

ALEX HORVATH / THE CALIFORNIAN

Paramedic Cortland Ashbrook checks supplies at the start of his shift at Hall Ambulance. Federal records show Hall Ambulance Inc. received a federal Paycheck Protection Loan of at least \$5 million that supported the jobs of 458 people for about two months. Nearly 7,000 businesses in Kern County received PPP loans supporting 104,000 local jobs. Agriculture led the way with 19,392 jobs, followed by accommodation and food service (12,055 jobs), health care and social assistance (11,748) and construction (11,481).

100,000+

That's the number of jobs in Kern being supported by the federal Paycheck Protection Program

BY JOHN COX
jcox@bakersfield.com

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A resilient company as Hall Ambulance Service Inc. would seem, there was a time shortly after California's stay-at-home order took effect when call volume dropped to a third below normal and it looked like layoffs were around the corner. But after the Bakersfield-based company applied for and received a federal loan of at least \$5 million, Media Services Director Mark Corum said the company was able to save the jobs of every one of its more than 450 emergency medical technicians, registered nurses, dispatchers and support staff.

"Without PPP we would have been forced to lay people off and in the end we haven't had to do that," Corum said.

The \$669 billion Paycheck Protection Program, the federal government's primary tool for keeping people employed and businesses alive through the pandemic, has preserved an estimated 104,566 jobs across Kern County, according to an analysis of federal data by Bakersfield's Valley Republic Bank.

LOCAL HAUL

Numbers released earlier this month by the U.S. Small

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PPP LOANS TO KERN COUNTY BUSINESSES

The federal Paycheck Protection Program, established this spring by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, set aside \$669 billion to help U.S. businesses pay their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. U.S. Small Business Administration records filtered and formatted by Bakersfield-based Valley Republic Bank show 6,815 PPP loans have been made to Kern County businesses.

Lending totals were not disclosed, but a spreadsheet prepared by the bank indicates PPP loans to local businesses have supported jobs of 104,647 employees. Here's a breakdown of benefits by industry, ranked by jobs impacted:

- 1. Agriculture:** 393 loans, 19,392 jobs
- 2. Accommodation and food service:** 587 loans, 12,055 jobs
- 3. Health care and social assistance:** 747 loans, 11,748 jobs
- 4. Construction:** 618 loans, 11,481 jobs
- 5. Retail trade:** 747 loans, 8,804 jobs
- 6. Professional, scientific and technical services:** 675 loans, 7,458 jobs

- 7. Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services:** 327 loans, 4,997 jobs
- 8. Transportation and warehousing:** 431 loans, 4,660 jobs
- 9. Manufacturing:** 275 loans, 4,077 jobs
- 10. Wholesale trade:** 222 loans, 3,235 jobs
- 11. Mining (includes oil production):** 97 loans, 2,361 jobs
- 12. Real estate rental and leasing:** 261 loans, 1,774 jobs
- 13. Finance and insurance:** 168 loans, 1,327 jobs
- 14. Arts, entertainment and recreation:** 103 loans, 1,060 jobs
- 15. Educational services:** 81 loans, 1,058 jobs
- 16. Utilities:** 30 loans, 657 jobs
- 17. Information:** 59 loans, 629 jobs
- 18. Management of companies and enterprises:** 8 loans, 106 jobs
- Other or not classified:** 986 loans, 7,768 jobs

Sources: U.S. Small Business Administration and Valley Republic Bank

South High reconsiders its mascot

As the school ponders a change, alumni look back on times rife with images of the Confederacy

BY EMA SASIC
esasic@bakersfield.com

If you take a drive through south Bakersfield, you'll come across an area quite different than the rest.

South High School, known for its Rebel mascot, a Confederate image, is surrounded by streets named after Confederate figures, battles and warships — Fambrough, Merrimac, Sumter, Monitor and Shenandoah. One block away, you'll come across Plantation Avenue and Plantation Elementary School.

As a Black student at South High in the 1980s, Marcus Hicks felt it was always weird to have so much symbolism from a time period that only lasted four years.

"Everything hinted toward the Confederacy ...

