

MAYA ANGELOU DIES AT THE AGE OF 86

Writer was a Renaissance woman
NATION A3



GV STANDOUT LOOKS TO BREAK RECORD
SPORTS B1

STANISLAUS STATE TO HOLD GRADUATION
LOCAL & REGION A2

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ELECTION 2014



Karen Adams sold off Merced County's holdings in Lehman Brothers in 2008, before the firm's spectacular crash.

Adams leans on track record

INCUMBENT FACES HER 1ST CHALLENGE

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series profiling the candidates for Merced County treasurer-tax collector.

By RAMONA GIWARGIS
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On any given day, Merced County Treasurer-Tax Collector Karen Adams handles a portfolio worth up to \$700 million dollars.

Crunching numbers and tracking financial markets all day might seem tedious to some, but Adams' eyes light up when she talks about her role as the county's cash manager and investment officer.

It's a job she's been elected to do for the last 12 years, but Adams is being challenged in this year's primary election — a first for the 56-year-old.

While the treasurer-tax collector job might not seem like the flashiest, it's a critical role in managing and safekeeping the county's money. Adams' department collects more than \$1 billion annually from taxes, local agencies, schools, college and special districts.

Adams said she's proud of her track record of collecting, investing and protecting the county's money. She points to a 2008 decision to sell off the county's holding in Lehman Brothers before its massive collapse.

Some counties lost hundreds of millions of dollars, but Adams said she prevented a \$10 million loss to Merced County by listening to chatter in the market and keeping her ear to the ground. "I've got experience in financial markets," Adams said, "and a history of navigating through volatile financial markets and not realizing financial loss to investments."

Despite those accomplishments,
ADAMS | Page A7

Study says seniors are healthier

By ANA B. IBARRA
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Seniors are taking more steps to improve their health, according to a new report.

The United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings Senior Report ranked California as No. 18 in the nation for senior health. In last year's report, the state was ranked 24th.

The report, which drew data from 12 government agencies and research organizations to measure and compare the health of seniors 65 or older, revealed that there have been improvements in the quality of nursing home care and end-of-life care.

The report also indicated gains in levels of activity among seniors, showing that they are not only taking better care of themselves, but are also engaging more with their
HEALTH | Page A8

HUNTERS FIRE

Blaze at 40% containment

Firefighters work on hot spots at the Hunters fire near Lake McClure in Mariposa County on Wednesday.



Andy Alfaro
The Modesto Bee

677 ACRES BURNED, MAPPING SHOWS

By RAMONA GIWARGIS
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AND PATTY GUERRA
The Modesto Bee

MARIPOSA COUNTY — Firefighters doubled the containment of the Hunters fire Wednesday. In the morning, it was reported at 20 percent contained, but by 8:30 p.m. it

was at 40 percent.

Also, the area reported burned dropped by nearly half, from an early estimate of 1,300 acres to Wednesday night's number: 677. That's because in the initial stages of a wildfire, it's hard to accurately tell what's been consumed, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Daniel Berlant said. "Today, we were able to GPS map it," he said Wednesday
FIRE | Page A7

Fire sweeps through 4 homes



Christopher Winterfeldt cwinterfeldt@mercedsunstar.com

A fireman pulls a hose through property destroyed by a fire Wednesday, displacing 15 residents, at Kibby Road near Highway 140.

ALL SHARED BACKYARD AREAS; NO ONE WAS INJURED, BUT PETS REPORTED LOST

By ROB PARSONS
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As flames raced through the back of his home Wednesday, Manuel Rodriguez rushed outside clutching the only possessions he could grab — photographs of his teenage son who died four years ago.

"We lost everything else, but I got those pictures," the 40-year-old Merced man said. "It burned off the fridge — just everything else, I think."

None of Rodriguez's eight family members, including three boys

ages 2, 3 and 6, were injured, but the fire gutted their Nellie Street home.

Flames broke out around 11:30 a.m. behind several homes in the 600 block of North Kibby Road. Those homes share backyard areas with Rodriguez's home on Nellie Street, just west of Highway 140.

The fire was extinguished around 1:30 p.m., but cleanup efforts continued for several more hours.

The blaze also claimed three other nearby homes. The fire dis-

placed 15 people. No injuries were reported.

"All four buildings were residential homes, about 1,200 square feet each" said Jeremy Rahn, Merced County Fire Department battalion chief. "We were able to save two other homes from any damage."

Two other buildings sustained less serious damage, firefighters said.

Rahn said the cause of the fire was not immediately known.

Initial reports put damage estimates at more than \$300,000. Firefighters said three other homes were threatened during the blaze but sustained no damage.

Several families reported losing pets in the fire, including dogs and cats. About a dozen pets were saved and taken to animal shelters for the time being, according to firefighters and residents.

About 24 firefighters responded from the Merced County and Merced city fire departments with seven engines and two water tenders.

Crews from Riggs Ambulance Service were on scene as a precaution and supplied water to the residents and firefighters. PG&E Corp. crews helped shut off power and gas to the area, which likely prevented further damage, Rahn said.

HOMES | Page A5

QUICK TAKE

News outside Merced County

STATE SPENDING:

Former controller Steve Westly hit on an issue close to lawmakers' hearts when his office released a scathing audit of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars requested by legislators for their districts. A3

VA HEALTH CARE:

Inappropriate scheduling practices have compromised the care of patients at Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics nationwide. A4

UC Merced pauses in support of UCSB

By THADDEUS MILLER
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Scores of faculty, staff and students gathered at UC Merced on Wednesday to stand in solidarity with those shaken last week after a young man killed and wounded students at a sister campus.

Those attending the gathering signed a banner, hung a wreath and observed a moment of silence for the three students who were stabbed to death, three who were fatally shot and 13 others who were wounded Friday night in a rampage at University of California at Santa Barbara. The campus and UC Merced are part of the University of California system.

"It really struck home for me, and Isla Vista hasn't been home for 10 years," said Jason Souza, 35, director
KILLINGS | Page A8



Thaddeus Miller tmiller@mercedsunstar.com

UC Merced students, faculty and staff members observe a moment of silence Wednesday to show solidarity with UC Santa Barbara after last week's killings.

WEATHER

Sunny, windy, warm today; wind continues tonight, clear. High of 88, low of 56.

CONTACT US

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COMING TOMORROW

Merced voters are being asked to approve a \$60 million school bond measure Tuesday to make improvements to all 17 district campuses.



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