



BUSINESS JOURNAL



Legacy of Leadership
page 13



Classic Car Restoration at
Rancho Cielo
page 22



Mural on Alisal Building an Expression of What's Going on Behind Its Walls

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

A huge, colorful and eye-catching mural was just completed on a rather unassuming building on North Sanborn Road in the Alisal section of Salinas. But the mural is not simply art on a wall, but a welcoming beacon to the community — what's portrayed on the mural is also a reflection of what's happening behind its walls.

That's because the building houses the Alisal Integrated Health Center, which includes Monterey County Behavioral Health, Child and Adolescent Services and a primary care clinic

MURAL see page 6

Local Election Results Bring Good Tidings to Business Community

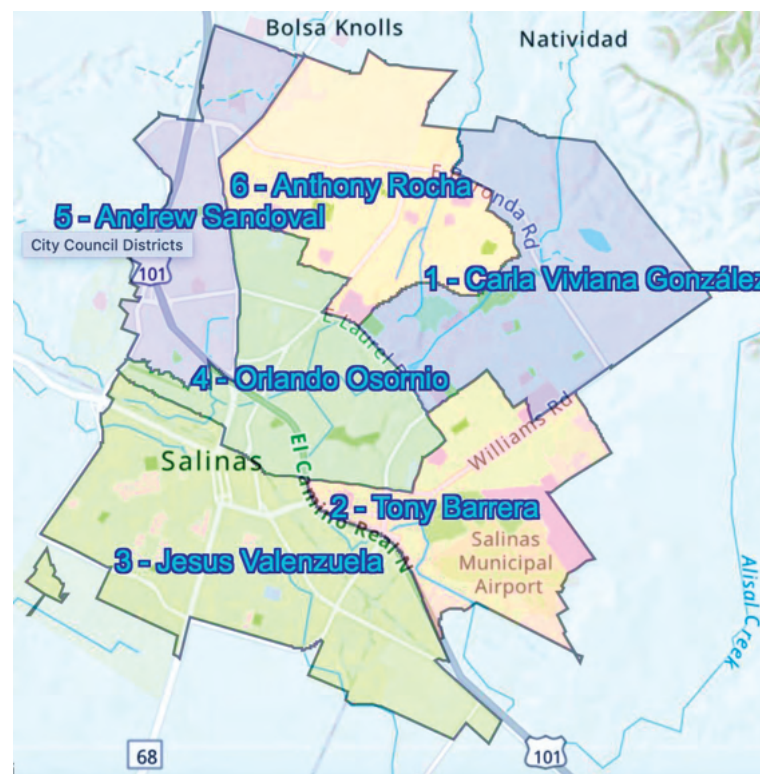
By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Voters in the City of Salinas seemed to agree with the perspective of your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce about the candidates running for Mayor and City Council in the November 2024 elections. All five candidates endorsed by the Chamber won their elections. This includes two challengers who defeated elected incumbents running for re-election and a third challenger who defeated an appointed incumbent.

Election Results

The Monterey County Elections Office was still counting ballots as the Business Journal went to press on Nov. 20. Based on those results, here's the outlook for the Mayor and City Council in 2025 and 2026.

Former Mayor **Dennis Donohue** will return to the Mayor's office, as 55% of voters chose him to replace Mayor Kimbley Craig, who is



Salinas City Council districts, identified with the outgoing councilmembers.

retiring. Chris Barrera, who also ran for Mayor in 2020, received 28% of the vote. Ernesto González García received 17%.

In District 1, **José Luis Barajas** won 54% of the vote and defeated Alex Ayala. He

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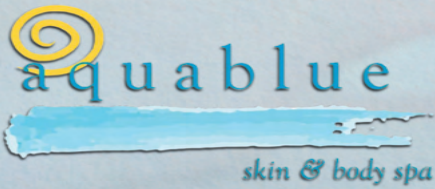


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A Season of Renewal for Your Chamber

By Jennifer Williams, SVCC Board Chair

As my term as your Board Chair draws to a close, I find myself filled with gratitude — not only for the opportunities I have had to serve, but also for the camaraderie and shared purpose that we, as a Chamber, have cultivated together.

The recent *Legacy of Leadership* event stands out as a special moment — a celebration of our local business community that embodied the vitality and promise of a new chapter for the Chamber.

I am pleased to report that the search for the Chamber's next CEO is nearing its conclusion. Interviews are complete, and I look forward to the moment when we can share an exciting announcement with you.

In November, we engaged in positive and productive dialogue with representatives from Amazon, addressing the concerns brought to light in the Member Survey. From this, a partnership is emerging — a testament to the strength of transparent communication. Plans are already underway for a community forum in Salinas this coming January, where project updates and shared concerns will be explored together.

We've put much in place for the Chamber to flourish in the year ahead. New city leadership, membership growth, exciting events, and the upcoming strategic

plan revision, all reflect a season of renewal for your Chamber. Yet in all this, one constant remains: our commitment to listening, partnering, and advocating for a balance between progress and community well-being.

As 2025 approaches, I am eager to witness Leonard Batti of Taylor Farms stepping into the role of Board Chair. His leadership, along with the dedication of newly appointed officers who will be announced soon, will guide the Chamber into this next chapter. I

will remain on the Executive Committee as Past Chair, continuing to lend my voice and support to the important work we share.

In this issue, you will find thoughtful contributions from our Government Affairs Liaison Kevin Dayton, including an analysis of local election results and the implications of those results on future public policy decisions affecting our community and our workforce.

It has been my privilege to serve as your Board Chair this year. As the holiday season approaches, I pray it brings joy and rest to you and yours. Let us greet the days ahead with courage and faith, knowing that the work we do together carries the weight of something far greater than ourselves:

a thriving, welcoming, Salinas Valley where people, families, and businesses succeed via economic opportunity and growth! 🌱



We've put much in place for the Chamber to flourish in the year ahead. New city leadership, membership growth, exciting events, and the upcoming strategic plan revision, all reflect a season of renewal for your Chamber.

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Taylor Farms
- **Vice Chair, Events - Amy Gibson**
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- **Vice Chair, GRC - Aaron Johnson**
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CREATING A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY • PROMOTING THE COMMUNITY • PROVIDING NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES • POLITICAL ACTION • REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENT

ELECTION - from page 1

will replace Carla Viviana González, who did not run for a second term.

Voters in District 3 were electing a city councilmember for a two-year term as a permanent replacement for Steve McShane, who resigned on May 10. The Salinas City Council appointed Jesus Valenzuela to fill the seat until the November election.

In the end, 56% of voters chose Hartnell Community College District board member **Margaret D'Arrigo** to serve out the remainder of the term. A candidate from 2022, Cary Swensen, received 21%. Councilmember Valenzuela received 17%. A fourth candidate, David Maisonneuve, received 6%.

In District 4, former Councilmember Gloria De La Rosa is returning to her old seat after winning 43% against incumbent Orlando Osornio, who ran for the seat and won it in 2020 after Councilmember De La Rosa chose not to run again. Councilmember Osornio received 40%, so this was a close race. A third candidate, Albert Lomeli, won 17%.

District 5 will also have a new representative on the City Council, as Hartnell Community College District board member Aurelio Salazar, Jr. won 55% of the vote. He defeated incumbent Anthony Rocha, who was running for a second term and received 45%.

Possible Policy Implications for the City of Salinas

1. Repeal or Amendment of Laws Regarding Landlord-Tenant Relations, Including Rent Stabilization (aka Rent Control)

Owners of rental properties and property management companies want to see the new Salinas City Council eventually repeal or amend some provisions in the package of three new ordinances that regulate landlord-tenant relationships. These controversial laws were enacted on a high-profile 5-0 vote by the



It's likely the new city council will shift the focus of housing discussions from controlling the price to increasing the supply to meet demand. (Getty Images)

outgoing City Council on Sept. 24, 2024. (Two of the seven councilmembers recused themselves because of conflicts of interest)

Your Chamber of Commerce will review and analyze each provision of the tenant protection ordinances to determine which ones could be considered reasonable tenant protections and which ones are detrimental to the rental housing market. In particular, the Chamber had concerns with the high-profile "rent control" provision to restrict annual rent increases to the lesser amount of 2.75% or 75% of the most-recent 12-month increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This restriction may lead some property owners to remove rental units from the market, thus reducing housing supply and complicating business recruitment and retention of employees.

Election results may suggest that a majority of Salinas voters do not believe in rent stabilization (aka rent control) as the essential strategy for easing the housing shortage. Even on the state level, 60% of voters rejected a ballot measure that would have given local governments authority to expand restrictions on the amount of rent increases.

2. More Emphasis on Increasing Housing Supply

It's likely that the new city council will shift the focus of housing

discussions from controlling the price to increasing the supply to meet demand — thus curbing the relentless rent increases. The stalled effort for mixed-use density development in downtown Salinas may start up again. There will likely be greater recognition and acceptance that some new housing will have to be market rate in order to achieve the city's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals.

