KOBE BRYANT LEFT DEEP LEGACY IN LA SPORTS, BASKETBALL WORLD »

GAP DOUBLES ITS GIFTS: LAND FOR ANIMAL SHELTER, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS »

US REPORTS 1ST CASE OF PERSON-TO-PERSON SPREAD OF NEW VIRUS »
January 28, 2020 | Bill McEwen

Fresno youth and pets, along with good corporate citizenship, enjoyed a banner afternoon Tuesday at City Hall. First, Mayor Lee Brand and The Gap made it official. As I reported last week, Fresno is getting 4.8 acres for a no-kill animal shelter near the airport from the global clothing retailer for $1. In addition, The Gap is giving the Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County about six acres of land in the same area. The parcels are part of 200 acres the city sold to The Gap for $2 in 1997 in return for building a distribution center. What Boys & Girls Clubs will do with the piece of prime industrial property is undetermined. As Diane Carbray, the nonprofit’s CEO and president, pointed out, its popular Clovis club is just two miles from the site. But there’s no doubt that the donation — however it is used — will benefit the organization. “We are very excited to receive such a tremendous and valuable gift,” Carbray said at a City Hall news conference. “It is transformational to our organization in enhancing our resources for serving over 5,500 youth in Fresno County.”

Related Story: Gap Returns a Favor With $1 Deal for New Fresno Animal Shelter

An Unexpected Call From an Old Friend

Carbray said The Gap’s gift came out of the blue with a phone call. But The Gap and the youth organization have longtime ties — here in Fresno and nationwide. Donald Fisher, who founded The Gap in 1972 with his wife, Doris, once served on the Boys & Girls Clubs national board of directors. And, after building the distribution center here, The Gap teamed up locally with the nonprofit. The new shelter will cost about $20 million, Lee Brand said. Fresno businessman and animal lover Derrel Ridenour is providing the design plans free of charge.

Summer 2021 Opening Eyed for Animal Shelter

While Boys & Girls Clubs leaders must decide their next steps, the city knows exactly what it will do with its land. It hopes to open a state-of-the-art animal shelter by summer 2021. Fresno Humane Animal Services will operate the shelter. “We looked at a number of locations around Fresno that would be suitable for a new animal shelter and this property is by far the best site because it’s centrally located and close to the airport,” Brand said. “On behalf of the people of Fresno and all of our four-legged friends, I say thank you very much to Gap Inc. for stepping up to the plate in a very big way.” Councilmembers Garry Bredefeld and Esmeralda Soria brought their pooches to the news conference.

Coco and Buddy Steal the Show

“This is Coco, who was rescued from the SPCA,” Bredefeld said. “Our pets provide us unconditional love and they deserve shelter.” Soria introduced Buddy, “who has been with me for more than five years.” If Buddy were to get lost, Soria said, she would want him to be treated well until he was reunited with her. “All residents expect that,” she said. The new...
Fresno Unified School District’s staff of school psychologists will continue to grow with the addition of two positions in the 2021-22 school year, district officials said Wednesday night. And, depending on the outcome of ongoing budget discussions, there could be more. There has been significant growth in the number of school psychologists hired by Fresno Unified. Five new jobs were added over each of the past three years, raising the total to 77.

But a longtime Fresno Unified school psychologist had warned that the district was in danger of losing its eight psychologist interns, who she described as “the cream of the crop,” to neighboring districts offering early-hire contingency contracts. School board president Keshia Thomas appeared torn at Wednesday’s meeting over balancing the need for more school psychologists against other district priorities. School psychologists are advocates for students’ well-being and assist them with processing issues such as problems with authority, poor academic performance, low self-esteem, and social anxiety.

School districts such as Fresno Unified, with a large number of students from disadvantaged communities, are in particular need of larger staffs of school psychologists. Thomas said she was aware that the district had no openings for school psychologists but suggested the board consider adding new positions. “I know that we don’t have a million dollars to hire seven people,” she said. “But seeing as our current status is where it is, is it possible — if the board chooses — is it possible for us to look into hiring a couple, a few? Two, three maybe? And...
LOS ANGELES — Kobe Bryant inspired a generation of basketball players worldwide with sublime skills and an unquenchable competitive fire. He earned Los Angeles’ eternal adoration during his two decades as the fierce soul of the beloved Lakers, and he was respected by basketball fans from every place with a hoop and a dream, including his native Philadelphia and in Italy, his other childhood home.

