



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



104th Annual Awards Luncheon
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Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program
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Country music star Chase Bryant.

Excitement Abounds at 81st Salinas Valley Fair Set for May 15-18

By Mac McDonald,
Salinas Valley Business Journal

Salinas Valley Fair CEO Lauren Hamilton is really excited about this year's fair, set for May 15-18, and that's saying a lot since she's been involved with the fair for 23 years, from volunteer to now CEO for the past five years.

"It's our 81st year, so it's a pretty big deal," she says. "And this year we do have new entertainment, including a big country concert. That's something new for us, a paid concert. And we have motorcycle racing with a lot of riders this year, from kids all the way up to

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Understanding the City of Salinas Budget Process and Being a Part of It

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

On Feb. 22, 2025, the City of Salinas posted a video on its YouTube site (The Salinas Channel) titled "Budget 101: What is a City Budget and Where Does the Revenue Come From?" It's the first of what will be a series of educational videos from the City of Salinas on the budget.

In addition to providing basic information about the city budget, the video explains why the community is an important part of the budget development process. You should not be uncomfortable about asking the City of Salinas to include, change, or exclude something from its budget. "We the People" are the Government, and the city budget is OUR budget.

Why is the City of Salinas talking about budget preparation in May?

The city's budget years (fiscal years) are not based on calendar years (Jan. 1 to Dec.



Structural steelwork is up for the Amazon distribution facility in South Salinas. Photos taken on April 15, 2025.

31). Fiscal years for the City of Salinas are the 12 months that begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. Note that the fiscal years for the State of California and the County of Monterey also begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year. The federal (United States) fiscal years begin on Oct. 1 and end on Sept. 30 of the following year.

Where does the money come from, and where does it go?

Sources of revenue for the City of Salinas include sales

taxes, property taxes, utility users taxes (UUT), business license taxes, franchise fees, transient occupancy taxes (also known as hotel taxes and often called TOT), and service fees and charges. The city does not have an income tax.

City of Salinas voters approved the Measure G sales tax in 2014 as a general purpose tax. It's an important part of city revenue and used for general government activities. Measure G is set to expire in

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Future-Proofing Your Business: Strategic IT Management for 2025

By **Ricardo Rocha**, President, RVS Technology Group

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Imagine Salinas as the State's Premier Youth Sports Destination

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair



I've never loved the summer weather on the Central Coast, it's a little too foggy, windy, and cool for me, but I've come to appreciate it the more I travel to other parts of our state and our country.

Stepping off a plane in Monterey after visiting Florida in August makes one really appreciate this place we call home. Now imagine an August trip to Morgan Hill, Davis, or Los Angeles to take your child or grandchild to a soccer tournament. You might wish that there was a facility here on the Central Coast where you didn't have to worry about junior becoming dehydrated from playing in triple-digit temperatures... well wishes do come true!

Salinas has a new crown jewel in sports, the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex. The complex currently has 14 youth and full-size natural grass fields and two lighted full-size artificial grass fields. When completely built out, the 68-acre complex will house 17 full-size fields, 12 beach volleyball courts, which can also be used for beach soccer, a skate and BMX park, and multi-sport courts. It is putting Salinas on the map as Northern California's premier soccer complex for youth, collegiate, semi-pro and professional tournaments.

The sports complex is currently welcoming 11,000 local and outside visitors per week. In addition, they will be hosting two major tournaments this year, attracting 120 to 150 teams. Once fully built out, the complex will have the capacity to double the number of weekly and tournament visitors they're currently experiencing.

It's rare that a project of this magnitude

is able to check two important community impact boxes. It is both a community development project, providing a safe place for youth to engage in healthy, life enhancing activities, and it is a significant economic development project, bringing visitors from both inside and outside the community who support local restaurants and retail businesses and provide the justification to draw additional retail, hotels, and services.

It's rare that a project of this magnitude is able to check two important community impact boxes — It's both a community development project and a significant economic development project.

More importantly, the Sports Complex can be a springboard to invest in infrastructure to support other traveling sports like baseball, softball, and lacrosse, to name just a few. With our cool summer weather and proximity to the peninsula, Salinas could truly become the traveling youth sports destination in California. Who doesn't want to come to the Central Coast in the heat of the summer?

This concept is in keeping with our sports culture in the Salinas Valley. There is a rich sports history here. Many star collegiate and professional athletes have come from our area. From Joe Kapp to Monica Abbott, the Central Coast has been well represented by premier athletes. Honoring their legacy by developing an infrastructure to promote and attract sports and sporting events is a gift that will reward the community for generations to come. 🌱



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pros. Lots of excitement. We're looking to bring something different to the community."

That country concert, on Saturday night, May 17, features Texas singer-songwriter Chase Bryant, who fuses contemporary country melodies with classic rock beats and swagger. Opening for Bryant at 6:00 p.m. will be rising country star Jordan Fletcher, with Bryant set to take the Steinbeck Stage at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds in King City at 8:00 p.m.