3. More Funding for Police Officers and Police Technology

The movement to "Defund the Police" has apparently dissipated in most of the country and the state, and the City of Salinas is not an exception. In fact, a voter survey conducted in the summer of 2024 by the City of Salinas regarding Measure G sales tax renewal indicated strong community opposition to reducing the size of the police force and curtailing its activities. It was a warning that any elected official associated — rightly or wrongly — with softness toward crime would be vulnerable to defeat.

Election results suggest that Salinas voters ended up associating the incumbent city council with cuts to the police. In fact, the city council actually cut the police budget (by less than 1%) for two fiscal years before approving a substantial budget increase in the following fiscal year.

As reported in the Business Journal, crime rates in Salinas have plummeted for most categories since the mid-2010s. Although some of this trend may be related to decreased reporting rates to the police rather than actual declines in crime, the data is very positive at face-value and the trend needs to continue.

4. Greater Focus on Economic Development

Your Chamber of Commerce generally believes that lower taxes and limited regulations will encourage companies to come to Salinas or expand in Salinas, resulting in economic growth, quality job creation, and higher tax revenue. There may be renewed attention to the Economic Development Element of the General Plan (enacted in 2017) as well as faster progress with area-specific plans such as the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, the Chinatown Revitalization Plan, and the latter stages of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan.

How About YOUR Ideas?

This is your Chamber, and we want to hear your thoughts about what the business community wants to see from its local governments in 2025 and 2026. Your ideas will be considered as the Chamber proceeds with its strategic planning for 2025 under a new board chair, with new board members, and a new President & CEO. 🌱

MURAL - from page 1

satellite office, both divisions of the Monterey County Health Department. Inside the building, behavioral health therapists, social workers, support staff, psychologists, occupational therapist, and administrative staff work together to provide a wide range of mental health and substance use services to children, youth and their families, while the primary care clinic, doctors, nurses, and medical assistants help the community with their physical health care needs. The center not only provides all these services, but a welcoming, nurturing, and inclusive environment for those seeking help.

The immense colorful mural, which is about 34 feet high by 100 feet wide, was a collaborative project of the Salinas-based nonprofit community arts group Hijos Del Sol Arts Productions and the Behavioral Health Department, specifically Dr. Marni R. Sandoval, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health, Child and Adolescent Services.

“Dr. Sandoval and José (Ortiz, Founding Director and Lead Art Instructor for Hijos Del Sol) had been talking about the mural way before the offices opened, but they didn’t have the funding,” says Yessica Rodriguez, a longtime social worker with Behavioral Health. “They said ‘We’re going to keep this vision alive.’ Then Jose said ‘I have the funding’ and Dr. Sandoval said ‘I have a new building.’ The timing was right.”

Then came the idea of what was going to go on that big blank space. Sandoval and her staff worked with Ortiz to come up with an image that would not only fit the building’s purpose, but the community at large.

“How do we represent on the mural what is happening inside the building?” says Rodriguez. “We wanted to make a safe, welcoming space where people would feel welcomed. We wanted the mural to represent the people we’re serving.



**HIJOS
DEL SOL** ARTS
PRODUCTIONS

We work with families a lot so we want that represented. Families are a big part of the therapeutic process. Hope, health, welcome, love, connection and community, these are all things we value here.”

“We want the mural to be an outward expression of the work we are doing inside the building,” adds

Sandoval.

The building opened in May and Ortiz and his crew of painters started work in October and completed it in late November. His crew included former students of his, including Jose G. Nolasco, Juan Carlos Padilla, and Josue D. Rubio. Funding came from a \$50,000 grant from the Latino Community Foundation, which received funding from the California Arts Council to give to multiple art-focused nonprofits throughout the state, in which 72% of that \$50,000 had to go directly to artists. “With this grant, a gift came true,” says Ortiz.

The mural is titled “The Hug” (“El Abrazo”) which the staff at the clinic was able to vote on and take pride in (“To be able to say, I had a part in that, that’s quite a thing to be able

to say.”) Ortiz says the mural promotes unity, healing and connection within the community. Rodriguez agrees.

“There’s a lot of meanings behind the hug — protection, safety, love and feeling secure,” says Rodriguez, who says the mural represents the “vibrancy of hope.” “It’s saying, this is hope, this is OK, you’re going to be fine. These are such important parts of what we do at the clinic. We’re so excited as a team to see this come true.”

To celebrate the finishing of the mural and officially introduce it to the community, there will be a Mural Unveiling Party from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14 at the site, 331 N. Sanborn Road in Salinas. Ortiz said there will be food, music, family activities and

speeches by local dignitaries.

In addition to murals, Hijos Del Sol has completed 80 since its inception in 1994, and free spaces for aspiring artists and their families, the arts group offers free open art studio for youth and parents, Tuesdays through Saturdays at 443 East Alisal St. in Salinas; is bringing art workshops to Salinas City Elementary School district five days a week for the 2024-2025 school year; bringing art experiences to the residents of Acosta Plaza in East Salinas in December and all next summer.

Hijos Del Sol is also part of the MCGives! fundraising campaign that runs through Dec. 31 to raise funds for its Experimental Arts Studio in East Salinas. This project promotes self-discovery and cultural pride, providing a welcoming space at no cost to participants. Open five days a week, the studio offers resources for youth to explore and hone their artistic skills in a supportive, inclusive environment.

To donate to Hijos Del Sol through MCGives!, go to www.montereycountygives.com/nonprofit/hijos-del-sol.

To contact the Behavioral Health Department, call (831) 784-2170 or go to its website at: <https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/government/departments-a-h/health/behavioral-health/bh-home>. If you or someone you care about needs help, contact the department's Access Team at 1-888-258-6029 for a warm, caring, and confidential conversation. 🌱

The Alisal Integrated Health Center houses Monterey County Behavioral Health, Child, and Adolescent Services and an Alisal primary care clinic satellite office, both divisions of the Monterey County Health Department. Inside the building, behavioral health therapists, social workers, support staff, psychologists, occupational therapist, and administrative staff work together to provide a wide range of mental health and substance use services to children, youth, and their families while the primary care clinic doctors, nurses, and medical assistants help the community with their physical health care needs. Both working together to support the wellbeing of body and mind. It's not just about the services, The Alisal Integrated Health Center is a welcoming, nurturing, and inclusive environment for those seeking help.

Celebrating a Season of Giving and Community

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

As we approach the Christmas season, I want to extend heartfelt gratitude on behalf of Compass Church to the incredible non-profit organizations here in Salinas. These dedicated agencies tirelessly support those in need, helping to make the holiday season brighter for families who might otherwise struggle.

During this time of year, we're especially reminded of the importance of community and compassion, and it's inspiring to see so many people come together to serve and uplift one another.

This year, we're thrilled to partner with other area churches to bring joy to children and families through the Salinas Rodeo's Country Christmas Event on Thursday, Dec. 12. Together, we're gathering hundreds of toys to be distributed to families who need a little extra support. It's a beautiful reminder of the difference we can make when we work together, and we are so grateful for the unity among our local churches as we join hands to spread joy and hope.

I would also like to invite you, your families, and friends to our annual Christmas on Main Street production, a special tradition we look forward to each December. With five performances to choose from, we hope there's a time you can attend.

This year's event will take place on Saturday, Dec. 14, with performances at 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., as well as



Sunday, Dec. 15, with services at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. We are thrilled to welcome Colton Dixon, a renowned "American Idol" artist, as our special musical guest. Colton's powerful music and vocal range will make this event a memorable experience for all who attend.

Our Christmas celebration will also feature a live nativity scene during the performance, bringing the wonder of the first Christmas to life and, for the first time, an indoor fireworks display to mark the joyous occasion. We hope these moments of worship and wonder will remind us all of the true meaning of Christmas.

Christmas is a time to reflect on the incredible gift of Jesus, who came to earth as a humble baby to bring salvation to the world. The Bible says in Luke 2:11, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." This verse captures the heart of Christmas — a Savior coming to bring hope, peace, and redemption. As we gather with friends, family, and our community, let's remember that Jesus is the true reason for this season, and His love is the ultimate gift.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to making Salinas a place where generosity and kindness shine brightly, especially during the holiday season. May you experience joy, love, and peace this Christmas, and may we all continue to be a light to those around us.

From our Compass Church family to yours, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year! 🌱



Increased Minimum Wages for Health Care Workers

By Gladys Rodriguez-Morales, Fenton & Keller

The minimum wage has increased yet again. This time for health care workers who provide health care services or who provide services that support the provision of health care, and who work for a health care employer that is subject to the new minimum wage law.



to the phase-in schedule, on July 1, 2026, the minimum rate for community clinics will increase to \$22 an hour, and on July 1, 2027, the minimum wage will increase to \$25 an hour. On Jan. 1, 2029, the minimum wage for community clinics will be adjusted each year for inflation.

Furthermore, an employee of the covered health care facility is entitled to the increased minimum wage if the employee provides patient care related services, health care services, or services that support the provision of health care, like, but not limited to, nurses, physicians, janitors, clerical and administrative workers, food service workers, medical coding and medical billing personnel, and schedulers.