Less than four years into his retirement, Bryant was seizing new challenges and working to inspire his daughters’ generation through sports and storytelling when his next chapter ended shockingly early. Bryant, the 18-time All-Star who won five NBA championships and became one of the greatest basketball players of his generation during a 20-year career all with the Lakers, died in a helicopter crash Sunday. He was 41. The crash occurred in the foggy hills above Calabasas, California, about 30 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles. Bryant was killed, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press, and a different person familiar with the case confirmed Bryant’s 13-year-old daughter Gianna also died. Both of the AP’s unnamed sources spoke on condition of anonymity because few details of the crash had been released publicly.

The Crash Occurred About 20 Miles From Mamba Sports Academy

Bryant lived south of Los Angeles in coastal Orange County, and he often used helicopters to save time and avoid Southern California’s notorious traffic. He traveled to practices and games by helicopter before his playing career ended in 2016. He continued to use them after retirement as he attended to his new ventures, which included a burgeoning entertainment company that recently produced an Academy Award-winning animated short film. The basketball world and Los Angeles reacted with an outpouring of pain and disbelief. Bryant is all but certain to be elected to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame this year, when he is eligible for the first time. “For 20 seasons, Kobe showed us what is possible when remarkable talent blends with an absolute devotion to winning,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “He was one of the most extraordinary players in the history of our game with accomplishments that are legendary … but he will be remembered most for inspiring people around the world to pick up a basketball and compete to the very best of their ability.”

The crash occurred about 20 miles from Mamba Sports Academy, Bryant’s basketball training complex in Newbury Park, California. A youth basketball tournament — the Mamba Cup — was scheduled for a second day of competition Sunday at the facility, and Bryant had attended the opening day Saturday with Gianna. Bryant and his wife, Vanessa, had four daughters. He had been a vocal booster of women’s sports since his retirement, coaching and mentoring basketball players around the world while also backing women’s soccer and other endeavors.

Bryant retired as the third-leading scorer in NBA history with 33,643 points, all scored in Lakers purple and gold. The self-nicknamed Black Mamba was a prolific, gifted shooter with a sublime all-around game and a...
HIGH-PROFILE HOUSING BILL SB 50 FAILS TO PASS STATE SENATE

SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers have failed to pass the most ambitious proposal yet to combat a growing housing crisis in the nation's most populous state, voting down legislation twice in two days that would have overridden local zoning laws to let developers build small apartment buildings in neighborhoods reserved for single-family homes.

Senate Bill 50 was meant to address an estimated shortage of 3.5 million homes that has driven up rents and contributed to a growing homelessness problem. It was authored by Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat from San Francisco, home to some of the highest housing prices in the country.

The bill failed to pass Wednesday by three votes. It was brought up again on Thursday for “reconsideration,” which gave legislators another shot at passage. The bill failed again, with no change in vote totals from the previous day.

In a news conference following Thursday’s vote, Wiener said he was “deeply disappointed” that SB 50 failed. “Fundamentally, this is about addressing California’s debilitating housing shortage,” he said. Wiener pledged to continue pressing for legislative solutions. “Dramatically addressing the supply of housing in California must happen,” he said. Wiener had been working on the measure since last year, saying lawmakers...
NEW YORK — Health officials Thursday reported the first U.S. case of person-to-person spread of the new virus from China. The man is married to the Chicago woman who got sick from the virus after she returned from a trip to Wuhan, China, the epicenter of the outbreak. There have been cases reported of the infectious virus spreading to others in a household or workplace in China and elsewhere.

The new case is the sixth reported in the United States. The other five were travelers who developed the illness after returning to the U.S. from China. The latest patient had not been in China.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Illinois health officials said that health workers and people who have been in contact with the latest patient are being monitored for symptoms. “We anticipated this,” said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University infectious diseases expert. “The kind of contact that you have in a household is very close and very prolonged. That’s the kind of circumstance where we would anticipate a virus such as this could be transmitted.”

The virus can cause fever, coughing, wheezing and pneumonia. It is a member of the coronavirus family that’s a close cousin to the SARS and MERS viruses that have caused outbreaks in the past. The new virus has sickened thousands, mostly in China, and killed about 170. An international outbreak caused by the virus first emerged last month in China. Doctors there began seeing the new virus in people who got sick after spending time at a wholesale food market in Wuhan. Officials said the virus probably initially spread from animals to people, as did SARS and MERS. The other U.S. cases are in Arizona, Southern California and Washington state.
WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed into law a major rewrite of the rules of trade with Canada and Mexico that he said replaces the “nightmare” of a Clinton-era agreement and will keep jobs, wealth and growth in America.

Trump made renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement a priority during his 2016 campaign, although trade experts say the impact of the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement will be modest. “This is a cutting-edge, state-of-the-art agreement that protects, defends, and serves the great people of our country,” Trump said in an outdoor signing ceremony at the White House, where the invitation list included more than 70 Republican members of Congress but no Democratic legislators. “Together we are building a glorious future that is raised, grown, built and made right here in the glorious U.S.A.”

