

# Orcutt PIONEER

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## Houth, Orcutt's Donut Lady, Retires Then Faces Medical Emergency



In December 2022, Charlie and Houth Hak Lay decided it was time to enjoy sleeping in the mornings and sold Golden Donut to their nephew. "Golden Donut will stay in the family," Charlie said, "and Houth still wants to work a few days a week. She just can't leave her friends." Houth was a mainstay at Golden Donut, joking with the regulars, and welcoming newcomers. People in Orcutt may have come to buy donuts, but they would stay to chat with Houth.

But within a few weeks of

retirement, Houth was experiencing debilitating pain in her neck and back that doctors were unable to diagnose. Then one night, with the help of Charlie and their son, Tommy, Houth was rushed to hospital where they found a tumor and a shattered neck bone.

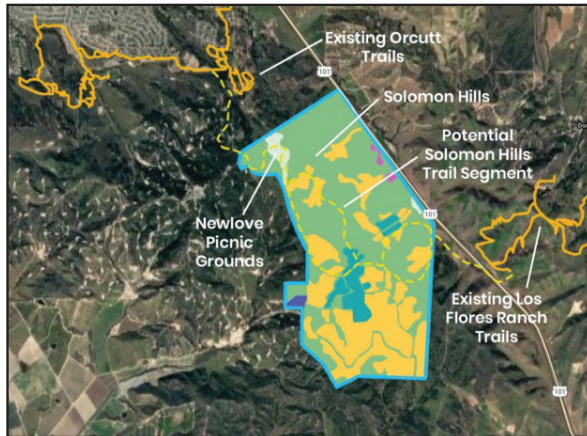
Her family rushed Houth to a specialized hospital at UC San Francisco where she had multiple treatments including a tracheotomy and neurosurgery. Her daughter, Nicky, along with Houth's 4-month-old granddaughter, rushed from Arizona to be with her mom. Charlie has remained by Houth's side. Currently she is in a rehabilitation center in the Bay area where she will stay until she is strong enough to start radiation and chemotherapy. Hopefully

those treatments can be done closer to home in Santa Maria or San Luis Obispo. Houth's family has been staying in hotels and "surviving on Subway sandwiches," Nicky says. "I know my dad is ready for his own bed and a home cooked meal, but he doesn't want to leave my mom's side. We are hoping she can come home in a few weeks."

In the meantime, a gofundme page has been set up to help the family with expenses. Go to <http://www.gofundme.com>, search Orcutt Donut Lady or Houth. Cards and letters can be mailed to: Houth Mu Hak, 1125 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Kentfield, CA 94904.

### Solomon Hills Development

## 4000 Homes and a Community Proposed South of Orcutt



The entrance to the proposed Solomon Hills development is 2 miles south of the Clark/101 interchange.

Over a hundred years ago, acres of rolling green hills and pastureland located two miles

south of Clark Avenue on the west side of Highway 101 was the site for oil drilling.

Santa Barbara County is now considering a proposal to develop the land for up to 4000 homes, a village center with grocery and drug stores, medical-urgent care, post office, fire station, an office campus, a school, parks and miles and miles of trails and open space. On March 8, the County Planning Commission took its first look at the mammoth proposal. Fourth District Commissioner Larry Ferini made the motion to "accept the general plan amendment and rezone" and the five Commissioners unanimously agreed to accept the application from Solstra Communities of California.

The developer acquired the 1903-acre

space in 2019 from Pacific Coast Energy Company. Representatives from Solstra told the Commission that the objective of the project is "creating a sustainable and thriving community to support future Santa Barbara County housing needs."

The County forecast indicates that by 2050, Santa Barbara County's population will increase by 75 percent and 40 percent of its job growth is forecast to be in North County.

Infrastructure including roads, water supply, wastewater, law enforcement, and fire protection would be developed by Solstra and financed by a Community Facilities District, a special type of tax district created by the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 as a means of obtaining additional financing for various services and infrastructural improvements in California by imposing special taxes on property. It will be maintained by a homeowners' association.

The developer will work with the Orcutt School District to provide a kindergarten through eighth grade school on an 11-acre site.

Water sources include wells drawing water from the San Antonio and Santa Maria Groundwater basins and possibly the purchase of supplemental water from Santa Maria City's allotment of State Water.