Another ticketed event that Hamilton is excited about is the Grand Tasting of Wine & Food that kicks off the fair at 6:00 p.m. Thursday, May 15, in the Orradre Building. The event features 50-plus wines, but not just any wines.

"These are samples of what we have in the wine competition so the public can judge the wines for themselves," she says. "It's 2 and a half hours, there's hors d'oeuvres, 50-plus wines, a lot of different varietals from all over the world, from Australia and New Zealand and many of the states in the U.S., including Georgia. We've been doing this for 25 years!"

Tickets to the Grand Tasting are available before the event on the website at Salinasvalleyfair.com and at the door. Tickets for the Bryant show are also available on the website.

Some of the other marquee events at this year's fair include the Motorcycle Racing on May 15; Truck and Tractor Pulls ("a big hit, super cool to watch," says Hamilton) on May 16; Vendetta Pro Wrestling on May 16; and Outlaw Mariachi on May 17. Hamilton described the dynamic mariachi band as a blend of traditional mariachi with Old School rock 'n' roll.

"They played the last five years and they're always a crowd favorite," she says. "They're so fun, super high-energy, definitely gets the crowd going."

Another signature event she's excited about is the Junior Livestock Auction on Saturday, May 18. More than 800 4-H and FFA members have selected, purchased, fed, and groomed livestock to be judged, graded and sold at the Fair. A few seconds in the ring concludes months of hard work for these young livestock exhibitors, who have raised market hogs, sheep, beef, replacement heifers, rabbits, or poultry.

"It gets a little bigger each year, in fact, we have one of the biggest auctions in the valley," says Hamilton.

"Learning to produce food for my table and how to be in business for myself – valuable lessons I learned as a 4-H and FFA member," says Fair Auction Director Cody Bassetti, who oversees the 75-plus volunteers that help to sell the livestock. "Now as the volunteers and the auction buyers, we're all doing our part to ensure these lessons continue for kids in our community."

And no fair would be complete with a Carnival, with its thrill rides such as the Zillerator roller coaster, the Orbitor and the classic Tilt-A-Whirl, as well as two Ferris Wheels as well as games of luck and skill, and a stunning variety of food and drink.

Purchase an all-day carnival wristband for only \$30 at the Salinas Valley Fair Office, Mechanics Bank, and GTS Tax Service, before May 15. Families can save money in advance by buying a Family 4-Pack for \$36 before May 15, while supplies last.

The fair also has daily Special Days and discounts:

- **Thursday, May 15: Kids' Holaday**, sponsored by Holaday Seed Company, free admission to all children 12 and under.
- **Friday, May 16: Senior Day & Special Kids Day**, sponsored By: RC Farms & King City Rotary Club, free admission to

adults 60 and over and to special education tour groups.

- **Saturday, May 17: Armed Forces Day**, sponsored By: A&G Pumping, free admission to all active duty military personnel and their dependents, military civilian employees, and military contractors with military ID.

- **Sunday, May 18: Dia Del Hispano**, sponsored By: Bassetti Farms.

Daily fair admission: Youth (6-17), \$8; Adults, \$12; Seniors (60+), \$8; Children (5 & Under) free; Parking, \$20.

The 81st Salinas Valley Fair, with the theme "The Berry Best Fair," a tribute to the valley's strawberry industry, will be held May 15-18, at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds at 625 Division St., in King City. More information is on the website at Salinasvalleyfair.com, by email at SVF@SalinasValleyFair.com or by calling (831) 385-3243. 🌱

COUNTRY IN THE BLOOD

Country star Chase Bryant has country music in his blood. Born Chase Spencer Yaklin in Orange Grove, Texas, he goes by the stage name Chase Bryant, a family name shared by his grandfather, Jimmy Bryant, who performed with Roy Orbison and Waylon Jennings.

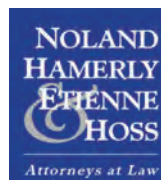
The young country star broke through in 2015 with his debut single, "Take It On Back," which became a top 10 single on Billboard's Country Airplay chart. His debut EP featured the hit single "Little Bit of You."

Bryant began touring with Brantley Gilbert in early 2015, and was one of two opening acts, along with Billy Currington, on Tim McGraw's 2015 Shotgun Rider Tour. He had another hit in 2017 with "Hell If I Know," and released full-length albums in 2021, "Upbringing" and in 2024, "Clio."



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2031 unless voters choose to extend it.

Another notable revenue source is the Measure E sales tax. Voters approved Measure E in 2012 as a permanent extension of the Measure V sales tax that voters approved in 2005. The City of Salinas has two budgets: the Operating Budget and the Capital Budget. The Operating Budget mainly deals with services, and the Capital Budget mainly deals with physical assets, such as buildings, streets, and large equipment.