In October of last year, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 525, and in May and June of this year he signed Senate Bills 828 and 159, respectively, codified in Labor Code sections 1182.14, 1182.15, and 1182.16, which increased the minimum wage for health care workers in health care facilities covered by Senate Bill 525. The new minimum wage requirements for covered health care employers went into effect on Oct. 16, 2024.

Senate Bill 525 provides five separate phase-in minimum wage schedules, which range between \$18 and \$25 an hour. The minimum wage will increase until it reaches \$25 an hour for all covered health care facilities by the year 2033. Generally, hospitals, residential care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, physician groups, and outpatient clinics are health care facilities subject to the new law. However, there are exceptions to who is a covered health care facility. For example, a physician group with less than 25 physicians is not a health care facility that is subject to the new law.

If a health care facility is covered by the new law, the applicable minimum wage depends on factors like the type and size of the health care facility. For example, a community clinic is now required to pay a minimum wage of \$21 an hour. Pursuant

to the phase-in schedule, on July 1, 2026, the minimum rate for community clinics will increase to \$22 an hour, and on July 1, 2027, the minimum wage will increase to \$25 an hour. On Jan. 1, 2029, the minimum wage for community clinics will be adjusted each year for inflation. Furthermore, an employee of the covered health care facility is entitled to the increased minimum wage if the employee provides patient care related services, health care services, or services that support the provision of health care, like, but not limited to, nurses, physicians, janitors, clerical and administrative workers, food service workers, medical coding and medical billing personnel, and schedulers. As a result of the increase to the minimum wage for health care workers, health care employers need to ensure that their exempt workforce are meeting the exempt salary requirements by paying at least one and a half times the applicable health care worker minimum wage rate or two times the state minimum wage rate, whichever is greater. For example, a health care employer that is currently required to pay a minimum wage of \$21 an hour must pay their exempt employees a yearly salary of at least \$66,560 since twice the state minimum wage rate ($\$16 \times 2 = \32) is greater than the one and a half times the applicable health care worker minimum rate ($\$21 \times 1.5 = \31.5).

All health care employers subject to the new phase-in minimum wage schedule are required to post the new minimum wage rate at their facilities in an area that is frequented



Getty Images

by its employees such as break-rooms and cafeterias, or a location where the employer customarily posts work-related notices. A copy of the required minimum wage poster is made available through the Department of Industrial Relations and can be downloaded at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/iwc/MW-2024-HC-SUPPLEMENT.pdf>.

Health care employers subject to the new phase-in minimum wage schedule also have an obligation to notify their employees of their new rate or salary by providing them with advanced written notice of the change to their hourly rate or salary. This obligation can be fulfilled by providing employees with a completed "Notice to Employee," which is available through the Department

of Industrial Relations and can be downloaded in six languages at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/dlse-publications.htm>. The notice must be given in the language that is usually used by the employer to communicate employment-related information to its employees.

Since the minimum wage will increase in phases, health care employers will need to ensure that updated minimum wage posters are posted timely and that employees are provided with written advance notice of changes to their hourly rates or salary. 🌱

Gladys Rodriguez-Morales is a lawyer with the Fenton & Keller law firm in Monterey. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. For more information, please visit www.fentonkeller.com.



MEMBER NEWS



Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) Announces State Transportation Agency Awarded \$63 Million from Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program

The funding was awarded to the Facilitating and Accelerating Service Transformations on the Central Coast Program (FAST Central Coast Program), a collaborative effort of the Coast Rail Coordinating Council involving the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, and the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN Rail Corridor) Agency. The grant award provides funding for several coordinated projects along the coast rail line between Monterey County and Santa Barbara County to increase ridership, reliability, and train frequency. The coordinated projects are:

- The King City Multi Modal Transportation Center will establish a new rail station in downtown King City, including railroad siding upgrades and a staging area for National Guard service members connecting between the rail station and Fort Hunter Liggett.
- Crossover and siding improvements near San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles stations will improve train reliability and operational flexibility for increased train service along the Central Coast.
- The Ortega Siding will be built between Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, enabling a seventh Pacific Surfliner roundtrip and improving overall corridor efficiency for both freight and passenger rail.

Mike LeBarre, Mayor of King City and TAMC Board Member, said, "The funding is a transformative opportunity for King City by offering access, economic opportunity, and critical support for our military. We look forward to celebrating this monumental achievement when it's completed." All rail improvements are expected to be completed by 2029 and will be advanced in partnership with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in a manner consistent with the network vision established in the State Rail Plan and included in ongoing Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program efforts being advanced along the Central Coast. A sizeable portion of the matching funds for this project is provided by Senate Bill (SB) 125 funding, with over \$14 million committed to deliver this suite of projects.

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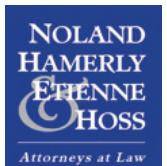
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MEMBER NEWS



Santa Cruz County Bank Announces Retirement of Mary Anne Carson, EVP, Chief Marketing Officer

Santa Cruz County Bank today announced the planned retirement of Mary Anne Carson, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer. Carson will continue to serve in her current role with the Bank through Jan. 3, 2025, to support a successful transition to her successor and to finalize the current merger systems integration. Carson was the fourth employee recruited by Santa Cruz County Bank (SCCB) in November 2003 during its pre-startup phase. Throughout her more than 20-year career with the company, Carson has been instrumental in creating and launching Santa Cruz County Bank's iconic brand, logo, website and early product offerings. During her years at SCCB, she spearheaded public and private stock sales, shareholder relations, product and branch launches and conversions as well as all aspects of marketing, including advertising, corporate communications, community development and engagement, donations, sponsorships and media relations. In addition, Carson led the Marketing Department through multiple transitions including merger and systems integration with Lighthouse Bank, merger and systems integration with 1st Capital Bank and complex stockholder-related changes. Krista Snelling, Santa Cruz County Bank President and CEO, said, "Mary Anne has been the heart and soul of our marketing efforts and has served as the bank's chief spokesperson for two decades. Since the inception of the bank, she has been instrumental in shaping our mission and driving initiatives that have become the cornerstone of our success. Her leadership has been essential in building the trusted and beloved institution we are today.



NHEH Welcomes New Attorney Ryan Miller

Ryan Miller joins Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss's Litigation practice group, where he focuses on a wide variety of cases, with emphasis on business and commercial disputes. Miller's J.D. degree is from Southwestern University School of Law, his B.A. in Political Science is from Brigham Young University, and he earned an M.B.A. degree from Claremont Graduate University. Miller began his legal career in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where he handled many oil industry and commercial construction arbitration disputes. Prior to joining Noland Hamerly, he ran his own private litigation practice for eight years where he represented clients in mediation, arbitration, and litigation. He resides in Monterey with his wife and three children.



Central Coast VNA & Hospice receives \$190,000 Grant from Hospice Giving Foundation

Central Coast VNA & Hospice (VNA) is proud to announce it has received a grant in the amount of \$190,000 from Hospice Giving Foundation aimed at enhancing whole person and community-centered care for palliative and hospice patients. This effort focuses on delivering comprehensive, tailored support to palliative and hospice patients and their families across Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, and South Santa Clara counties. Hospice Giving Foundation has awarded over \$32 million in grants for community-based support to promote personal choice, preparedness, and the highest standards of compassionate, dignified, end-of-life care for individuals and their loved ones. As a leader in palliative and hospice care, VNA recognizes the increasing need for services, especially for those with greatest financial need. This grant will help fund services around crisis care for palliative and hospice patients in addition to being able to offer in-home provider visits to address goals of care. By bolstering support for caregivers through respite care services, educational resources on stress relief and self-care, and coping strategies provided by social workers and chaplains, VNA aims to mitigate burnout, which is a significant concern in palliative and hospice care programs. This commitment to elevating end-of-life care aligns with VNA's mission of providing the highest quality health care to residents of the Central Coast by meeting their individual needs in a caring, effective, honorable, and accessible manner.



Office of Traffic and Safety Awards Salinas Police Department \$170,831 for Bicycle and Crosswalk Safety Program

The Salinas Police Department has received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to support its Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program. The program will promote safe practices for pedestrians and bicyclists and emphasize drivers' responsibility to look out for other people using roads and paths. The grant program runs through September 2025. "We are excited to receive this grant again this year which will allow us to maintain our partnership with Ecology Action and expand our youth focused bicycle and pedestrian safety program in Salinas," said Danny Warner, Salinas Police Department's Acting Police Chief. "By focusing on education, awareness, and promoting safe practices among our youth, we aim to reduce crashes and prevent injuries. Ultimately, we're working toward building more walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods where everyone can travel safely and confidently."

