

## Aera gives CSUB \$2.5M for energy research

**BY JOHN COX**  
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Bakersfield-based oil producer Aera Energy LLC announced a major gift to Cal State Bakersfield Tuesday in the form of a \$2.5 million endowment funding a leadership position at the university's California Energy Research Center.

The company behind a large

direct-air capture project called Carbon Frontier said that, by supporting an executive director for energy research position at CERC, it hopes to bring together local communities to help prepare the local workforce for future energy jobs while also ensuring the region provides thought leadership during the state's move toward lower carbon energy.

"We want to be positioned in Kern County to not only be the energy leaders but also the thought leaders when it comes to California's energy transition,"

Aera President and CEO Erik Bartsch said in an interview.

The endowed position is not considered a part of the formal community benefits plan the federal government is requiring of Carbon Frontier. But Aera said the investment will play a role in that it will help the company identify what sorts of needs ought to be a part of the company's detailed benefits plan.

The endowment follows more than \$900,000 Aera has contributed to CSUB since 1997, including financial support for CERC's

annual carbon management symposium and an occupational safety and health management endowment.

CSUB President Lynnette Zelezny thanked the company for the generosity she said will give undergraduate and graduate students a new level of access to perform energy research, hopefully building a pipeline of local scientists, engineers and others suited to energy innovation.

"With the establishment of the executive director for energy research at California State

University, Bakersfield, the entire region should feel an immense sense of pride that we will remain the energy capital of the West Coast for generations to come," Zelezny said.

CERC's multidisciplinary work is planned to be done on the university campus inside an energy innovation building being funded by \$83 million that was set aside in California's 2022-23 budget. Construction of the building has not yet begun.

Please see **RESEARCH | A3**

### BAKERSFIELD CHRISTMAS PARADE CRASH



ROD THORNBURG / FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

Daughters of Bakersfield Christmas Parade crash victim Arnold Rios — Anna Escobedo, left, Marissa Sullivan and Rachel Marantos — take questions from reporters at a news conference Tuesday morning in downtown Bakersfield.

## Bakersfield celebrates affordable housing project

**BY MELANIE NGUYEN**  
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Bakersfield launched its latest affordable housing project Tuesday afternoon with a ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the city.

The Sagewood Affordable Housing Project for Farmworkers is a complex of 72 apartments along Stine Road. In addition to the housing units, there is a community garden and a playground. The project also includes several units with lower countertops in the kitchen and handlebars in the bathrooms to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. All of these units are located on the ground level.

The \$25.9 million project took three years to complete using several funding sources such as the city of Bakersfield, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and private companies such as Chelsea Investment Corp.

City officials who attended the event included Mayor Karen Goh, Vice Mayor Andrae Gonzales and City Councilwoman Manpreet Kaur from Ward 7, where

Please see **HOUSING | A3**

## VICTIM'S FAMILY FILES SUIT

**BY JOHN COX**  
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Arnold Rios experienced horrific moments during the Vietnam War, but perhaps the worst trauma of his life occurred Thursday after he drove with his wife down the mountain from their Tehachapi home to see one of their granddaughters dance in the Bakersfield Christmas Parade.

The 77-year-old was standing in a crowd near the corner of H and 21st streets when he heard the roar of a Ford F-150. He spun around in time to see the truck accelerating in reverse out of an alleyway — and barreling straight for them.

With a soldier's instincts, the two-time Purple Heart recipient shoved his wife, Candace, out of harm's way, only to be run over himself at the hands of a 72-year-old man who police suspect had been drinking heavily, and who witnesses reported grew increasingly frustrated at being blocked by the parade route.

"He's a hero," one of Rios' daughters, Marissa Sullivan, said of her father at

a news conference Tuesday morning downtown. "He's incredibly heroic in every way."

As he slowly recovers in a local intensive care unit — both legs in casts, toes amputated, with a fractured skull after brain bleeding — Rios and his wife are suing retired real estate agent Alan Lewis Booth, who police say was behind the wheel of the truck that also sent a father and son, ages 21 and 42, to the hospital.

Partner Matt Clark at the law firm that filed the lawsuit on the Rioses' behalf, Chain | Cohn | Clark, told reporters at Tuesday's news conference that additional parties may be named as defendants, possibly including public entities and any eating or drinking establishments that served Booth alcohol prior to the crash.

Besides determining whether police contacted Booth before the crash and became aware that he was inebriated, Clark said, the firm expects to ask local government agencies involved in the parade whether any reasonable

Please see **LAWSUIT | A3**



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAW OFFICE OF CHAIN | COHN | CLARK

Arnold Rios, right, is identified as one of the victims injured at the Bakersfield Christmas Parade on Thursday.

### WAR ON HAMAS

Rift develops between allies, US and Israel with calls for cease-fire

**WORLD | A6**

### SOBRIETY

Drunken drivers face new obstacle with in-vehicle detection device

**NATION & WORLD | A6**

### HOCKEY

Condors welcome area students to annual Education Day game

**SPORTS | B1**

### KENNY GRAHAM | 1941 - 2023

## Former NFL player captured Bakersfield's heart



LOIS HENRY / FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

Kenny Graham shows off his mangled fingers in 2020, broken many times over during his days playing professional football.

**BY LOIS HENRY**  
For The Californian

Bakersfield, and the world, lost one of its great inhabitants Monday night.

Kenny Graham, a pioneering NFL football player, family man, ride-or-die friend, animal lover and irascible, irrepressible character, died in his sleep at Magnolia Place Assisted Living & Memory Care.

He was 82.

"Kenny did everything throughout his life exactly the way he wanted to," said

his brother Will Graham.

"And I firmly believe that if he had been able to choose the option of going out the way he did, that's what he would have done."

He had been in his own apartment in assisted living for several years, attending San Diego Charger reunion games, chatting up neighbors ("Sometimes to their dismay," Will joked) and enjoying family visits, though his health had begun to deteriorate recently.

This past August, Kenny

went missing for several days after he was allowed to sign himself out of Adventist Health Bakersfield hospital on Chester Avenue, where he'd been treated for pneumonia. He was on the streets for three days with no food or water before he was found.

"He's tough," Will Graham said at the time. "I don't know many 81-year-olds who could survive three days on the streets and still be OK. But he is tough."

Kenny was 74 when this newspaper began a series of

articles chronicling his life and fight for benefits to receive care for his growing dementia and symptoms of apparent CTE, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or repeated brain injuries from his days on the gridiron.

At the time, he was living under a fig tree on a vacant lot in southeast Bakersfield inherited from his father.

In true Kenny fashion, he didn't feel sorry for himself, nor see a problem with his

Please see **GRAHAM | A3**



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### OUTSIDE TODAY

YOUR COMPLETE FORECAST | **A5**

HIGH **63** LOW **38**

AIR QUALITY **115** | Unhealthy

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Advice.....	<b>B3</b>	Obituaries.....	<b>A4, A5</b>
Classifieds.....	<b>B6</b>	Opinion.....	<b>A8, A9</b>
Comics.....	<b>B4, B5</b>	Puzzles.....	<b>B4, B5</b>
Horoscopes.....	<b>B4</b>	Sports.....	<b>B1</b>
Lottery numbers.....	<b>A2</b>	Television.....	<b>B3</b>
Nation & World.....	<b>A6</b>	Today in History.....	<b>A3</b>