

 **Salinas Valley**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# BUSINESS JOURNAL



**Eucalyptus Trees Are Getting Cut Back**  
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## Efforts Continue to Increase Child Care Affordability and Accessibility in Monterey County

By **Kevin Dayton**, Government Affairs Liaison

In 2022, your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce supported Measure Q, a ballot initiative titled the "Safe, Affordable, Quality Child Care in Monterey County Act." This ballot measure was a meaningful, substantial, organized response to a shortage in child care that Monterey County families have endured for decades. At the time, employers increasingly reported their struggles in recruiting and retaining employees because of the child care shortage.

Many business owners, managers, and employees were telling your Chamber of Commerce that child care in Monterey County was difficult to find and prohibitively

**CHILD CARE** see page 5

## Welcoming Colleen Bailey as the New CEO of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce

By **Jennifer Williams**, SVCC Past Chair

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce the appointment of Colleen Bailey as its new Chief Executive Officer. A proud native of Monterey County, Colleen lives in Salinas and brings with her a deep commitment to our region and a remarkable legacy of leadership in the nonprofit and education sectors.

Colleen's experience includes serving as the Executive Director of the world-renowned Monterey Jazz Festival, where for the past decade, she has led with vision, fostering community connections and cultural enrichment. Prior to that, she served as Executive Director of the National Steinbeck Center, honoring and sharing the literary and cultural heritage of our region.

Colleen was also a founding board member and the Executive Director of the Youth Orchestra of Salinas



Colleen Bailey has been appointed the new Chief Executive Officer of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce.

(YoSal), an El Sistema-modeled music program that continues to inspire and empower youth in our community through music education.

Before returning to Monterey County, Colleen earned recognition as an award-winning arts educator and administrator in schools in Colorado, as well as Central and Southern California. She is currently serving as a lecturer

at CSUMB, teaching a new course on Music Business.

Colleen is a graduate of University of Southern California, holds a Master's Degree from Northwestern University, and has a certificate from the Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business.

Colleen's selection as the Chamber's new CEO reflects the values and leadership qualities most important to Chamber members. Her vision, experience, and commitment to fostering a thriving business community make her the ideal leader to guide the Chamber into an exciting future.

Stay tuned for more about Colleen's goals and priorities, as well as a special message from her, in the February issue of the Business Journal.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Colleen Bailey as she steps into this pivotal role! 🌱

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# It's a New Year and New Era for Salinas and The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair

**H**appy New Year to all SVCC members, staff, and board of directors! I couldn't be more excited about the year ahead and humbled by the opportunity to lead your Chamber of Commerce in 2025.

I have lived in Salinas since 1980, and with my wife Adrian, we have raised our two children here. I have worked in the produce industry for over 46 years, much of that time working for Bruce Taylor. I have a deep appreciation for the central coast and its people, and I've witnessed firsthand how the companies in our valley have positively impacted our community. Impact that has literally improved lives for generations.

Business is what drives our economy and quality of life here in the Salinas Valley, and your Chamber of Commerce plans to continue to be the voice and influencer for this critical economic engine.

I want to express my appreciation and heartfelt thanks to Jennifer Williams, our outgoing Chair. Jennifer's dedication to your Chamber of Commerce has been so much more than any volunteer leader would have signed up for. Through most of this year, Jennifer has served as both the Chamber's Chair of the Board and its de facto CEO. Jennifer has guided the Chamber through the recruitment and selection of a new CEO, always keeping member's feedback as her north star in the process. The hiring of Colleen Bailey as CEO is a testament to Jennifer's impactful leadership and words will simply not convey my personal admiration and gratitude for Jennifer and her leadership.

We are entering a new era in our community. We have a new mayor and four new Council members (all five endorsed by your Chamber) who understand the vital contributions that businesses provide to a thriving community. We have a relatively new city

manager, who I have witnessed working steadfastly towards solutions to many of the issues plaguing our local business community.

We have strong relationships with our County Supervisors, and we have an important ally in the State's Speaker of the Assembly, who also represents our 29th District. To a person, each understands that government must work for the whole community and supports business to that end, and I look forward to working with local and state government on issues affecting our business community. We will continue to work collaboratively on issues where we are aligned and respectfully debate issues where we are not, all the while focused on providing fact-based information to help government in their decision-making process.

Lastly, I want to thank our incredible staff at the Chamber. Gabe, Jasmine, Bryan, and Cesar have kept this incredible organization functioning at a high level this year and they are the future of your Chamber. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of Kevin Dayton, our Government Affairs Liaison. Kevin has been a vital contributor, informing our committees and board on the critical issues affecting business.

I'd like to wish you all a prosperous 2025 and encourage you to stay involved with your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. Please feel free to reach out to staff, or to me personally with any thoughts or concerns. I look forward to working with all of you to shape "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic opportunity and growth!" 🌱



## 2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **Chair - Leonard Batti**  
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- **Past Chair - Jennifer Williams**  
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- **Vice Chair, Membership - Mark Kennedy**  
Green Rubber Kennedy Ag
- **Vice Chair, Events - Amy Gibson**  
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- **Vice Chair, Finance - Tom Moran**  
Goodwill Central Coast

## NEW CHAMBER BOARD MEMBERS

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- **Regina Gage** - Meals on Wheels of the Salinas Valley, Inc.
- **Scott Gillett** - Pacific Valley Bank
- **Fred Hooker** - Retired Agri-Business Manager
- **Oscar Mora** - Blue Adobe Mortgage
- **Veronica Plascencia** - KION

## CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Brent Fogg** - Granite Construction
- **Brenda Granillo** - California Water Service
- **Clement Miller** - Salinas Valley Health
- **John Narigi** - WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca
- **Colby Pereira** - Braga Fresh Family Farms
- **Tony Sanchez** - Spiffy Clean Services
- **Hugh Walker** - Stonebridge Homes

## CHAMBER LIAISONS

- **Peter Kasavan** - SPARC
- **Matt Huerta** - Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
- **Kevin Dayton** - SCCIA

## LEGAL COUNSEL

- **Matt Ottone**

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- **Colleen Bailey**  
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- **Gabriel Lopez**  
Membership Development Director
- **Jasmine Bhardwaj**  
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- **Bryan Cabello**  
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## CHAMBER PRIORITIES

CREATING A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY • PROMOTING THE COMMUNITY • PROVIDING NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES • POLITICAL ACTION • REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENT



## Child Care - from page 1

expensive. Child care was an additional blow to families already dealing with the high costs of housing, utilities, and other basic expenses.

Potential employees who had families with children were choosing not to accept job offers in Monterey County. Meanwhile, companies in states such as Texas and Florida continually lured Monterey County workers by promising orderly, affordable communities with cultures dominated by families with children.

Even military families on the Monterey Peninsula reported struggles with child care. This is an ongoing concern to community organizations that promote the capability of local military bases. Groups such as the Monterey Bay Defense Alliance try to minimize any reasons for the U.S. Department of Defense to close local bases and move their operations to less expensive places such as Arizona.

Anecdotes and limited data seemed to confirm that child care supply was far below demand. The Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Initiative issued a report in 2022 showing there were 9,000 operational licensed child care spaces and family child care homes in Monterey County to serve an estimated population of about 36,000 children ages 0-4 years. Average monthly out-of-pocket cost for households using child care programs was \$773 per month, after limited government subsidies were taken into account.

### An Attempt at Action Rather than the Usual Talk

Measure Q would have moved beyond the usual platitudes from politicians and commentators about the importance of child care. It would have established a \$4,950-per-year parcel tax to help fund planning and construction of new child care facilities, training of child care professionals, and financial assistance for new start-up child care operations.

The child care ballot measure



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Monterey Peninsula Unified School District now has four child development centers.

was one of the first of its kind in the United States and California, reflecting Monterey County's frequent leadership in the 2020s for innovative and effective public policy solutions. Most of the major Monterey County business associations supported Measure Q, as part of an unusually broad coalition of organizations and individuals.

But many Monterey County voters balked at the idea of paying a tax on property for child care, even if local businesses asserted it would help them recruit and retain workers for the benefit of the local economy. Despite a well-funded, professionally organized campaign with minimal public opposition, 58.9% of voters rejected the ballot measure.

So what has happened in the two years since then? Some things have not changed.

Child care continues to be an impediment for Monterey County businesses trying to recruit and retain employees. Raising a family in California (particularly coastal California) on ordinary incomes is challenging.

One Measure Q opponent

asserted that the lack of affordability and accessibility of child care would eventually resolve itself through the free market: over time enough families with children would leave Monterey County so that child care demand would drop to a level of equilibrium with supply. While this may be true, the disappearance of families with children may not align with the Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity."

### Achieving the Objectives of Measure Q through Other Means

Child care advocates who want to see Monterey County as a thriving, welcoming place for families have continued to pursue the objectives of Measure Q. Entities active in this effort on a ground level include First 5 Monterey County, the Monterey County Office of Education and its partners such as Quality Matters Monterey County and the Monterey County Child Care Planning Council, and the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation (MAOF)

Monterey County Resource and Referral Program, which provides technical assistance for persons interested in becoming licensed family child care home providers.

The Bright Beginnings Initiative has taken a major role in coordinating much of the strategy to improve child care. The initiative was launched in 2014 by the Monterey County Children's Council, a collaborative public agency of local governments (such as the County of Monterey and the Monterey County Office of Education) and private organizations (such as United Way Monterey County). The Council's mission is to provide "leadership and policy direction to encourage the development of a comprehensive and collaborative delivery system of services to children and youth in Monterey County."

In partnership with other agencies, Bright Beginnings has identified multiple strategies to expand child care. This includes support for start-up and administration of family day care homes and the development of early childhood education (ECE) apprenticeship training



programs. These were two of the three major arenas that would have benefitted from Measure Q funding.

Here's a summary of what's happening today in the three arenas for child care identified in Measure Q.

*1. Construction, acquisition, and maintenance of public and private child care facilities in the county, with a priority on adaptive reuse of existing government structures for government child care programs.*

For many reasons, child care as an economic activity is generally not centralized, organized, or assessed through measurable, quantitative data. As a result, Monterey County child care advocates occasionally have to identify trends and promote policy solutions based on locally-collected primary data, outdated secondary statistics, anecdotal evidence, and testimonials.

To bring more clarity to the status of child care in Monterey County, the Monterey County Child Care Planning Council has been regularly issuing requests for proposals to collect data, prepare reports about child care facilities, and identify potential sites for new child care facilities in the county. Bright Beginnings is now seeking funding to use these reports to "develop and pilot a replicable model for a multi-sector (private and public) approach to building new licensed child care facilities."