Grant funds will support various activities focused on bicycle and pedestrian safety:

- Bicycle training courses that educate youth on safe riding behaviors
- Helmet fitting inspections and distribution of helmets to children in need
- School education presentations
- Community bike rides that encourage and teach riders safe riding skills
- Walking field trips and walking safety education for second-grade students
- Pop-up events that promote the importance of visibility on roads with safety equipment such as reflective arm-bands/leg bands and bicycle headlights/taillights

"The safety of people walking and biking on our roads is a top priority for our office," said OTS Director Barbara Rooney. "Everyone moves, and not always by car. It's important that we invest in efforts to protect people walking, biking and rolling that helps establish a strong traffic safety culture where everyone on California roads can travel to and from places safely." Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



Natividad Foundation Celebrates \$600,000 Gift from Local Ag Businesses

The Natividad Foundation celebrated its Annual Donor & Hero Award Celebration, honoring the remarkable generosity of its supporters with an evening of entertainment, recognition, and heartfelt gratitude, all dedicated to the Foundation's mission of enhancing health care in the community. One of the evening's standout moments was a historic \$600,000 donation from members of The Agricultural Leadership Council (TALC), a collective of local agricultural businesses dedicated to supporting the Natividad Foundation. Since its founding in 2010, TALC has raised over \$5.1 million for Natividad, providing funding for 705 vital pieces of medical equipment and supporting essential programs, including spiritual care and diabetes prevention education. In his remarks, John D'Arrigo, founder of TALC and CEO of D'Arrigo California, said, "TALC exemplifies how partners and competitors can unite around a common goal. We all recognize the direct link between a well-resourced safety-net hospital and the health of agricultural workers and their families." Natividad Foundation proudly honored five exceptional individuals with its 2024 Hero Awards: Dr. E. Valerie Barnes, Harold W. Keland, Patricia B. Munoz, Dr. John Schatz, and Dr. Marc Tunzi, recognizing their enduring philanthropic support. Each honoree has been a vital contributor to the Foundation for over 26 years. Established in 2008, the Hero Award celebrates individuals and organizations whose significant contributions have been instrumental in helping Natividad fulfill its mission of providing essential healthcare services to everyone in Monterey County.



Envision Initiative Announces Hiring of Casey Gutierrez

Envision Initiative is excited to announce the Hiring of Casey Gutierrez an HR Generalist. Gutierrez brings years of experience in accounting and people and culture, with a dedication to supporting others and a strong commitment to all aspects of Human Resources. She enjoys helping organizations foster growth and communication. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time with family, particularly outdoors, and making last memories.



Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our December renewing Members. Please help keep the Salinas Valley strong by doing business with companies that support the Chamber.

Member Name	Member Since	Member Name	Member Since
Ottone & Leach LLP *80 Years*	1944	Cardinale Moving & Storage Inc.	2008
Swenson & Silacci Flowers Inc	1953	Bank of America—S. Main Branch	2011
Bianchi Kasavan & Pope LLP *75 Years*	1959	Active Seniors Inc	2015
Moss Adams	1961	The Western Stage	2015
Credit Consulting Services Inc	1964	Kings Oil Tools	2018
Polar Services Company, Inc.	1965	Reyes Coca Cola Bottling Co	2018
Coldwell Banker Gay Dales Inc Realtors	1966	Catholic Charities, Diocese of Monterey *5 Years*	2019
Central Coast Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice	1977	Downtown Streets Team *5 Years*	2019
Discovery Luxury Motorcoach Charter	1987	ARCpoint labs of Salinas	2020
Clinica De Salud Del Valle De Salinas-	1988	Women’s Business Center	2020
CSVS Community Care		Cagwin & Dorward	2021
D’Arrigo Bros Co of California	1989	First Tee—Monterey County	2021
El Camino Machine & Welding	1989	Tope’s Tree Service	2021
Ivy Park at Salinas	1989	Valley Health Plan	2021
Monterey PTAC	1997	El Rey Theater	2022
Palm Court Apartments *25 Years*	1999	Sabor De Valle	2022
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local Union *25 Years*	1999	H Jackson Events	2023
Go Kids, Inc.	2005	Nadrich & Cohen Accident Injury Lawyers	2023
Residence Inn by Marriott—Salinas	2007	Rosita’s Armory Café & Bar	2023
A.G. Davi, LTD	2008	Salinas Valley Speech Pathology	2023

A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members



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2024 Legacy of Leadership



(Left to right) From Chevron, Robin Woodward, Richard Bueler, and Krisi Bollinger.



(Left to right) Mary Hooker and incoming board member Fred Hooker, Richard Sumbing, and Leinette Limtiaco of Wescom Credit Union.



(Left to right) Outstanding Business of the Year Honoree, Jose Ruvalcaba, with his family.



(Left to right) Past Chair Bill Hastie receives certificate of recognition from current Chair of the Board Jennifer Williams.



World-renowned speed painter Amy Burkman.



(Left to right) Young Professional of the Year Jordan Pratt-Thatcher and wife Jenny Savage.



(Left to right) Past Chair Bill Hastie, Jordan Pratt-Thatcher, Jenny Savage, and Clark Savage.



(Left to right) Tony Marandos, Chis Illig, and John Tilley of Pinnacle Bank.



(Left to right) Prosperos Team members Melany Chavez, Salvador Chavez, Vinay Pai, and Aarti Pai.



(Left to right) Distinguished Business Innovation Honoree Rod Braga, Colby Pereira, Sparky Locke, and Kori Tuggle.



(Left to right) Business Philanthropy Honoree Raymond Costa with Legacy Award Honoree State Sen. Anna Caballero.



Waste Management Team at LOL Gala.



NON-PROFIT EVENTS

Alzheimer's Association - Salinas Caregiver Support Group

Dec. 11, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., 1130 San Vicente Ave., Salinas

If you have a family member who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia disorder, a caregiver support group can offer you an opportunity to find out more about available community resources, learn from others who are going through similar experiences, and obtain additional educational materials. Our Salinas caregiver support group meets monthly, on the first Wednesday of each month, without a fee. In partnership with the Harden Foundation, this program is funded in part by Hospice Giving Foundation Community Foundation for Monterey County and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, host of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

California Rodeo — The Country Christmas

Dec. 12, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., The Salinas Sports Complex, Salinas

The second annual Country Christmas hosted by the California Rodeo Salinas will happen Thursday, Dec. 12 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Salinas Sports Complex (1034 N. Main St.). The event is presented by MYCARS.com and is free — no admission fees. That night there will also be free hot cocoa and candy canes, as well as photos with Cowboy Santa plus a letter-writing station for Santa letters and an ornament-making station. At least 1,000 gifts will be distributed to children ages 2-12. Food will be available for purchase and will include mini donuts, baked potatoes, tacos, kettle corn and more. Don't forget, there's a clear-bag policy.

Monterey Bay Economic Partnership Holiday Mixer

Dec. 12, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m., 3180 Imjin Road, Marina

Celebrate the season with members of the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership at a lively in-person event, the annual Holiday Mixer, perfect for mingling and expanding your network. We'll honor this year's standout leaders with the 2024 Community Impact Award and the Public/Private Partnership Awards, so come share in the celebration of our community's achievements. The event will take place at MBEP's office, located at 3180 Imjin Road in Marina. Don't miss this fantastic chance to connect, share some holiday cheer, and enjoy a memorable afternoon together. Free for MBEP members, \$39 for non-members.

Active Seniors Christmas Party with the Foxtrot and Dinner

Dec. 17, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., 100 Harvest St., Salinas

Join Active Seniors Inc. for an evening of Christmas fun. We celebrate Christmas with a lively dinner party, including live music, and dancing, followed by dinner!

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FOR UP-TO-DATE LISTINGS**

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RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Helping Hands Second-Hand Store Grand Opening & BBQ Fundraiser

Helping Hands Second-Hand Store celebrated its Grand Opening with a BBQ Fundraiser at 956 Park Row in Salinas. The event featured a lively ribbon-cutting, delicious barbecue by CRE's BBQ & Soul Food, music, raffles, a bounce house, and more. Shoppers joined in the festivities while supporting Victory Mission's impactful work to help those in need in our community.



ITN Monterey County 100,000th Ride Celebration

ITN Monterey County marked a significant milestone with its 100,000th ride. The event featured a special ride re-enactment, ribbon-cutting program, along with a wine reception and delicious bites from Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy. Guests enjoyed a silent auction, raffles, and thrilling hot laps, making it a memorable celebration of ITN Monterey County's commitment to accessible transportation in our community.



Grand Opening of Valley Health Associates

Valley Health Associates proudly celebrated the opening of its new facility with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. With expanded facilities, improved accessibility, and enriched resources, the new space enables Valley Health Associates to make an even greater impact. We're excited to see the continued growth in comprehensive care, including vital substance use disorder treatment and wellness services, for our community.



Graves Elementary School District Well Unveiling

Graves Elementary School District celebrated the completion of its new well system. This project, made possible through collaboration with local and state partners, including the Monterey County Office of Education and King Inc., resolves the challenges of an aging water system. The new well ensures reliable access to clean water, promoting a healthier future for students and staff.



What's Your Chamber's Government Relations Committee Talking About This Month?

DECEMBER 2024

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 16 members at its most recent meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 13, eight days after the Nov. 5, 2024 presidential general election.

1. The Committee discussed the outlook for housing policy in the City of Salinas following the apparent victories of all five Salinas City Council candidates endorsed by the Chamber. Committee members were presented with an outline of the housing policy proposals included in the Chamber's Sept. 23, 2024 letter to the City Council. A committee member talked about his personal experiences and challenges in pursuing approval and construction of a major housing development in the City of Salinas. A table was presented to the Committee of the City of Salinas Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) performance for the 5th Cycle (2015-2023).

