier and more restricted diets of fresh cooked-to-order food, BBD is one of the only restaurants in town that will accommodate my doctor-ordered dietary requirements. But I also know they serve some of the best old-fashioned pot roast, prime rib and tri-tip meals in town. And for adult 'bears' with smaller appetites, the 'little less' options will still ensure you don't go home a hungry bear along with the kid's menu also has great little bear options (I wish I could have!)

The LB Black Bear Diner is located in the San Louis Plaza at 955 W. Pacheco Blvd. Enjoy!

Night Out from p.4 onions, tomato salsa and other secret seasonings. My favorite of the day was the al pastor style pork tacos on two soft

grilled corn tortillas and served with freshly sliced radish and lemon by Nineve from JJ Tacos & Mariscos taco truck from Los Banos.



Police Explorers Gabby Huerta and Laura Lomeli with raffle prizes donated by generous sponsors.

Also, in the background, walking around the event and intermingling with the crowd, were the local members of the police, fire and sheriff's departments explaining how their community work impacts and helps the local residents. Of particular note was the presence of the always friendly police department's code enforcement officers

and their commander. These are the guys that diplomatically keep our neighborhoods clear of abandoned cars, barking dogs, noisy neighbors, etc. so we can sleep comfortably at night.

After the band's second set, the last raffle had even more luxury prizes from local generous sponsors ranging from X-boxes, bicycles, and ultimately a large screen high-definition television for example. During this night, as annually, 'the meek inherited the earth' thanks to Police Chief Gary Brizee, Police Services Manager Brenda



Commander Ray Reyna with Code Enforcement Officers Evelyn Rosas and Jen Hogan

Geary, all other associated officers, organizations, and various sponsors for their continual loyal dedication to one of the most important community events in Los Banos. PS, great thanks for the ice-cold water!

Los Banos residents can now receive cleaner electricity for less

By *Sandra Benetti, Associate Manager of Community Relations, Peninsula Clean Energy*

All electricity customers in the city of Los Banos now have the choice to receive cleaner power at lower rates without having to sign up or install solar panels on their roofs. As of April, this year, Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE) began delivering greener electricity to Los Banos at a 5% savings compared to the electricity mix provided by PG&E.

Peninsula Clean Energy is a joint

powers authority comprised of the City of Los Banos and all 20 cities within San Mateo County. The governing board of 23 from the jurisdictions that all took action to join PCE includes one representative per city and two supervisors from San Mateo County

Peninsula Clean Energy, which has been the official electricity provider for San Mateo County since 2016, has already saved its customers there approximately \$104 million. At a time when PG&E has raised its electricity



The Wright Solar Park on Billy Wright Road southwest of Los Banos.

rates across the state, the discount that customers will receive from the power generated by PCE could not have come at a better time.

In October 2020, the Los Banos City Council voted to join Peninsula Clean Energy to not just bring cleaner and less expensive electricity but also allow Los Banos residents and businesses to enjoy a wide range of rebates, incentives, and other programs to help customers save even more on electric appliances, electric vehicles and emergency backup power.

Here's how it works:

Peninsula Clean Energy is a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) public agency. As a CCA, PCE provides electricity generation, which is the source of your power. One source is the Wright 200-megawatt solar power project just southwest of Los Banos on Billy Wright Road. This local solar farm

its rates for electricity delivery service, which all customers pay whether they belong to a CCA or not. The good news is that PCE customers' electricity generation rates are 5% less than if they purchased it from PG&E.

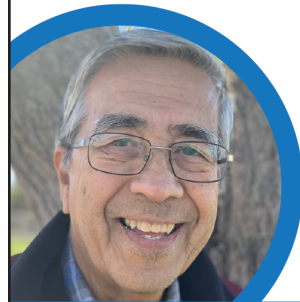
Energy customers don't need to do anything to become a PCE customer because enrollment is automatic. Starting in April, Los Banos customers were enrolled in PCE's default service plan, ECOplus. The average household enjoys a few dollars of savings on their monthly energy bill compared to what they would otherwise pay, while receiving cleaner power.

Customers also have the choice to opt out of PCE services and continue purchasing their electricity generation through PG&E. Enrollment notices were mailed out starting in February to all City of Los Banos customers explaining



Good News, Los Banos!

