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Here are 10 questions you should ask when choosing a day-care provider.

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The Modesto Bee



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Participants run down Sycamore Avenue during the Modesto Marathon in Modesto on Sunday. In addition to the marathon, runners participated in half-marathon, 10k and 5k races.

Modesto Marathon races heat up a chilly morning

BY DEKE FARROW
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“Shakin’” was playing and people were shivering. It was a brisk 41 degrees, with a light breeze, as Modesto Marathon participants gathered behind the starting line for the 26.2- and 13.1-mile courses. The hit by Eddie Money, along with other classic rock blasting from a radio station’s booth, had some participants dancing in place a bit until the races really got them moving. The chill didn’t appear to dampen the spirits of the 2,100-plus folks of all ages — runners, walkers, wheelchair users — who gathered downtown for the 7 a.m. event start. Rain might have, but marathon organizers lucked into their event falling a few days after the last storm system and a couple before the next is expected.



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Men’s marathon winner Michael Mrgudic of Modesto, on the first mile of the Modesto Marathon on Sunday. Mrgudic finished with a time of 2 hours, 25 minutes, 41 seconds.

Michael Mrgudic certainly wasn’t complaining about the

weather. The 27-year-old Modesto resident was all smiles after winning the full marathon

with a time of 2 hours, 25 minutes, 41 seconds. On the way out, there was a slight headwind, he said, but when the course direction changed, he got the benefit of a tailwind for about half the race and “my mile splits started dropping.” Between the wind at his back and the flat course that makes Modesto a popular run, “it was just perfect,” said Mrgudic, who was running his second Modesto Marathon and only his third marathon ever. He said he made a “rookie mistake” last year by not taking any fuel on the course. “I mile 19, I could barely run — I walked into the finish” after being in second much of the race, he said. “This year, fueled right and ran the whole thing strong.” The first woman to finish the marathon Sunday was Angie

SEE MARATHON, 3A

In Ghana, Harris ‘excited about the future of Africa’

BY CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press

ACCRA, GHANA Vice President Kamala Harris was greeted by schoolchildren, dancers and drummers as she arrived Sunday in Ghana for the start of a weeklong visit to Africa intended to deepen U.S. relationships amid global competition over the continent’s future. “We are looking forward to this trip as a further statement of the long and enduring very important relationship and friendship between the people of the United States and those who live on this continent,” Harris said. Children cheered and waved Ghanaian and American flags as she stepped off her plane after an overnight flight. She smiled broadly and placed a hand on her heart as she passed by the dancers.

“What an honor it is to be here in Ghana and on the continent of Africa,” Harris said. “I’m very excited about the future of Africa.” She said she wanted to promote economic growth and food security and welcomed the chance to “witness firsthand the extraordinary innovation and creativity that is occurring on this continent.”

Ghana is one of the continent’s most stable democracies, but Harris is arriving at a time of severe challenges for the West African nation. Its economy, among the fastest growing in the world before the COVID-19 pandemic, faces a debt crisis and soaring inflation that is driving up the cost of food and other necessities. A country of 34 million people that’s slightly smaller than Oregon, Ghana is also wary of threats from instability in the region. Burkina Faso and Mali have each endured two coups in recent years, and local offshoots of al-Qaida and the Islamic State group operate in the area known as the Sahel, which is north of Ghana. Thousands of people have been killed and millions more have been displaced. The fighting has created an opening for the Russian merce-

SEE HARRIS, 3A

Unemployment rate rises slightly in Stanislaus County

BY KEN CARLSON
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Stanislaus County’s unemployment rate grew to 6.6% in February, an increase from 6.5% in January and higher than 6.4% a year ago. The increase won’t stir many complaints in a county historically known for double-digit unemployment. But with high inflation and trouble in the banking industry, 2023 is not shaping up as a stellar year for the nation’s economy or economic activity in

California. The state’s jobless rate rose to 4.3% in February, compared to 4.2% in January. It equates to a 3.28% change in unemployment that is third worst in the nation, according to WalletHub, a personal finance site. The nation’s jobless rate is 3.6%. Last month, California had fewer unemployed people than a year ago, when the state still was recovering from COVID-19 business shutdowns. It had 840,535 residents without jobs, compared to over a million in February 2022. Stanislaus County mostly

showed a drop in retail jobs and business services in the state Employment Development Department report for February. The failure of Santa Clara-based Silicon Valley Bank this month and aftershocks could have an effect on employment opportunities, according to WalletHub. “The recent banking collapses can affect unemployment in a couple of ways,” WalletHub Analyst Jill Gonzalez said in a post Friday. “When a bank collapses, it can lead to a reduction in the availability of credit. As a result, businesses may cut back

on their hiring, leading to an increase in unemployment.” In addition, a loss of consumer confidence caused by banking industry turmoil may reduce demand for goods and services and put a chill on hiring, the analyst said. The Federal Reserve is not optimistic about economic growth this year, which could lead to national unemployment rising to 4.6%, Gonzalez predicted. Stanislaus County’s jobless rate peaked at 17% amid the coronavirus public health shutdowns in April 2020; otherwise, the county’s longer range economic recovery has kept the jobless rate below 10% since March 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. As COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed, county unemployment reached a low of 4.5% in

May 2022. The weather is another economic factor for Stanislaus. The severe storms, creating an enormous snowpack in the mountains, should provide plenty of water for agriculture in the Valley, balanced against crop disruptions as heavy rainfall extends into the spring. For those who might lose jobs this year, finding work at the same pay level should not be very challenging. “The biggest thing that unemployed people should look for when choosing which businesses to apply to is compensation that’s appropriate for their field and skill level,” Gonzalez said. “Since there is currently an employment shortage, workers are in a great position to negotiate a worthwhile compensation package.” Ken Carlson: 209-578-2321



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