Some observations of committee members: (1) local governments should try to find legal ways that give preference to local residents in obtaining new housing; (2) housing construction is especially lagging in the "moderate income" segment of the housing market (80%-120% of Area Median Income), and many employees of Chamber members would be classified in this segment; (3) successful construction of proposed larger projects depends on the Public Works Department being effective and responsive as well as the Community Development Department; (4) a lot of new units are in the planning stages, but it will take years for developers to

City of Salinas Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Final Outcome - 2015-2023 Housing Element (5th Cycle)													
Income Category	Goal for Units	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total Units for Cycle	Shortfall of Units	% of Units Achieved
Very Low	537	21	24	50	42	0	0	88	0	4	229	308	42%
Low	351	20	16	0	53	8	0	1	0	2	100	251	28%
Moderate	407	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	397	2%
Above Moderate	934	142	52	25	71	100	210	189	139	241	1169	-	125%
Total	2,229	189	93	78	166	108	210	278	139	247	1,508	721	68%

Final outcome of the City of Salinas Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals for the 2015-2023 Housing Element (5th Cycle), as discussed during the Nov. 13 Government Relations Committee meeting.

actually build them; (5) the City should prioritize advancing development plans that are already approved rather than moving on to prepare new plans

2. The Chamber will work with other organizations to promote policies and practices that increase housing supply in pursuit of the City of Salinas Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) performance for the 6th Cycle (2023-2031).

3. The Committee directed the Government Affairs Liaison to research and report back on policies and practices in the City of Marina that give preference to local residents in obtaining new housing.

4. The Committee appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to examine the package of three tenant protection ordinances enacted by the Salinas City Council on Sept. 24, 2024. Four options were presented for a Chamber position in 2025 on residential rental registration and newly enacted restrictions on rent increases and tenant evictions: (1) Repeal All of It, No New Provisions; (2) Repeal All of It, Enact New Provisions; (3) Repeal Some

of It, No New Provisions; (4) Repeal Some of It, Enact New Provisions. It was reported that someone has an estimate of tenants who have lost their rental housing since the city council enacted the ordinances.

5. The Committee directed the Government Affairs Liaison to prepare a new Chamber letter to the new Mayor and City Council regarding a plan for voter consideration of renewing the Measure G sales tax in 2026.

6. An introductory meeting has been held between Chamber leaders and Amazon officials regarding the future Amazon facility in South Salinas. Amazon has expressed a commitment to work with local organizations to have a positive impact in the community. Committee members reiterated ongoing concerns about the impact of trucks on congestion and safety on the US 101 South of Salinas corridor. It is likely truck delivery to and from the facility will be in full operation years before the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project is completed. There are other business groups,

individual businesses, and community organizations concerned about traffic impact of the Amazon facility.

7. The Committee approved a letter to Caltrans asking for environmental review of the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project to include traffic generated by the planned Amazon facility.

8. The Committee approved a letter to the Santa Rita Union School District board of trustees and administration opposing a requirement for construction companies to sign a "Project Labor Agreement" with building trades unions as a condition of working on district contracts over \$400,000. The board has scheduled a vote on Nov. 13 for a Project Labor Agreement already negotiated with the unions.

9. The Committee reviewed Nov. 5, 2024 election results.

10. Chamber leaders informed the committee about the search for a new Chamber President & CEO and plans for a Chamber strategic planning conference that includes the new CEO. 🌱

Environmental Review Begins for US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

In 2016, Monterey County voters approved Measure X, a county sales tax to pay for regional and local transportation projects. One of the projects specifically identified in the 2016 Transportation Safety & Investment Plan for Measure X was the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project.

This major project includes highway and interchange improvements on the dangerous stretch of Highway 101 between Salinas and Chualar. One piece of the project has already been completed: the Spence Road Auxiliary Lane. This new lane offers additional highway space for trucks to speed up entering Highway 101 from Spence Lane and slow down exiting Highway 101 to Eckhardt Road.

However, the bulk of the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project will take many years to approve and build. It may cost as much as \$450 million.

A New Variable Will Affect the Highway Corridor

In the meantime, an unexpected development emerged for this highway section and roads leading to it. Amazon has begun site preparation for a 3.1 million-square-foot facility that would add an unknown amount of truck traffic at unknown times. This massive logistics and distribution facility will likely be completed years before the completion of the Caltrans highway and interchange improvements.

Earlier this year, your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce obtained public records from the City of Salinas regarding the Amazon facility. According to a memo dated Jan. 18, 2022, Caltrans and the City of Salinas had agreed on Jan. 12, 2022, that a ramp metering system



Location of US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project.

on the southbound Abbott Street on-ramp to U.S. Highway 101 would help to mitigate impacts of the increased truck traffic. No other steps were referenced in the memo.

Is this ramp metering light enough to ensure additional trucks will not significantly increase congestion and further compromise safety on

this section of Highway 101? The answer is not publicly known.

City officials have contended that the 2009 environmental review of the Salinas Ag-Industrial Center Specific Plan (the zone for the future Amazon facility) was adequate in addressing all impacts of the new Amazon facility, including traffic. The

City of Salinas has publicly acknowledged the Amazon facility in two recent press releases, but the Salinas City Council has not considered any meeting agenda items that specifically identify it or discuss it.

PROJECT see page 20

Your Chamber Responds to Member Concerns

In September 2024, your Chamber of Commerce conducted a membership survey regarding the Amazon facility. The unusually high response revealed that a majority of Chamber members supported the idea of the Amazon facility, provided that certain impacts to the community — especially traffic congestion and traffic safety — are addressed with meaningful solutions.

Your Chamber has responded to its member concerns by working to ensure traffic impacts of the Amazon facility on the South of Salinas 101 Corridor are recognized, evaluated, and appropriately handled. In this process, your Chamber is collaborating with businesses in the industrial area of South of Salinas, business associations such as the Monterey County Farm Bureau, and community organizations such as the South of Salinas US 101 Traffic Safety Alliance.

For example, on Aug. 26, 2024, your Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to the Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) Board of Directors. It noted that a staff report prepared for a board discussion item on the US 101 South of Salinas Project did not mention the Amazon facility. As stated in the letter, “you may want to discuss traffic and safety implications of the 3.1 million-square-foot Amazon retail warehouse planned for a parcel adjacent to Abbott Street, just north of the Abbott Street left lane entrance and exit ramps from Highway 101.”

Since then, Caltrans (the California Department of Transportation) has begun the process of environmental review for the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project. On Oct. 10, 2024, Caltrans issued a “Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project in Monterey County.”

Caltrans requested comments on issues that need to be addressed in the environmental impact report.

Knowing the concerns of its members, your Chamber sent a letter to Caltrans dated Nov. 13, 2024. Here is the text of the letter:

Re: Comments on Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project in Monterey County

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is aware of preliminary construction now underway for an Amazon fulfillment center on Abbott Street in South Salinas. This facility will reportedly exceed 3 million square feet in size. Public records suggest there is a plan for truck traffic related to this fulfillment center to use Abbott Street entrance and exit ramps to U.S. Highway 101, within the proposed project location.

The Chamber of Commerce is unsure how this variable is being incorporated into traffic and safety planning. We recently conducted a survey of our members and found that a significant number of them are concerned about the impact on traffic and safety resulting from trucks traveling to and from this fulfillment center.

It would be prudent for Caltrans to incorporate traffic data about this fulfillment center into the environmental review for the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project in Monterey County.

Next, Caltrans will respond to the comments on the Notice of Preparation from the Chamber and other parties in a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

In the meantime, your Chamber will continue to proactively provide direction on the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project. At the forefront of all of our decisions is the advancement of our official vision: “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.”



The multi-branch DLI Color Guard.

Rain Doesn't Dampen the Spirit and Celebration of 14th Annual Monterey County Veterans Day Parade

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

Fourteen years ago, the first Monterey County Veterans Day Parade down Main Street in Salinas drew 5,000 spectators and 34 parade entries, as well as a steady rain all day.

The rain returned for this year's 14th annual parade, but that's where the similarities end. This year's event, despite the rain, drew a whopping 18,000 people and 98 entries, walking the route from Salinas High School to the Steinbeck Center at the far end of Main Street.

“It rained on our very first parade and it rained all day this year too, but I think it just made people more motivated to come out,” said parade co-founder and Chairman Tony Virrueta, a U.S. Army Ranger

veteran. “It just shows the love the community has for our veterans. We didn't miss a beat. It just grows every year.”

Last year's parade hit a high of 25,000 and 150 entries, so the rain put a little damper on the number who came out, but it didn't diminish the participants, spectators and Virrueta's enthusiasm.

“It's a huge celebration and it grows every year. We have entries from all over Monterey County, from Salinas and the Monterey Peninsula to Soledad and North County,” he said. “The Veterans Day Parade even surpasses the Big Week parade! We have an amazing turnout full of love.”

Virrueta, who co-founded the event with Marine Corps veteran

Phil Orozco in 2010, said the committee that runs the parade fundraises all year long to bring the one-day event to the community.