There would be solar panels on all proposed homes and buildings in the Village Center. The residential villages would be all electrical and will use no natural gas.

Solstra's land-use agent Jay Higgins told the Commission, "It's a unique opportunity for the County to study and plan a forward thinking, net-zero emission community which will provide jobs, housing, and open space for future generations."

The primary access would be from Highway 101 across from Las Flores Park at the current Highway 101 underpass which will be improved.

Proposed of the 1903 acres of development, almost 1100 acres will be set aside as open space.

Commissioner Ferini noted that "in the last  
*continued on page 2*

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## Solomon Hills

*continued from page 1*

one hundred plus years the site has come full circle from a space where oil workers worked and lived and a town was located." These first oil workers eventually moved to what is now Old Town Orcutt.

Most speakers favored the project. Dominick Barry of Orcutt and president of Quintron Systems, a ten-million-dollar Santa Maria industry specializing in high tech communication systems for NASA, commercial, and government entities, told the Commission, "As a technology company we are constantly looking for high tech personnel. We compete with very attractive markets such as San Jose, Bay area, Phoenix, Atlanta. I have recently lost employees because they love working here but cannot afford housing. An \$80,000 employee has difficulty finding a home. I just lost one employee at \$130,000 annual salary. He had two children and couldn't find a home."

Ken Dalebout, speaking on behalf of Dignity Health and Marian Medical Center, told the Commission that the local hospital employs about 3300 people with currently 250 open positions. "There is a direct correlation between housing and recruiting employees. We have plans for long term expansion and will need

more employees."

Ken Hough of Santa Barbara County Action Network said he was comfortable with plans for hiking and biking trails, however, has concerns about the expansion of the urban boundary and loss of agriculture land.

Orcutt resident Todd Wilson said public notice of the development was not adequate. Both Hough and Wilson urged denial at the Planning Commission level suggesting the project move to the Board of Supervisors for adequate community input.

Glenn Morris, President of the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, said if the Commission did not accept the application, "it calls into question the credibility of our County leadership about whether we are really, truly serious about solving the housing problems, not just today but into the future and whether we are willing to think about unique and out-of-the-box solutions or if we're going to continue on the same hamster wheel we've been on."

Multiple public hearings are required before an amendment to the General Plan and Rezoning can take place. After a myriad of environmental studies including public and County review, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will be the final decision makers.

*Steve Southwick reporting*

## U-Haul Illegal Asbestos Removal Lawsuit Settlement Requires Funding for Local Nonprofits

In late September of 2019, the building that formerly housed the Kmart and Chuck E. Cheese businesses on Santa Maria Way was being prepared by the new occupant, U-Haul of California. Flooring tiles were being removed by workers, and a large dust cloud emerged as the work continued. A concerned neighbor, noticing the dust, called Santa Barbara County to find out what was happening. Once inspectors from the County were allowed access, they determined that the dust, the tiles, and the adhesive were all positive for asbestos, and that U-Haul did not take necessary precautions to protect workers, employees, and the public from asbestos exposure. They also disposed of the materials improperly, sending it to the Santa Maria Area Recycling Terminal, which is not a hazardous waste site.

U-Haul of California was sued by the County of Santa Barbara and ordered to pay for remediating the improper disposal, cleaning the dumpsters used, and incurred fines totaling \$1,004,326.00 for damages to the public and costs to the County. In addition, a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) assessment requires U-Haul of California

to pay an additional \$111,595 to four local nonprofit agencies to pursue public benefit environmental activities in the area.

Friends of Waller Park, which is located close to the U-Haul facility, received part of the SEP funds. Juliann Hemphill, coordinator for the Friends of Waller Park said, "We are very sad that this incident occurred so close to homes in our neighborhood, mine included. However, Friends of Waller Park is grateful to be awarded \$22,000 to help with our mission to help maintain and enhance the beauty of Waller Park."

In addition, NatureTrack Foundation, Inc. who provides fieldtrips to K-12 students in Santa Barbara County that include environmental education and experiences, will receive \$40,000. Santa Barbara Foundation will receive \$29,595 to provide grants to environmental and/or conservation projects to benefit Santa Maria and the surrounding communities. An additional \$20,000 will go to People for Leisure and Youth, Inc., (P.L.A.Y.) to help plant oak trees and restore 234 acres of parkland to provide a location for environmental education programming.

