

FOURTH OF JULY TEMBLOR

‘A LOT OF SHAKING AND A LOT OF NOISE’

Strongest earthquake to strike Southern California in nearly 20 years rattles Ridgecrest; tremors felt in Tehachapi, Bakersfield



DARLA A. BAKER / THE CALIFORNIAN

This mobile home at Trousdale Estates at 210 W. Ward Ave. in Ridgecrest was damaged in Thursday's earthquake. Property manager Sarah Baird, who lives across the street from the damaged home, predicted it would be considered a total loss. See more photos online at Bakersfield.com.

RIDGECREST — A magnitude 6.4 earthquake rocked Ridgecrest and the Mojave Desert on Thursday, prompting California Gov. Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency in Kern County and President Donald Trump to tweet that he had been fully briefed.

The temblor hit Searles Valley, near the Kern-San Bernardino county line, at 10:33 a.m. It was the strongest earthquake to strike Southern California in nearly 20 years, and led to more than 87 aftershocks, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

"Just like the movie 'San Andreas.' Just like it. A lot of shaking, a lot of banging," said Terrell Jenkins, of Ridgecrest. The earthquake woke him up and he immediately covered his daughter lying next to him.

The Kern County Fire Department along with Kern County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue teams descended on the region. Because there



JACK BARNWELL / RIDGECREST DAILY INDEPENDENT

Kern County Fire Department crews put out a fire on South Sunland in Ridgecrest that started after Thursday's earthquake.

were so many calls for service, Los Angeles County, the Kern County Office of Emergency Services and the Bakersfield Police Department sent more resources.

Calls came in for everything from injuries to structure fires, downed power lines, vegetation fires and gas leaks. All reports of injuries appeared to be minor, according to the Kern County Fire Department. Some power and gas was shut off as a precaution.

Kern County Fire Chief David Witt said at a Thursday night news conference that initially some 7,000 people were without power throughout Southern California because of the earthquake, but by 7 p.m. the number was



COURTESY OF HALL AMBULANCE

Hall Ambulance deploys an ambulance strike team Thursday to assist with the evacuation of the Ridgecrest Regional Hospital following the magnitude 6.4 earthquake and multiple aftershocks.

SHELTER OPENS

The American Red Cross has opened a shelter at the Kerr McGee Community Center, 100 W. California Ave. in Ridgecrest, because of the earthquake.

Red Cross volunteers are providing safe shelter, meals and emotional support.

"We know that this community is resilient and we are working with local agencies to ensure the immediate needs are met," according to a Red Cross statement.

estimated to have fallen to 1,300.

The KCFD inspected the safety of highway passes through area canyons. The department reported that at least 15 patients at Ridgecrest Regional Hospital were

Please see **QUAKE | A3**



JENNIFER JOHNSON FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

PATRIOTISM ON PARADE

Enzo DiGiacomo, 2½, gets into the spirit of the holiday during the Westchester Fourth of July Parade.

LOCAL | A2

FOURTH OF JULY EVENT
Trump asks Americans to 'stay true to our cause'
NATION & WORLD | B1

BOYS BASKETBALL
For BCHS' Garrett Brown, coaching hoops is in his blood
SPORTS | C1

LAW ENFORCEMENT

BPD off to good start as it attempts huge hiring spree

BY SAM MORGEN
smorgen@bakersfield.com

The Bakersfield Police Department's quest to hire 100 officers in three years is off to a good start. Early application figures suggest the department will be able to keep to a hiring schedule some have said is overly ambitious.

Thirty-five recruits are already participating in a "pre-academy" program designed to prepare them for the rigors of the official police academy, which is scheduled to begin in August.

The most recent hiring process saw 774 people apply to be officers, 399 of whom actually showed up for the initial tests.

The BPD hopes to select the 50 best of those applicants for another police academy beginning in late December or July.

Bolstering the application numbers, the BPD has received four transfers

from other agencies, and those officers could potentially already be patrolling the streets.

Due to the rigors of the academy, there will almost certainly be dropouts, lowering the total of graduating police officers, but BPD officials say the early figures are encouraging.

"I think it is a step in the right direction for sure," said BPD spokesman Nathan McCauley. "Hopefully our people do well and succeed."

With the passage of Measure N last year, which raised the city sales tax from 7.25 percent to 8.25 percent, the city will receive an estimated \$58 million in new funding, a large chunk of which will go to the Police Department.

The added revenue will allow the BPD to expand from about 400 officers

Please see **BPD HIRING | A4**



SUBSCRIBER SERVICES
392-5777, 800-953-5353 or customercare@bakersfield.com

99/70
Complete forecast | B4

TO REPORT A NEWS TIP
395-7384, 800-540-0646 or local@bakersfield.com

They're 'Born Learning' in Arvin

City latest in Kern County to receive trail aimed at promoting literacy, being active among kids

BY EMA SASIC
esasic@bakersfield.com

What if children could play, jump, skip, run around and have a fun time all while understanding the importance of literacy? United Way of Kern County is on a mission to make that a reality.