“It costs a lot of money to put on a parade, but anybody who wants to be in the Veterans Day Parade can be in it, it’s free,” he said. “We have everybody, every high school marching band in the county, 4-H, Boy Scouts, car clubs, classic cars, horseless carriages, lowriders, four platoons from DLI in uniform and a multi-branch color guard.”

Virrueta says the parade not only honors and celebrates our military veterans, but also promotes the social health and well-being of veterans and brings awareness to the various issues facing veterans and to highlight the work of nonprofit organizations such as the Veterans Transition Center, which tackles veteran homelessness and helps veterans assimilate into the civilian society and workforce.

“I’m humbled and honored to be the chairman of the parade,” he said. “But we couldn’t do this without



Veterans Day Parade Committee with Parade Chairman Tony Virrueta in the middle (wearing black Ranger sweater).

the parade committee, who are all volunteers, some veterans, some not. You cannot pay for this kind of

patriotism and dedication. I cannot say enough good things about them.”

If there’s one thing that gets Virrueta every year, it’s the opening ceremonies, when veterans gather to kick off the parade.

“Every year, at the opening ceremonies, I see veterans from all walks of life and all ages, all sharing their time and talking,” he said. “There’s nothing that amazes me more, just to see all the eyes that sparkle. That’s priceless.”



“It’s a huge celebration and it grows every year. We have entries from all over Monterey County, from Salinas and the Monterey Peninsula to Soledad and North County...The Veterans Day Parade even surpasses the Big Week parade! We have an amazing turnout full of love.”

— Tony Virrueta, parade co-founder and Chairman



U.S. Marine Corps recruits conducted a mock enlistment.



A Girl Scouts group also marched in the parade.

Classic Car Restoration at Rancho Cielo

By Adam Joseph, Rancho Cielo

As classic car restoration experts in Monterey County approach retirement, the demand for skilled specialists in this field has intensified.

Rancho Cielo (RC) launched its Classic Car Restoration (CCR) program in 2023 as part of its Auto & Diesel Repair curriculum to address this growing need. This program was made possible through partnerships with the Don Williams Foundation, support from the Pebble Beach Company, Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, and contributions from community leaders Sandra and Martin Buttons, Judith Anne Raible and Gabriel Garza, the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance Director of Operations. The CCR program aims to equip students with the skills to restore and maintain pre-1982 vehicles, which are a vital part of Monterey's classic car culture.

The program offers a structured learning path through a three-tiered curriculum — Structural Repair and Refinishing, Intermediate Structural Repair and Refinishing, Advanced Structural Repair and Refinishing — that covers fundamentals and emphasizes safety, tool identification and proper tool use.

Students complete the program prepared to demonstrate competency in real-world settings that can lead to internships and industry-recognized



certifications that prep grads for entry-level positions in vehicle collision and refinishing facilities and have a highly marketable skill set in a field with a shortage of new talent.

CCR's first project involved restoring a 1952 MG, a classic British roadster. This ambitious undertaking included extensive dent and rust repair, parts fabrication, and meticulous work on the engine, upholstery and paint. RC instructors,

students, and help from local garages completed the project in six months — an impressive timeline for a job of this scale, usually taking over a year. The restored MG was then showcased at the annual Culinary Round Up (CRU) fundraiser last February 2024 (more on CRU 2025 below), marking an auspicious beginning for the program.

Currently, students are working on their second major project: the restoration of

a 1974 Alfa Romeo Spider. Instructor Tom Forgette emphasizes the project-based learning approach, starting with the disassembly of the car to identify parts that need replacement, parts that can be restored in-house and some that need to be fabricated from scratch.

"I always tell (students) to see using their hand," Forgette explains as he runs his hand alongside the Alfa Romeo's door. "Sometimes,

you can't see the dents and imperfections."

An adage like Forgette's "see with your hands" isn't found in a textbook. Among RC's three Auto & Diesel Repair/Classic Car Restoration instructors, students have several decades of experience to glean from and guide them through challenging, hands-on projects. Meanwhile, students gain technical skills, confidence and pride in preserving classic automotive history.

Monterey County's rich automotive culture provides an ideal backdrop for the CCR program. The region is a hub for classic car enthusiasts, hosting renowned events like the WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca's vintage races and the prestigious Monterey Car Week, which culminates in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, one of the world's most esteemed automotive shows. Rancho Cielo students, who participated as ambassadors for their program last year, proudly showcased their rebuilt MG at Monterey Car Week. The plan is to return in 2025 with the fully restored 1974 Alfa Romeo Spider and the students who worked on it.

Rancho Cielo's CCR program fosters a passion for craftsmanship and automotive preservation by immersing students in real-world classic car restoration projects. With the increasing need for skilled mechanics and autobody experts,



program graduates are well-positioned for careers in an industry with cultural significance and financial promise. Rancho Cielo's Classic Car Restoration program is a model for training the next generation of artisans in a thriving field.

The 15th annual Culinary Round

Up will be on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, at the Portola Hotel & Spa in Monterey. Details at ranchocieloyc.org. 🌿

Rancho Cielo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that invests in all young people facing challenges for success through diploma education, vocational training, counseling and life skills development in a safe and affirming environment.

The Federal Reserve Explained

By **Ryan Hastie**, Hastie Financial Group

As inflation began to accelerate in late 2021 and interest rates began to skyrocket in early 2022, news outlets have regularly written about the Federal Reserve (Fed) and the actions they have taken over the past few years. To understand what the Fed is and their specific role as an agency of the U.S. government, let's pull back the curtain and take a deeper dive into the inner workings of the Fed.

The Federal Reserve, the central bank of the U.S., was created by the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 to establish a system to respond to stresses within the U.S. banking system. The Fed's primary goals are set forth by congress and are known as its dual mandate — promote maximum employment and stable prices.

There are three main entities within the Fed — the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, the 12 Federal Reserve banks, and the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC). The Board of Governors is comprised of seven members, or governors, who are nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate. Their chief roles are to oversee the operation of the Federal Reserve System and fulfill the duties and responsibilities set forth in its creation document, the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. As an agency of the federal government, they report directly to the United States Congress. The chair of the Federal Reserve, currently Jerome Powell, reports to Congress twice a year and testifies on numerous topics including the Fed's current and projected monetary policy stance. The chair also meets periodically with the Secretary of the Treasury.

The 12 Federal Reserve banks are the operational banks of the

Fed, along with their 24 branches across the nation. These 12 banks operate within specific geographical areas, also known as districts or regions. The chief responsibilities of the banks are to supervise and examine banks and other financial institutions, enforce compliance with consumer protection laws, and lending to depository institutions to ensure liquidity within the financial system.

The FOMC is a 12-member group of officials from around the Fed system that set U.S. monetary policy at Fed meetings held eight times per year, four of which sees the release its Summary of Economic Projections — a summary of the FOMC's voting members' projections for inflation, interest rates, unemployment, and GDP growth. Members include the seven members of the Board of Governors, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and four of the remaining 11 Federal Reserve bank presidents on a rotating basis. Monetary policy, which affects interest rates and credit conditions, can have wide sweeping effects on financial conditions throughout the economy. The Fed's setting of monetary policy influences short-term interest rates and overall financial strength throughout the economy, something that has been front and center since the Fed began its rate hiking campaign in early 2022. The FOMC is also responsible for enacting open market operations — selling or purchasing government securities (e.g., Treasury bills) in the open market to reduce or increase the money supply in the economy. 🌿

Ryan Hastie, CPFA®, is a Partner and Investment Advisor with locally owned Hastie Financial Group and can be contacted at ryan.hastie@hastiefg.com.

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT MAGGIE RODRIGUEZ

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE, ENTRAVISION

Born and raised in Watsonville, and now a resident of Salinas for the past 20 years, I have dedicated my career to sales for the past 10 years.

As an account executive with Entravision, my passion lies in supporting local businesses to enhance their growth and overall success in our vibrant community. When I'm not working, I enjoy hiking, exercising, exploring new restaurants and attending concerts. I look forward to collaborating with fellow members of the Chamber of Commerce to foster a thriving local economy.



Holiday-themed Donations to Goodwill Central Coast Can Help Make the Season Brighter for Everyone

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

Research shows that giving to others can enrich our lives, unite communities, and connect us to people and ideas that positively impact our own perspectives.

Goodwill Central Coast believes in that premise, especially during the holiday season as we gather with loved ones to create memories and celebrate that spirit of giving.

While it's the most wonderful time of the year for some, for others it can be a season of stress and uncertainty — especially when resources are limited.

This holiday season, Goodwill Central Coast invites you to spread a little extra joy by making holiday-themed donations that help brighten the lives of those in need.

Here's how your donations can make a difference and bring hope to your community:

Why holiday donations matter

When you donate to Goodwill Central Coast, you're doing more than simply giving away items you no longer need. You're supporting a mission to provide job training, employment services, and community-based programs to individuals looking to improve their lives.