Please see **SOUTH | A4**



CONTRIBUTED

A male student, filling the role of Johnny Rebel, would dress up in a Confederate soldier's uniform, while a female student was dressed in a Southern belle-type gown for the role of Jody Rebel. This photo was part of South High's 1972 yearbook.

VIEWPOINTS

The pageantry was nice when South's students were innocent, ignorant

Like virtually all societies throughout human history, we Americans have always romanticized our wars. The more significant the war, the more vivid the romance. We build legends and traditions around the wars and paint the combatants in boldly contrasting colors of good and evil.

If the enemies least like our own culture have been the easiest to paint, the participants of our Civil War are the hardest; the cultures of North and South, particularly in the mid-Atlantic region, were as alike as might have been possible. Armies didn't cross oceans to invade and then retreat back across those oceans when the fighting ended. Cousins fought cousins who spoke the same language and might have lived just a day's ride apart.

Resentments lingered at that close proximity for generations afterward. So did legends that helped justify the grievances that led to the conflict.

If the Civil War were simply



ROBERT PRICE FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

The fact is, the South's slavery-driven economy was at the center of the Civil War. Southern industry and commerce rode on the backs of enslaved African-Americans, and often cruelly so.

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COLLEGE BASEBALL

Former Stockdale star Jalen Smith is building momentum in summer league

SPORTS | D1



Federal legislation aims to help local media survive the pandemic

BY JOHN COX
jcox@bakersfield.com

The civic value of local newspapers tends to rise during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic as readers seek out reliable, updated information on important events unfolding around them.

But because news organizations tend to rely heavily on advertising revenue, even an increase in subscribers doesn't guarantee the survival of media that have long played central roles in local discourse.

A bipartisan bill expected to be introduced soon in Congress proposes to help by providing a series of three limited-time tax credits designed to help local newspa-

pers pull through the crisis.

The Local Journalism Sustainability Act, backed by Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick, D-Ariz., and Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., has gained the support of industry groups including News Media Alliance, National Newspaper Association, America's Newspapers, Report for America and Rebuild Local News Coalition.

As House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy put it, local news organizations have established themselves as vital sources of information for communities.

"I will consider this legislative idea as Congress debates different proposals over the next few weeks to enact additional relief legisla-

tion that will provide consumers and businesses who support local media, especially our community newspapers, the resources and pro-growth economic environment necessary to support our vital community institutions," the Bakersfield Republican said in an emailed statement.

Rep. T.J. Cox, D-Fresno, added that local journalism is how millions of Americans stay up to date with current events and local news.

"Representing the Central Valley, I know how important it is that everyone, no matter where they live, gets the broadcasting

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC

State data reveals a look at who has died in Kern County

LOCAL | A2

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PRICE: \$2

SOUTH

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especially the mascots, Jody and Johnny Rebel," Hicks explained. A male student would dress up in a Confederate soldier's uniform, while a female student was dressed in a Southern belle-type gown. "Even weirder is that our senior year, Johnny Rebel was a Mexican-American student, and Jody was Black. It was crazy to put them in that," Hicks added.

The school's mascot and other imagery have gone through several changes ever since South High School opened in 1957, but it seems like a changing of the guard might happen soon. Along with a petition urging the Kern High School District to change the mascot, a committee is currently in the early stages of being formed with the intent to do just that, according to Principal Connie Grumling.

REBEL HISTORY

The Rebel mascot and pride associated with South High School today looks much different than decades past.

In the 1950s and 1960s, imagery from the Confederacy was easy to spot. A "Rebel flag" was part of the mascot, and hung from horns during marching band performances. Football games featured "Dixie," a popular Southern song, and audiences celebrating touchdowns would wave the Confederate flag.

The Rebel mascot donned a gray and blue Confederate soldier's uniform — which remain the school colors today.

Ethel Dixon, a school nurse during the late 1960s and the first adviser of the Black Student Union for Progress, said it was hard seeing that imagery everywhere. But, having been born in 1944 and living with racism, she thought it was just a way of life.

"You just make your own comfort zone and live with it," Dixon said. "Even though it was offensive, you accepted things you couldn't change."

But Black students had enough. Around the late 1960s, a riot broke out, Dixon explained. Black students, fed up with seeing a Confederate flag waved around and being left out, let their actions show how they felt.

