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# MONTEREY COUNTY WEEKLY



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# VETERANS FIRST

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By Pam Marino



JUNE 22-28, 2017

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LOCAL & INDEPENDENT



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# WATER MATTERS

## RECORD SETTING YEAR FOR AQUIFER STORAGE & RECOVERY PROJECT



Over 764 million gallons of excess Carmel River water stored in ground this year

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## Q&A

### Q: WHAT IS ASR?

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# The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 103 No. 25

On the Internet: [www.carmelpinecone.com](http://www.carmelpinecone.com)

June 23-29, 2017

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## Eastwood's next film: 'Regular kids' who stopped a terrorist

By PAUL MILLER

FORMER CARMEL Mayor Clint Eastwood became famous playing fictional tough guys like Rowdy Gaines and Dirty Harry. Lately, he's achieved even greater fame as the director of films about real-life heroes — including Iraq vet Chris Kyle and pilot Sully Sullenberger.

Now, Eastwood is working on his next project, about three friends who stopped a terrorist attack two years ago on a train in France. One of them, a U.S. Air Force enlisted man named Spencer Stone, did something very few people have done and



PHOTO/MARK DAVIS, GETTY IMAGES

Clint Eastwood greets Alek Skarlatos, Spencer Stone and Anthony Sadler during an awards presentation last summer. A conversation at the event started the process toward Eastwood's next film, "The 15:17 to Paris."

lived to tell about: Without a weapon or anything to defend himself, he charged a fanatical and heavily armed enemy, knocking him to the ground. And then he and his friends, Alek Skarlatos and Anthony Sadler, disarmed the man and rendered him unconscious, saving dozens, if not hundreds, of innocent lives in the process.

"It was a very important event, because there were so many people on the train, and the guy had hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and he could have done a tremendous amount of damage," Eastwood said. "And there's no reason to think he wasn't going to."

At his office on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank, Eastwood is busy these days refining the shooting schedule, while his casting directors are choosing the actors, costumers are picking the outfits, and set designers are planning the shots — all routine tasks for a major Hollywood picture. But the film, "The 15:17 to Paris," which Eastwood says will probably be released later this year, has a story that promises to be unprecedented in its heart-stopping impact, yet which

See **HEROES** page 16A

## Rescued seal pup gaining weight in Marin

By MARY SCHLEY

A PASSERBY who spotted a skinny seal pup alone on the rocks at Carmel Point Monday afternoon did the right thing by calling the Marine Mammal Center, according to the center's operations manager, Julia O'Hern.

Despite oft-heard warnings not to disturb wild animals just because they're alone, "We definitely appreciate the public calling in. Otherwise, we would never find these guys," O'Hern added.

On Monday, the center received several calls from people who said, "a seal pup was hanging out on the rocks by itself, and that it seemed thin and that it was unusual to see it by itself," according to O'Hern. "It wasn't until we got a photo that we identified it as a Guadalupe fur seal."

Because that species is "threatened," under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, O'Hern dispatched a team of volunteers right away. Guadalupe fur seals are unusual to find

See **PUP** page 18A

## Tree crew helps save man trapped in crushed truck

By MARY SCHLEY

THE DRIVER of a three-axle truck hauling a load of sod and a forklift miraculously escaped with a badly broken leg and pelvis after losing control of the tractor-trailer, careening down Los Laureles Grade and across Carmel Valley Road, and crashing down the embankment Wednesday morning.

The force of the collision separated the truck from the trailer, badly mangling the cab and rupturing the fuel tanks. Fortunately for 27-year-old Osvaldo Mendez, a crew from Lopez Tree Service happened to be in a truck behind him and rushed to help the driver, who was trapped inside the crushed cab under hundreds of pounds of sod.

Mike Lopez, who runs the tree service with his dad, recounted the collision. As the trucks reached the faster straight stretch at the south end of the Grade, "I started smelling a lot of burning brakes."

"He was driving too fast, and it seemed like he couldn't control the brakes," Lopez said. "It seemed like he was going 70 mph."

'Went airborne'

In an instant of fortuitous timing, no other cars were backed up at the stop sign at the intersection at Carmel Valley Road, and as the runaway truck barreled across the road, there was no cross-traffic.

"It basically went airborne at the bottom, and it looked like he might have maneuvered it to go between the trees," Lopez said.

He and his father and a couple of employees immediately stopped to help, running to the wreckage that by then was some 70 feet down the hill, while his brother stayed by the road to call 911. "We could hear someone screaming for help," he said. His dad was the first to reach the truck and

called to the other men to help him remove the rolls of sod that had flown off the trailer and landed on top of the cab.

"You could hear him screaming, and you could tell he was having trouble breathing," Lopez said.

After they finally pulled the rolls of turf off the truck, they could only see Mendez' hat and his head, which was poking through what had been the cab's rear window, and one arm. The rest of him was trapped inside.