According to Bright Beginnings, "local lenders are ready to support the purchase, renovation, or construction of child care facilities with low interest rates." But sites and employer partners need to be identified.

In the meantime, public agencies have been working to develop child care centers. For example, the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) has recently opened child development centers in Marina and Monterey and two in Seaside. Funding to expand or establish these facilities came from the State of California through the California Department of Education

California State Preschool Program (CSPP) and a California Department of Social Services General Child Care and Development (CCTR) Expansion grant. Construction was also funded by bond proceeds authorized by Measure I, approved by district voters in 2018. These projects would have been possible candidates for Measure Q funding if the ballot measure had passed.

Also, a new Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) Early Learning Program (ELP) center opened in 2024 (following construction that began in 2023) at the Hartnell College East Campus (the Alisal Campus). It's called Discovery Academy, and it focuses on STEAM (an acronym for "science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics.") Discovery Academy offers early childhood education and other services to approximately 80 children ages 2 to 5 in four classrooms. It employs 12 staff members.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed two bills in the late 2010s to eliminate city and county zoning obstacles to the establishment of family child care homes. Some local governments in Monterey County, such as

the City of Marina, have changed their municipal codes to conform with these laws.

*2. Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training; instruction and fee subsidies for prospective child care workers to pursue credentials, permits, licenses, and other government requirements; and continuing education for the county's public and private child care workforce.*

Hartnell Community College District now has an Early Childhood Education (ECE) state-approved, state-regulated apprenticeship training program. In February 2022, Hartnell College received a California Apprenticeship Initiative New and Innovative Grant Program from the California Community College Chancellor's Office. The grant was meant to address a shortage of teachers in Early Childhood Education (ECE), overcome barriers to Early Childhood Education (ECE) career access for English language learners, and raise wages that are too low to attract workers who could provide quality child-care. Hartnell College contracted with Bright Beginnings to provide

promotion and recruitment of potential employers to partner with the program. The first official cohort is slated to graduate this spring.

Other parties involved with the Hartnell College apprenticeship program are the Monterey County Office of Education, First 5 Monterey County, and the Hartnell College Foundation. Soledad Adult School has developed a state-approved pre-apprenticeship program as a way to prepare incoming students to the Hartnell apprenticeship, and Salinas Union High School District (SUHSD) is also on a path to certifying a similar pre-apprenticeship program.

The First 5 Monterey County Community Annual Report for 2022-2023 stated that it had helped 524 students from Hartnell Community College and Monterey Peninsula College to complete their Early Childhood Education (ECE) degree. First 5 Monterey County also reported providing 874 training sessions for early childhood educators, child care providers and social service partners to ensure high quality service delivery to an estimated 7,000 children.

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Advertisements from the Central Coast Small Business Development Center for classes to learn how to start and operate a family child care home in Monterey County.



3. Limited and judicious financial subsidies to certified center-based and family-based public and private child care facilities with relatively low success rates in recruiting and retaining trained and committed child care workers, particularly in rural areas or other areas underserved by child care facilities or programs.

As noted above, federal and state grants have helped to increase the pay of child care workers in centers run by public agencies. For example, the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) has substantially increased the pay of its preschool/child development teachers through state funding. In February 2024, the district announced a new compensation package that could be as high as \$85,950 per year with full benefits, along with a \$5,000 bonus retention stipend.

#### Outlook for Local Sources of Child Care Funding

While Measure Q failed in Monterey County in 2022, voters in other California localities are approving ballot measures to fund child care. For example, in 2023, a campaign for a ballot initiative in Sonoma County submitted enough signatures to place a quarter-cent (\$.0025) sales tax on the November 2024 ballot.

According to language in the ballot measure, "Proceeds from the Tax shall be used exclusively to increase access to high-quality child care, preschool, and

early education services to benefit low- and middle- income children and families in Sonoma County; to improve wages and compensation for child care providers and early educators who provide those services; [and] to maintain and protect the availability and accessibility of local health and mental health care services that are specific to the unique needs of infants, toddlers and pediatric patients." Measure I was approved by 62.8% of Sonoma County voters.

Based on this success, will Monterey County child care advocates try again with another ballot measure to fund child care? At this time, the answer to that question is not known. Some progress is happening despite the lack of a consistent local revenue source. 🌱

The Hartnell Community College District began its Early Childhood Education program with a year-long introductory class at Soledad Adult School in August 2021, followed by student enrollment in Early Childhood Education classes at Hartnell College beginning in August 2022.

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# Eucalyptus Trees Are Getting Cut Back

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Driving southbound on Highway 101 and approaching the Monterey County line, visitors from the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Valley enter a portal into Vacationland: an impressive dense grove of large, fragrant eucalyptus trees that surrounds both sides of the highway and fill the median.

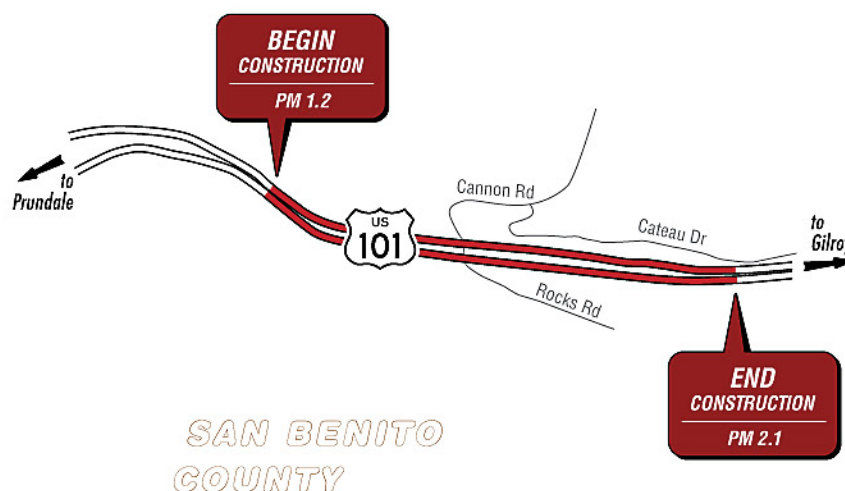
There is a scene of several seconds in the 1958 movie "Vertigo" that features the characters Scottie and Madeleine (James Stewart and Kim Novak) driving through this eucalyptus grove on Highway 101. Some people refer to this stretch of highway as Eucalyptus Alley.

In fact, large groves of eucalyptus can be found in this area throughout Aromas and Royal Oaks and west to the Elkhorn Slough. They grow extensively in the hills on the north side of Elkhorn Valley, an ancient drainage basin.

Blue gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) are native to Australia but were imported for various purposes in California starting with the Gold Rush, and then more intensively through the second half of the 19th Century and into the first decades of the 20th Century. Today, they are still aesthetically pleasing but have serious drawbacks for public safety.

In part because of the eucalyptus trees, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has designated much of North Monterey County as High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The 2022 Monterey County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Public Works Plan (PWP) of the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County noted the risk of fire from eucalyptus groves and the need for fuel reduction:

Critical Fuel Reduction projects may occur in residential and



rural-residential settings... Many of these areas were once dominated by low-growing coastal scrub and grassland and are now a matrix of homes and towering flammable fuels. These fuels include invasive tree species such as Eucalyptus...

In July 2022, a wildfire started in the Anzar Hills near the Aromas Granite Quarry, in San Benito County near the Monterey County border. It burned 104 acres, including parts of eucalyptus groves.

Fire isn't the only danger from eucalyptus trees. In December 2022,

a eucalyptus tree in the large grove surrounding Highway 101 fell on the southbound lane, striking a car. Two other cars then collided with the fallen tree. Two people died and five people were seriously injured.

Governments have responded to the dangers. In 2015, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors rejected a citizen appeal and other public opposition and approved an application from the Elkhorn Slough Reserve for a permit to remove 1,225 existing eucalyptus trees. Trees have been removed over the

past several years to help restore native oak woodland and freshwater habitat. And in 2024, two projects in the area were initiated to address the negative effects of eucalyptus trees.

Highway 101 Rocks Road Tree Removal Project

Because of the continuing danger of eucalyptus trees falling onto Highway 101 in the dense grove in San Benito County near Aromas, Caltrans recently carried out the "Rocks Road Tree Removal Project." Proving that eucalyptus tree removal is expensive, the cost of the project was \$2.6 million.

An arborist assessed the condition of the trees near the highway and identified 228 blue gum eucalyptus trees that were in poor health or exhibited structural weakness or imbalance. The trees were cut down and the stumps were treated with herbicide to prevent regrowth. (Eucalyptus is notorious for regrowth from stumps.) The thinning out of the trees is obvious to anyone who has driven through the grove in recent months.

Fire-resistant native trees and shrubs were planted in place of the eucalyptus trees. New native trees include arroyo willow, box elder, California buckeye, and coast live oak trees. New native shrubs include hooker's manzanita, buck brush, coffeeberry, and toyon.

The native growth is expected to benefit California red-legged frogs, which live at a nearby creek. It is listed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Caltrans prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for environmental review as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Comments about the project were



received from 28 members of the public and a couple of environmental organizations.

Almost all of the comments supported the project. In fact, many of the comments called for removal of the entire eucalyptus grove.

A couple of comments opposed the tree removal, with one comment expressing concern about the loss of bird habitat. Caltrans noted in response that the project site was only 3% of the entire grove: 560 of the 577 acres would be untouched. Caltrans also reported that two years of repeated surveying by wildlife biologists did not observe any bird or raptor nests in the eucalyptus trees.

Also of interest were comment letters from the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and the Wildlife Conservation Network. Both letters supported the project. They also identified the location of the eucalyptus grove as a critical part of a proposed regional plan to improve movement of native animal species between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Gabilan Mountains. The plan would include significant removal of eucalyptus trees and replacement with native species.

Also under this plan, a wildlife highway crossing would be built where the eucalyptus grove is now located. (There is a wildlife highway crossing on Highway 17 in Santa Cruz County, and at least one wildlife highway crossing is planned for Highway 68 between Monterey and Salinas.)

Monterey County's Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program

Removal of massive eucalyptus trees can be a costly and dangerous business. At the same time, insurance costs are high when eucalyptus trees are present on a property. In fact, sometimes insurance coverage is not even available.