With your generous contributions, GCC is able to stock its stores with affordable items, ensuring

that everyone has access to festive decor, warm clothing and unique gifts for their loved ones. Plus, the revenue generated from sales goes directly to funding life-changing programs that empower local individuals to find jobs and thrive.

What to donate

As you prepare to deck the halls and celebrate, consider setting aside items that can bring cheer to others. Here are some great donation ideas for the holiday season:

- **Holiday decorations:** Do you have extra string lights, ornaments, wreaths, or holiday-themed knick-knacks? Your festive decor could be just what another family needs to make their home feel warm and inviting. Whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, holiday decorations are always in high demand during this time of year.
- **Gently used winter apparel:** As the weather gets colder, many families will be searching for affordable options to keep warm. Coats, scarves, gloves, sweaters, and hats — especially in children's sizes — are essential donations that can make a huge difference for individuals facing financial hardships.
- **Toys and games:** The joy of unwrapping a special gift on a holiday morning is an experience every child deserves. If you have gently used or new toys, board games, or puzzles, consider donating them to Goodwill Central Coast. These items not only provide entertainment but also help create lasting memories for children and their families.
- **Gifts for all ages:** If you've received a gift that isn't quite your style or have new items still in their original packaging, donate them to GCC. From home goods to electronics, books to



Getty Images

kitchenware, and beauty products to sporting equipment — there's something for everyone. Your donation could help another person find the perfect present for a loved one.

How to donate

Goodwill Central Coast goes to great lengths to make donating easy and streamlined. Simply gather your items and drop them off at one of GCC's 30 donation centers across Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties. Staff members will be on hand to assist donors and ensure that donations end up in the right hands — and out of landfills.

Among GCC's 30 donation centers, six now feature drive-thru service, an added convenience that allows donors to quickly drop off gently used items from the comfort of their car.

The following six donation sites offer convenient drive-thru service: Atascadero, 8310 El Camino

Real #A, Atascadero; Marina, 266 Reservation Road, Marina; Salinas, North Main, 1325 N. Main St., Salinas; Salinas Outlet, 1566 Moffett St., Salinas; San Luis Obispo Outlet, 880 Industrial Way, San Luis Obispo; Santa Cruz, 204 Union St., Santa Cruz.

The gift that keeps on giving

The shopping season is already in full swing, and department store lines lead to long waits and longer faces. Holiday shopping can be stressful, especially when you're shopping for multiple people. It can be exhausting to go from store to store looking for the perfect gift.

When you shop at Goodwill, you can not only find meaningful gifts that the whole family will love, but you're spreading the holiday cheer even further, with all proceeds going back to the Goodwill mission of supporting job training and resources for people in your community.

Find unique gifts and much more

At Goodwill, holiday shopping is not just a task; it's an experience filled with delightful discoveries. Each aisle is a treasure trove of unique gifts for your loved ones. Here are some ideas on gifts you could easily find at Goodwill:

- **Toys and games:** You could find nearly everything imaginable, including a number of items donated in their original packaging. GCC offers a large selection of board games and puzzles, most in like-new condition, and the shelves have held many brain-teaser games. Dolls, cars and action figures are frequently donated. Remember, don't shy away from vintage games and toys. Introducing a child to something that was special to you during your youth is a gift that keeps giving! If you are looking for something specific head to GCC's online store at www.shopgoodwill.com.

- **Gently used and new treasures:** Often people buy things in the wrong size or change their mind after making a purchase. Often they end up donating it to Goodwill. Walk through any of GCC's retail stores and you're bound to find a variety of donated items either still in their original boxes or with their original tags. Also, new parents tend to receive a lot of infant clothing and sometimes it is just too much for them to sort through it all, or perhaps the baby grew too fast to ever wear it. Some of those items, new with tags, are donated and they are a huge bargain for families wanting to stretch their dollar further.

In the end, if a gift comes from the heart it's absolutely perfect. This holiday season, you can make a difference with every purchase in your support of GCC's mission to create job opportunities and make a positive impact in your community. 🌱

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Housing: Who is Building?

By Norm Groot, Monterey County Farm Bureau

We are all continuously reminded that there is a housing crisis in California, including here in Monterey County. Prices continue to increase each month, with minimal new housing units coming to market to aid in supply. It's hard not to see that all of California has worked itself into a situation where many simply cannot afford to buy into the American dream.

For many decades, Monterey County has lagged in producing new housing units, either single-family homes or apartment/multi-family units. The state has now stepped up and provided numbers of housing units that each city and county must build to "catch up" with the demand. These numbers are putting additional strain on communities as they struggle to get new projects approved and built.

We can be thankful of new housing developments in Marina, King City, and elsewhere, that have added to our supply of units. But a



majority of these units are priced at market value, with a small component of low-income units mixed into these projects. We should also thank CHISPA for their efforts to build family workforce housing around the county.

It is clear we need to do better, particularly for those who are priced out of the market as costs of living continue to increase each month. Newly proposed neighborhoods in Salinas and Gonzales will add substantial number of units to our housing stock — but it is taking a long time to get approvals and permits in place for these larger projects. And not everyone in the community agrees that these are the right

projects or the right places.

There is one success story that is helping ease the housing crunch: the construction of workforce housing for farmworkers by their farm employers. In the past six years there have been multiple employer-sponsored housing units built, primarily on their own land, to house farmworkers in apartment style settings. Indeed, the design and construction of these projects have won awards for their efforts.

Monterey County can now boast that over 5,000 new "beds" have been built by farm employers for their employees — but this goes much farther than just a bed. These housing units are designed in an apartment-style with full kitchens, living space, and amenities such as recreation rooms to convey a quality of life, rather than just a place to sleep.

This new style of housing for farmworkers helps to alleviate the housing crisis within our communities. By providing housing for our workforce, employers are demonstrating that

their employees are valued by providing a safe, affordable, and convenient housing solution. This leads to employee loyalty and reduces the turnover rates each year.

These housing units are fast becoming the model for other agricultural employers in California, where farmworkers are needed to harvest crops seasonally, or in Monterey County, nearly year-round. Once again, Monterey County farm employers are leading the way in providing solutions to community issues.

We are fortunate that our Planning Commissions, City Councils, and Supervisors have supported these housing projects as they have been proposed. Many of these have received swift approvals as the need for equitable farmworker housing has been elevated in our planning processes.

So who is building the most housing these days? It's the farm employers who continue to elevate the supply of housing for their employees. 🌱



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Sustainable Groundwater Management: Progress is Happening

By Norm Groot, Monterey County Farm Bureau

Back in 2015, then-Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, promoting a new era of water management in California. This legislation came about because of the impacts not only of drought but the overdrafting of groundwater in the Central Valley area. Sustainable supply when sourced from groundwater must be achieved by 2040 for the most impacted groundwater basins around the state.

While our groundwater story is quite different here in Monterey County, we still need to comply with the new law (referred to as SGMA). The prime groundwater basin is the Salinas Valley, which has more of a plumbing issue than a deficit, and a seawater intrusion problem in the coastal zone area. The community formed the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) to lead the efforts to comply with SGMA — in the short timeframe before 2040.

The first step in this process was to submit groundwater sustainability plans to the State Department of Water Resources (DWR); six plans were developed for the sub-basin areas of the larger groundwater basin, each with slightly different characteristics and program plans. Defined were thresholds for water levels, practices and projects that could be adopted, and pathways for community engagement in the process.



All six plans were approved by DWR and implementation began even before the approvals were received. It's been pointed out by many other groundwater basins that the Salinas Valley plans were a model of how to achieve the required sustainability.

As defined by SGMA, sustainability of groundwater basins means that what is extracted each year must equal what is recharged or replaced in the groundwater basin, a delicate balance on both sides of the equation. Fortunately, the Salinas Valley has resources to help with recharge and replacement with water storage facilities of Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs. These water resources help to maintain that balance by flowing water into the Salinas River for percolation during the irrigation season.

With some projects proposed for construction, to ease some of the plumbing distribution issues in the various sub-basins, we are looking to solve our balance equation by the deadline date — but it will be an expensive process to get there as these projects will cost hundreds of

DID YOU KNOW?

MONTEREY COUNTY AGRICULTURE HAS REDUCED IRRIGATION WATER CONSUMPTION BY 20% IN THE PAST 25 YEARS?

THAT'S OVER 115,000 ACRE FEET OF WATER SAVED EACH YEAR FROM 1999 EXTRACTION LEVEL!

millions to construct.

The more daunting project will be dealing with seawater intrusion in the coastal zone; pushing the brackish water "line" back to the goal of Highway 1 will be a very challenging task, and very expensive to achieve. A feasibility study is underway to determine how best to construct this project and where the best "bang for the buck" can be successful. It may take more decades to achieve the goal of retreat of seawater intrusion than just the next 15 years.

Already there are discussions about other implementation practices such as land repurposing, demand management during periods of drought, and alternating following methods to manage areas where groundwater challenges are most intense. The farming community, along with others in our greater

Salinas Valley community, are engaging in these discussions that will have economic and environmental impacts that need to be assessed and mitigated.

