

LOMPOC RECORD



Air Force dog lends a paw

Preston trained to support, comfort sexual assault victims. **A3**



Cabrillo water polo

CHS water polo standout Rhodes has been unstoppable. **SPORTS, B1**

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LEN WOOD, STAFF

Chris Wildt, left, asks Maj. James Lewis about the new MQ-9 wing being proposed for Vandenberg Air Force Base during a scoping meeting Dec. 12 at Hancock College's Lompoc Valley campus.

ABOUT TOWN

Church to host 'Blue Christmas' worship service

The First United Methodist Church of Lompoc, 925 North F St., is inviting community members to attend its "Blue Christmas" worship service, scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19, in the church's sanctuary.

The name of the service comes from the season that is supposed to be filled with joy but can often be difficult for those experiencing loss. Attendees are encouraged to invite someone struggling with grief or hardship to come with them. Everyone is welcome.

For more information, call 805-736-1271 or visit lom-pocumc.org.

Lompoc city offices to close for holidays

Lompoc city facilities and most city field operations will be closed for the holidays from Monday, Dec. 23, through Friday, Dec. 27. City facilities will again be closed on Wednesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year holiday.

The weeklong December closure, which was approved by the Lompoc City Council, is being implemented as a cost-savings measure for the city, while minimizing the impact on the public and city employees, according to a city spokeswoman.

Crucial operations, including police, fire, water treatment and wastewater treatment, will continue to function during the holiday closures.

During the holiday closures, utility payments may be mailed, paid online, or placed in the yellow utility payment drop box in front of the Lompoc Police Department at 107 Civic Center Plaza.

Half-Century Club to host bingo games

The Lompoc Valley of Flowers Half-Century Club will hold a special New Year's Eve bingo potluck event on Tuesday, Dec. 31, at 341 North N St.

Doors will open at 5:30 p.m., early bird games will start at 6:30 and the first full session will begin at 7. Attendees are asked to bring a dish to share, and dinner will be served around 8 p.m. There will be noisemakers, prizes and free games.

For more information, call the club at 805-736-6669.

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Air Force shares details on potential new wing

Base in the running for MQ-9 Reaper remote operation center

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Less than a month after it was revealed Vandenberg Air Force Base was under consideration to host a new remotely piloted aircraft wing, Air Force leaders converged on the Lompoc Valley to share information about the significant construction and additional personnel such a wing would require.

Several officials tasked with assessing the environmental impacts of establishing the new wing gathered at Hancock College's Lompoc Valley campus Dec. 12 for a scoping meeting to field concerns from the public and share information about the proposal.

In November, it was affirmed that VAFB and Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida were being considered to house an MQ-9 Re-



USAF PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN HALEY STEVENS

Maintenance units compete in an MQ-9 Reaper weapons-loading competition at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada, on July 19.

motely Piloted Aircraft Wing.

The new wing would provide the space and facilities for pilots of the MQ-9 Reaper, which are commonly referred to as drones, to train and operate the aircraft, which could be physically located in various parts of the world.

"It's pretty exciting to be able to look at bringing a brand-new mission here," said Cynthia

Pettit, program manager for the environmental assessments through the Air Force Civil Engineering Center.

The establishment, or "bed-down," of the new wing, according to the Air Force, would be to fulfill the MQ-9 operational requirements while also diversifying operation locations so not all MQ-9 assets are based at one site.

"We're looking at biological

Having everything in one place could disrupt operations in the event of an emergency, like a hurricane or other extreme weather event, according to officials.

VAFB and Tyndall Air Force Base were selected by the Air Force as the top two candidates for the new wing from an initial field of 54 installations.

Pettit noted that both bases are being assessed equally.

She said the environmental impact statement that is ultimately produced will provide "apples to apples" comparisons for the secretary of the Air Force to review before ultimately deciding which base to select for the new wing.

The first draft of that environmental report is expected by summer 2020, Pettit said. The scoping meetings are being held to solicit comments from community members around both installations.

"We're looking at biological

Fourth annual Lompoc Community Snow Day planned for this weekend

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Despite Lompoc's normally mild climate, at least one portion of the city is expecting snow this weekend.

Members of the public are invited to attend the fourth annual Lompoc Community Snow Day, which is slated for Friday, Dec. 20, Saturday, Dec. 21, and Sunday, Dec. 22, at 2 River Road, near the entrance to River Park.

The event, which is free to attend, will be held from 3 to 8 p.m. Friday, and then from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting.

The celebration is once again being put on by Lompoc City Councilman Jim Mosby, who kicked off the first event in 2016.

Mosby is getting an assist this year from the Lompoc Valley Festival Foundation, a nonprofit organization that is helping coordinate the 2019 festivities.

Mosby said he is looking forward to bringing back the young tradition, particularly after a tumultuous year in Lompoc that has been marred by violence.

"What keeps me doing this is the smiles we help to put on thousands of people's faces," he said. "Especially this year, Lompoc needs a happy, positive event. It's been a rough year for Lompoc."

Forty tons of snow, or pulverized cubed ice, will be trucked in for this year's celebration — 25 tons on Friday, and then another 15 on Saturday. Mosby said

that organizers hope to make the snow last longer this year than in years past by covering it with tarps overnight.

Activities will include sledding, and snow-filled play areas will be set up for visitors to have snowball fights and build snowmen.

Santa Claus is scheduled to be on site from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and then again from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday. Additionally, snow cones, coffee, hot cocoa and other refreshments will be available.

Mosby noted that this year's Snow Day was boosted by several contributors. He credited the new partnership with the

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LEN WOOD STAFF

Estephania Burquez and her daughter Thea slide down a hill during Snow Day festivities near Lompoc's River Park in this Dec. 21, 2018, file photo. The fourth annual event is slated to return Friday, Dec. 20, and last through Sunday, Dec. 22, weather permitting.



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AT LOMPOCRECORD.COM

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SPORTS	B1	CLASSIFIED	B6