Dixon recalled several Black students telling her they didn't care if they got expelled for starting the fights. "I'm not living like this anymore," she recalled then saying.

The principal at the time, Don Murfin, listened and the flag was removed. Bill Miller, an English teacher for 37 years, said there were a lot of hard feelings from alumni when the flag was dropped, but he "knew this needed to happen."

In the following decades, more symbolism was removed, such as losing Johnny and Jody Rebel and the Confederate uniforms, said Grumling, also an alumna of the school.

In the early '90s the school stopped using the Rebel man as its mascot. There was a schoolwide



CONTRIBUTED

The Rebel mascot, as seen above and on the side of the South High School building at right, long ago shed its Confederate imagery. Today, the mascot dons a baseball cap with the letter "S" on it and is made to look like a rebel, but not one from 1861 to 1865.

competition, and the shield that's now sometimes used as South's logo was chosen.

"A James Dean type of Rebel was considered, but the school could not visualize that mascot either," Grumling said. "Over time, the student body became disenchanted with being 'the Shields,'" so the mascot was redrawn with stubble and a baseball cap. He was made to look like a rebel, but not one from 1861 to 1865. When looking at the mascot today, most wouldn't know he was a Confederate Rebel. But for a lot of alumni, it's something they can't forget.

LOOKING BACK

It's taken years for Nicholas Belardes, a 1986 graduate, to process his feelings and understand his identity after saying he was "ideologically sedated" into believing a certain narrative while at South.

In a Boom California essay, Belardes recalled the Confederate imagery that surrounded him — Rebels, the blue and gray colors, the Merrimac yearbook, Johnny and Jody yell leaders in military-style gray uniforms and Confederate hats — and admitted being so caught up in school spirit he didn't realize what it all stood for.

"I never had a course on the Civil War or the American South while at South High," he explained in an email. "That means I was never taught the context of what any of those school and street names symbolized: forced labor, preservation of slavery, the willingness to accept an economic system comprised of an enslaved labor force, where untold millions died violently, murdered and raped in jungles, slave factories, and on ships, prior to even reaching American shores. Let alone, what slave life on plantations entailed."

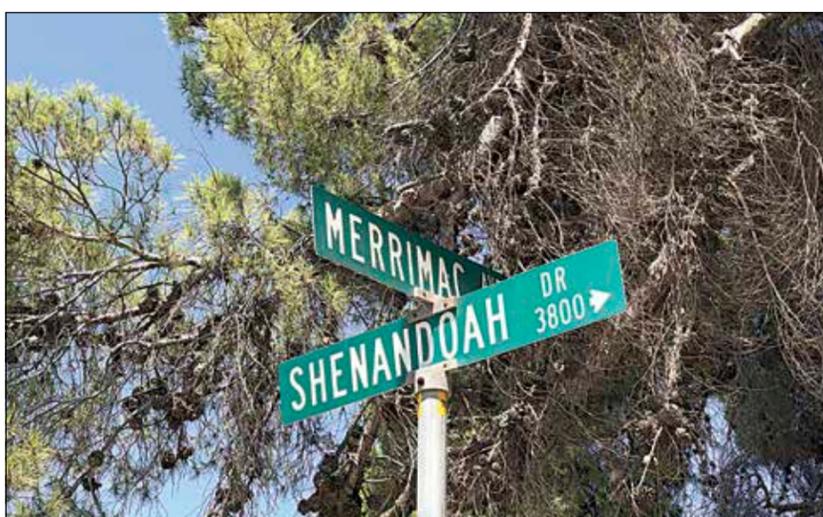
There was shame that set in long after seeing students of color dressed in Southern military garb, which he himself wore. But at that time, it all seemed "righteous and good."

Doug Walters, a 1981 graduate, shared a similar experience. He was looking for a way to get more involved in school during his senior year, and after losing the student body president election, was offered the role of Johnny Rebel.

Mostly a presence during football games, Walters recalled being dressed in the uniform and hat with



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The streets around South High School are named after Confederate figures, battles and warships.

a plastic sword. The role of Johnny Rebel was filled by a Black student the following year.

At that time, he didn't think much about the look, mainly because there was little discussion about it. To him, a Rebel was about "questioning authority, questioning what others may have thought was appropriate (and not) accepting everything you see and hear," not the Confederacy.