Smothermon Park in Arvin is the latest spot in Kern County to receive a Born Learning Trail. The trail opened to the public June 20.

Signs are scattered throughout the trail that have children reading and staying active.

"By age 3, the brain is 80 percent developed, so there's a lot of learning going on. Kids are literally born learning," said Rachel Hoetker, education manager for United Way of Kern County. "It's nice to tap into those early learning opportunities without even realizing they're taking place."

This is Kern County's ninth trail. Other trails are located in Bakersfield, Buttonwillow, Delano, Taft and Wasco.

There are more than 750 trails nationwide in parks, libraries and other locations.

The Arvin trail, along with the eight other Born Learning Trails in the county, features 10 different stations with learning activities in both English and Spanish. Children are encouraged to talk, read, sing, dance and perform other actions as they make their way through the trail.

Activities include going down a sidewalk-drawn hopscotch, rhyming, imitating animal sounds and reading signs that ask them to think of words that begin with specific letters. There are even activities for parents to get involved with their kids.

"We want to have parents spend time with kids and get that bonding going on," Hoetker said.

On Wednesday, Chara Yochum, a first-grade teacher at Veterans Elementary School, and her daughter, Addison, a first-grader, were enjoying a cool morning at Greenacres Park in Bakersfield. Without even realizing it, Chara Yochum said her daughter uses the Born Learning Trail in the park.

"She loves walking on the alphabet trail. We didn't even know that's what that was for," she said.

As a first-grade teacher, she tries to instill a love of literacy in her students, she said. Seeing United Way of Kern County do the same is special for her.

"I love that they're doing this," she added. "Literacy is so



ALEX HORVATH / THE CALIFORNIAN

Greenacres Park is one of nine parks to have a Born Learning Trail. Smothermon Park in Arvin was the latest park in Kern County to receive one.



COURTESY OF RACHEL HOETKER

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at Arvin's Smothermon Park June 20 for the Born Learning Trail grand opening.



COURTESY OF RACHEL HOETKER

Children who complete the Born Learning Trail received a free book to take home.

important, so I'm happy this is available."

Mother and daughter Danae and Phalen Rocco came to Greenacres Park on Wednesday to take advantage of the swimming pool. Although they were not aware of the Born Learning Trail in the park, Danae Rocco said, "We'll do it next time we're here."

The first Born Learning Trail was implemented at Friendship House in 2013. Since then, the United Way of Kern County has installed about one trail a year, Hoetker said. This year alone, however, trails have been installed in three parks: Delano's Morningside Park in March, Wasco's Cormack Park in May and

Arvin's Smothermon Park. Each trail costs about \$15,000 and sees an estimated 1,500 visitors per year.

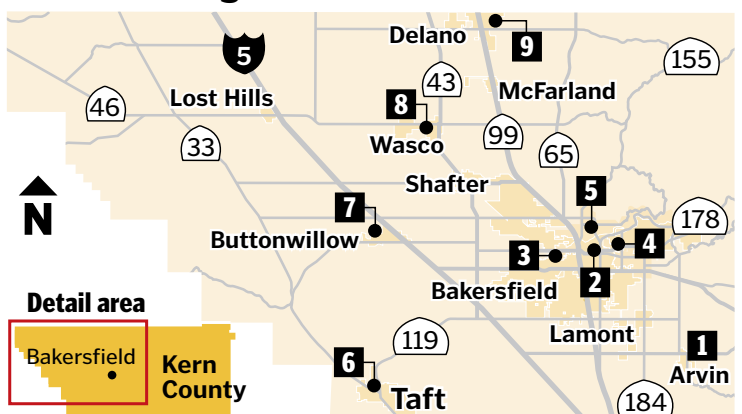
Parks are sponsored by various organizations, such as Aera and Chevron.

During each trail's grand opening, once children complete the tasks at all 10 stations, they are given a free book to take home.

There are no other installations scheduled for the remainder of this year, but Hoetker said United Way of Kern County is "actively seeking sponsorships" and is open to any locations.

"We will meet with the park department and say to them, 'You know your community best so

Born Learning Trails



- Arvin**
1. Smothermon Park
800 Walnut Drive
 2. Friendship House
2424 Cottonwood Road
 3. Greenacres Park
2014 Calloway Drive
 4. Baker Street Library
1400 Baker St.
 5. North Meadows Park
3300 McCray St.

- Taft**
6. Taft Rail to Trails
2nd and Main streets
- Buttonwillow**
7. Buttonwillow Park
556 Milo Ave.
- Wasco**
8. Cormack Park
1401 6th St.
- Delano**
9. Morningside Park
2108 20th Ave.

