Supervisor Rubio Tackles Accessible Government and Quality of Life

Fifth District Supervisor Michael Rubio recently completed his first 18 months in office. The new Supervisor didn’t waste any time getting to work, and points to a number of projects he’s undertaken since joining the Board.

One issue that impacts almost every area of the County is illegal dumping. Supervisor Rubio and his staff are personally involved in a number of clean up efforts. In fact, Supervisor Rubio tracks the number of illegally dumped tires he collects. So far that number exceeds 2,000.

“I want to make east Bakersfield, Lamont, Arvin and other areas within the Fifth District places people can be proud of,” Supervisor Rubio said. “Everyone needs to get involved and help fight illegal dumping that damages the quality of life and economic growth of our communities.”

Some of the biggest concerns residents in the Fifth District voiced at a recent community meeting in Greenfield were graffiti and potholes. Supervisor Rubio is working on an anti-graffiti campaign to address this problem.

He encourages people to call 661/32-ERASE (661/323-2773) to report graffiti.

“I work hard to listen to the needs of residents so we can work together to develop solutions to our problems,” Supervisor Rubio said. “The many community meetings I’ve held led to creation of a to-do list of unmet needs in the area that can be used as a starting point for improvements.”

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Kern County’s Biggest Losers Are Real Winners

Thirty-five County employees just completed phase one of “Kern County’s Biggest Loser” program. During the first six weeks of the program, the employees collectively lost more than 125 pounds and 71 inches of fat.

The program promotes overall employee health. “Helping employees lose weight keeps them healthier and decreases health insurance claims,” explained Bill Douglas, County Employee Relations Officer. Robin Hall, Auditor/Appraiser at the Assessor’s Office, lost 17 pounds and won the female category. Robin’s trick to losing weight is riding her bike to and from work from her home in southwest Bakersfield. She’s continuing to ride her bike and lose weight.

Tom Newell, Liability Claims Adjuster at Risk Management, lost nearly 9 pounds. He trained with a personal trainer who “pushed me to the limit,” he said. “I also quit the office donut club,” he said.

The best winner overall was Elaine Kosareff, Office Services Technician at General Services. Elaine lost more than 7 pounds and 2 percent of her body fat and is continuing to lose. Elaine works out four or five times a week. “I run in place on a jogging pad and use

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Avoid Mosquitoes, Avoid West Nile Virus

Last month, a Kern County man was the state’s first West Nile Virus victim of the year. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds and can transmit the virus to humans and animals.

In order to protect yourself and your family from the mosquitoes that carry the virus, the Public Health Department suggests the following:

Eliminate all sources of standing water where mosquitoes can breed. Contact your mosquito abatement district if you notice a significant mosquito problem.

Avoid being outdoors at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active. When outdoors, wear long sleeves and long pants whenever possible.

Use insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus according to label instructions.

Make sure the doors and windows in your home have tight fitting screens with no holes or tears.

Report any ill or dead birds. Consult veterinarians to properly vaccinate horses.

“Ten to fifteen percent of infected individuals who do become ill can expect to experience mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever, headache, and body aches, approximately 5 to 15 days after being bitten by a mosquito.”

“Currenty, there is no human vaccine or treatment available and most persons recover without medical assistance,” Jinadu adds.

It is important to remember that most people who are infected with West Nile Virus do not usually become ill and may have no symptoms,” says Dr. B.A. Jinadu, M.D., Public Health Services Department Director.

“To receive a free brochure with information on West Nile Virus, in English or Spanish, click on www.co.kern.ca.us/health/wnv.asp. If you find a dead bird, call the state toll-free hotline at 877-WNV-BIRD (877/968-2473), or go online at the California Department of Health Services web site www.westnile.ca.gov. For a supply of mosquito fish used to control larvae in troughs and ponds, call the Kern Mosquito and Vector Control District at 661/589-2744.”

What Makes Kern County’s Medical Benefit Plan So Great? Choice.

Did you know that under the County’s health benefit plan you and your family receive benefits no matter which doctor you choose? The plans offer two benefit levels based on whether the doctor is in-network or out-of-network. Regardless of choice, coverage is provided.

Most of you select a doctor who is in-network. This means you receive services from your Primary Care Physician (“PCP”) or that your PCP has referred you to a contracted specialist. Contracted specialists are doctors who contract with the plan administrator (Gallagher Benefits Administrators). This means you will receive maximum benefits under the County’s health plan. Typically, only a copayment is required for each doctor’s visit.

What you may not realize is that benefits are also paid when you visit an out-of-network doctor. When using an out-of-network doctor, the County health plan typically covers 70% of reasonable and customary charges, after the deductible has been paid. You will be responsible to meet your deductible, pay the remaining 30% of reasonable and customary charges and possibly the amount billed by the doctor that is above reasonable and customary.

It is important to note that when you use an out-of-network plan, the amount you are responsible to pay is limited to the annual out-of-pocket maximum of $2,000 per individual or $4,000 per family per year. However, if you use an out-of-network doctor, amounts beyond reasonable and customary charges are not included in the calendar year out-of-pocket maximum. So, your actual out-of-pocket expenses could exceed the annual $2,000/$4,000 limits.