Looking back on the mascot, "It's certainly something that doesn't sit well as an alum," Walters said.

Most high school alumni, whatever their mascot may be, are attached to it and the memories associated with being a student. Hicks, who described seeing Confederate imagery around him as "demoralizing," said his classmates didn't really seem to care much about the history behind the Rebel, or how it may have impacted peers.

"If we were asked our senior year should it change, I'm quite sure the majority would say no," Hicks said. "There's attachment, pride, school spirit. It was important to them."

"I look back on my time attending high school and I'm ashamed of my thoughts on it then. I definitely noticed it and thought about it, but back then, I didn't think 'Wow, this is extremely racist' the

way I realize today," said 1990 graduate Vanessa Fox. "Instead, I thought that it was weird and even ironic that a school where white people were a minority was named after the Confederacy and that Johnny Rebel was a Black student."

Fox added that students who attend schools with these names aren't getting the message that "the Confederacy fought to continue to enslave other humans and went to war with our country and killed Americans." Instead, "they are getting the message that the Confederacy is something to be honored and revered and be proud of."

A NEW FUTURE

Grumling was a Rebelette, the dance and color guard team, and part of the Associated Student Body in the late 1970s. She enjoyed her time at South.

By that point, she had learned from mistakes of the past and embraced inclusivity and progress.

Looking back on it, "I should have understood it more," she said.

South High has come far with its student population. In 2019, about 83 percent of students were Hispanic, 8 percent were African-American and 4 percent were white, according to California Dashboard data. The school also uses Rebel United and Reb-

els Do It RIGHT (Respect, Integrity, Goals, Heart, Tradition) as its mantras.

"We are really inclusive here," the principal said. "You can be who you are here and it's OK."

Which is why Grumling feels like it's time to move past the Rebel name. She initially tried pursuing the effort around 2014 and 2015 and received push-back from some stakeholders and alumni. A school boundary change was also taking place, so the timing just wasn't right.

It's something Grumling still feels remorseful about. "I've wanted to do it and I didn't," she said. "I know it needs to happen."

Others have also tried to take on the effort, like Garrison Moratto last year, saying by having students go to a school that values respect and integrity, but still has the Rebel mascot in place, creates a "weird dichotomy."

Some are indifferent on a new mascot. Recent graduate Sebastian Cardenas said today's Rebel man never really affected him.

"When I went to school there, it had been so detached from that (Confederate) imagery that it wasn't particularly offensive to myself at the time," Cardenas said. He added it might be because of his race — he's Hispanic — that he's not offended. "I think at this point someone would have to tell you it did have

that root. ... It's a seemingly normal mascot now."

Though Dixon saw riots firsthand over Confederate imagery, changing the mascot isn't a battle she believes is important today. Instead, she's more focused on the things she can change in her own life.

She might face pushback again, but Grumling is determined to see the change through. She's in the early process of forming a committee to discuss and suggest a new mascot.

KHSD spokeswoman Erin Briscoe said, "We are looking forward to receiving the information that Principal Grumling and the committee will provide, and the district and the board will evaluate the next steps moving forward."

Belardes agrees it's time to shed not just the Rebel mascot, but any and all Confederate symbols.

"(A new generation of South High School students) have to not only wake up to the idea that Confederate symbols are polluting the landscape of Bakersfield, they have to be the generation who decides once and for all to put a stop to this," he said in an email. "While they're at it, they need to embrace their younger brothers and sisters at Plantation Elementary, and create change for them too, and then, because this is a monumental fight, bigger than any high school in California infected with this kind of Confederate imagery, they have to rally to change the street names too."

There are no plans at this time to change the name of Plantation Elementary School, said Greenfield Union School District Superintendent Ramon Hendrix. However, there has been some discussion within the district about the name of the school.

Alumni haven't dwelled too much on what they would like to see represent South High School if a new mascot is selected, but Hicks said he hopes "it is something that looks to the future and not the past."

Emma Sasic can be reached at 661-395-7392. Follow her on Twitter: @ema_sasic.