*Juliann Hemphill reporting*



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## Service Dogs On the Clock in Orcutt



Chanda Hagen and Kestrel, Auggie at library, Jacquelyn Huebner and Aspen

From alerting their owners about blood sugar levels to sniffing out guns and pests, Orcutt area dogs are on the clock.

Orcutt resident Chanda Hagen says that her 6-year-old labrador, Kestrel, changed her life. "I used to hide in the corner and not interact with people. Thanks to Kestrel, people aren't scary to me anymore." Hagen, who trained dogs and horses for 35 years, has been in a wheelchair for eight years because of genetic-related disabilities. Kestrel, Hagen's 4th service dog, has the temperament that service dog owners and handlers want, "loves to work, is treat-motivated, fearless, trainable, connected to the owner, extremely comfortable and friendly to all, and not upset by other dogs," explains Hagen.

Hagen says that getting around in a wheelchair can be quite dangerous. She's had close calls with cars and once face-planted on a "lumpy sidewalk." Kestrel's job includes pulling the wheelchair when needed, retrieving dropped items, pushing buttons for crosswalks and doors, and creating a safe space for Hagen. "She's my partner. People smile at her and start conversations," she adds.

Jessica Kromer's son Kovey Allen, has diabetes. Kromer trained her dalmatian, Arson, to bark and poke with his nose to alert Kovey that his blood sugar is reaching danger levels. The most important on-duty time for Arson is at night when Kovey may sleep through a device alert. One night, Kovey's blood sugar plummeted to 22, which could lead to a diabetic coma. Arson jumped on the bed to alert Kovey to eat the emergency glucose. "One hundred times over Arson has saved Kovey's life," Kromer says.

Jacquelyn Huebner from Orcutt says she was able to attend CalPoly with the help of her dog, Aspen. Aspen alerts Huebner to rising anxiety levels. Symptoms like jumpy legs, finger flicking, and fast breathing/heart rate will cause Aspen to nudge Huebner's knee, stare at her intently and even jump in her lap. Jacquelyn has dealt with her anxiety since junior high. The idea of moving 45 minutes away for college "was

terrifying," says Huebner, but getting Aspen, "opened up my life."

Huebner described a day at Disneyland when Aspen accompanied her on rides and "worked hard all day long creating space." Aspen creates space by sitting behind Jacquelyn in lines and circling her in crowds. Aspen also picks up items Huebner might drop during an anxiety attack.

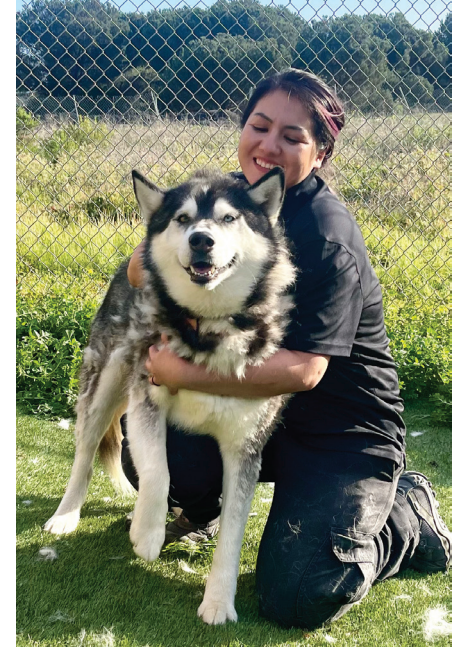
Local students will get to see Huebner and Aspen this summer at Camp Hope where she attended as a student, and this year will be teaching about service dogs. Camp Hope teaches kids about animal responsibility.

Other Orcutt working dogs are Auggie, owned by Susan Sauvain. Auggie listens to children read at libraries and "lifts spirits" at schools and senior homes, explains Sauvain.

Santa Barbara North County Sheriff's Department has Thor, a highly trained German Shepherd. He can track people, bombs, firearms, and drugs. Dumas is a Labrador trained by the United States Department of Agricultural who works at post offices, FedEx, UPS, and On Track to sniff out agricultural pests and insects. He jumps on infected boxes on conveyor belts with a high degree of accuracy. Dumas has volunteered to demonstrate his abilities at Camp Hope this summer as well.