At the local level, government services are people-intensive. Therefore, about four-fifths of tax and fee revenue for the city's Operating Budget is spent on compensation for city employees. This includes financial commitments in labor agreements made through collective bargaining.

Pension payments and health care payments to retirement programs (such as CalPERS, the California Public Employees' Retirement System) also must be incorporated into budget expenditures. An ongoing concern of the City of Salinas (as well as many other California governments) is the insufficient amount of assets to fulfill the city's future obligation to fund retirement benefits to its employees. This shortfall is called unfunded pension liability.

The City of Salinas has issued municipal bonds to finance large capital projects and therefore has to dedicate some of its budget each year to paying back debt service — the principal amount borrowed plus the interest payments. For example, the city borrowed \$48.8 million in 2018 to pay for construction of the new police station and must pay a few million dollars back to those investors every year.

Is the budget balanced? Will it be balanced in the coming years?

The City of Salinas Finance Department and the Salinas City Council will need to prepare a final



Structural steelwork is up for the Amazon distribution facility in South Salinas. Photos taken on April 15, 2025.

budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 in which revenue and expenditures are equal — a balanced budget.

On Feb. 25, 2025, the Salinas City Council received a mid-year report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 that cites preliminary revenue of \$176,641,450 for its general fund. This is a little less than its projected preliminary expenditures for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 of \$177,268,168.

However, it should be noted that this was a mid-year forecast. City staff will develop a preliminary Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operating Budget with the benefit of additional data about revenue and expenditures.

If future city budgets are projected to have a deficit (expenditures that exceed revenue), city staff will need to propose items in the budget to reduce or eliminate, while considering ways to increase revenue. Ultimately, the city council will make final decisions.

A small budget shortfall could eventually become a huge shortfall

In Fiscal Year 2026-2027, the City of Salinas anticipates new revenue from the Amazon distribution facility now under construction in South Salinas. However, if voters do not renew or replace the Measure G one-cent per dollar sales tax that voters enacted in 2014, there will be a budget crisis in Fiscal Year 2030-2031 that may result in significant cuts to police, fire, libraries, parks,

and other services.

At their April 9, 2024 meeting, the Salinas City Council authorized a poll of residents about Measure G. They reviewed the findings at their June 25, 2024 meeting and then voted not to put Measure G renewal on the November 2024 ballot. It may appear on the ballot in November 2026.

Based on a unanimous recommendation from your Chamber's Government Relations Committee on March 12, 2025, your Chamber's Board of Directors voted unanimously on March 26 to offer Chamber leadership in a regional coalition to devise and implement strategies to win voter approval for renewing the Measure G sales tax. While no one likes taxes, the loss of Measure G sales tax revenue would compromise the ability of Chamber members to conduct business and grow businesses in the City of Salinas.

Contact Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey at (831) 751-7725 or at info@salinaschamber.com if you would like to provide leadership, volunteer your time or resources, or financially contribute to a future campaign to renew Measure G. It would also be useful for the Chamber to hear your perspective on what residents now think about the city and the value of Measure G.

How can I provide input into the city budget?

City of Salinas Department of

Finance staff divides the budget development process into five general stages, and three of these stages involve public input.

1. Internal Preparation

Department of Finance staff begins the year evaluating the state of the local economy, the ongoing collection of revenue for the city, the ongoing expenditures of the city, and the initiatives and activities of each city department. They alert the city council and the public to potential opportunities and challenges for the upcoming fiscal year. The Finance Department reported the following circumstances about the budget to the Salinas City Council on Feb. 25, 2025:

- "Operating funds are generally performing as expected, with a few exceptions"
- "While there is uncertainty, most indicators are relatively positive through the first half of the fiscal year and very modest growth is expected in the future"
- "The City is relatively well positioned entering the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget"

2. Community Engagement

From Jan. 30 to Feb. 28, 2025, the City of Salinas invited interested parties to participate in a survey and comment on budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. There was also an in-person community budget meeting on Feb. 26. The public will get its first opportunity to review the community survey results at the city council's budget study session on May 27.

Before that meeting date, the public will have additional opportunities to comment in person on the upcoming budget at the Measure E and Measure G Oversight Committee meetings on Thursday, April 17 (at 4:00 and 5:00 p.m., respectively) and the City Council Finance Committee meeting on Tuesday, May 6 at 2:00 p.m.

3. Initial Budget Presentation As

noted above, the Salinas City Council will receive, review, and comment on a proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget on May 27. This annual study session is often a time when representatives of city employee unions and members of the public comment on their desires for the budget in the coming fiscal year.

4. Union Agreements and Line-Item Expenditures

To ascertain expenses for the coming fiscal year, city staff strives to finalize the labor agreements with various employee unions. Staff also makes decisions on line item expenditures for specific outside programs or projects.