You are now receiving **cleaner electricity at lower rates** from Peninsula Clean Energy



"When we heard that there is another choice for our electricity provider and that it will save us some money, you bet we got excited about the good news."

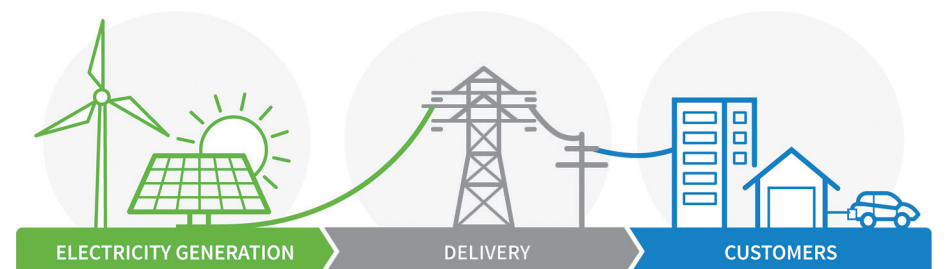
Jerry Knoester, Los Banos Resident & Business Owner

Now that the City of Los Banos has joined Peninsula Clean Energy, **the average Los Banos household automatically saves a few dollars each month.** You are also helping the environment with clean energy. And it's easy because you don't need to do anything!

You will see a new line item on your PG&E bill, but it's not an extra charge. Your electricity charges are now itemized in two lines. **You are now saving 5% on the electricity generation part of your PG&E bill.**

CARE and other discounts automatically continue. If you are a solar customer, enrollment is after your PG&E true-up date. You may qualify for up to thousands of dollars in savings through our various rebate programs as well.

[PenCleanEnergy.com/Los-Banos](https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/los-banos)
(209) 592-0870



Peninsula Clean Energy provides electricity from clean energy sources at lower rates than PG&E.

PG&E owns the power lines and delivers the power we generate. They send a consolidated bill.

As a customer of Peninsula Clean Energy, you are helping the environment and saving money.

generates clean solar energy exclusively for Peninsula Clean Energy customers.

PG&E continues to own and operate existing wires, poles and other infrastructure to deliver the power generated by Peninsula Clean Energy to participating homes and businesses. PG&E also still owns and reads electric meters and provides the same maintenance and other repair services they always have. And customers continue to receive their bills from PG&E and pay them in the same ways as before.

Customers with a special bill discount such as CARE, FERA, or Medical Baseline, don't need to worry - it remains in place. These customers also enjoy additional savings tied to Peninsula Clean Energy's discounted generation rates, which shows up as a separate line item on the PG&E bill.

Note that PG&E recently increased

these new energy choices.

According to CEO Jan Pepper, PCE is a not-for-profit public agency that reinvests their profits into the community. For example, two solar panel projects on Los Banos city facilities, the community center and the wastewater treatment plant, are planned. They will be free to the city and will provide the local government lower cost electricity, she shared.

PCE launched with a vision to build a sustainable world with clean energy for everyone.

"It's my passion to bring renewable energy to the world," Pepper added.

Learn more about Peninsula Clean Energy's services and frequently asked questions at [PenCleanEnergy.com/los-banos](https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/los-banos) or call them at 1-866-966-0110.

Allen D. Payton contributed to this report.

Writer: Los Banos needs quality retail stores, commercial businesses, medical facilities



Dear Editor:

Los Banos is primed for an economic boom. After all we are at the crossroads of California. There is such an opportunity to court better retail stores, commercial businesses and medical facilities. The nearest Kaiser facility is Fresno, Modesto

Memorial Hospital Los Banos recognized for participation in program to reduce heart disease, strokes



Source: Sutter Health

Get With The Guidelines
By Valerie Koch, Senior Director, Communications & Marketing, American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is pleased to share that Memorial Hospital Los Banos is among eight Central Valley hospitals and 2,600 hospitals nationwide recognized for participating in the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines® initiative to improve outcomes for Americans who experience heart disease or stroke.



The eight hospitals are:

- Memorial Hospital Los Banos
- Dignity Health Mercy Medical Center Merced
- Adventist Health Hanford
- Community Regional Medical Center, Fresno
- Kaiser Foundation Hospital – Fresno
- Saint Agnes Medical Center, Fresno
- Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Visalia
- Sierra View Medical Center, Porterville

Every 40 seconds, someone in America has a stroke or heart attack. The Get With The Guidelines program helps ensure all patients can access high-quality care amid adversity.