Katy Jacobson reporting

## Neo Needs a Home



Neo, 3, is friendly to humans of any size and other dogs. (No idea about cats.) He's happy, affectionate, gorgeous and been at the Foster shelter sadly since November! To meet this happy guy and set him free, call (805) 934-6119.

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## Calendar of Events

*Do you have a special event, fundraiser, or community activity you would like our readers to know about? Whether it's a one-time event or an monthly or weekly happening, we want to help you get the word out. Email 50 words or less to [info@orcuttpioneer.com](mailto:info@orcuttpioneer.com) by the second Wednesday of the month. Be sure to include, in this order, the name of the event, location, time, a short description and contact information.*

*All events are subject to change. Please contact the event or club sponsor to find out details about the organization/event and meeting times.*

### SPECIAL EVENTS

The Friends of the Santa Maria Public Library's 12 Annual Painted Chair Raffle—April 1-14—Santa Maria Town Center Mall. Features book-themed items decorated by local artists. Proceeds help the Friends support reading in our community and the Santa Maria Public Library.

Theodore Roosevelt's Wild America, will be presented by Orcutt Community Theater for two performances only, Friday April 7 and Saturday April 8, 8 PM, at KDA Studios, 3558 Skyway Drive, Orcutt. This special one-man performance, centers on Roosevelt's remarkable adventures in the great outdoors. Tickets are \$20. More info: 805-268-2993.

FREE One Day Health Clinic. Sunday April 23, 2023 8am to 4pm. First Come, First served. Services include: Footcare, vision screening, physical therapy, massage, haircut, lifestyle counseling, healthy cooking, blood glucose, stroke screening, free literature on healthy living. Register in person. Santa Maria Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 1775 S. Thornburg St.

### MONTHLY OR WEEKLY EVENTS

50+ CLUB Meeting/Luncheon at Giavanni's Pizza, 1108 E. Clark Ave. at 11:30AM on the second Thursday of the month, purchase your own lunch, meet & share ideas and support local charities. New members welcome. Pam Cosma 805-896-6045.

AA (or Alcoholics Anonymous). If you want to drink, that's your business. If you want to stop, that's ours. Meetings Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 6:30PM Orcutt Presbyterian Church. General information and other meeting times and places, 925-3782.

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS AND DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES ([www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)) meets on Thur, Fri, Sat, and Sun. Contact Kim at (805) 714-6908.

AGAPE School of Christion Education now enrolling K-12 sliding scale (805) 614-9292.

## Classified Ads

Sell items for free. Free ads can only be accepted via email to [info@orcuttpioneer.com](mailto:info@orcuttpioneer.com) with "classified" in the subject line. 25 word limit. All ads must be received by the second Thursday of the month and will appear on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Business ads only \$25/25 words. Mail payments for business ads to Orcutt Pioneer, PO Box 2545, Orcutt CA 93457.

SPECIAL THANKS to all who supported the Knights of Columbus St Patricks Day Car Show on March 11th. Though the event was rained out, we raised over \$3500 for our scholarship fund. Save the date, March 9, 2024! [kofccarshow.com](http://kofccarshow.com)

Lawn Care. Liability insured, bi-monthly residential & commercial, one-time cleanup, miscellaneous jobs, weed clearing, free estimates. Jim Reid 805-938-1402 Lic #36524

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Shadowsfund, Senior and Pit Bull Rescue in Lompoc is looking for volunteers and dog walkers. [Shadowsfund@gmail.com](mailto:Shadowsfund@gmail.com)

Monthly SUDOKU puzzles (either Tough, Challenging or Advanced) on YouTube - Search SUBINGDOKU for videos that also include Step-by-Step puzzle solutions

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## Letters to the Editor

The following was submitted to the Local Agency Formation Commission and to the Orcutt Pioneer. With permission of the writer, Steve LeBard, it has been edited for space and clarity.

### Orcutt Cannot Allow City of Santa Maria to Cherry Pick Orcutt's Real Estate

The citizens of Orcutt are alarmed that the City of Santa Maria is attempting to incorporate Richard's Ranch into the city - forty-three plus acres of Orcutt heartland, located at Union Valley Parkway and Orcutt Road.

