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Courthouse closure proposed

By John Watkins
The Daily Independent

Ridgecrest and in actuality all of Eastern Kern County and the mountain communities which make up the Kern River Valley would face the loss of a local court system should a group of judicial officers of Kern County Superior County have their way.

According to reports the judicial officers plan to submit a request to

the Court Facilities Advisory Committee requesting the closure of the Ridgecrest and Mojave Superior Courts to be consolidated into Tehachapi.

The recommendation is somewhat confusing, as less than 90 days ago, a plan was approved that would allow for new court facilities in Ridgecrest and Mojave.

In all that would be a \$55 million asset to Eastern Kern County as well

as all of Kern County. Making the expenditure plan was the Court Facilities Advisory Committee. The vote was unanimous.

In email correspondence with Presiding Judge Colette Humphrey, City Manager Ron Strand said, "I find it difficult to understand why our judicial officers would consider the closure of our court facility without any

See COURT, A9

F/A-18 crashes in Death Valley

News release

An F/A-18F Super Hornet crashed in Death Valley National Park, California, at approximately 3 p.m. Oct. 4. The pilot was treated for minor injuries at Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, and released later that night.

The aircraft was assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 9 based at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake.

Search and rescue units from NAWS China Lake, Fort Irwin Army Base, and Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma responded to the scene and rescued the pilot.

No civilians were harmed as a result of this incident. The aircraft crashed in a remote area in southern Death Valley National Park. The National Park Service and Navy will work together to coordinate cleanup of this wilderness area.

This incident is currently under investigation and the U.S. Navy is cooperating fully with local authorities.



Nita (Zills) Bates, head cheerleader for the Burroughs High School Class of 1967, is calling all BHS alumni to attend the All Class Reunion on Nov. 6.
DARLA A. BAKER/THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

Set your calendars: Burroughs All Class Reunion is Nov. 6

By Darla A. Baker
The Daily Independent

It's been 20 years in the making, but the next Burroughs High School All Class Reunion will return to Ridgecrest Saturday, Nov. 6, at the Desert Empire Fairgrounds.

The last all class reunion saw upwards of 2,000 attendees, and committee members are hoping to see these numbers this year, regardless of the pandemic.

Committee member Nita (Zills) Bates from the Class of 1967 sat down with the Daily Independent last Friday to talk about what alumni can expect this year. Not only is she a Burroughs graduate, but so are her two children and two grandchildren.

"This year, we are good to go. The only way we will get cancelled at this point is if the local fair board decided we couldn't do it, but we don't foresee anything like that," said Bates.

Due to the pandemic, Bates said

that she hopes attendees will use common sense.

"Wear masks, don't wear masks. Whatever you're comfortable doing. We are not going to check vaccination records at the door," Bates said.

The reunion will kick off at 6 p.m. and continue through midnight. It will be open to all free of charge, with no RSVP required. It will feature a no-host bar by Partners, DJ

See REUNION, A8

Ninja-like attacker arrested in Inyokern

Staff report

A man dressed as a ninja attacked a special operations soldier with a sword and another with a chunk of asphalt while the soldiers were training at the Inyokern Airport.

On Sept. 18, at approximately 1 a.m., the Ridgecrest Police Department received a 911 call from the soldiers who were reportedly forced to shelter in a nearby hangar after they were wounded by the attacker.

See NINJA, A9

Local school districts react to COVID vaccine requirement

By John V. Ciani
For the Daily Independent

Local education leaders responded to Gov. Gavin Newsom's mandate that all students be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Sierra Sands Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Dave Ostash said the district will continue to closely monitor the mandates and guidance handed down from the state to ensure a safe and high quality in person education for all

students and staff.

"The most recent mandate related to vaccines for students and staff complicates the planning process as we have been informed that the timeline is not firmly established yet," he said. "The notices we have received from the state indicate that the requirement for seventh-through 12th-grade students, as well as all staff, could be in place as early as Jan. 1, 2022, or perhaps not until July 1, 2022, depending upon

when the FDA approves vaccine use by students who are 12 years of age and older."

"As you know these are difficult times," said Immanuel Christian School Principal Heather Urich. "I can only imagine what other schools, teachers, and their families are experiencing and feeling during these unprecedented times."

She said as the school navigates through COVID-19 and the mandates by state and country they have kept prayer

at the center of each decision.

"We only desire to do what is best for our students and families now and in the future," she said. "We are grateful to Gov. Newsom for his willingness to allow for medical and personal beliefs/religious exemptions and pray these exemptions stay in place. We ask that everyone take the time to pause before acting and speaking during these stressful times, pray about what their personal

beliefs are, and model that respectfully to others and their children. At Immanuel Christian School, we promise we will keep the safety of our students as a priority along with their education."

The governor announced plans last week to add the COVID-19

vaccine to the list of vaccinations required to attend school in-person when the vaccine receives full approval from the Food and Drug Administration for middle- and high-school grades, making California the first state in the nation to announce such a measure.

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