The public has an additional chance to comment in person about the proposed budget at the Salinas City Council Finance Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 3 at 2:00 p.m.

5. City Council Approval

If all goes well, the Salinas City Council will approve a budget for the upcoming fiscal year (starting on July 1) on June 17.

Members of the public often show up in force at this last meeting of the budget process to press the city council to add or increase budget expenditures. Although the city council sometimes does agree during this final meeting to make a last-minute adjustment; the more effective and appropriate time to ask for city funds is well in advance of this date.

Want to learn more about the city budget?

A book could be written about the historical process for the development, approval, and implementation of City of Salinas budgets. (For context, the adopted Operating Budget itself for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 is 496 pages, and the adopted Capital Budget is another 76 pages.) If you have questions or comments about the process or how to get involved, please contact Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey at (831) 751-7725 or at info@salinaschamber.com. 🌱



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AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT JAN BURNETT

PRODUCTION MANAGER & LOAN ADVISOR, TREEHOUSE MORTGAGE GROUP

Jan Burnett has lived on the Monterey Peninsula for more than 40 years. She is the Production Manager and Mortgage Loan Officer for TreeHouse Mortgage Group and has been associated with them since 2009. As Production Manager, she works with the entire team to assist in delivering an experience that matters and exceeds her customers' expectations. She helps in keeping the staff up to date on critical industry information and training where needed. Her experience spans more than 30 years in the mortgage and real estate industry, working as a Realtor, Mortgage Lender, and Regional Outreach Liaison for the Multiple Listing Service, to name a few. Jan has guided many local families through the home-buying process and brings with her the ability to navigate through the loan programs and their changes with the times.

Away from work Jan is involved in numerous community and business activities throughout the area, including the California Rodeo Salinas and the California International Airshow and Membership Chair for the Women's Council of Realtors. She had been part of the Leadership Salinas organization since Class 2 and is a graduate of Class 3. She is also an avid dancer and certified dance instructor and enjoys spending time teaching others to enjoy her passion. Her newest passion is her new puppy, AraBella.



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

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 23 members at its meeting on Wednesday, April 9, as it continues to pursue your Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." Here's what they discussed:

1 As directed by the Government Relations Committee, the Housing Ad Hoc Committee met again on March 31 and continued discussions on the four rental ordinances enacted in 2023 and 2024 by the Salinas City Council. Although a majority of the Ad Hoc Committee identified nine flaws in the ordinances, the majority believes one provision is primarily responsible for reducing the housing supply in the City of Salinas rental market: "Increases in rent on residential real property in the city may not exceed the lesser of 2.75% or 75% of the most-recent 12-month increase in the Consumer Price Index..."

2 The Housing Ad Hoc Committee recognizes that such a low limit on the maximum allowable rent increase may chip away at the expected return on investment of rental property owners that are subject to the ordinances. It could even result in annual losses. In addition, the Ad Hoc Committee notes that rental property owners must calculate their maximum allowable rent increases using the "most-recent 12-month increase" in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at the time of the annual rent increase, despite monthly

fluctuations in the inflation rate that may occur.

3 At the April 8 Salinas City Council meeting, numerous people spoke during general public comment to support or oppose the current rental ordinances. Committee members do not know if and when the City Council will address this issue. Supposedly city staff is collecting data and anecdotes over time about how the rental ordinances have led to existing residential units taken off the rental market, abandonment of planned construction of new residential units, and more stringent qualification standards imposed on potential tenants.

4 Some public comments to the Salinas City Council in support of the rental ordinances were testimonials accusing landlords of practices prohibited under state law, such as monthly rent increases. A committee member suggested Chamber sponsorship or partnership of a project to inform tenants of existing state laws. In conjunction with city enforcement of existing state laws, an education campaign about tenant rights perhaps would be a more effective strategy for housing stability than having government impose a strict limitation on the amount of rent increases.

5 Committee members also discussed Chamber good-faith efforts to contact organizations that support the rental ordinances and meet to identify common concerns and solutions. It was noted that the City of Salinas Housing Technical Advisory Committee

had been the forum for such discussions, but the tenor and makeup of that committee turned against the business community in March 2023, after the Chamber adopted a compromise position in support of the subsequently enacted rental registration ordinance.

6 After a discussion of arguments for and against the city's current cap on annual rent increases, the committee asked the Housing Ad Hoc Committee to prepare a list of objective, specific questions about rental policies for a possible survey of Chamber members. Committee members cited the November 2024 survey concerning the planned Amazon distribution center in South Salinas as an example of a successful recent survey of Chamber members.

The Chamber would design and distribute the survey so that a broad spectrum of Chamber members would answer the questions, rather than just members closely tied to the rental property market. It would be sent to members after publication and distribution of the May 2025 Business Journal, which will include an article outlining the pros and cons of the rental ordinances.