The City of Santa Maria claims that this property is in their sphere of influence, yet it is separated by California State Highway 135. Their connection appears to be farmland controlled by and near the Santa Maria Airport - a common sense "NO BUILD" due to airplane traffic. Equally insulting to the citizens of Orcutt is the City of Santa Maria's contentions that most of Orcutt is in the city's sphere of influence. Orcutt cannot allow Santa Maria to cherry pick prime Orcutt real estate.

Richard's Ranch (a project consisting of 400 apartments, 95 townhomes and a retail commercial center) is located on Key Site 26, an integral part of the Orcutt Community Plan. This plan was adopted in 1997 by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors. The Orcutt Citizen's Advisory Committee played the major role in creating this plan - after all it is our home.

The City of Santa Maria wants to annex this property for two reasons - tax revenue and state housing mandates, at Orcutt's expense. Santa Maria controls Orcutt's water. Every time Orcutt has the opportunity for a significant commercial development (needed to support cityhood) Santa Maria plays the "Monopoly Water Card," refusing to sell supplemental water to Orcutt projects - but happy to annex and bankroll the city. Ironically, Orcutt has a vast supply of underground water.

The following is in a 2014 report linked to Stanford University - "Before the Well Runs Dry: Improving the linkage between Groundwater

and Land Use Planning. "As an unintended consequence, the ability to sell or withhold supplemental water has given Santa Maria some ability to influence land use changes in unincorporated Orcutt." Pgs 24-26

*"In response to ongoing litigation regarding the Santa Maria basin and perceived basin overdraft, the Orcutt Community Plan, when released in 1997, enacted a new water policy (WAT-0-2) requiring that water demand from new development must be offset by "supplemental water." This supplemental water must come from other sources besides groundwater. To meet this requirement, developers have been purchasing State Water Project water from the city of Santa Maria - currently the most feasible option for supplemental water - at a one-time cost of \$25,000 per acre-foot. As an unintended consequence, the ability to sell or withhold supplemental water has given Santa Maria some ability to influence land use changes in unincorporated Orcutt."*

*"In 2005, the court responded to a lawsuit seeking an adjudication of the Santa Maria basin by approving a stipulation, setting forth a solution agreed to by a majority of the parties. Significantly, the court did not order reductions in groundwater pumping, but rather required that new users obtain supplemental water*

*instead of groundwater. The court also upheld Orcutt's supplemental water requirement."*

What is the outcome?

The stipulated agreement is currently the mechanism in place to manage groundwater in the Santa Maria basin. Under the agreement, developers pay for supplemental water for urban development. Not only is the city of Santa Maria influencing land use in Orcutt, they're swindling Orcutt out of its heartland!

With Orcutt's median household income of \$95,916 and Santa Maria's median household income of \$67,634, per capita Orcutt exceeds (expenditures & taxes) Santa Maria by forty two percent.

With more expendable income Orcutt has exponentially supported Santa Maria's economy - Costco, Home Depot/Lowes, car dealerships, big box stores, hospitals etcetera. Santa Maria reaps the benefits via taxes without providing any services.

The City of Santa Maria's sales tax rate is 8.75%. If Santa Maria is allowed to annex this property Orcutt residents will pay the higher sales tax rate and not Orcutt's rate of 7.75%.

We are assembling a group of Orcutt folks to incorporate Orcutt, California - established 1904. If successful, Orcutt would become the third largest city in Santa Barbara County -

larger than Guadalupe, Buellton, Solvang, Carpinteria, Goleta and Lompoc.

Steve LeBard, Orcutt

### Street Lighting in Old Orcutt

I recently reached out to Supervisor Bob Nelson about concerns over the poorly lit crosswalks in the old Orcutt area. While I was told that this would be investigated, I felt that I needed to express this concern to others in our community. Due to a lack of parking in the Old Orcutt area, I am often forced to park across the street from the local restaurants and other venues. During the winter months especially, I have almost been hit by cars multiple times when attempting to cross the street using the cross walks. Why? Because the streets are dark in those areas, the cross walks are faded and not painted with reflective paint, and there are no flashing signs or even reflectors showing drivers that a pedestrian might be crossing the street. I am sure that it would take little time or financials to put some type of lighting/signs or reflectors in these areas. Unfortunately, until that is done these cross walks remain unsafe. It would be terrible if an accident were to occur in these areas when this could have easily been remedied.