In 2023, Monterey County Supervisor Glenn Church (who represents the eucalyptus-laden North Monterey County) worked with State Sen. John Laird to establish a

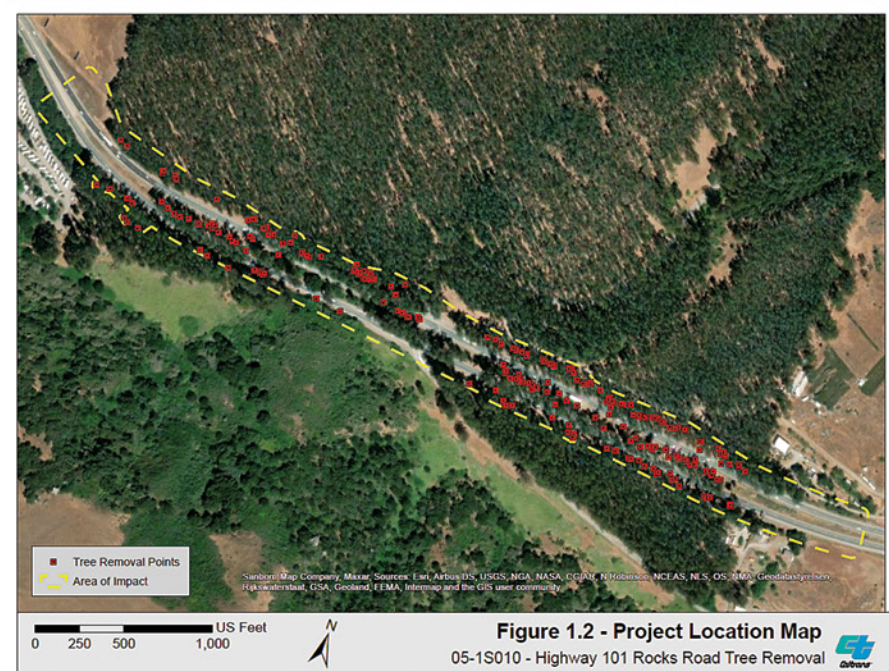
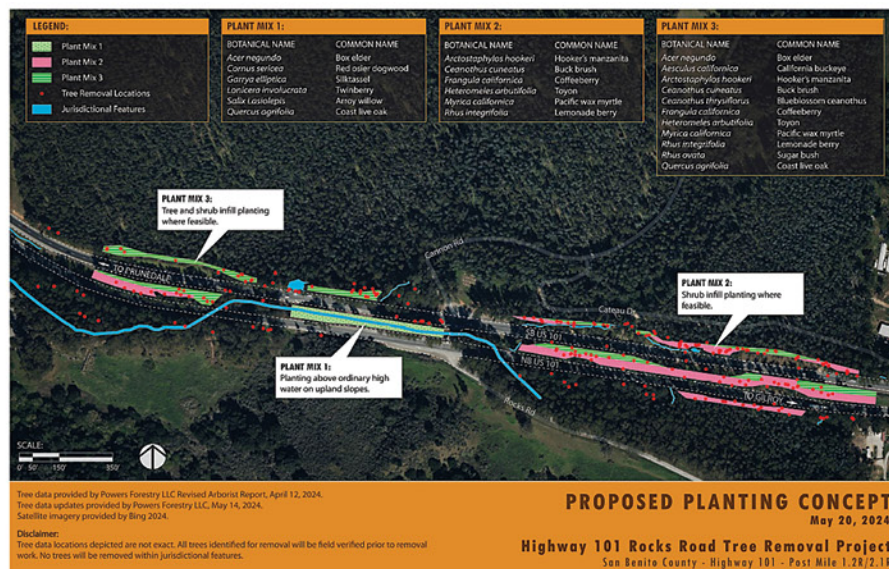
pilot project to help property owners pay for thinning, trimming, or removing eucalyptus trees within the defensible spaces (fire protection buffer zones) of structures and roadways.

Laird was able to get a \$1 million pass-through line-item appropriation from the Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) in the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 state budget (Assembly Bill 102) to the County of Monterey for a "wildfire prevention and eucalyptus tree removal pilot project."

The county would match property owner expenditures with the \$1 million in state funds "to remove problematic eucalyptus and restore native vegetation to assist in fire control and support local biodiversity." CalOES was the appropriate source of funding because of the immediate safety risks of eucalyptus caused by wildfires (and also wind-related tree falls).

On Jan. 30, 2024, the Board of Supervisors voted to authorize the county's Housing and Community Development Department to secure the \$1 million allocation and prepare the pilot project. On June 4, 2024, the Board of Supervisors found the pilot project to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), approved a Coastal Development Permit for tree trimming and removal within the coastal zone, and approved implementation of the pilot project on eligible properties within the unincorporated areas of District 2 in North Monterey County.

The Board of Supervisors also approved a \$990,000 agreement for three years (2024-2027) with the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) to administer the Pilot Project. The RCDMC is a special government agency founded in 1942 and governed by a board of various backgrounds who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Its mission is to conserve and improve natural resources through integrating the



public interest in environmental protection with the interests of agricultural and urban users.

Almost 100 applications were received. According to Supervisor Church, property owners were responsible for contacting two licensed tree contractors and obtaining bids for approval. The homeowner paid half of the costs and the contractor was reimbursed later through the program for the other half. The trees were entirely removed from the site and then chipped and spread as mulch or used as firewood. The stumps were

destroyed or treated to prevent new sprouts.

Church considers the pilot program to be a success. Residents elsewhere in Monterey County, as well as residents in Santa Cruz County and San Benito County, sought opportunities to participate. The pilot project even attracted the interest of parties in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Your Chamber of Commerce will continue to track eucalyptus removal efforts as the business community seeks greater safety and more relief from insurance costs. 🌿





## MEMBER NEWS



### Ottone & Leach LLP Announce the Addition of a New Associate Hanna Hitchcock

Hanna Hitchcock is an associate attorney at Ottone & Leach LLP. Born and raised in Salinas, Hanna graduated from Salinas High School in 2017, before continuing her education at the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned her degree in Political Science with high honors in 2020. She graduated from the University of California Davis School of Law (King Hall) in 2024, earning her J.D. degree. During her time in law school, Hanna worked as a teaching assistant for first-year law students and spent summers interning at Ottone & Leach LLP. Coming from a family with deep ties to the Salinas Valley and the agriculture industry, Hanna is dedicated to serving her community through her legal work. Hanna is a member of the State Bar of California and the Monterey County Bar Association.



### Salinas Airshow Wins Best Overall Marketing for 2024

The California International Airshow received two prestigious awards at the ICAS International Council of Airshows convention in Las Vegas in December. The Salinas Airshow was recognized and presented the "Best Overall Marketing Program for 2024." There are over 450 air shows in North America, and the Salinas show was No. 1 in the entire industry for marketing effectiveness, creativity, sponsorship, media partner relationships, website, and social media marketing, as well as television, radio, and newspaper advertising. Director of Marketing Esmeralda Owen and Executive Director Harry Wardwell proudly accepted the award at the awards luncheon in Las Vegas on Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024. In addition, The California International Airshow Salinas was recognized with a "Gold Pinnacle" award for an outstanding program for improving the experience for volunteers at the Airshow. Volunteerism is the key to a successful The Airshow and Tara Baker, Director of Volunteers, were recognized along with the Airshow Board for their creativity and successful program to recognize and honor the dedicated volunteers of the California International Airshow. Also at the convention, the military released their final schedules for 2025 and 2026, and the California International will host the U.S. Navy Blue Angels on Oct. 4-5, 2025, along with the U.S. Air Force F-16 Viper demonstration. On Sept. 26-27, 2026, the Salinas Airshow has been selected to host the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. The California International Airshow will celebrate its 44th anniversary in 2025 and is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization that has raised over \$9 million for local charities since our inception in 1981.



### Bay Federal Credit Union 2025 Education Scholarship Opens for Applicants

Bay Federal Credit Union announced it is now accepting applications for its 2025 Education Scholarship, designed to support students as they pursue their educational and career goals. The program will award up to three \$1,500 scholarships to individuals enrolled in accredited colleges, universities, or trade schools. Applications are open to Bay Federal members who demonstrate a commitment to their education and have a vision for the future of financial literacy. Interested applicants should submit their completed forms, proof of enrollment or acceptance, and essays by March 16, 2025. A panel of judges will review the submissions, and winners will be announced by April 30, 2025. This year's application asks students to reflect on the essay topic: How has technology impacted financial literacy and money management for your generation? Describe what improvements you would make to these educational resources to make them more broadly accessible and useful for young adults and others in your community. "We recognize the critical role education plays in shaping the future," said Carrie Birkhofer, President and CEO of Bay Federal Credit Union. "Our scholarship program is not just about financial assistance — it's about celebrating the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. We're looking forward to hearing their ideas on creating more inclusive, accessible financial resources for all." Since its inception, Bay Federal's scholarship program has contributed over \$90,000 to local students, affirming the Credit Union's commitment to the community. For more information on the 2025 Education Scholarship program and to access the online application, visit [bayfed.com/scholarships](http://bayfed.com/scholarships).





### NHEH Attorney Charles W. Mullaney Joins Bar Association Board

This year, Charles Mullaney begins his Board of Directors service with the Monterey County Bar Association (MCBA) for a two-year term. Charlie joined the Salinas office of Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss in December of 2023 and has quickly established his practice in labor and employment law and general civil litigation. A Santa Barbara native, Mullaney lives in Monterey and is an avid pickleball player, competing in 4.0 and 4.5 tournaments.



### Scholl & Arensdorf, LLP Welcomes John Balestreri as Tax Supervisor

Scholl & Arensdorf, LLP, a leading provider of accounting, tax, and business consulting services, announced the appointment of John Balestreri as Tax Supervisor. John brings a wealth of experience in tax reporting and advisory services, and business development, further strengthening the team and enhancing firm's commitment to excellence. Balestreri has consistently exhibited a high level of expertise in managing complex tax issues, strategic planning, and financial analysis. His contributions will be essential in shaping tax strategy and supporting growth initiatives. In his new role, John will oversee tax planning, reporting, and strategic business consulting, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the financial data while implementing effective tax mitigation strategies. Additionally, he will collaborate with the company's executive team to identify and execute strategic opportunities that will enhance the company's success. Scholl & Arensdorf, LLP is dedicated to providing exceptional accounting, tax, and business consulting services, and the addition of John reflects its ongoing commitment to attracting top talent and delivering outstanding results for clients and stakeholders.