7 For reference, staff provided the Government Relations Committee with three Chamber documents: (1) the table presented by staff to the committee on Feb. 8, 2022 titled "Rental Registration and Inspection — Pro and Con," (2) the Feb. 28, 2023 Chamber letter to the Salinas City Council outlining its positions on the rental registry ordinance proposed by

MAY 2025



City of Salinas staff, and (3) the Sept. 23, 2024 Chamber letter to the Salinas City Council opposing the rent stabilization ordinance.

8 Amazon has agreed to prepare and present a traffic management plan related to its distribution facility. Their representatives will meet with South Salinas business representatives about this plan on May 1.

9 The City of Salinas Measure G Oversight Committee is tentatively scheduled to meet on April 17, but reportedly a committee member has resigned and another member cannot attend the meeting. It may be rescheduled to April 24 so a quorum is present.

10 The committee asked staff to research possible tiering or exemptions for certain disadvantaged categories of households (very low income, seniors, etc.) when the City of Salinas considers sewer rate increases.

11 The Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison presented comprehensive tables revealing the status of progress through 2024 for the 12 cities and unincorporated areas of

the County of Monterey toward their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals for the 6th Cycle (2023-2031). He obtained the data and compiled the tables on behalf of the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, business organizations that place a high priority on increasing the supply of housing in Monterey County for ordinary households of all income levels. He explained “I’m not sure anyone is doing this or has ever done it. I think it’s important to use actual data to bring some public accountability to the jurisdictions.” (The tables are included in this issue of the Business Journal.)

12 The committee asked staff to obtain information from the City of Salinas on how much revenue was collected and how much revenue was lost from 2019 to 2024 under the 2019 city ordinance to exempt Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

from development impact fees for five years. The Chamber supported that ordinance, noting at the time that only 24 permits for ADUs were issued by the city from 2007 through 2018. This is in contrast to 2024, when 216 of the 221 total residential units permitted by the City of Salinas were ADUs.

13 The committee received an introduction to municipal hotel incentive policies in California, including a proposal introduced to the Watsonville City Council at their March 25 meeting to adopt such a policy. One of the strategies that Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue has proposed to achieve his goal of “Growth for Economic Opportunities” is to “encourage hotel development for Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue.” However, this policy was not specifically listed among the city department initiatives presented at the Feb. 22 Salinas City Council Strategic Planning Session. 🌿



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MEMBER NEWS



Interim, Inc. Celebrates 50 Years of Transforming Lives and Building Community in Monterey County

2025 proudly marks 50 years of Interim's service to Monterey County, celebrating a legacy of housing, healing, and hope for adults living with mental illness. Since its founding in 1975, Interim has provided not only life-changing mental health services and affordable housing, but also, an enduring sense of community that empowers individuals to rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose. This milestone honors the vision of advocates and leaders like Barbara L. Mitchell, who served as Executive Director from 1984 to 2023. Under her leadership, Interim grew into a model of compassion and innovation, spearheading housing and rehabilitation programs that prioritize human connection alongside practical support. Interim has long recognized that recovery is not just about providing services but about fostering a sense of belonging. Shared spaces in its housing developments and peer-led initiatives have created opportunities for mutual support, where individuals build friendships, grow together, and find strength in a community of understanding. This focus on inclusion and empowerment remains a hallmark of Interim's approach today. Monterey County's natural beauty comes with a cost —the region's housing market is among the most expensive in the nation. For adults with serious mental illness, who often rely on government insurance programs as their primary income, securing stable housing is nearly impossible without support. Interim has made affordable, supported housing a cornerstone of its mission, addressing this critical gap with subsidized rents and integrated services. Most residents contribute an average of \$300 per month toward rent, enabling them to optimize their limited fiscal resources while accessing the resources they need to thrive. "Housing is foundational, but it's the comprehensive support services, accessibility to such services and resources, and fostering a healthy community that make long-term stability possible," said Dr. Rhiyan Quiton, Interim's current Executive Director. Over the past five decades, Interim has developed more than 20 supportive housing projects totaling over 300 beds. Moreover, these beds are comprised of permanent, transitional, or short-term rehabilitation beds, providing a continuum of housing options towards stability and hope to thousands of Monterey County residents.



Coastal Kids Home Care Announces the 11th Annual Touch-A-Truck Salinas

Coastal Kids Home Care announces the return of Touch-A-Truck Salinas, set for Sunday, Sept. 7, 2025, from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Salinas Rodeo Grounds (1034 N Main St., Salinas). Now in its 11th year, this beloved event invites families to get up close and personal with an impressive array of vehicles while supporting an incredible cause. Attendees of all ages will have the chance to climb into a fire engine, explore a bulldozer, and get behind the wheel of a big rig. The day will also feature interactive experiences such as CPR demonstrations, toy truck building, and carnival games, plus a variety of food trucks and live music. Since its inception in 2014, Touch-A-Truck Salinas has raised \$355,000 to support Coastal Kids Home Care, the only nonprofit organization in California dedicated to providing in-home medical care, social services, and therapy for medically fragile children. The event has grown from a grassroots effort into a highly anticipated annual tradition, attracting more than 1,000 attendees each year.