The bottom line is that Kern County’s Medical Benefit Plan offers plenty of flexibility. If you use an in-network physician, in most cases you are only responsible for a copayment. However, you can visit any doctor you choose. If you decide to receive services from an out-of-network physician, be sure you understand the additional costs.

For more information, contact Gallagher at 866/568-5376 or its Bakersfield office at 888/478-2450.
Adult and Aging Services Provides Help for Seniors, Families & Friends

As our parents and relatives age, many of us find ourselves in the role of caregiver and we often don’t know where to turn for help. The Kern County Aging and Adult Services Department (KCAASD) is a great way to find services for older persons, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers.

What does that mean to you as a county employee? It means someone is there to help you find resources to deal with the many challenges associated with aging or disabilities. The department will connect you and your loved ones with services needed to achieve maximum independence, even if your loved one lives outside of Kern County.

A county employee was faced with the challenge of adapting her 87-year-old father’s home to meet his needs after surgery. KCAASD referred her to a handyman who built handrails for the stairway and bathroom. The department also helped her find home health and respite care to give him the temporary assistance he needed as he recuperated. Her father was able to return to his home of 52 years and sleep upstairs in his own bedroom.

With 112 employees in KCAASD, Director Debbie Stevenson and her staff provide a variety of services to insure quality of life while promoting independence and preserving the dignity of older adults and persons with disabilities. Services focus on helping individuals remain safely in their homes.

One program, targeting the safety of seniors and dependent adults, is Adult Protective Services. Staff respond 24/7 to reports of suspected abuse including physical, sexual, and financial as well as self-neglect.

Self-neglect and abandonment are often unreported. If you know of an elderly person who is isolated and does not appear to be meeting his or her own needs, Aging and Adult Services may be able to help connect the individual with community resources to improve the situation.

Another program available to any Medicare beneficiary (age 65 or older and/or disabled adults) is the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy program. Staff and trained volunteers provide advice on insurance issues including HMO’s, billing issues, appeals and Medicare Part D.

The Homeowner and Renter Assistance Program is another service provided by the department. This free program helps individuals prepare homeowner or renter assistance claim forms. The claimant must be a United States citizen or designated alien; 62 years or older, or blind, or disabled and have a total household income of $40,811 or less. Renters may receive up to $347.50 annually; homeowners may receive up to $472.60 annually if eligible. Claims can be filed now through October 15.

Winners (con’t. from page 1)

the resistance machines. “I also cut back on what I eat,” she said.

The pilot program included employees in the County Administrative Center. Employees in the Public Services Building will be added to the next round of the program.
Keep Family Picnic Safe at the Plate!

The Environmental Health Services Department helps protect your health, safety and well being.

To help keep your summer barbecues, picnics, parties, and family reunions illness-free, the department recommends that you follow these guidelines for safe handling and cooking of summer foods.

Bring water and soap to wash your hands and surfaces like the picnic table and cutting boards.

Bring a meat thermometer. The internal temperature for hamburger should reach 157 degrees and chicken should reach 165 degrees before they are eaten.

Store foods that need to be kept cold in a cooler with ice or ice packs at 41 degrees or lower. Keep coolers in the shade under a tree or bench. Return chilled foods to the cooler immediately after serving. Throw out leftover meat, chicken, fish, eggs, and foods made with them, if they are left out of the cooler for more than two hours.

Put the grilled foods on a clean plate; don’t reuse the plate where the raw food was kept.

Foods that need to be kept cold (41 degrees or lower) include: milk, yogurt, cheeses, uncooked chicken, meat, shrimp or fish, hard-cooked eggs, deli meat, cooked chicken, meat, shrimp or fish if they are to be served cold. Salads that contain cut-up meats, vegetables or fruits also need to be kept cold.

Foods that need to be kept hot (135 degrees or higher) include: baked beans, hot dishes, cooked chicken, meat, shrimp or fish. While the food is being served or held for serving, keep it at 135 degrees or higher. Serve within 2 hours.

Foods that don’t need to be kept cold include: whole fruit, raw finger vegetables (most can be left at room temperature for a few hours), dried fruit (raisins, apples, apricots), juice boxes, canned fruit, tortillas, bagels, pocket bread, crackers or bread, pretzels, buns, nuts, peanut butter, and unopened canned meat.

For more information, please contact the Kern County Environmental Health Services Department at 661-862-8700 or toll free (800)-552-5376, option 5.

Fifth District Update (continued from page 1)

From new traffic signals to repairing potholes, Supervisor Rubio is enjoying his work as a Supervisor, and praised County employees who go the extra mile to help constituents.

“I have worked alongside many diligent County employees that respond at a moment’s notice to my questions or concerns,” Supervisor Rubio said. “Together, we will continue to provide great service to the people of Kern County.”

“I work hard to listen to the needs of residents.”

Fifth District Supervisor
Michael Rubio