### Bank of America Names Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley as its 2024 Neighborhood Champion

Bank of America's Neighborhood Champions® program provides multi-year flexible grant funding and nonprofit leadership training annually to high-impact organizations in nearly 40 communities nationwide. In the Monterey Bay region, Bank of America has named Watsonville-based Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley as its local 2024 Neighborhood Champion for its work to foster a healthy community through advocacy and wellness. As a Neighborhood Champion, Community Health Trust is awarded a \$50,000 grant over two years, leadership training resources for the organization's executive director and an emerging leader, access to technical coaching, and a national network of nonprofit peers. "Since 2019, our Neighborhood Champions program has provided a unique combination of leadership development and multi-year grant funding to Monterey Bay nonprofits, and we're excited to include Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley to help them scale community health programs," said Jennifer Dacquisto, president of Bank of America Monterey Bay region. "Countless individuals, families, and neighborhoods have felt the profound impact these Neighborhood Champion nonprofits have had across the Monterey Bay region over the past years." The Pajaro Valley's predominantly low-income residents and farmworker population suffer higher rates of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and obesity. They are twice as likely to be enrolled in government food programs. However, some chronic illnesses and health outcomes can be improved or managed with healthier habits such as those offered by Pajaro Valley CHT. The organization will use the Neighborhood Champions grant to help its expansion of health and nutrition programs into downtown Watsonville.



# Kaiser Permanente Holds Ribbon-Cutting Event to Introduce New Medical Office

**K**aaiser Permanente held a ribbon-cutting event on Dec. 4 for its new Salinas Medical Office Building in Monterey County at the Boronda Crossing shopping center, 1930 N. Davis Road.

The new 24,000-square-foot Salinas medical offices will provide northern Monterey County residents with a range of medical services, including primary and specialty care, pediatrics, OB/GYN care, mental health care, laboratory, radiology, and pharmacy services.

More than 70 care providers, including physicians and medical staff will provide high-quality, specialized health care in a warm and healing environment. The new medical office is expected to open this month. 🌿

Kaiser Permanente held a ribbon-cutting event in December for its new Salinas Medical Office Building in Monterey County at the Boronda Crossing shopping center.





# AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT KEITH CHUA

BUSINESS SPECIALIST, DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION

Keith Chua earned his bachelor's degree in business administration in the Philippines before embarking on a journey that led him to the United States.

Fifteen years ago, his journey brought him to Salinas, where he transitioned into the role of Assistant Administrator at a care facility dedicated to serving adults with disabilities. Over eight years in the Adult Residential Facility setting, Keith discovered a deep-seated passion for assisting individuals with disabilities. This realization prompted a shift in his career path, leading him to explore the realm of education.

Venturing into the field of special education, Keith spent five fulfilling years as a long-term substitute teacher. During this time, Keith recognized his calling to advocate for and empower people with disabilities. This revelation paved the way for Keith's transition to the Department of Rehabilitation, where Keith's been

contributing to the betterment of lives for almost three years.

In Keith's current role as a Business Specialist, Keith is tasked with establishing connections with local businesses, providing job coaching, and delivering training sessions to businesses and organizations on disability awareness. Witnessing individuals with disabilities gain confidence and secure employment through the support of the Department of Rehabilitation is the most rewarding aspect of his job.

Keith takes pride in knowing that the work he does not only facilitates professional growth but also empowers individuals to achieve their aspirations, knowing that the Department of Rehabilitation stands firmly behind them.



  
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# 73rd Annual Children's Shopping Tour Brings Joy to Local Children at Northridge Mall

**T**he Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation proudly hosted the 73rd Annual Children's Shopping Tour on Dec. 7, at the Northridge Mall, bringing the spirit of giving and community to life. This cherished tradition provided 400 children in first through fourth grades, with winter and essential school clothing, helping underserved families while delivering an estimated \$50,000 in positive economic impact to local retailers.

The event was made possible by the unwavering generosity of presenting sponsors: Chevron, Harden Foundation, Alco Water Service, Northridge Mall, and Mrs. Marilyn Quadros. Their leadership in supporting this long-standing event highlights their commitment to both the well-being of children in our region and the economic vitality of our community.

"For decades, the Children's Shopping Tour has been a cornerstone event that uplifts both families and local businesses," said Greg Hamer, Chair of the Children's Shopping Tour. "This year was no exception, with the incredible support of our sponsors and volunteers ensuring that hundreds of children not only received much-needed essentials but also experienced the joy of being cared for by their community."

The Children's Shopping Tour collaborates with local school districts and teachers to identify children in need, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most impactful. Each child, paired with a chaperone, shopped for clothes from participating Northridge Mall retailers, including JC Penney, Macy's, The Children's Place, and Old Navy. The event not only delivered tangible support to families,



but also bolstered sales for these valued local businesses during the holiday season.

The success of this event would not have been possible without the efforts of hundreds of volunteers, including the Monterey County Sheriff's Department and the dedicated CST Committee Members: Cynthia Martinez, Evette Selva-Kirby, Greg Hamer, Cristal Hamer, Amy Salmina and Starla Warren. The Salinas Valley Chamber staff — Gabriel Lopez, Jasmine Bhardwaj, Bryan Cabello, and Cesar







Chavez — along with Ambassadors Keith Chua, Daniel Philpott, and Margaret Noroian, also played a vital role in the event. Special thanks go to Celia Garcia, Northridge Mall's Marketing Manager, for her collaboration and support.

This year's event reflects the power of community and the generosity of sponsors who believe in creating opportunities for children while strengthening local businesses. Supporting sponsors included Bay Federal Credit Union, Coast & Valley Properties, Green Rubber Kennedy

Ag, Chilton & House Inc. Attorneys at Law, Wow! Smiles, Smith & Enright Landscaping, Johnson Electronics, Backus Properties, and Graniterock.

The Salinas Valley Chamber Foundation also recognizes the generosity of community donors: Chris Steinbruner, Maryln and David Mesa, Richard and Rosalia Foster, Dean and Kristin Callender, Steve McShane, Rodney Meeks, Elvia Salgado (Stonies), Carol Collins, Maria Lopez, Michele Rios Fernandez, Kevan Clarke, and

Gordon and Jane Zook.

"The smiles on these children's faces as they shopped for clothes, they needed were priceless," added Hamer. "Equally rewarding was seeing how our collective efforts support local retailers and bring vitality to our community's economy. It's a testament to the power of giving and partnership."

As the 73rd Children's Shopping

Tour concludes, the Foundation is already gearing up for next year, aiming to continue making a positive impact on Salinas area's youth through charitable giving and volunteerism.

For more information about the Children's Shopping Tour or to learn how to get involved, please visit [SalinasChamber.com](http://SalinasChamber.com) or call (831) 751-7725. 🌱



# A New Year Filled With New Opportunities

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

**H**appy New Year, Salinas Valley! As we step into 2025, we are filled with the promise of fresh beginnings



and new opportunities. There's something invigorating about turning the calendar to January — a chance to pause, reflect, and look forward with hope. This is the season to embrace renewal, restoration, and redemption in our lives. We can take what we've learned, build on what we've experienced, and commit to doing better and being better. The good news is that none of us have to do it alone. Together, as a community, we can make this year one of transformation and purpose.

At Compass Church, we are excited about the opportunities 2025 holds. One of the most meaningful ways we're kicking off this new year is by hosting the Mayor's Breakfast for the Faith Community. This inspiring event will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 29, at Compass Church, and we would love for you to join us. The Mayor's Breakfast is a time for faith leaders, community members, and city officials to come together and explore ways we can serve and uplift our community. It's a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when we unite around a common purpose. For more details, visit our website — we'd be honored to have you with us.

As we look back on the Christmas season, our hearts are full of gratitude for the incredible partnerships and community spirit that made it so memorable. Working alongside the Salinas Rodeo Grounds and other area nonprofits, we saw firsthand what happens when people come together to create joy and



connection.

One highlight of the season was our annual Christmas on Main Street production. The turnout was amazing, and we were humbled by the number of families who joined us to celebrate. Seeing our community come together in joy and unity reminded us of the power of shared experiences. To everyone who attended, volunteered, or supported this event in any way — thank you. You helped make Christmas on Main Street a highlight of the year for so many.

As we step into this new year, we encourage you to consider what renewal looks like for you. Maybe it's reconnecting with loved ones, committing to a new goal, or simply being more intentional about kindness in your daily life. Every small step can lead to big changes. And as we move forward, let's remind ourselves of the strength we find in community. Together, we can accomplish more than we could ever do alone.

At Compass Church, our mission is to be a source of encouragement

and hope for Salinas Valley. Whether it's through events like the Mayor's Breakfast, partnerships with local organizations, or weekly gatherings, we are here to walk this journey with you. Let's make 2025 a year of growth, unity, and renewed purpose.

We're excited about the possibilities ahead and grateful to share them with you. Here's to a wonderful year of hope, collaboration, and transformation. Let's embrace this fresh start together and make it our best year yet! 🌱





# RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



## 17th Annual Salinas Tree for Peace Lighting Ceremony

Salinas was filled with holiday cheer during the Tree for Peace Lighting Ceremony, presented by the Salinas City Center! After a fun-filled day of supporting local businesses for Shop Small Saturday, families gathered for the tree lighting. They enjoyed festive holiday crafts, live performances by Ariel Theatrical, YOSAL, and a special visit from the Fire Department, the Mayor, and Santa himself!



## El Abrazo "The Hug" Mural Unveiling

Hijos Del Sol hosted a grand unveiling of their new mural in partnership with the Monterey County Department of Behavioral Health and the Salinas Valley Chamber. The community was invited to hear the amazing story of how the partnership between HDS and MCBH came to fruition and learn the inspiration behind "El Abrazo" from artist Jose Ortiz.



## Goodwill Central Coast Alisal Store Renovation Unveiling

Goodwill Central Coast completed its 16-store renovation project with a grand celebration unveiling its flagship Alisal store in East Salinas. Guests enjoyed live mariachi music, exclusive deals, and activities throughout the day, including a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The renovations reflect GCC's commitment to creating welcoming spaces, supporting associates, and building a sustainable community.



## Kaiser Permanente's New Medical Offices in Salinas

Kaiser Permanente celebrated its new Medical Offices with a ribbon-cutting event. Opening in January 2025, the facility features 20 exam rooms, pharmacy, lab, radiology, and more for integrated and comprehensive care. Guests had the opportunity to tour the state-of-the-art space.



