



TOM BRENNER TNS

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In today's paper

SPORTS: JT Snow of Roadsters seeks out coaching advice.
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The Modesto Bee



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Mourners gather at a vigil in Ceres for homicide victim Amari Peterson of Modesto on Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025.

Coaches, team mourn Modesto teen killed in Stockton shooting

BY ATMIKA IYER
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Coaches, teammates, classmates and friends of Amari Peterson gathered at Whitmore Park in Ceres on Tuesday evening to honor the 14-year-old's memory and mourn him with a candlelit vigil.

Some mourners held posters of Amari in jerseys and athletic uniforms, with the "Forever 14" written on them. Others wore bandanas bearing his name.

His coaches from the Ceres Jr. Bulldogs football program stood together to share their memories of Amari and their heartbreak.

The young teen was one of four people killed, including three children, in a mass shooting Nov. 29 at a toddler's birthday party at a Stockton banquet hall.

"We won't see him at our games. But in spirit, he will be there. These are our kids. And they're dying from gun violence. There has to be justice,"

Jr. Bulldogs President Joe Estrada said. "We come to honor the little life that he lived. Fourteen years. Just turned 14. Forever 14."

An eighth-grade student at Modesto's Prescott Junior High and an avid athlete who played football, basketball and

SEE COACHES, 5A

Slain teenager's dad calls for justice, identity of shooter

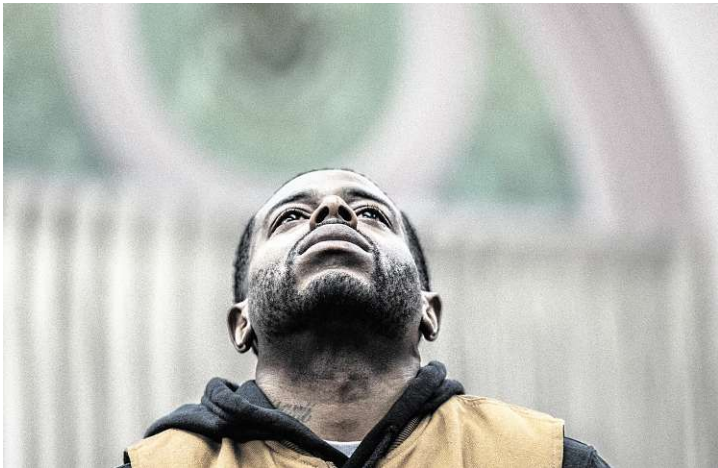
BY DEAN J. CONDOLEO
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One week after gunfire tore through a toddler's birthday party and killed four people, including three children, the father of 14-year-old victim Amari Peterson stood at Stockton City Hall on Tuesday and said he still feels trapped in a nightmare.

"I haven't been able to eat, sleep. I don't even know what time it is. I barely know what day it is," Patrick Peterson told reporters, his voice shaking. "My son is on my mind every day. I feel like he was stripped away from me for nothing."

Peterson, a Stockton barber and father of five, said he changed his life to be a better

SEE JUSTICE, 5A



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Patrick Peterson looks up on Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025, as Stockton Vice Mayor Jason Lee shares his story of being shot at 15 and losing his brother to a shooting. Peterson is the father of 14-year-old Amari Peterson, who was one of the victims killed in the mass shooting near Stockton.

Homeless students up 73% in Stanislaus County since pandemic

BY ATMIKA IYER
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Homelessness among K-12 students in Stanislaus County has increased across all racial demographics and school districts since the COVID-19 pandemic. It has doubled among Latino and Asian students.

During the 2024-25 school year, 2,932 students across the county experienced homelessness, up 73% from 1,697 during the 2019-20 school year. The increase in students experiencing homelessness is in line with statewide trends,

according to data from the California Department of Education.

Pandemic funding, in addition to new legislation requiring districts to administer a housing questionnaire to families, has helped both identify and assist students experiencing homelessness since 2021. And while improved identification efforts, in part, contribute to higher numbers, so do rising costs and housing challenges, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.

The number of students experiencing homelessness more than tripled in the Tur-

lock Unified School District and Patterson Joint Unified School District since the 2019-20 school year. Ceres Unified School District has had the highest number of students experiencing homelessness since the 2021-22 school year of the four districts The Bee looked at, despite having less than half the population of Modesto City Schools.

Latino students were disproportionately represented among students experiencing homelessness, comprising 85% of students experiencing homelessness at CUSD, 64% at MCS, 51% at TUSD and 77% at PJUSD.

Of students experiencing homelessness in the county, 83% were "doubled up," per the 2024-25 school year, meaning their families were staying with relatives or friends, according to data from the California Department of Education. About 17% were in shelters, hotels or motels, or temporarily unsheltered.

Asked what psychological and academic challenges children face when their basic needs aren't reliably met, Stanislaus County Office of Education responded, "Every school district in Stanislaus County has a liaison assigned to assist families, children and youth experiencing homelessness or at-risk of becoming homeless."

While schools provide free breakfasts and lunches Mon-

SEE HOMELESS, 4A

Stanislaus leaders OK allocation shift for Colorado-Rouse

BY KEN CARLSON
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Stanislaus County supervisors voted Tuesday to shift allocations in order to make \$26.8 million in improvements to the Colorado-Rouse area of Modesto.

The unincorporated pocket is one of seven priority projects for targeting American Rescue Plan Act funds, which were allocated to counties and cities to address economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Colorado-Rouse is in dire need of storm drainage, sidewalks and wastewater improvements. The area is bordered by South Avenue, Garden Avenue and Sutter and Sunset avenues, west of John Thurman Field.

Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors approved the ARPA-funded improvements for the county pocket, which will be a candidate for annexation to Modesto if the neighborhood is brought up to municipal standards.

The county pieced together \$20.3 million for the Colorado-Rouse project through ARPA, \$5 million from Modesto and \$9.6 million from the state.

Almost \$3.6 million in ARPA funding will be reallocated to Colorado-Rouse from the "Herndon project" between south Modesto and Ceres, along with \$600,000 in community infrastructure funds from Herndon. The county also will move \$900,000 in community infrastructure funds from the Bystrum neighborhood sidewalk project to Colorado-Rouse, bringing the total to \$25.2 million, which is still short by \$1.7 million.

According to a county staff report, sufficient funds are not available for the improvements in the Herndon and Bystrum areas. The two projects will be on hold until more funding is identified.

County Public Works has been talking with the Stanislaus Council of Governments about Measure L grant funds to cover the remaining \$1.7 million. The county could use road maintenance funds if the other sources fail to cover the total project costs, but staff will return to the board to get approval.

Supervisors also approved a construction contract with George Reed Inc. for \$21.8 million and a \$2.6 million contract with MNS Engineers for construction management.

George Reed was the low bidder when proposals from five companies were unsealed in September. Teichert Construction was the second lowest with a \$22.1 million bid.



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