ARTS COUNCIL
for Monterey County

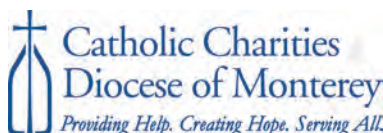
Arts Council for Monterey County Joins Forces to Secure \$250,000 Workforce Development Grant Under Uplift Central Coast's Catalyst Funding Program

The Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC), along with its partners — the San Benito County Arts Council and the Arts Council Santa Cruz County — is excited to share that they've been selected as one of 36 recipients in a competitive grant program designed to boost economic growth and resilience across the Central Coast. This funding, provided by Uplift Central Coast, is part of Gov. Gavin Newsom's California Jobs First Initiative, which aims to create good-paying jobs and encourage development in various sectors. With this grant, the tri-county partnership will use Catalyst funding to identify and develop career pathways for visual and performing arts teachers in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. Through the VAPA Pipeline Project, the partnership will collaborate with local school districts, county offices of education, community colleges, higher education institutions, and artists in our region. The project will look for ways to provide training and improve skills for local teachers and artists, helping them access stable jobs with full-time salaries and benefits. "ART work, is REAL work, and we want to ensure that our current and upcoming workforce knows that becoming a teaching artist is a viable career option, a much-needed one," said Jacquie Atchison, Executive Director of Arts4MC. "And we want to ensure they have a clear path to accomplish this." This grant comes at an important time, especially after the passage of Proposition 28, the Art and Music in the Schools Act, in November 2022, which sets aside approximately \$1 billion annually for arts education in California public schools. While Prop 28 is a win for arts, education, and student advocates, the latest study by SRI Education estimates that there is a big need for more Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) teachers — California alone needs an additional 5,457 more teachers, and the tri-county region is facing a current shortage of 285 credentialed art teachers. The Catalyst grant will bring together local experts, artists, and educators to tackle this issue. "Proposition 28 has given us the funding for arts education, and now it's time to invest in developing our workforce," said Jennifer Laine, Executive Director of the San Benito County Arts Council. Uplift received close to \$50 million in funding requests but only had \$9 million available. Out of 136 applications, they chose 36 projects, providing money for initial planning activities to ensure these projects are ready for future funding from various sources.



Granite Rock Company Celebrates 125th Anniversary

Granite Rock Company, founded on Feb. 14, 1900, is proud of its rich history, which parallels the growth and development of California's Central Coast. The company retains a rich collection of photographs and historic documents which span the years. They reveal the stories of the people of Graniterock, who have built an enduring company as they have provided for their families and contributed to their communities. Granite Rock values the public's trust and confidence in them, sincerely appreciates you and thanks you for your valued business.



Catholic Charities Launches Program Honoring Farmworker Mothers on Mother's Day

Catholic Charities invites you to participate in its heartfelt initiative, Heart of the Harvest, dedicated to honor and support farmworker mothers this Mother's Day. These incredible women are the backbone of our economy, embodying resilience, love, and unwavering dedication. It is truly inspiring, their tireless efforts to cultivate and harvest the food on our tables as they work to create brighter futures for their families and communities. In appreciation, Catholic Charities aims to create and distribute special care packages for 100 mothers from the Greenfield, Gonzalez, King City, and San Ardo communities. Each thoughtfully curated care package, valued at \$250, will include personal care items, relaxation essentials, and a special gift card to make a meaningful impact in the lives of these remarkable women. Sponsors are encouraged to contribute or offer discounts on the following items to help make these packages truly unforgettable:

- Candles: To create a calming and relaxing atmosphere at home
- Lunch bags and water bottles: Supporting nourishment throughout the day
- Lotion and face cream: To soothe and nourish hardworking hands and skin
- Shampoo and conditioner: Promoting self-care and refreshment
- Nail-care kits: Encouraging a sense of personal care and confidence
- Teas: Providing moments of warmth and comfort
- Lip balm or sunscreen: For added protection during outdoor work and activities
- Soft scarves or sun hats: Offering a touch of coziness and relaxation
- Grocery or restaurant gift cards: Valued at \$50-\$100
- Flower bouquets: To brighten their special day

Your support will create meaningful care packages that not only provide practical assistance but also express our heartfelt appreciation for the strength, sacrifice, and love these mothers provide every day. Together, we can all make a lasting impact in their lives and show them how valued they truly are.