Already we are seeing progress in irrigation water reductions. Over the past quarter-century, irrigation water extractions have been reduced by 20% while irrigated farmland has increased by 5% and crop values have increased over 40%. This has been achieved by a substantial investment in irrigation technology such as micro irrigation and computer aided models that help with evapotranspiration.

Water is indeed a finite resource that must be managed and the local farming community is stepping up to the plate to ensure that this resource is used efficiently to produce our fresh food items each season. 🌱



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HOLIDAY MESSAGE FROM GOODWILL CENTRAL COAST



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This holiday season, the entire Goodwill Central Coast team extends warm greetings and sincere gratitude for your continued support. Here's wishing you joy, fulfillment and a happy and healthy new year. And may the days ahead be filled with fresh opportunities that inspire positive change, empowerment and life-affirming jobs for our friends and neighbors.

~ Tom Moran, CEO Goodwill Central Coast

Goodwill Central Coast builds lives, families and communities by helping people with employment needs become successful, supported by innovative enterprises that preserve earth's resources.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Goodwill Central Coast's Flagship Alisal Store to be Unveiled on Dec. 5**

*Thursday, Dec. 5, 12:30 p.m.
708 E. Alisal St., Salinas*

Goodwill Central Coast's extended 16-store store renovation project concludes with a celebration on Dec. 5 as the nonprofit unveils its new flagship Alisal store in East Salinas. With a soundtrack of live mariachi music and ribbon-cutting ceremony held by the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Alisal store will offer guests exclusive early access and special deals and prices. The major renovation is part of GCC's efforts to create welcoming, convenient environments for shoppers and donors, along with safer, more comfortable workplaces for associates. The improvements make it easier for GCC to focus on refining operations and becoming more efficient — funding its core mission to create jobs and build a stronger, more sustainable community rather than on creating bigger buildings. The Alisal store's doors open at 9 a.m. with the first 50 shoppers receiving a special GCC tote bag filled with surprises. The ribbon-cutting will take place at 12:30

p.m., followed by a special presentation about Goodwill's vision for a sustainable future.

- **Children's Shopping Tour – Volunteers and Donations Needed**

*Saturday, Dec. 7, 7:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Northridge Mall, Salinas*

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation invites you to be part of a heartwarming tradition that brings joy to the holiday season — our annual "Children's Shopping Tour." This cherished event is set for Saturday, Dec. 7, and we need volunteers to help make it a day to remember. Whether you're distributing gift cards, helping with set-up, cutting merchandise tags, or serving as a chaperone assisting the children as they pick out new clothes, there's a role for everyone to get involved. Your support will bring smiles, warmth, and holiday cheer to local kids, making a meaningful impact. Join us and be part of the magic this holiday season!

- **Kick-Off Celebration for CASA of Monterey County's 30th Anniversary**

*Thursday, Jan. 23, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
945 South Main St., Salinas*

Join us in celebrating CASA of Monterey County's 30th Anniversary. Come together as we honor three decades of dedication to advocating for children and youth. This milestone reflects the commitment of our community volunteers who have tirelessly supported our mission: to recruit, train, and support community volunteers who advocate for children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system. To uphold children and youths' rights and pursue a safe and permanent home while providing the support, empowerment, and resources needed to heal and flourish into adulthood.

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Cal Ag Foundation Leadership Awards

Ag Leadership Group Recognizes Castañeda, McShane for Roles in Leadership

The California Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF) and the Ag Leadership Alumni Council recently honored Carlos Castañeda and Steve McShane with the 2024 Profiles in Leadership Award. The award recognizes Ag Leadership Program alumni for leadership actions that result in the betterment of industry, community, business, government, education and/or the environment.

"I am delighted to watch our alumni making the kind of generational impact that agriculture and our communities need today," said CALF Board Chair Mike Young (Class 35). "Carlos and Steve exemplify true servant leadership, and I commend their dedication to creating innovative solutions and partnerships that will leave a lasting mark on our industry and our state."

This year's recipients were recognized during a ceremony on Oct. 11 in Fresno, in conjunction with the inauguration of Class 54 into the California Agricultural Leadership Program.

ABOUT THE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Castañeda (Class 36) was selected as an awardee for his dedication to providing opportunities to farmworker communities. He has shown a commitment to giving farmworkers a pathway to work in the U.S. and build a life for themselves and their families. He lives in San Luis Obispo County and is the owner and president of Castañeda & Sons Inc.

"To make a difference you don't have to have a huge impact on a large number of people, or in a very pronounced and public way," said Castañeda. "I've learned that the most impactful changes we've been able to make are on an individual level. The people we help are great parts of our communities who are raising phenomenal kids. What a feeling to make a difference in this way."

Through a partnership with the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico, Castañeda has helped individuals find jobs in the U.S. through the H-2A program. His work has helped transform families and villages in rural Mexico. He has also donated vans in his parents' home region in Mexico to provide transportation to students who would not otherwise have transportation

to school. He hires 1,100 individuals annually to work in the U.S., with more than 95% of his workforce returning year after year. In the U.S., Castañeda has developed and partnered with others to provide housing for thousands of farmworkers.

McShane (Class 33) was selected as an awardee for his leadership in public service. He has demonstrated continued commitment to improving his community through volunteerism and his work as a city council member. He lives in Monterey County and is the director of development and community relations at The Bridge Restoration Ministries.

"Leaders in agriculture need to be bold and step out of their comfort zones," said McShane. "I'm so grateful for the education and connections made thanks to Ag Leadership. The program propelled me to serve an elected office and taught me self-reliance and the importance of thinking long-term for our industry and communities."

McShane's public service began in college when former Gov. Pete Wilson appointed him to the California Postsecondary Education Commission. He later worked for former State Sen. Bruce McPherson, served on the Salinas City Council for 14 years and as CEO of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce for two years. As a city council member, he helped secure more than \$200 million in capital improvements for the city and helped establish a community garden, an adopt-a-tree program and \$100,000 in annual funding for public art. During many years of his public service, McShane operated McShane's Nursery & Landscape Supply in Salinas.

ABOUT CALF

CALF is dedicated to growing leadership in agriculturalists who have the capacity and potential to advance, benefit and promote California agriculture. Since 1970, more than 1,400 California Agricultural Leadership Program fellows have become lifelong leaders who individually and collectively act as a catalyst for a vibrant agricultural community and make a significant difference in the agricultural industry, their businesses, communities and families. 🌱

How to Achieve Time Affluence at Work

By Tylour Matz, Founder of Full Circle Consulting

Time affluence is the feeling of having enough time to do what you need and want to do. It's not just about managing time more efficiently but also about perceiving that you have ample time. Here are some tips based on the latest research to help you achieve time affluence at work:

1. Prioritize Tasks with the Eisenhower Matrix

- **Urgent and Important:** Do these tasks immediately.
- **Important but Not Urgent:** Schedule these tasks.
- **Urgent but Not Important:** Delegate these tasks if possible.
- **Neither Urgent nor Important:** Eliminate these tasks.

By focusing on what truly matters, you can reduce the stress of urgent, unimportant tasks and create more time for significant activities.

2. Use the 1-3-5 Rule

Each day, plan to accomplish:

- **1 Big Task:** A significant project or goal.
- **3 Medium Tasks:** Smaller, but still important, tasks.
- **5 Small Tasks:** Quick tasks that are easy to knock out.

This method helps you prioritize effectively and ensures a balanced workload.

3. Batch Similar Tasks Together

Grouping similar tasks can reduce the mental shift required when jumping between different types of work. For example, respond to emails at designated times instead of sporadically throughout the day.

4. Set Clear Boundaries

- **Work Hours:** Define your work hours and stick to them.
- **Breaks:** Take regular breaks to recharge. Use techniques like the Pomodoro Technique (25 minutes of work followed by a 5-minute break) to maintain productivity.
- **Personal Time:** Avoid checking work emails or messages during personal time.

5. Learn to Say No

Politely declining additional responsibilities or tasks that don't align with your priorities can protect your time and focus. It's important to recognize your limits and communicate them effectively.

6. Automate and Delegate

Use technology to automate repetitive tasks and delegate tasks that others can handle. This frees up your time for more meaningful work.

7. Monotask Over Multitask

Focus on one task at a time instead of juggling multiple tasks. Multitasking can reduce productivity and increase stress. Monotasking allows you to give your full attention to each task, improving quality and efficiency.

8. Focus on Deep Work

Allocate specific blocks of time for deep, focused work where you can concentrate without interruptions. Turn off notifications and find a quiet space to work on tasks that require your full attention. If possible, determine your most optimal working time during the day and schedule your focused, deep work for that time.

9. Reflect and Adjust

Regularly review how you spend your time and make adjustments as needed. Reflect on what works well and what doesn't, and be willing to change your approach to improve your time affluence.

By implementing these strategies, you can create a work environment that promotes time affluence, leading to increased productivity, reduced stress, and greater job satisfaction. Remember, the goal is not to fill every moment with activity but to create a sense of balance and control over your time. 🌱

Tylour Matz is the founder of Full Circle Consulting, where she provides tailored coaching and consulting services to foster workplace wellbeing and performance by addressing relationship dynamics within organizations.

Bringing joy this holiday season

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