Canada and Mexico already represent the top two export markets for U.S. goods. But the new pact, along with the signing of a “phase one” agreement with China, dials down trade tensions that contributed to slowing economic...
WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump unveiled his long-awaited Middle East plan Tuesday, winning immediate praise from a beaming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but a swift rejection from the Palestinians, who called it "nonsense." Trump's plan calls for the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, but it falls far short of minimal Palestinian demands and would leave sizable chunks of the occupied West Bank in Israeli hands. Netanyahu said he would move forward on Sunday and ask his Cabinet to approve plans to annex West Bank territory — an explosive move that is likely to be met with harsh international reaction.

At a speech in the West Bank, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the plan as "nonsense." "We say 1,000 no's to the Deal of the Century," Abbas said, using a nickname for Trump's proposal. "We will not kneel and we will not surrender," he said, adding that the Palestinians would resist the plan through "peaceful, popular means." With Netanyahu standing beside him, Trump presented the plan at a White House ceremony filled with other Israeli officials and allies, including evangelical Christian leaders and wealthy Republican donors but no Palestinian representatives.

The Palestinians Seek All of the West Bank and East Jerusalem

The ceremony came amid Trump’s impeachment trial and a U.S. election year, and after Netanyahu was indicted on counts of fraud, breach of trust and bribery in three separate cases. The longtime Israeli leader, who denies any wrongdoing, also faces a March 2 parliamentary election, Israel’s third in less than a year. The Palestinians seek all of the West Bank and east Jerusalem — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war — for an independent state and the removal of more than 700,000 Israeli settlers from these areas. But as details emerged, it became clear that the plan sides heavily with Netanyahu’s hard-line nationalist vision for the region and shunts aside many of the Palestinians’ core demands. Under the terms of the “peace vision” that Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner has been working on for nearly three years, all settlers would remain in place, and Israel would retain sovereignty over all of its settlements as well as the strategic Jordan Valley. The proposed Palestinian state would also include more than a dozen Israeli “enclaves” with the entity’s borders monitored by Israel. In addition, the areas of east Jerusalem offered to the Palestinians consist of poor, crowded neighborhoods located behind a hulking concrete separation barrier. Trump acknowledged that he has done a lot for Israel, but he said he wanted the deal to be a “great deal for the Palestinians.”

Thousands of Palestinians Protested in Gaza City, Burning Pictures of Trump and Netanyahu

He said his vision gives the Palestinians the time needed for them to meet the challenges of statehood. The only concession the plan appears to demand of Israel is a four-year freeze on the establishment of new Israeli settlements in certain areas of the West Bank. But Netanyahu clarified later that this only applied to areas where there are no settlements and Israel has no immediate plans to annex, and that he considered the plan to impose no limitations on construction. Thousands of Palestinians protested in Gaza City ahead of the announcement, burning pictures of Trump and...
LONDON — Anxious, angry, abandoned. Brexit elicits strong emotions, and as Britain’s departure from the European Union approaches, more than 3 million U.K. residents who are citizens of EU countries are feeling the impending separation more strongly than most.

Brexit is a huge economic and social experiment, and the U.K.’s European residents are among the guinea pigs. The U.K. government says they can stay and carry on with their lives as long as they apply for confirmation of their “settled status.” For some, that process is easy, or mildly annoying. For others, it’s deeply alienating. Tanja Bueltmann, a nor-thumbria University history professor who has studied the experiences of EU citizens in Britain as they grapple with Brexit, said many felt the country’s decision to leave the EU as a “real rupture.”

“People were promised that nothing would change for them. Yet for a good number, even the process already changes everything,” she said. Free movement for people among the EU’s member states is a core EU principle and Britain’s 2016 vote to leave the bloc was, in part, a reaction to high levels of immigration from other EU nations. More than 1 million EU citizens moved to the U.K after eight formerly...

OSWIECIM, Poland — Survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp recalled their suffering as they marked the 75th anniversary of its liberation, returning to the place where they lost entire families and warning about the ominous growth of anti-Semitism and hatred in the world. “We have with us the last living survivors, the last among those who saw the Holocaust with their own eyes,” Polish President Andrzej Duda told the dignitaries at the commemoration, which included the German president as well as Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders.

“The magnitude of the crime perpetrated in this place is terrifying but we must not look away from it and we must never forget it,” Duda said. About 200 camp survivors attended, many of them elderly Jews and non-Jews who have traveled from Israel, the United States, Australia, Peru, Russia, Slovenia and elsewhere. Many lost parents and grandparents in Auschwitz or other Nazi death camps, but were joined...