## Hartnell College Track and Field Reopening and Naming Ceremony

Hartnell College celebrated the ribbon cutting and grand re-opening of the Bill Elliott Football Field and Gary Shaw Track. This event marked the completion of Phase III of the Measure T renovation projects, bringing upgraded facilities to their students and community. The day ended on a high note with a welcome lap around the track — what a way to kick off this





# NEW CHAMBER BOARD MEMBERS

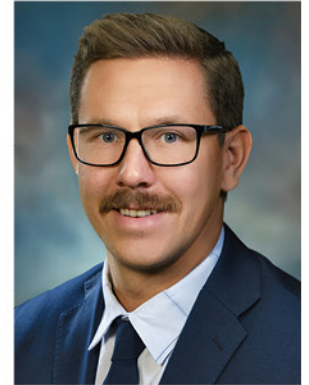
## REGINA GAGE MEALS ON WHEELS OF THE SALINAS VALLEY



Regina M. Gage, President/CEO of Meals on Wheels of the Salinas Valley, has been with Meals on Wheels since November 2014. Prior to this position, she was the Executive Director of the Monterey County Bar Association. She has worked in the non-profit sector for almost 20 years, including foster care, being a legal advocate for domestic violence victims, and now homebound seniors. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in Humanities and Political Science from San Jose State University and has a Juris Doctor degree from the Monterey College of Law.

She is a member of the Steinbeck Rotary Club and serves on the Board of Directors for St. Andrews Residential Programs for Youth, Inc. Gage was elected to represent Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System's District 1 in 2018.

## MICHAEL ARENSDORF SCHOLL & ARENSDORF LLP



Michael Arensdorf, Partner of Scholl & Arensdorf, is a Certified Public Accountant with emphasis in taxation, business consulting, and client accounting services with primary focus in the construction, real-estate, and cannabis industries.

Arensdorf grew up in Monterey County and is a graduate of Salinas High School and California State University Chico in 2017. He joined Scholl & Arensdorf in 2018 and made partner in 2022. He also was an associate with Hayashi & Wayland, LLP, in Salinas, in 2017 and 2018. Outside of the office, Arensdorf enjoys being active, including hiking and golfing.

Scholl & Arensdorf offers a wide range of services, including tax reduction planning, tax compliance, profit improvement planning, complete accounting and payroll services, outsourced CFO and controller services, tax problem resolution work and business sales and acquisitions.

Scholl & Arensdorf have special niche expertise in several industries, including real estate, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, commercial fishing and Canada cross-border tax planning.

## SCOTT GILLETT PACIFIC VALLEY BANK



Scott Gillett is the Vice President, Relationship Manager at Pacific Valley Bank, serving Monterey County. With a strong background driving breakthrough performance in retail, private, and commercial banking, he is recognized for his ability to recruit, develop, and lead high-performing teams while delivering consistent and sustainable results. His career includes roles at 1st Capital Bank, Mechanics Bank, and Rabobank Wholesale Banking North America.

Gillett holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Postbaccalaureate in Financial Accounting from Cal Poly Humboldt.

## FRED HOOKER RETIRED AGRI-BUSINESS EXECUTIVE AND PAST RODEO PRESIDENT



Fred Hooker is a seasoned professional with a deep passion for agriculture, education, and community service. His career began as an agricultural educator at Ventura Community College, where he laid the foundation for his lifelong commitment to the industry. From there, Hooker transitioned into the agribusiness sector, gaining hands-on experience in all facets of the field, including vegetable production, harvesting, processing, and packaging.

Over the years, he held leadership roles that showcased his expertise and dedication. He served as a general manager for a prominent agricultural irrigation and industrial fluid handling company, as well as managing a Case Tractor dealership. These positions allowed him to hone his skills in operations management and community engagement.

Hooker's passion for education and youth development is evident in his long-standing role on the Agricultural Advisory Committee for North Salinas High School. He worked tirelessly to ensure the school's curriculum prepared students for higher education, industrial technology training, and successful careers. His efforts have helped countless young people develop the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

He is also deeply committed to addressing societal challenges, particularly homelessness. He has a vision for creating programs that provide not only housing solutions, but also essential training and skill development to help individuals regain stability and independence. By working closely with local businesses and organizations, Hooker seeks to foster a stronger, more supportive community.

Through his leadership and advocacy, he strives to make the Salinas Valley a place where families can thrive and take pride in their community. He welcomes ideas and input from others, believing that collaboration is key to driving positive change and creating lasting solutions for a better future.





# Chamber Board Member Starla Warren's Term Expires, But She Continues to be Involved

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

## OSCAR MORA BLUE ADOBE MORTGAGE



Oscar Mora has lived in Monterey County for over 40 years and has been in the mortgage business for over 20 in the Salinas Valley. Mora's bilingual and bi-literate skills have helped hundreds of families in the Hispanic community obtain home ownership. He was recently ranked on Scottman's Guide and Mortgage Executive as one of the top 1% mortgage loan officers in America. A wonderful family man, he and his wife Sheila have been married for over 27 years and have three children. His oldest child is Priscilla, a teacher at North Monterey County High School. His son Oscar Jr. just graduated from Cal State East Bay and is preparing to enter Law School. His youngest daughter Faith is currently attending Cal State Northridge on an athletic scholarship. She's pursuing medical school right after she graduates. Mora has also gained a son in law, Luis, who married Priscilla in 2019. Mora welcomed the arrival of his first grandchild, Myla, this past summer. Mora and his family enjoy weekend runs together and stay involved in community events, such as local 5K's. He has coached basketball for several years at different levels. In his spare time he loves to attend sporting events. He also serves as an ambassador for the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. Mora was part of the first graduating class at California State University Monterey Bay and earned a bachelor's degree in business. He has also taken several real estate and finance courses. He has had great leadership training in programs such as Rapport Leadership, The CORE Training, and Certified Mortgage Advisors.

**A**ffordable housing advocate Starla Warren may have left the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors after she was termed out after five years, but she's not giving up her involvement in the Chamber.

Warren, who has spent the past 40 years in housing, finance, construction and real estate development and continues to assist Monterey County Housing Inc. (MCHI), is still serving on the SVCC Foundation Board and is also active on the SVCC Government Affairs Committee.

She believes the 2025 board, with five new members, a new board chair and a new CEO/President, is as strong or stronger than it's ever been.

"I was really impressed with the resilience of the board members during a very stressful time of leadership," she says about her five-year stint with the board. "Also, the board has a strong ability to understand the financial dynamics of running an organization. There's a lot of depth of financial management and budgeting on the board and that will continue under the new leadership of Leonard and five strong new board members."

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, she was recruited to come to Monterey County 23 years ago to work with in the field of developing affordable housing. Her career includes 20-plus years with Monterey County Housing Development Corporation as founder, President and CEO. Warren retired from that position to assist Monterey County Housing Inc. (MCHI) rebuild and rebrand the



30-year-old nonprofit affordable housing provider and developer that was struggling under the local housing authority's management of their assets. MCHI has now withdrawn from that control and are in the process of coming to terms with a fiscal settlement as well as develop an entitled 80 development in the Salinas area.

In addition to being a board and foundation member, Warren was the recipient of the Chamber's "Spirit of the Community" award in 2017.

She expressed admiration for anyone who volunteers to serve on the Chamber board.

"As a board member you have to react appropriately, you have to be diligent, flexible and nimble," she said about traits needed to be an effective board member. "I admire our board members who dedicate their time and effort to do this work." 🌱

## VERONICA PLASCENCIA KION



Veronica Plascencia, Sales Manager with KION, brings more than 20 years of leadership experience in customer service and client management. A passionate advocate for community equity and nonprofit support, Plascencia is dedicated to helping local organizations drive results that support their goals and positively impact the community. Her work is centered on bringing valuable resources to people in need, ensuring that everyone in our community has access to the support they deserve.

Born in Jalisco, Mexico, Plascencia moved to the Central Coast at the age of 10. She began her career in the hospitality industry in Big Sur, which ignited her interest in marketing and community engagement. In 2015, she transitioned into marketing and communications when she joined Entravision Communications.

Her desire to make a more direct impact in her community led her to join Blue Zones Project Monterey County, where she focused on engaging the community and raising awareness within the Hispanic population to help everyone live longer and better. In 2023, Plascencia returned to the media world with KION-TV, where she continues to support both businesses and nonprofits in delivering their messages to the community.

Outside of her professional life, Plascencia enjoys hiking, volunteering at local schools, and supporting organizations such as Jacob's Heart and Hijos del Sol. Above all, she cherishes spending quality time with her daughters. She is deeply committed to the thriving of the Salinas Valley community, both in business and in helping future generations succeed.

Plascencia is excited to work with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce and its members to foster growth and development within the local business community.





# Prepare Your Portfolio for 2025

By **Bill Hastie**, Hastie Financial Group

**F**ollowing a strong year in the stock market, it is always prudent to review your portfolio to make certain it is appropriately positioned for the new year. Here are two things you can do now to make sure your portfolio continues to reflect your risk tolerance and investment objective.

Confirm your risk acceptance level

Human nature being what it is, it can be tempting to gravitate to those investments that performed well during the year before. Once again, large capitalization (cap) growth stocks dominated the U.S. stock market with outstanding performance. These are primarily large technology companies, especially those focused on artificial intelligence (AI). But these stocks also represent potential volatility beyond what the investor is comfortable accepting.

Maintaining a balance of the

stocks in a portfolio is typically a prudent approach. "Tilting" toward one asset class or another is quite normal, but overweighting a portfolio simply based on previous performance can be a risky endeavor. For investors who maintain a more balanced portfolio — one containing both stocks and bonds — takes a bit more work. An investor's risk acceptance level should not necessarily change for anything other than a change in the investor's financial circumstances, time frame, etc.

Rebalance your portfolio

This may be the single most important step you can take be prepare your portfolio for a new year. In a nutshell, rebalancing a portfolio is the process of reallocating the individual holdings in a portfolio back into their initial, intended percentages.

For example, during a year when one asset class substantially

outperforms another, the percentage allocation will increase in the investment that performed well, while the allocation of the lesser performing investment will decline. This is the case, in general, with stocks and bonds in 2024. The average investor most likely saw their stock holdings dramatically increase in value, while their bond holdings increased little, if any.

To bring the portfolio back into its intended allocation, some of the stock holdings must be sold and reallocated (added to) the bond holdings. This process is often seen as selling some "winners" and investing more into the "losers." To a degree, this is exactly what is happening. Although this seems counterintuitive, there is a rationale for doing so.

For example, let's assume that an investor's ideal stock/bond allocation is 60% stocks and 40% bonds. By the end of 2023, when stocks

again dramatically outperformed bonds, that percentage allocation might have drifted to 70% stocks and 30% bonds. Let's further assume this investor did not rebalance the portfolio at the beginning of 2024. By the end of 2024, this portfolio may likely have continued to drift toward stocks, potentially ending the year nearly 80% stocks and 20% bonds.

