

## **'Burn Cleaner Program' highlights town hall**

### **Residents qualify for \$1,500 voucher when upgrading to an EPA friendly wood stove**

By Alan Wileman

Sierra Star, Tuesday, October 7, 2014

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District Strategy and Incentives Adviser, Anna Myers, spoke at last week's town hall meeting at Wasuma Elementary School hosted by Madera County Board Chairman and District 5 Supervisor Tom Wheeler.

Myers addressed a new grant program with the Air Pollution District that would provide incentives to residents who replace their old wood burning or pellet burning devices with new, cleaner hearth options such as EPA phase II certified wood or pellet inserts.

Myers said the purpose of the program is to help reduce particulate matter produced from older devices which contribute to air pollution during the Fall and Winter months.

According to Myers anyone who replaces their old device with a new certified wood or pellet insert/freestanding stove would receive a \$1,500 voucher to put towards the purchase of a newer and more economically friendly device. Those who qualify for low-income assistance will receive an additional \$1,000 bringing the total rebate to \$2,500.

Wheeler emphasized the importance of improvements to older stove devices and encouraged those in attendance to take advantage of the grant money being provided by the organization.

Also present at last week's meeting were two Area 4 Bass Lake School Board candidates. Incumbent Dave Read and challenger Darlene Stephens gave introductions and speeches informing residents why they are best suited for the job which will be decided after the Nov. 4 elections.

Throughout the night Wheeler discussed the need to support the Eastern Madera County SPCA who has raised \$900,000 of its \$1,000,000 needed to build their new center at the Ahwahnee Regional Park, flu shots and the Oct. 20 deadline for absentee ballots.

Other issues included the recently signed ground water bill, the potential entrance to School Road off of Highway 41, the beginning of construction on the new Sheriff's Department near the Madera airport and the North Fork Indian Casino referendum on the Nov. 4 ballot.

On hand at last week's meeting was Cal Fire Public Information Officer, Chris Christopherson who discussed the need for continued fire safety and awareness. Christopherson was adamant about the lack of clearance and fire prevention done by several of the home owners effected by the Courtney Fire. Christopherson emphasized that fire fighters are risking their lives to save these homes yet a few home owners refused to do their part which added fuel to the fire that destroyed more than 30 homes in the Bass Lake Heights area.

Wheeler's next Town Hall meeting will be 6-8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13 at the Oakhurst Community Center. Members of the community are encouraged to participate and bring questions they have for their Supervisors.