



Key sign of hurricane activity detected

INSIDE, 6A

VENTURA COUNTY STAR

MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Star reporter Tom Kiskin dines on bacon-wrapped pickle pops at the Ventura County Fair on July 30. Pickles are a thing this year at the fair. JUAN CARLO/THE STAR

In a pickle: Feasting on all things dill at the VC Fair

Tom Kiskin
Ventura County Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The woman standing behind the glass jar swimming with giant dills surveyed her inventory.

At the Ventura County Fair’s commercial building, in the Timbo’s beef jerky booth named for a clown, Blenda Highsmith sells ice-cold dill pickles and ones marinated in hot chili peppers. She sells pickle bites – some covered in Mexican chamoy sauce and others lathered in ranch sauce and bacon bits.

People can’t get enough of the dills, Highsmith said, also telling stories of funnel cake served with sides of pickles and grocery store shelves teeming with pickled-flavored items.

“This is the year of the pickle,” she said.

I was all in, having already heard rumors of dills served in pizza or stuffed with cheese and wrapped in bacon. I came to the fair in Ventura on my annual food pilgrimage. At booths that offer lobster tacos, turkey legs wrapped in bacon and spiral fries buried in chili, I was looking to feast on something different.

Like pickles.

See PICKLES, Page 2A



Lori Bennett of Fillmore prepares to drink a pickle lemonade from Hot Dog on a Stick at the Ventura County Fair on July 30. TOM KISKIN/THE STAR

6 more people die of hunger in Gaza

Nidal Al-Mughrabi, Jaida Taha, Charlotte Greenfield and Ali Sawafta
REUTERS

CAIRO – Six more people died of starvation and malnutrition in the Gaza Strip over a 24-hour period, its health ministry said, underlining the enclave’s humanitarian emergency as Egyptian state TV said two trucks were set to make a rare delivery of fuel on Aug. 3.

The new deaths raised the toll of those dying from what international humanitarian agencies say may be an unfolding famine to 175, including 93 children, since the war began, the ministry said.

Egypt’s state-affiliated Al Qahera News TV said two trucks carrying 107 tons of diesel were set to enter Gaza, months after Israel severely restricted aid access to the enclave before easing it somewhat as starvation began to spread. COGAT, the Israeli military agency that coordinates aid, said later in the day that four tankers of U.N. fuel had entered to help in operations of hospitals, bakeries, public kitchens and other essential services. There was no immediate confirmation whether the two diesel fuel trucks had entered Gaza from Egypt.

Gaza’s health ministry has said fuel shortages have severely impaired hospital services, forcing doctors to focus on treating only critically ill or injured patients. Fuel shipments have been rare since March, when Israel restricted the flow of aid and goods into the enclave in what it said was pressure on Hamas militants to free the remaining hostages they took in their October 2023 attack on Israel.

Israel blames Hamas for the suffering in Gaza but, in response to a rising international outcry, it announced steps last week to let more aid reach the population, including pausing fighting for part of the day in some areas, approving airdrops and announcing protected routes for aid convoys.

U.N. agencies say airdrops are insufficient and that Israel must let in far more aid by land and open up access to the territory to prevent starvation among its 2.2 million people, most of whom are displaced amid swaths of rubble. COGAT said that during the past week over 23,000 tons of humanitarian aid in 1,200 trucks had entered Gaza but that hundreds of the trucks had yet to be driven to aid distribution hubs by U.N. and other international organizations.

Meanwhile, Belgium’s air force dropped the first in a series of its aid packages into Gaza on Aug. 2 in a joint operation with Jordan, the Belgian defense ministry said. France on Aug. 1 started to air-drop 40 tons of humanitarian aid.

See GAZA, Page 2A

‘Lucky not to be killed’: Survivors recount Reno casino shooting

Jaedyn Young
Reno Gazette Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

It was just before 7:30 a.m. in Reno when a shooter stormed the Grand Sierra Resort’s valet area, firing off gunshots at the people gathered there.

Justin Agulia, 33, of Chatsworth, Calif.; and Andrew Canepa, 33, of Newbury Park, Calif., were killed in the valet area. Angel Martinez, 66, of Sparks died when the shooter ambushed him as Martinez was leaving the parking lot.

Matt Sitler and Kevin Weir, two Californians who had never met, were taken to Renown Regional Medical Center in critical condition. They survived.

A third person, a Thousand Oaks, Calif., resident whose name has not been made public, has been released from the hospital.

‘I thought my life was over’

Sitler, 33, was waiting outside the hotel-casino for an Uber with a group of his friends just before 7:30 a.m., ready to fly

home after a fun bachelor’s trip over the weekend.

The Thousand Oaks, Calif., resident told the Reno Gazette Journal all of the guys were standing in a circle when they heard a loud pop and a bang.

Sitler, facing in the direction the shots were coming from, watched one of his best friends get shot in the back and fall to the ground. By the time he could react, he had been shot in the chest.

For a split second after hearing the shot, Sitler could see the shooter waving his arms around, pointing the gun at

them.

“Once I realized I got shot, I’m now running in the opposite direction,” down the valet lanes, Sitler said. “As I’m running ... I got shot again.”

He flagged down a valet worker in a car, who pulled up and blocked Sitler from the shooter. Things started to get fuzzy, he said, but he remembers falling into what felt like a bed of rocks.

“I thought my life was over,” Sitler said.

See SHOOTING, Page 4A