The problem this creates is that the risk inherent in an 80/20 portfolio is far above the acceptable level of a 60/40 portfolio. This potentially exposes the investor to unintended risk in the new year.

An investment professional can easily assist in evaluating the investor's acceptable risk level, and that inherent in their portfolio. If these two metrics do not match, changes can be made to align the two. 🌱

*Bill Hastie, MBA, is a Financial Advisor with locally owned Hastie Financial Group and can be contacted at [william.hastie@hastiefg.com](mailto:william.hastie@hastiefg.com).*



# Natividad Trauma Center Celebrates a Decade of Lifesaving Care

**T**his month, Natividad Medical Center is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its Level II Trauma Center designation, a milestone that underscores the hospital's unwavering commitment to providing high-quality, lifesaving medical care to the Monterey County community.

Since receiving its designation on Jan. 5, 2015, Natividad has transformed the region's emergency medical services landscape. As the only Level II Trauma Center in Monterey County, it has become a beacon of hope for critically injured patients, addressing a vital need in one of California's largest counties without such facilities at the time.

Dr. Alexander Di Stante, the Trauma Medical Director and Surgical Services Director, said that years of dedication and rigorous preparation went into becoming a Level II Trauma Center.

"Our journey to becoming a designated trauma center involved meticulous planning, significant upgrades to our facilities and staffing, and was a collaborative effort with our leadership team," he said. "The improvements we implemented not only elevated our hospital's reputation but also transformed the standard of care we provide to our entire community."

Over the past decade, Natividad Trauma Center has treated more than 14,000 trauma patients, averaging 1,400 cases annually. Its robust trauma program is equipped with advanced medical technology and staffed by highly trained professionals, including double-boarded trauma surgeons, neurosurgeons, orthopedic trauma surgeons, trauma nurse practitioners and trauma-trained nurses.

All specialized medical personnel are committed to delivering round-the-clock care and support.

"This level of preparedness, along with our location within an hour's



reach by ambulance or helicopter, has saved countless lives," Di Stante said.

Di Stante said the trauma center team exemplifies a commitment to collaboration and rapid response. As a Level II Trauma Center, Natividad attracts top medical talent — doctors and other medical professionals who seek out the challenges of trauma care. This creates a halo effect where patient outcomes and care is improved for all patients, not just for trauma patients. With its exceptional readiness and skill, Natividad's Trauma Center operates at the same level as the top Level I Trauma Centers. The primary difference between its Level II and a Level I is that Natividad doesn't have trauma teaching, research or fellowship programs.

Trauma remains the leading cause of death for people aged 45 and younger, making immediate access to specialized trauma care crucial. Studies show that treatment at a designated trauma center reduces death rates by 25% compared to non-trauma facilities.

While car accidents account for 45% of the trauma cases treated, falls make up 21% of patients. Assault injuries account for 12% of trauma patients, while other incidents are 4%. Pedestrian accidents have surged to 7% of cases, while motorcycle and bicycle incidents hover at 6% and 4%, respectively, and cars often play a role in these traumatic injuries. For pediatric cases needing specialized care, the hospital coordinates transfers as required to ensure the best outcomes.

"Our impact on the community extending beyond the treatment room reflects our dedication to comprehensive care, from emergency arrival through discharge and rehabilitation, providing lifesaving care accessibly close to home," Di Stante said. "It can be seen in the lives we've saved and the families we've helped reunite."

The hospital's trauma program also offers community-focused trauma prevention education and programs such as Stop the Bleed to equip the public with medical tactics, like compression and tourniquet applications,

to save lives in urgent situations.

Natividad Foundation's CHOICE violence intervention program addresses the root causes of violence. It places expert interventionists at the bedside and offers resources to patients to avoid retaliation and returning to a violent lifestyle.

"Natividad is dedicated to continuing our journey of excellence and ensuring that our community has accessible world-class health care close to home," said Natividad CEO Dr. Chad Harris. "We look forward to the next decade and beyond and are committed to saving lives and improving patient outcomes for everyone in Monterey County."

About Natividad

Natividad is a hospital and trauma center providing compassionate high-quality health care to everyone, regardless of ability to pay. Located in Salinas, Natividad is a public health care system offering a wide range of inpatient, outpatient, emergency, diagnostic and specialty medical care for adults and children. Founded in 1886, the 172-bed medical center has more than 11,000 admissions and 60,000 emergency visits annually. Home to the area's only Level II Trauma Center, the hospital's specialized personnel, equipment and services provide a vital local community service that saves lives and keeps patients close to home.

Natividad's Baby-Friendly® facility delivers nearly 2,300 babies every year and is affiliated with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals. It also operates an accredited Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, giving the tiniest and most fragile babies the best chance for a healthy start.

Through its UCSF-affiliated Natividad Family Medicine Residency, Natividad is the only teaching hospital on the Central Coast. For more information, call (831) 755-4111 or visit [www.natividad.com](http://www.natividad.com). 🌿





# CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

## Kidz Corner USA

Since 2015, Kidz Corner USA has been a cornerstone of the Salinas community, providing a nurturing, safe, and engaging environment where children can thrive. Founded by Stephanie Bayer, Kidz Corner USA emerged from her vision to create a space that fosters growth, creativity, and confidence. This vision has flourished, shaping Kidz Corner USA into a trusted establishment dedicated to serving families and children. From its humble beginnings, Kidz Corner USA has evolved into a hub for educational enrichment, recreational opportunities, and specialized programs in gymnastics, dance, and cheer. These programs inspire confidence, teamwork, and self-discipline while promoting physical fitness, strength, and coordination. Beyond its activities, Kidz Corner USA has cultivated a community-centered approach, creating meaningful connections with families and making a lasting impact on children throughout the Salinas area. Stephanie's dedication to excellence and innovation has allowed Kidz Corner USA to continuously grow and adapt to the changing needs of the community. Her passion for creating opportunities that empower children has solidified Kidz Corner USA's reputation as a beloved institution in Salinas. As we celebrate the grand opening of KidzCornerUSA's new facility, we reflect on the remarkable journey since its inception in 2015. This milestone is a testament to Stephanie's unwavering commitment to shaping a brighter future for generations to come. We invite you to join the celebration and become part of the Kidz Corner USA family. Together, let's continue to build a stronger, more connected community through the joy of learning, play, and personal growth.

*kidzcornerusa@gmail.com, kidzcornerusa.com, (831) 710-2509*



## Goldberg & Ibarra Law Firm

Attorney David Ibarra and his dedicated team work to protect the rights of the disadvantaged, seriously injured and disabled, getting them the compensation and benefits they deserve. Their clients feel comfortable and taken care of because they value the people of their community. Everyone is treated with respect and understanding starting with their free consultation and continuing through their trial. The Law Office of Goldberg & Ibarra offers 24-hour availability to its clients. And if they don't win their case, they don't pay. With their people-first approach, Goldberg & Ibarra has created a law firm the valley can trust.

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## Looking for Child Care?

Visit [www.MontereyCountyChildCare.org](http://www.MontereyCountyChildCare.org)

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*Options for child care and early learning • Tips for parenting, health and safety • Resources for child care and education providers*

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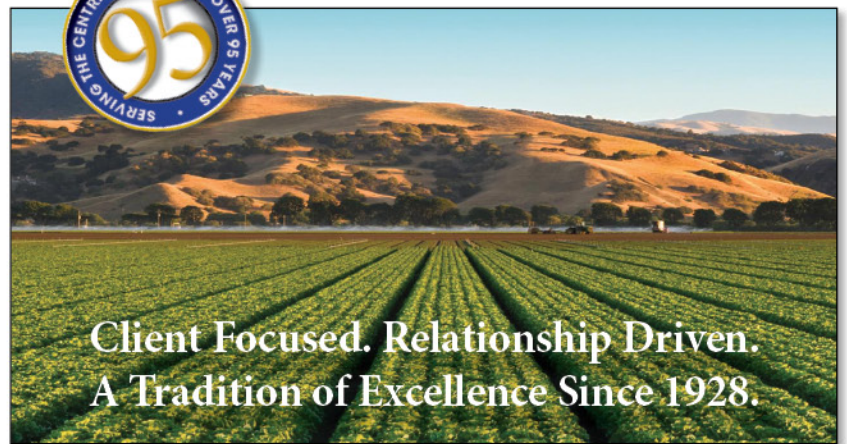


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**For all that is Monterey County.  
For all that is you.**







## Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our January 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
The Californian (USA Today/Gannett)	1922	Green Rubber - Kennedy Ag, Inc.	1991
Struve & Laporte Funeral Home	1927	Garden of Memories Memorial Park	1992
Timmins & Sorensen CPAs	1954	Round Table Pizza - North Salinas	1993
McGilloway, Ray, Brown & Kaufman	1956	Vilmorin-Mikado USA, Inc.	1993
JM Electric	1958	PearTree+Belli Architects Inc	1995
Granite Construction Company Inc	1959	Mechanics Bank, N.A.- Castroville Branch	1996
Andrews Blueprint	1962	El Sol	1997
Scarr Moving & Storage, Inc.	1962	L. Nielsen Enterprises, Inc.	1998
Star Market	1963	Mechanics Bank, N.A.- Westridge	1998
Pan American Insurance Services	1968	Palma School	1998
Brandon & Tibbs Accountants	*55 Years* 1970	Triangle Farms, Inc.	1998
Matsui Nursery	1972	Tovar Strategies, INC. - DBA TMD	1999
Chicago Title Company	1974	TriCord Tradeshow Services	1999
Vegetable Growers Supply Company	1974	Backus Property Management Inc *25 Years*	2000
Central Coast Builders Association	1976	Patane Gumberg Avila, LLP *25 Years*	2000
Mechanics Bank- Salinas Financial Service Center	1983	Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority DBA	2000
Wescom Credit Union - Seaside	1984	Salinas Valley Recycles *25 Years*	
Meals on Wheels of the Salinas Valley Inc	1986	Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa	2002
Commercial Service Company - Key & Young INC	1988	Salinas Mattress Company	2004
Kirkorian Enterprises, LLC, dba Kirkwood Plaza	1988	Foundation for Monterey County Free Libraries	2006