Water Efficiency Pilot Program for Rural Residents Launched by Local Groundwater Agency

The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) announced the launch of its Water Efficiency Pilot Program to help rural residents improve water efficiency and contribute to sustainable groundwater management. The Salinas Valley, like much of California, relies on groundwater for residential, commercial and agricultural uses. In rural areas, communities are often at a greater risk of losing their water supply, due to dependence on a single source, limited conveyance infrastructure and financial resources. SVBGSA is taking a three-track approach as part of the program: conduct a bilingual survey to assess current water use patterns, offer free home visits from trained experts to identify water-saving opportunities, and provide an online resource to help rural water users become more water efficient. "Small changes can make a big difference," said Piret Harmon, General Manager for SVBGSA. "Groundwater is a vital resource for all of us. Being mindful of our water use and making efforts to be more water efficient helps the entire region work toward groundwater sustainability." The survey is designed to better understand water use habits and conduct a need assessment among rural residents who rely on private wells or small water systems. The survey, available online in English and Spanish through June 2025, will help SVBGSA identify practical tools and strategies to support water efficiency. Participants will have the chance to enter a raffle for prizes. Take the survey here: svbgsa.org/demand-management/wepp. Free house calls will be offered, through which trained experts conduct an evaluation of plumbing fixtures, irrigation systems and household water habits. The expert will provide personalized recommendations for improvements and retrofits to help rural residents use water more efficiently.

Defining ‘Normal’: How Early Medicine Left Women Behind

By Spenser Smith, ARCpoint Labs Manager

If you’ve ever scanned your blood test results and wondered what the numbers really mean, you’re not alone. Hidden in every lab report is a silent assumption about what numbers are “normal” — and for much of modern medical history, that assumption was male. What happens when your biology doesn’t fit the mold?

It’s familiar to all of us. You go to the doctor’s office, they look you over, and the doctor orders some tests. You get your blood drawn and when the results come back, you see a list of numbers and values. Some of them are easy to understand; total cholesterol is high in the red zone? That’s probably bad. Blood sugar A1C is lower than last year? Hey, that’s good! Many results, though, are more complex to interpret, and that’s usually the job of your doctor. But how did medical science determine which values should be tested and when, and what the numbers mean?

For more than a century, clinical medicine has used lab tests, especially blood tests, to evaluate health: measuring the amount of iron in your blood, the balance of enzymes in your liver, or how well your kidneys are functioning. It’s estimated that 80% of all medical decisions made by doctors are guided by clinical results. Each result is compared to a “normal human range,” that is meant to represent the healthy human body. If your levels fall too far outside these levels, it’s a sign for your doctor to dig deeper and look for the cause of what’s ailing you.

But here’s the catch: in the early decades of clinical research, the “normal human” was almost always a man. In the 19th to mid-20th century, researchers often drew their “healthy volunteers” from male medical students or staff, typically

white and middle-class. Women were excluded due to fears about reproductive health complications or the perceived variability caused by menstrual cycles.

Ironically, the very factors that make women biologically distinct were used as excuses to ignore them. The result? Reference ranges — the benchmarks against which your health is measured — were built on incomplete data.

The ripple effects of this philosophy of “one-size-fits-all” medicine affected patients in ways both small and large for decades. Women’s complaints were more likely to be dismissed as hysteria or exaggeration by a medical system that had trained itself to be blind to how health issues express in female biology. Maya Dusenberry writes in her book “Doing Harm,” women, with their “unpredictable” hormones and potential for pregnancy, were seen as complicated, risky, or simply irrelevant to medical research. The early pioneers of clinical testing relied on groups of test patients recruited largely from medical students and staff, who at the time were overwhelmingly young, male, and white.

The results of ignoring everyone who wasn’t a young white male medical student when conducting medical research could also be much more dramatic. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a medication known as thalidomide was marketed in Europe and other countries as a safe treatment for nausea and insomnia, especially morning sickness. But thalidomide had never been properly tested on women — or even female animals in many preclinical studies — before it was approved.

While it had the usual roster of mild to moderate side effects among men, it was mostly harmless

and largely effective. For women, particularly pregnant women, it was a different story. The drug had devastating side effects, including severe birth defects such as malformed limbs and internal organ damage, which only became apparent after tens thousands of babies were born with thalidomide-related complications, mostly in Germany. It was banned for use in pregnant women in Europe in 1963 — six years after entering the market. Fortunately, thalidomide had never been approved in the U.S. thanks to the warnings of an FDA official in charge of reviewing the drug named Frances Oldham Kelsey, a tribute to the relatively stringent for its time U.S. regulations concerning drug safety.

The thalidomide tragedy exposed a dangerous flaw in how medical research was conducted. It led to an international movement to expand the types of people who were enrolled in research studies. But it also was far from the only corner of the medical industry that could benefit from expanded definitions of what a “normal” human body looks like.