PRICE

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about the South's quest for states' rights and freedom from an oppressive federal government, surely we could at least all understand, if not agree. And Johnny Rebel would be the symbol of a reasonable point of view — dismissed by the blunt finality of war, perhaps, but otherwise worthy of respect.

Worthy, even, of emulation. That must have been a primary justification for the Kern High School District's decision in 1957 to name the mascot of its fourth Bakersfield high school, South High, the Rebels.

They went in, too. Members of the girls' drill team, the Rebelettes, incorporated the Stars and Bars into their routines. The student yell leaders were Jody and Johnny Rebel. Sports teams wore gray, powder blue and red. Touchdowns were punctuated with a cannon blast of bluish smoke — all the more dramatic if that touchdown

were scored against North High School, South's primary rival, which had opened four years before.

The fight song was "Dixie." In 1957, south Bakersfield would have indeed been, as the song references, "the land of cotton."

Local builders apparently bought into the enthusiasm because even some of the street names in a new, adjacent housing tract evoked Civil War imagery.

They're still there: Sumter Drive, named for the Union fort off the South Carolina coast whose shelling ended the war.

A few blocks east, directly behind the south end zone, the corner of Monitor and Merrimac, named for the two combatants in the famous Civil War naval battle that foretold submarine warfare. Streets named Fambrough, Shenandoah and Plantation — also the name of a feeder elementary school — are nearby.

All quaintly romantic if Johnny Rebel did indeed simply represent freedom from oppression and subjugation, as had been the case with another, more successful rebellion 90 years before.

But the fact is, the South's slavery-driven economy was at the center of the war. Southern industry and commerce rode on the backs of enslaved African-Americans, and often cruelly

so. If the war was about states' rights, it was the rights of states to perpetuate an economic model that the nations of Western Europe had long since outlawed.

It's easy to understand how South High students must have failed to grasp this at the time. They were teenagers and their school's Confederate-lite campus culture revealed itself without the racial context of the real thing.

In 1966, a year after the Watts riots, Johnny Rebel was portrayed by James Ratcliff, "a very funny and outgoing young man," according to South alum Jim Reynolds, who quarterbacked the 1968 football team. "He was elected by the student body (and) he did a great job, if I am any judge of mascots."

Ratcliff was Black and not the only minority to serve in that enviable role over the years.

"I do not recall any racially motivated animosity surrounding any of this," Reynolds maintained.

Perhaps not surrounding the mascot or team name, but South did experience student riots around that time, and by 1969 the Confederate flag and "Dixie" were gone from campus.

The rest of South's Confederate imagery remained.

And why shouldn't it, Reynolds said.

"At some point, we've got to stop," he said. "I was just looking at, for instance, the West High Vikings. These people are (named after) rapers, pillagers. We all know that — we've seen this (2019 'Who Were the Vikings' documentary) series on TV. What are they doing with that (mascot) name? What about the (East) Blades? Come on, a knife?"

Theresa Souers, who graduated in 1972, said it was easy to get swept up in all the period-piece pageantry.

"At the time when we were singing 'Dixie' and waving the flag, it was fun," she said. "I loved the tradition and the costumes and the whole thing about the South. But I was totally ignorant about slavery. Ignorant innocence, I guess you'd call it. To me it was South against the North. I wondered in hindsight why the adults hadn't done anything about it, but you can't change what's been done."

Souers, who's lived near Lake Tahoe for decades, said she assumed all of the Rebel imagery had been done away with.

But no: Six U.S. schools, including the University of Mississippi, still have the Rebel mascot, and, other than the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (the Runnin' Rebels), South High is the only one west of the Mississippi.

Innocent ignorance only works as an excuse for as long as you're truly innocent and ignorant. Those days are over.

Reynolds and his fellow South alumni might be well-served listening to another quarterback of that era: Jim Plunkett, who starred at Stanford at about the same time Reynolds was leading the Rebels, saw his alma mater switch from the Indians to the Cardinal in 1972, after Native American students approached the university administration about the issue.

"None of us ever thought the name was demeaning," Plunkett said years later. "But why offend somebody if you don't have to offend them?"

Robert Price is a journalist for KGET-TV. His column appears here on Sundays; the views expressed are his own. Reach him at robertprice@kget.com or via Twitter: @stubblebuzz.