

MERCED SUN-STAR

Another woman alleges Cesar Chavez raped her at UFW compound

BY MELISSA MONTALVO mmontalvo@fresnobee.com

A former volunteer involved in the farmworker movement is alleging union leader Cesar Chavez raped her in the 1970s while she lived with her family on the Unified Farms Workers compound, according to a new lawsuit.

The lawsuit filed Sept 1 in Kern County Superior Court against the Cesar Chavez Foundation and the UFW Foundation, alleges leadership at the foundations “allowed the labor union and civil rights icon to freely target women for sexual abuse,” according to a press release.

The unnamed plaintiff, Jane Doe, now 86, has lived with “decades from depression, anger, emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, alcohol dependency and ongoing therapy,” according to the press release announcing the lawsuit.

The lawsuit alleges the flagship farmworker union and the Cesar Chavez Foundation “made concerted efforts to hide evidence relating to sexual harassment and sexual assaults of girls and women by UFW members and leaders, including Cesar Chavez, in an effort to incentivize survivors to remain silent or prevent information relating to such wrongdoing from becoming public.”

The UFW foundation did not respond to a request for comment and the UFW, which is not a defendant in the lawsuit, declined to comment. The UFW Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded in 2006 that advocates for farmworkers’ rights and is a separate entity from the United Farm Workers union.

Through a spokesperson, the Cesar Chavez Foundation said it “recently became aware of the legal complaint. We are reviewing with our legal counsel and will respond in a way that stays true to our mission and values.”

This appears to be the first lawsuit to be filed after a March

SEE CHAVEZ, 4A



RICKY FLORES The Journal News/USA TODAY Network via Reuters Connect

On Sept. 11, 2001, a series of terror attacks in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania carved scars across our nation that continue to heal. To mark the anniversary, we pause to reflect on the tragedy of that day and the triumphs that rose from the ashes.

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Family-owned garden nursery closing after 50+ years in Fresno

BY BRYANT-JON ANTEOLA bjanteola@fresnobee.com

For more than half a century, the lush, green oasis at the southeast corner of International and Willow avenues in northeast Fresno in some ways represented a defiance of northward urban sprawl.

The 17 acres of mostly untouched lands instead promoted greenery — functioning primarily as a large plant nursery, as well as on-site housing for family members working at Willow Gardens Nursery.

“There used to be nothing else out here,” said Danielle DePrima, who has been heading up operations of Willow Gardens Nursery for the past 11 years.

But after 55 years of serving

local gardeners, plant enthusiasts and countless homeowners who were looking to greenify their homes, Willow Gardens Nursery is shutting down.

DePrima, whose grandparents founded the nursery and whose father has been the owner the past 30-plus years, said the nursery’s land lease is set to expire at the end of the year, and there has been interest from other family members to use the land in other ways.

The recent passing of co-founder Nancy DePrima also played a factor why the land lease was not renewed, DePrima said.

“It’s going to be really hard for all of our family to see this place go because our grandparents created it — out of love. It was their passion; it was for the family,” DePrima said. “I think



BRYANT-JON ANTEOLA The Fresno Bee

Danielle DePrima, operator of Willow Gardens Nursery, announced this week that the plant nursery would be closing with the business’ land lease set to expire at the end of the 2026 calendar year. Willow Gardens Nursery was founded by DePrima’s grandparents, John and Nancy, and has been around for 50-plus years.

all of our family has worked out here one time or another. My dad did so much work in growing it.

“We like to think the community loves us, and from some of the feedback we’ve received, they do love us. But I’ve had some time to think about things and process it, and I think it’s

SEE NURSERY, 3A



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