### A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members







# Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our January 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
Pizza Factory / Amorim Enterprises Inc	2006	Monterey Fish Company	2022
Coastal Kids Home Care	2007	Scale Microgrid Solutions	2022
EMC Planning Group Inc.	2009	Splash Car Wash	2022
Hartnell College Foundation	2009	Tope's Sustainable Garden Center	2022
International Paper *15 Years*	2010	Working Solutions CDFI	2022
Chilton and House Attorneys	2012	Blue Adobe Mortgage	2023
Edward Jones Investments	2013	Leal's Bakery	2023
Chevron	2014	Monterey County Historical Society	2023
Geisler3	2014	organicgirl	2023
American Takii Inc	2015	Platinum Auto Glass LLC	2023
The YWCA Monterey County	2017	Salad Shoppe	2023
Artistic HangUps	2018	The Monterey Symphony	2023
Black Bear Diner - Salinas	2018	Broker Associate, Century 21	2024
Monterey County Pops!	2018	Showcase Realtors	2024
AgroThrive Inc	2019	Golden State Paint Company LLC	2024
Pacific Valley Bank	2021	Montage Health	
Compass Church	2022		

## A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members







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

# JANUARY 2025

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison



### Topics for Inclusion in Chamber Communication to Mayor, City Council, and City Manager on 2025 Strategic Planning Session

1. Measure G Sales Tax Transparency and Plan for 2026 Voter Consideration of Renewal
2. Traffic Mitigation for Amazon Fulfillment Center
3. New Housing Supply
4. Economic Growth and Quality Job Creation, Including a Revised Economic Development Element of the General Plan
5. Restoration of Focus on the Downtown Vibrancy Plan
6. Data Collection and Reports for Key City Services
7. Decline in Crime Rates and Continuing That Momentum
8. City of Salinas as a Water Supplier
9. Improving the Permitting Process
10. Impact of Homelessness on Community and Commerce
11. Street and Sidewalk Improvements
12. Municipal Wastewater, Stormwater, and Industrial Wastewater Improvements
13. Compliance with Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) Measure X Accountability Guidelines to Obtain County Funding

**Y**our Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 17 members at its most recent meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 11. Committee members took the opportunity to review accomplishments in 2024 and plan for 2025.

**1 Fulfillment of 2024 Government Affairs Objectives Identified at Chamber Board's Strategic Planning Meeting.** Committee members agreed that they oversaw achievement of many of the 2024 Government Affairs objectives, which the Board of Directors had identified at its Jan. 26, 2024 strategic planning meeting.

See the list of 13 2024 objectives on this page. Committee members recognized that these objectives, with slight adjustments to reflect 2025 political conditions, remain relevant to the Chamber.

**2 Proposal for Salinas City Council Strategic Planning Sessions.** The Salinas City Council did not hold a day-long planning session for 2024. It held them for the two previous years, on Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021 (planning for 2022) and on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2023 (planning for 2023). It's reported that the City Council may hold a strategic planning session again for 2025.

The Committee approved sending a letter to the Salinas City Council proposing items for potential discussion at a 2025 planning session.

Chamber leaders have identified these items as important for advancing the Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." See the list of items on this page.

**3 Drafting a Proposal to the Salinas City Council Proposing Specific Changes to Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization/Tenant Protection Ordinances.** At its November 2024 meeting, the Government Relations Committee established an Ad Hoc Committee to examine the four ordinances enacted in the last two years that regulate rental properties. In addition, a separate Working Group of property owners and property management firms is meeting for the same purpose.

The four new ordinances in Chapter 17 of the Salinas Municipal Code are Article I - Residential Rental Registration; Article IIA - Rent Stabilization; Article IIB - Just Cause Eviction and Tenant Protection; and Article IIC - Anti-Harassment. The Salinas City Council enacted Article I



on April 4, 2023 and the three parts of Article II on Sept. 24, 2024.

To assist affected parties in reviewing the ordinances, your Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison has created and distributed spreadsheets to these groups listing each provision in each of the ordinances as a separate item for review. The spreadsheets provide an empty column for people to rate each provision in each row from 1 (must be kept) to 10 (must be repealed). It also provides a second empty column to fill in possible amended language, using a strike out font for deletions and italic font for additions.

The Committee directed the Government Affairs Liaison to collect and compile comments about the rental registration and stabilization ordinances from the Ad Hoc Committee, the Working Group, other

associations, and individual members. He was also directed to obtain and analyze any data showing how the new ordinances are affecting the housing market in Salinas. Finally, he was asked to devise new statutory language that would focus the City of Salinas on education and enforcement and provide public accountability for city actions and expenditures related to these ordinances.

Committee members seemed open to the idea of the City of Salinas continuing to collect a rental registration fee if it actually uses the revenue to educate landlords and tenants and protect tenants from egregious treatment and violations of the law by unscrupulous landlords. Committee members also emphasized that the dismal findings about the housing market listed in the ordinances to justify their passage are generally accurate. 🌱

## 2024 Government Affairs Objectives Identified at Chamber Board's Strategic Planning Meeting

1. Craft concise messages to cite with news media and provide to pro-business elected officials and candidates.
2. Give the Government Affairs Director authority to speak to the news media without a cumbersome, time-consuming bureaucratic approval process. We need to be fast, like our opponents, and show our members and the business community that the Chamber is their voice. The example last week of Kevin's comments on KSBW were proof this strategy works.
3. Identify and train capable and interested Chamber members to speak on issues.
4. Highlight issues in Business Journal. Be a source of authoritative information.
5. Increase public interaction with the Chamber website for public policy issues.
6. Increase use of social media for public policy issues.
7. Produce educational pieces to explain to voters what issues are important to businesses and how the city council addresses those important issues.
8. Increase opportunities for Chamber members to interact with elected officials.
9. Publish a legislative bulletin to send to the GRC list, with encouragement for them to forward/circulate it to colleagues, friends, etc.
10. Obtain documents and expose plots that are hostile to business.
11. Develop and promote Chamber messages as our own, but keep our political allies informed about what we're doing.
12. Endorse candidates for the November 2024 election who are credible and share the positions of the Chamber.
13. Create, join, and maintain coalitions with other entities on public policy issues of common concern.



**Salinas Valley**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## EMPLOYMENT LABOR POSTERS FOR SALE



**If you own a business in California, it's mandatory to update your CA and Federal Labor Law posters every year. Don't miss out on this requirement. Order your updated posters through the Chamber to stay compliant.**

**\*Accepting orders through January**

For questions or for any purchases, contact our Director of Operations and Finance, Willa Doroy  
831-751-7725 / [Willa@SalinasChamber.com](mailto:Willa@SalinasChamber.com)



# Just Cause Eviction and Tenant Protection Ordinance in Salinas

By Geraldine Villa, Attorney, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss

**A**s of Jan. 1, 2025, landlords with property in the city limits of Salinas must have more “Just Cause” to evict tenants than required under State law. [Salinas City Code 17-02.50 and following (“Ordinance”)]. The Ordinance limits the reasons a tenancy can be terminated and requires higher relocation assistance payments, among other things.

The following residential units are *exempt* under the Ordinance:

**Short-Term Rentals:** Short-term rentals of 28 days or less. This exemption is lost if the tenant stays for more than 30 consecutive days, has a rental agreement for 30 days or more, or if the landlord violates specific regulations under California Civil Code section 1940.1.

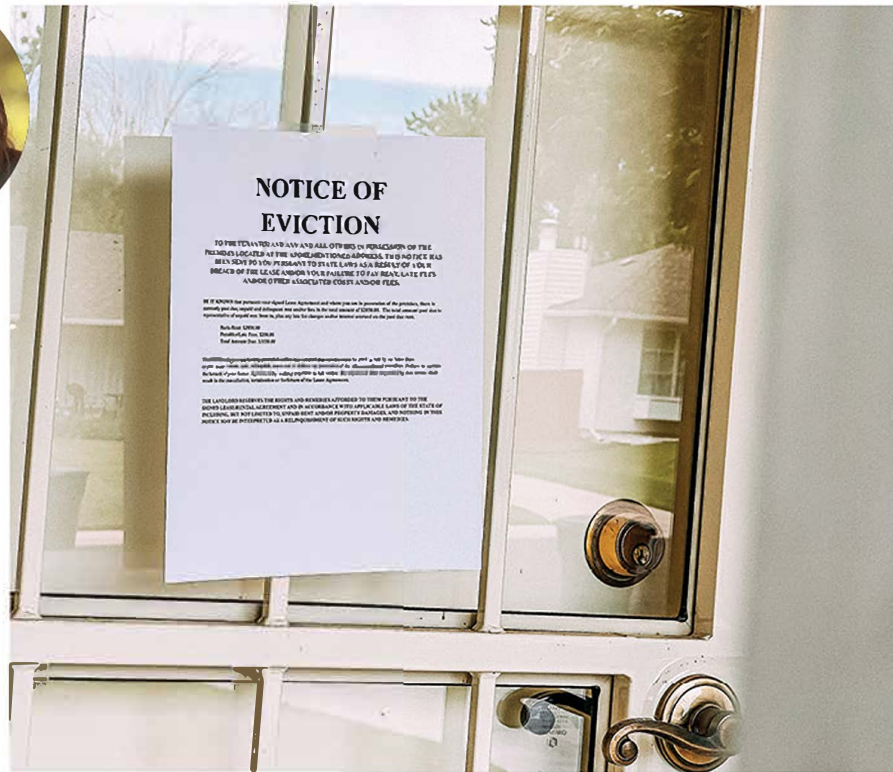
**Special Housing Types:** Units in hospitals, convents, monasteries, extended care facilities, dormitories owned and operated by an accredited educational institution.

**Shared Housing:** Units where tenants share a bathroom or kitchen with the property owner who maintains their primary residence at the property.

**Single-Family-Owner-Occupied Homes:** Single-family homes are only exempt if the owner maintains their primary residence in the home and the owner rents no more than two units or rooms, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs and Junior ADUs).

## Just-Cause is Mandatory to Terminate any Residential Tenancy

Under the Ordinance, landlords cannot terminate any tenancy without “Just Cause,” regardless of how long the tenant has been in



possession of the property. There are two types of “Just Cause”: At-Fault and No-Fault.

“At-Fault” Just Cause includes:

- **Failure to Pay at Least One Month’s Rent:** If the tenant lawfully withholds rent due to habitability issues, the rent will not be considered “overdue.”
- **Breach of Lease:** After the tenant is notified and given a chance to cure the breach, the landlord may evict a tenant substantially violating any material terms of the lease provided such terms are legal.
- **Assignment and Sublease:** Tenants can be evicted for violating the assignment and sublease provisions of a lease. However, a tenant who continues to reside in the unit as their primary residence, cannot be evicted if the sublease replaces one or more departed tenants and the landlord

unreasonably withholds consent to sublet.

