

# The Bakersfield Californian

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MEDIA



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Officer Elena DeMarah volunteers to help 11-year-old Kaiden Jones pick out a toy during Monday's event.

RODNEY THORNBURG / FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

## TO PROTECT AND SERVE WITH HOLIDAY CHEER

Thousands of gleeful children in need select Christmas gifts of their choice during sixth annual CHiPs for Kids toy distribution event **LOCAL | 3**

### PLANE FATALITIES

'Wonderful family' from Gilroy identified as dead in almond orchard crash

**LOCAL | 2**

### INVESTIGATION

BPD officer justified in shooting burglary suspect, DA's office says

**LOCAL | 4**

### ATTACK NORTH OF KABUL

Six American troops killed outside airbase by suicide bomber

**USA TODAY | 14**



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**Local / State**

# Bank prepares to open branch

BY JOHN COX  
The Bakersfield Californian  
jcox@bakersfield.com

Valley Republic Bank said it plans to open its third branch early next year at 4300 Coffee Road, becoming the only locally based financial institution with an office in northwest Bakersfield.

The bank attributed the expansion to quick growth since its 2009 launch on California Avenue. It opened a second branch in September 2011 at 11330 Ming Ave. in southwest Bakersfield.



Voiland

“Our growth since inception has been remarkable,” bank Chairman Eugene Voiland said in a news release, calling the push into the northwest “timely and cost-effective.”

Valley Republic posted total assets of \$483 million at the end of this



**Bakersfield-based Valley Republic Bank plans to open a new branch in early 2016 at 4300 Coffee Road. It will be the institution's third office.**

VALLEY REPUBLIC BANK

year's third quarter, a 14 percent increase from a year before. During that period it reported 38.5 percent growth in net income to \$953,000.

President and CEO Bruce Jay said the bank has long planned to have a full-service office in the northwest.

“We have been looking for a prominent location along the Coffee Road corridor for over one year,” he said in the release.

Valley Republic said the new branch will have drive-up service, as do the other two offices.

# Grinch steals donated gifts from SLO Elks Lodge

BY MATT FOUNTAIN  
The Tribune (San Luis Obispo)

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Despite a last-minute, Grinch-esque theft of donated gifts, volunteers at the San Luis Obispo Elks Lodge were able to collect about \$400 worth of gift cards for their annual Christmas drive within one day of delivering them to local children Sunday.

At some point Friday night, Elks volunteer Vivian Boaz said, a suspected thief made away with about \$1,000 worth of gift cards and other items donated over the past month to the Elks Lodge No. 322 for its annual gift drive.

“We were calling it a Grinch-tastrophe. We were all pretty shocked,” Boaz said. “Who steals from 2-

year-old, 6-year-old kids right before Christmas?”

Elks officers do not know exactly when the items were stolen, and there was no sign of forced entry into the locked Trustee's Office, where the gifts were sitting beneath a Christmas tree.

“If somebody really needed something, especially this time of year, all they had to do was ask. We take care of our members,” Boaz said.

When the theft was discovered Saturday, Boaz and other volunteers took to social media.

Within 24 hours, local Elks members, residents and businesses had donated enough items so that the 67 children identified by the organization as in need received gifts Sunday.

## People in Business

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

JC Financial Credit Reporting Services Inc. has named its 2016 Kern County Group Board of Directors.

**DAN SPROAT**, of Jaco Oil/Wholesale Fuels, will be chairman. **JOY RICKETTS**, of S.A. Camp Pump Co., will be vice chairwoman.

**KEVIN MINDOCK**, of Crop Production Service, will be treasurer. **LOREN MARTIN**, of Commercial Trade Inc., will be secretary. Members-at-large will include **CHRIS KEELER**, of Commercial Trade Inc., and **NANCY ZANDER**, of Jaco Oil/Wholesale Fuels.



Martin



Keeler



Sala



Filkins



McCracken



Eberhardt



Stricklen



Gehlawat

Kern Leaders Academy has announced its 2015 graduating class.

The graduates are **RICARDO DEL HOYO**, staff member with the office of Kern County Supervisor Leticia Perez; **ELAINE MCNEARNEY**, founder and executive director of Dress for Success Bakersfield; **TYLER MOYER**, with Cal State Bakersfield's University Budget Department; **AMANDA AVILA RUIZ**, program specialist with the Kern County Sheriff's Office; **NOOR SABA**, business development representative at Stantec; **TRACY SALERNO**, marketing and promotions associate with the Kern County Department of Child Support Services; **DAURES STEPHENS**, retired senior deputy sheriff; and **ASHLEY WEAVER**, mortgage professional with San Joaquin Valley Mortgage. The academy is a community leadership program conducted by the Kern County Taxpayers Education Fund.

The State Bar of California's Board of Legal Specialization has recertified Bakersfield lawyer **H.A.**

**SALA** as a legal specialist in criminal law.

Sala has been licensed to practice law in California for 33 years. He has been certified as a legal specialist in criminal law for 20 years.

**MICHAEL CONGDON** has been named chief credit officer at Bakersfield-based Mission Bank. He has nearly three decades of banking and senior management experience.

A graduate of West High School in Bakersfield, Congdon earned a bachelor's degree in finance at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and a master's degree in business administration at Cal State Bakersfield. He has completed specialized banking courses while working at Wells Fargo and California Republic Bank.

Nickel Family LLC has hired **DARREN FILKINS** to replace **JIM NICKEL** as CEO.

Filkins has almost 25 years of experience in the produce industry, having worked at



Nickel

companies including Bolt-house Farms, Tanimura & Antle, NewStar Fresh Foods and D'Arrigo Brothers. He is president of Rio Bravo-Greeley School and has served on the Kern County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and the Central California Lettuce Cooperative. He earned a degree in agricultural management at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Nickel led the company during 30 years of growth. The family-owned, multi-generational company owns and farms on more than 9,000 acres throughout California.

Bakersfield visual artist and poetic author **ALIZA MCCRACKEN** has been selected for a media review in the Guide for Spiritual Living. Her coffee table art book, “Creative Abundance: Artful Possibilities,” has been recognized for its design and writing.

**JEFFERSON X. EBERHARDT** has joined Young Wooldridge LLP's business department. In his new position, Eberhardt will focus on representation of management on labor and employment-related mat-

ters. He earned a bachelor's degree in social and behavioral sciences with a minor in economics at the University of Arizona. He earned a law degree at the Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego and was admitted to the State Bar in 2014.

**RICHARD STRICKLEN** has received the Greater Bakersfield New Car Dealer Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Stricklen, dealer principal of Motor City Buick, Motor City GMC Truck and Motor City Lexus, has contributed to Bakersfield for more than 55 years. The Stricklen family has represented new car and truck franchises through its 75-year local history.

**NEIL GEHLAWAT** has been named a partner at the law firm of Chain | Cohn | Stiles. A graduate of Stockdale High School, Gehlawat joins partners David Cohn, Matthew Clark and James Yoro. Gehlawat, 27, joined the firm in 2012. He focuses on personal injury, wrongful death, civil rights and employment cases.

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