Source: United Way Kern County

THE CALIFORNIAN

you tell us what location would work best for you," Hoetker explained.

Other than the trails, the organization has a free Book of the Month club. United Way of Kern County will send age-appropriate books to every child, up to 6 years old, in a household.

"They're spending more time with their kids, their home library has grown and they're visiting

their local library more," Hoetker said. "Not only do we offer these trails to them but we give them this literacy piece as well for free."

For more information on the trails or to sign up for the Book of the Month club, visit uwkern.org or call 661-834-1820.

Emma Sasik can be reached at 661-395-7392. Follow her on Twitter: @emma_sasic.

HGTV show headed for Bakersfield to lead volunteers in homebuilding effort

BY JOHN COX
jcox@bakersfield.com

Some deserving Bakersfield family will have a new home in no time.

In a made-for-TV effort scheduled to be broadcast nationwide sometime next year, hundreds if not thousands of local volunteers using donated materials will work with Bakersfield homebuilder John Balfanz Homes Inc. to construct a house from the ground up during a four-day period later this summer.



COURTESY OF HGTV.COM

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" initially aired on ABC for nine seasons before its cancellation in 2012. The series was recently revived by cable network HGTV.

St. Jude Dream Home Giveaway.

Each episode of the reality-TV show, described by one entertainment news service as a "feel-good/tearjerker" series, focuses on a family in need of a home. It then takes viewers through the homebuilding process, showing the many volunteers involved in making the family's dream come true.

Formerly aired by ABC, the show was canceled after nine seasons in 2012. It was recently revived by

HGTV, the cable-TV network known for its focus on home remodels, repairs and families looking to buy in an exotic location.

Balfanz Homes was tapped partly because of its experience with the St. Jude project. Fresno homebuilder De Young Properties was familiar with the Bakersfield company's work and gave the show's producer Balfanz's name.

"We were automatically like, yeah, sounds great!" said Balfanz, who added the project has already



COURTESY OF ADAM DAVID WELCH

Jacob Balfanz, project manager and estimator at Bakersfield-based John Balfanz Homes Inc., describes how the completed build will look to a customer. Balfanz agent Kelly Allison is pictured at left.

been a lot of work as the homebuilder works out contracts with subcontractors and materials suppliers expected to donate whatever it takes to get the home built.

There should be plenty of opportunities for people to get involved, even if they have no homebuilding experience. The project will require the work of people who can seat and feed work crews, as well as produce signage, among other necessary chores.

"We need a lot of community involvement for this project," said Balfanz's public relations partner, Vali Nemetz.

"It's more than even just the home," she added. "We're talking about permit fees we're asking the city and the county to waive. ... It's a big ask, for sure."

A fundraising effort intended to provide a financial cushion for the new homeowners has begun. Balfanz said organizers are hitting up local sponsors

and donors who will be invited to view the entire effort from a premium vantage point in front of the work site.

He has been asked not to share a number of details, including how big the home is, what it will look like and where it'll be built.

But he was confident in saying this much: "It should all be worth it. We're super-excited."

John Cox can be reached at 661-395-7404.

At least 1 dead, 2 still missing in river

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

The Kern County Sheriff's Office received three calls for people missing in the Kern River Thursday.

About 4:30 p.m., KCSO landed a helicopter in the Rabbit Island area in the Kern Valley. Deputies gave CPR to a woman who was then declared dead.

At 4:56 p.m., KCSO Search and Rescue received a call for three

people missing in the river near Granite Point. One was rescued by the Kern County Fire Department, while another self-rescued. The third person is still missing.

About 5:11 p.m., KCSO and Park Rangers responded to the river near Lake Ming after a man, 20, was reported missing. KCSO has not yet located the two missing people.

BPD HIRING

Continued from PAGE A1

to about 500, along with 56 civilian staffers, over a three-year span.

It is hoped the huge increase in the force will allow the department to lower response times and respond to lower-priority calls such as burglaries that are not in progress.

Whereas before, the BPD asked victims to fill out an online form detailing a burglary, soon an officer will be able to respond personally, which the city says is a much-requested

service.

The department is hoping to hire 14 officers to fill vacancies that currently exist, increasing the total number of new employees they need to add.

The BPD hopes to hold many back-to-back academies until all the officers are added.

However, because it takes around nine months before officers complete the academy and field training, the public will not see the hiring boost for at least a year.

"It was always going to be a big undertaking and there are still a lot of things to do," McCauley said. "There's

a lot of steps to go through before we actually have them out and responding to calls."

He noted that later hiring campaigns could see reduced applicants if all the top recruits are hired in the first round.

However, the department has said it will search for hires potentially outside the state if applications begin to dwindle.

You can reach Sam Morgen at 661-395-7415. You may also follow him on Twitter: @smorgenTBC.