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and Gilroy medical offices. So many residents of Los Banos must travel within a 60-mile radius to see a doctor. Bring a Kaiser facility to Los Banos.

I've lived in Merced County for 15 years, yet my retail dollars are not spent in Los Banos. The quality and caliber of retail needs to be greatly improved. We need robust grocery stores. We may be too small for a Costco, but we are the perfect population for a Smart and Final and a Winco. Folks from Dos Palos, Gustine and Santa Nella can contribute to the revenue dollars in the Westside by shopping in our city.

Please stop introducing Los Banos to low quality retail like DD's Discounts and Big Lots. Los Banos community deserves better.

Sincerely,
Trish Vigil
Los Banos

Send your letter to the editor@losbanosenterprise.com and please include your name and phone number so we can verify you sent it.



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Dr. Billy Louis Weir

April 12, 1938 – July 28, 2022

Billy Louis Weir discovered America on April 12, 1938, in San Antonio, Texas. He was born to Mary Blackstock Weir and Louis William Weir. He moved to Corpus Christi, Texas where he met the love of his life Carol Ann Myers, who he later married in 1961. He began his college education by attending Texas A&M University, where he earned his Bachelor of Science Degree.

He later moved to Davis, CA with his family, where he attended UC Davis and earned his Master of Science degree, then later his PhD in soil science. He was employed by the University of California for 36 years and worked as a farm advisor, 4-H advisor, then later as an agricultural researcher and educator. In his retirement he owned his own research and consulting company, which he enjoyed very much. In his spare time, he loved gardening and wood working.

He was a loving and devoted husband to Carol Ann Weir, they shared a wonderful journey as a couple, as best friends and partners in life. They would have shared 61 years of marriage this month, August, 25 2022.

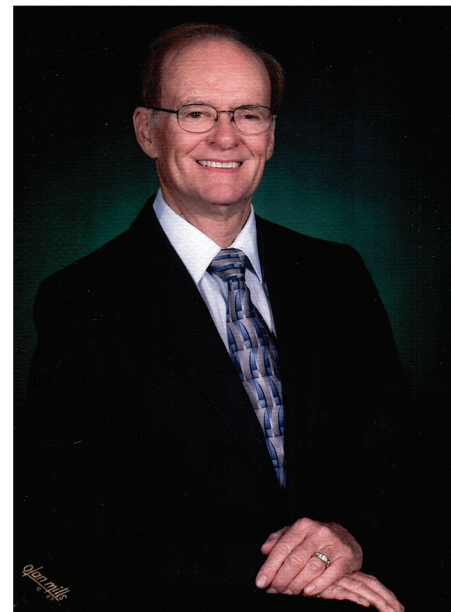
Together they traveled to fifty-five countries, where he spoke in many of them about his agricultural research in cotton. He was known as the "Father of narrow row 30 inch cotton". His research in the conversion of cotton rows and harvesters from 40 inch rows to 30 inch rows was instrumental in establishing the 30 inch cotton culture, which transformed the agricultural industry. In this research he found that utilizing the 30 inch rows would increase the cotton yield, thereby increasing the financial gain for the farmers per crop. During his travels, he helped to establish utilizing 30 inch rows in their agricultural practices. He was also instrumental in research on the use of Pix growth regulator on cotton and potassium deficiency symptoms in cotton.

He taught for 20 years at Merced College in the agricultural department and served on the California Cotton Alliance Board, which he enjoyed very much. He was also a member of the California Association Farm Advisors and Specialists from 1980-1991. He conducted research in cotton and many different crops and made a big difference in the agricultural world at large.

He is survived by his loving wife Carol Weir, his son Daniel Louis Weir and daughter-in-law Teresa, and his daughter Deborah Leanne Weir. Grandchildren; Cristi Weir, Vanicia Wilhelm, Alex Myers, Tisneem, Zaynib, Humzah, Rowtha, Omar and their spouses. Including many great-grandchildren and his three nieces. He is preceded in death by his parents, one grandson, one great grandson and two sisters, Louise Mayo and Laverne Fisher.

A memorial service was held at Central Presbyterian Church in Merced on Saturday, August 6, 2022, followed by a private family burial service at Lakewood Mortuary in Hughson.

Visit www.lakewoodhughson.com to leave memories or condolences for the Weir family.



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