"He was saying, 'Please help me, please help me,' and trying to push himself up," he said. "I kept telling him, 'Stay

See **CRASH** page 15A



PHOTO/MIKE LOPEZ

Thanks to the help of Mike Lopez (left) and others, the driver trapped in the crushed cab of a tractor-trailer that crashed at the bottom of Los Laureles Grade Wednesday morning survived.

## Wildfire fears aren't deterring illegal campers

By CHRIS COUNTS

WITH THE community still reeling from last summer's Soberanes Fire and this winter's mudslides, fire season has returned to Big Sur — and with it, people doing stupid and dangerous things.

An abandoned campfire along Nacimiento-Fergusson Road appeared to be the cause of a fire that ignited at about 9 a.m. on June 15 about three miles east of Highway 1. The blaze spread into the grass and was burning down a steep hillside when a resident called 911. It was about 45 minutes before firefighters and air support arrived, and before long, personnel from Cal Fire, the United States Forest Service and the Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade were on scene. The fire was extinguished by 11 a.m. after burning about two acres.

The incident showed how easily an illegal campfire can escape, just like the campfire that started the Soberanes Fire.

"People come here and they are completely unaware of how dangerous it is to start a campfire along the road," said South Coast resident Kate Novoa, whose Big Sur Kate blog has highlighted the issue.

Four days later, Novoa came across a groups of campers

who had spent the previous night in a grassy meadow not far from where she lives. To get there, they had to drive past a "No Campfires" sign and go off-roading for about 100 yards, but that didn't deter them. When Novoa confronted the illegal campers, she could see evidence of a campfire from the night before.

"The whole field is dry and ready to go up" in flames, Novoa told The Pine Cone. "They were pretty good about it when I told them the fine would be \$5,000."

Forest service spokesman Andrew Madsen confirmed scofflaws could get hit with a \$5,000 fine for an illegal camp-

See **FIRES** page 14A

## Oxygen bar won't get permit for Ocean Ave.

By MARY SCHLEY

A BUSINESS that "specializes in aqua massage and oxygen bar services" might be great for Cannery Row, but it has no place on Ocean Avenue, the planning commission decided last week.

The company, called Vitality, operates nationwide and already has a shop in the tourist-heavy area of Monterey, planning director Marc Wiener said at the June 14 meeting. It offers aqua massage — which uses pressurized water — and aromatherapy-infused oxygen at stations set up along a bar. In addition, Vitality sells herbal pillows, massage equipment and other products.

Real estate agent Alison Goss of Mahoney & Associates the store, which she represents, has "been hounding me for three years to open here," and she argued it would be a good fit for the town's main street.

"There were a number of us who had our doubts," she told commissioners. "We were not sure this would fit on Ocean Avenue, so we went and checked out one of their other facilities, and had an amazing family experience."

Businesses now tend to offer experiences as a means of getting people to buy their products, she said. "One thing I've learned in real estate in last 10 years is that you have to be open to change, and I've had to be open to change, even here

See **OXYGEN** page 18A



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Volunteers from the Marine Mammal Center in Moss Landing net a seal pup that stranded herself on the rocks at Carmel Point Monday afternoon.

# YBR gives \$\$\$ to students, charities

PINE CONE STAFF REPORT

THE YELLOW Brick Road benefit shops at the mouth of Carmel Valley have helped raise \$5.7 million that's been distributed to more than 480 charities and nonprofits during the past three decades. And last month, Yellow Brick Road also distributed \$45,000 in scholarships to more than two dozen graduating high school seniors.

"We commend the graduates for their high achievement and hard work," said Jerry Carter of Yellow Brick Road.

The original main store, as well as the newer bookshop and a furniture shop, were founded by Carmel Presbyterian Church as an outreach to the community, and Yellow Brick Road has been devoted to feeding and clothing those in need, providing college

scholarships for deserving students; and helping hundreds of charities and nonprofits with grants.

"The Yellow Brick Road has become an oasis where so many come to be refreshed and renewed," Carter said.

The expansion from one store into three — amounting to four times the original store's square footage — reflects the fact that many aging residents in Carmel, Pebble Beach, Carmel-by-the-Sea and Pacific Grove are downsizing, and therefore donating their high-quality possessions to Yellow Brick Road. Meanwhile, more people have also found themselves in need.

"As people drop the stigma of buying second hand, our motto, 'Repurpose with Purpose,' has become a reality of our times, not just a catchy phrase," Carter said.

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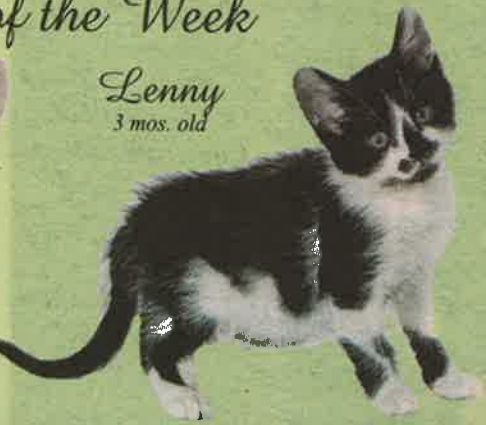
## The SPCA for Monterey County

### Kitties of the Week



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