Laurie Haro



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Orcutt Schools Update

Good News from All Over the District

Dr. Holly Edds, Superintendent, OUSD

This month, we have happy developments to share from all around the Orcutt Union School District:

Special thanks to everyone who attended or supported the February 25 Orcutt Children's Arts Foundation (OCAF) Gala! OCAF's first Gala event since 2020 brought in substantial dollars in support of arts programming in Orcutt classrooms. Highlights included performances by the Orcutt Academy High School Jazz Band and OAHS Drama students performing a number from their upcoming play, Monty Python's Spamalot. ...

On the topic of the arts, March is a month for theater productions in our district. Goldilocks on Trial, a one-act comedy featuring elementary and junior high school students directed by Eimile Pay, will be staged March 17 and 18. Monty Python's Spamalot will be performed by OAHS Theatre Arts students directed by Michael Shaw March 24, 25, 30, and 31, and April 1. ...

March also brings the North County Math Super Bowl, an interscholastic competition for young mathematicians in grades 4, 5, and 6. Orcutt elementary schools and other schools from northern Santa Barbara County will participate in the event, which will be held on March 28 at the Santa Maria Fairpark. Our school district hosts, and we are grateful to our friends from the Guadalupe Union School District for helping us this year. ...

Elementary librarian/media specialists delighted in taking a group of district fifth graders to the Santa Barbara County Author-Go-Round on January 31. Students were able to chat with several children's authors and interact with fellow literature fans from other schools. The next event for avid readers will be the Battle of the Books on April 4. The Battle matches teams of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in a competition to see which school knows the most about a set of children's books they have read. ...

Congratulations to Julie Kozel, our district's executive director of curriculum and instruction, and Rusty Gordon, our executive director of Special Education! The local region of the Association California School Administrators (ACSA) recently announced Kozel and Gordon respectively were selected as Curriculum Administrator of the Year and Special Education Administrator of the Year! Kozel and Gordon will be honored at an ACSA event in May. ...

Speaking of ACSA, the organization's weekly newsletter for administrators statewide recently featured a photo from our own Alice Shaw School! As part of its observance of the Great Kindness Challenge in January, Principal Helena Avedikian had students and staff stand in a massive formation of the word KIND and then took video and photos from overhead. The result was a striking affirmation of the school's warm heart. ...

The community of Los Alamos rallied around

our two schools there, Olga Reed and Orcutt Academy K-8, with a successful bingo night fund-raiser for the schools' annual Science Camp trip. The Los Alamos Valley Men's Club was jam-packed with participants in the March 3 event. ...

Kudos to the Ralph Dunlap School PTA and district counselors Solana Gallegos and Yana Washington for presenting a family night on "Building Student Confidence" on February 16! The night was well received by students and parents who attended. ...

Regarding parent/family education, Ralph Dunlap School soon will host a free 11-week class on Strengthening Families that parents and children 7-17 years of age can attend together. Provided by Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley, the class will be held from 6:30-8:15 on Wednesday evenings starting April 13. For details, phone 805-346-1774 or go to [www.fbsmv.com](http://www.fbsmv.com). ...

Here's wishing everyone a wonderful spring! Superintendent Dr. Holly Edds can be contacted by phone at 938-8900 or by e-mail at [hedds@orcutt-schools.net](mailto:hedds@orcutt-schools.net). She can be followed on Twitter at [@hce101](https://twitter.com/hce101).

Orcutt 2023 Rainfall Amounts Approaching a Record Year

Coming into 2023 Orcutt had recorded 8.86 inches of rain during the current rainy season. By mid-January Pacific storms raged, causing thousands of dollars of flood damage, and the Orcutt rainfall amount climbed to almost 17 inches, according to tracking information from the gauge at the Orcutt County Fire Station. At press time the current Orcutt rainfall total for the season is 23.85 inches.

In a typical rainfall year, Orcutt averages 13.49 inches.

Some of the significant rainfall years include 2016/2017-22.03 inches, 2010/2011-25.15 inches, 1997/1998-34.93 inches, and 1982/1983-29.92 inches.

Statistics provided by the Santa Barbara County Water Agency.

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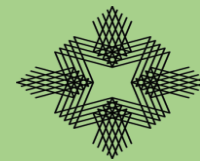


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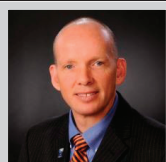
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