- **Family Protections:** Landlords may not evict tenants for allowing children, a parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother or sister or the spouse or domestic partner to join the household so long as the number of occupants does not exceed the maximum number of occupants permitted by the lease.
- **Nuisance and Waste:** This includes causing significant damage to the property.
- **Failure to Give Access:** Tenants who refuse without good cause to grant the landlord access to the unit after the landlord has served the tenant with proper written notice.
- **Illegal Activities:** Tenants engaging in criminal activity on the premises, including in common areas, criminal threat by tenant towards landlord or landlord

representative, or expressly permits the rental unit to be used for any illegal purpose, may be evicted.

For “At-Fault” evictions, a tenant must be given 10 days to cure the violation (in cases of curable violations) before sending the tenant an additional 30- or 60-day notice to terminate. The notice must include a description of the basis for termination among other things.

“No-Fault” just cause includes:

- **Owner Move-In:** If the landlord wishes to move into the unit as their primary residence or move in an immediate family member (parent, child, grandparent etc.), they can evict the tenant after proper notice. However, for leases entered into on or after Jan. 1, 2025, the agreement must expressly allow the landlord to terminate the tenancy for this reason, or the tenant must agree in writing. The landlord must have at least a 51% ownership interest in the property and the intended family member must move in within 90 days and live in the unit for at least 36 consecutive months. If the intended family member does not occupy for 36 months, the landlord must offer the unit back to the previous tenant at the same rent and on the same terms and pay all reasonable expenses the tenant incurs in moving to and from the unit. The landlord may not recover possession for an “owner move-in” if a comparable unit owned by landlord and located within Salinas is vacant and available. Only one specific unit per building may undergo an eviction for this reason. Thereafter, any future evictions for an Owner Move-In must be of that same unit.



• **Substantial Repairs or Demolition:** After obtaining all necessary City permits and providing the tenant with proper notice, a landlord may evict a tenant to demolish the property or substantially repair health and safety issues. Substantial remodels include the replacement or substantial modification of structural, electrical, plumbing, or environmental repairs requiring a permit from a governmental agency or the abatement of hazardous materials. If the repairs can be completed in 60 days or less and the tenant agrees in writing to vacate during the repair period landlords may not evict the tenant unless the tenant fails to vacate in accordance with such agreement. If a comparable unit owned by the landlord and located within the City is vacant and available, the landlord

must notify the tenant in writing of the existence of such unit and offer it to the tenant.

Landlords must pay tenants evicted for no-fault just cause relocation assistance equal to three months' rent, regardless of income or length of tenancy. If a unit becomes available within five years of the eviction, the displaced tenant has a right of first refusal to re-occupy the unit. All termination notices and accompanying materials, including warning notices, must be filed with the City Attorney within three days of service of the notice on the tenant. [Sec. 17-02.54.]

**Buyout Agreements**

Landlords wishing to negotiate a buyout agreement with tenants must provide detailed disclosures to tenants, explaining their right to refuse the buyout and consult legal counsel. Buyout agreements

must be written and for an amount that is greater than the amount of relocation assistance available to the tenant under the Ordinance. [Sec. 17-02.56.]

**Ellis Act Provisions – Removing Rental Structure from the Rental Market**

Landlords who remove the unit from the rental market must provide tenants a 120-day notice and three months' relocation fees. The landlord must offer displaced tenants the right to re-rent any units withdrawn from the market within 10 years. Landlords must file the termination notice with the city and record it with the Monterey County Recorder. Failure to comply with these provisions can result in civil penalties, including punitive damages. [Sec. 17-02.57.]

**Notify Tenants of Residential Tenant Protections Ordinance**

A landlord must provide existing

tenants notice of the Ordinance no later than Jan. 31, 2025. On or before commencing a new tenancy, landlords must provide tenants with this notice or must include this notice in the lease. The notices must be in tenant's primary language, English, and Spanish. [Sec. 17-02.55.]

**Compliance is Mandatory**

Strict compliance with the Ordinance is mandatory. Failure to comply may result in civil and criminal damages. Landlords should determine whether their rental property is subject to the Ordinance, familiarize themselves with its details, consult with legal counsel and give the necessary notices to all tenants. 🌿

*Geraldine Villa is in Noland Hamerly's Civil Litigation practice group and frequently works on landlord/tenant matters. A Salinas native, she serves on the Board of Directors of the Monterey County Women Lawyers Association. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice.*

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# NON-PROFIT EVENTS

## Monterey County Woman's Business Center – Reenergize Your Social Media

*Jan. 6, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m., via Zoom – Virtual Seminar*

Join the MCSC Women's Business Center on Jan. 6, from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. for a live online meeting lead by presenter Andrea LaRosa, focused on optimizing your marketing and sales strategy after the holiday season. Learn how to avoid common post-holiday sales pitfalls, leverage social media to boost engagement, and develop a targeted content calendar. Discover how to utilize analytics and user-generated content to maintain momentum and keep your brand relevant. Registration is free. Contact the MCSC Women's Business Center at (805) 595-1357 for more information.

## Big Sur Land Trust – Volunteer Orientation

*Jan. 9, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., Virtual via Zoom*

Your dedication to your community is what makes it a vibrant place. If you have chosen to become a volunteer with Big Sur Land Trust, we should get better acquainted. Whether you are a new or current volunteer, please join BSLT for this online volunteer orientation. Through this orientation, you will become more familiar with Big Sur Land Trust's mission, history, programs, organizational structure, and volunteer opportunities so that you are more fully informed about the organization you hope to so generously support through volunteering. This will also be your chance to interact with staff members and ask questions. There is nothing you need to do to prepare for this orientation — just join in! However, if you'd like to learn more about who you will hear from, and some of the things you will hear about, here are a few links to peruse:

- BSLT's Get involved! page has links to all the ways you can get involved with the Trust, from making a hike request to submitting a photo. You can also review volunteer roles and click each to learn more about them.
- Check out upcoming events, including upcoming public volunteer work-days. You can also review past events to get a feel for what BSLT has been up to.
- Your orientation will be given by Jenny Jacox, Organizational Engagement Lead for Big Sur Land Trust. Until you meet personally, you can learn more about Jenny, and all Big Sur Land Trust's staff members, on the staff page.
- Finally, you can learn about BSLT's work and where it (and often, volunteers) are most active by visiting the Where We Work page.

BSLT's work would not be possible without the generosity of our donors and volunteers. Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Big Sur Land Trust. We look forward to seeing you soon!

## Notre Dame High School – 16th Annual Crab & Pasta Feed

*Jan. 18, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., Notre Dame Gym, 455 Palma Drive, Salinas*

Notre Dame High School is hosting its 16th Annual Crab & Pasta Feed on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025, at the Notre Dame Gym (455 Palma Drive, Salinas). Doors open at 5:30 p.m. The event features live, silent, and dessert auctions. Tickets are \$80 per person or \$640 for a table of eight. Advance purchase only (no walk-ins). Reserve your seats today — this event sells out quickly. For tickets, call (831) 751-1850.

## 2025 City of Salinas See Our Youth Summit

*Jan. 18, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Sherwood Hall, 940 N. Main St., Salinas*

Youth ages 13 to 18, are invited to join the city on Saturday, Jan. 18th, 2025, for an exciting in-person event filled with inspiration, learning, and connection. The Salinas See Our Youth Summit brings together young minds from diverse backgrounds to empower, motivate, and equip them for a brighter future. This event is a unique opportunity for young individuals to gain valuable insights, network with like-minded peers, and discover their true potential. Throughout the day, there will be an incredible lineup of inspiring speakers who will share their personal stories, experiences, and expertise. From successful community organizers to city officials, each speaker will provide valuable advice and guidance to help our youth navigate their paths to success. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow young visionaries, exchange ideas, and create lifelong friendships. The Salinas See Our Youth Summit promises to be an incredible day of growth, inspiration, and fun.

## Blue Zones Project Monterey County – MLK Jr. Day of Service

*Jan. 20, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Oak Woodland Garden, 190 Seaside Circle, Marina*

As we commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, you're invited to join Blue Zones Project in positively impacting our community through volunteering. This MLK Jr. Day of Service, honors Dr. King's legacy by working towards a healthier, happier, and more connected community. Join in for a fun morning beautifying the Oak Woodland Community Garden in collaboration with Citizens for Sustainable Marina (C4SM). There will be hands-on tasks for all abilities and ages. It's the perfect opportunity to get outdoors, move naturally, and connect with your community – while growing food and pollinator habitat.

## CHISPA Annual Celebration

*Feb. 6, 5:30 p.m., Salinas City Center, 1 Main St., Salinas*

CHISPA hosts one community fundraising event each year, its Annual Celebration. This yearly celebration brings the community together to share in the achievements of CHISPA, its community partners, and its scholarship students.

BE SURE TO VISIT THE CHAMBER WEBSITE FOR UP-TO-DATE LISTINGS





# UPCOMING EVENTS

- **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 in celebrating CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Monterey County's 30th anniversary in 2025, marking three decades of unwavering dedication to improving the lives of children and youth in foster care in Monterey County. Since its founding in 1995, CASA of Monterey County has worked tirelessly to ensure that every child and youth in foster care throughout the community has a voice, a champion, and the opportunity to thrive.

- **Lunch and Learn on Money Matters: Finding and Securing Funding for Your Business**

*Thursday, Jan. 30, 12:00– 1:00 p.m., 119 E. Alisal St., Salinas*

Are you ready to grow your business but unsure how to secure the funding to make it happen? Join the Central Coast Small Business Development Center (SBDC), California Coastal Rural Development Corporation, and the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce for an empowering, hands-on workshop tailored specifically for small business owners and entrepreneurs like you. This engaging session will equip you with the tools and confidence to secure the right funding to elevate your business. Master the Loan Application process, craft a winning business plan, and learn insider tips for success. Take the next step toward financial empowerment and business success. Reserve your spot today and connect with local experts ready to help you thrive.

**RSVP at [salinaschamber.com](http://salinaschamber.com)**

## SAVE THE DATE

**More information is coming soon at [SalinasChamber.com](http://SalinasChamber.com)!**

- Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting of The Valley Restaurant and Catering  
*January 2025*
- Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting of Kidz Corner USA  
*Jan. 18, 2025*
- Lunch and Learn with Granite Construction  
*Feb. 11, 2025*
- 104th Annual Awards Luncheon  
*April 10, 2025*



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# HEALTHY HABITS, HEALTHY YOU

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## WELLNESS

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## WALK WITH A DOC

Take a step toward better health with monthly healthcare discussions by local doctors and health experts.



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Explore budget-friendly (often free) classes, programs, events and support groups to help you live your best life.



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