Since the 1980s, widespread reforms made great progress for the inclusion of women in clinical trials. Feminist advocacy has played a pivotal role in reshaping medical research and the development of reference ranges, pushing for the inclusion of biological sex as a fundamental variable in study design. These efforts have dovetailed with the rise of personalized medicine, which emphasizes individual variability, including sex, gender, genetics, lifestyle, and infinitely more personal variables, in diagnosis and treatment.

Yet inequalities persist, and history remains instructive. Medical science needed to learn that women

aren’t just men with fluctuating hormones, that individual variation means what is within range for one person might be unhealthy for another. There is still much work to do to realize the advantages of personalized medicine. The promise of a more inclusive, precise, and responsive model of care is worth it, one that will catch the next thalidomide before it harms anyone.

I hope that this article doesn’t give the impression that medical science is universally misguided or foolish. I work in the field myself, obviously, and modern medical science is a marvel. Understanding human health is hard because humans and our health are unbelievably complicated. But this Women’s Health Month, looking back on the humbling history of where medical science has gone wrong before can help underline the importance, in the present, of treating everyone, woman and man alike, as the unique individual they are.

If you’ve found this article interesting, please consider checking out the book “Doing Harm” by Maya Dusenberry, which was an important inspiration for the theme of this article celebrating National Women’s Health Month.

If you are interested in a deeper dive on your own health, check us out at ARCpoint Labs of Salinas and Monterey Bay, where this month we are offering 25% off of the Comprehensive Women’s Health panel, an in-depth collection of over 90 bioindicators with reference ranges custom built to assess health at any stage of a woman’s life.

For a complete list of specific women’s health panels checkout our website www.arcpointlabs.com/monterey-bay

And have a happy Women’s Health Month this May! 🌱

Catching Up to 2025: Sewer Rates for City of Salinas Customers Likely to Triple on July 1

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

If you're a Salinas resident or business connected to the municipal sewer/wastewater system in the City of Salinas, your sewer rates are about to triple.

No one likes utility rate increases. Your Chamber does not like utility rate increases. Regrettably, the sewer rates must indeed go up — substantially on July 1, 2025, and then with smaller increases each year thereafter.

For example, the monthly rate for a typical business or government entity with ten employees or less will go up from \$4.21 to \$12.63. And the tiered monthly rate for larger businesses will increase from \$4.21 per each additional 10 employees to \$12.63 per each additional ten employees.

Note that certain categories of businesses with higher sewer use have higher rates. For example, commercial laundries have been paying \$53.21 per month for each hundred gallons per day of water usage, but as of July 1 they will pay \$159.61 for each hundred gallons per day of water usage.

For a restaurant that serves three meals per day, the rate will increase from 61 cents per seat to \$1.82 per seat. A church will pay \$32.70 per one hundred members instead of \$10.90.

Residents will also pay three times more for sewer service. Currently the rate per single residential living unit is \$5.45 per month. It will increase to \$16.35 per month as of July 1, 2025. By July 1, 2035, the rate will be \$19.54 per month.

City sewer rates last increased in 2012. The Mayor and City Council cannot allow the sewer system to deteriorate. Nor can the Chamber accept neglect of the sewer system

for the sake of low rates. Other cities have increased rates to reflect realities of the cost of water infrastructure, and Salinas needs to do the same.

Maintaining the sewer system allows existing businesses to operate and grow without inconveniences and restrictions. Expanding the sewer system to new areas of the city (such as the North of Boronda Future Growth Area and parcels identified in the Economic Development Element) increases housing supply and allows the regional economy to grow and prosper, which in turn ensures financial stability of the city.

Failures of the sewer system can force businesses to close for health reasons. Sewage system leaks, malfunctions, and failures harm the environment and can result in substantial fines from government agencies.

Raising rates is not just for maintaining and expanding the sewer system. The City of Salinas must also fulfill its existing obligations to holders of its debt, or pay punitively high interest rates as a consequence. Water infrastructure is expensive. The Mayor and City Council recognize that Salinas has borrowed money for past construction of sewer projects and needs to pay it back.

Taking Responsibility

No one person or one incident can be blamed for what led up to

this sudden rate increase. Even your Chamber of Commerce wasn't clear-sighted about long-term fiscal planning for the municipal sewer system. Especially during COVID-19 and the recovery period, business owners appreciated stable sewer rates that were lower than rates in other cities.

In retrospect, your Chamber should have noticed how other cities and counties were handling their sewer infrastructure needs

Raising rates is not just for maintaining and expanding the sewer system. The City of Salinas must also fulfill its existing obligations to holders of its debt, or pay punitively high interest rates as a consequence.

and taken the lead on advocating for slow, gradual, regular sewer rate increases. The City of Salinas now has to correct the revenue shortfall with a one-time dramatic jump in rates.

Your Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee has

been monitoring policy decisions regarding the City of Salinas municipal wastewater system. Some of our observations are outlined below.

City Council Accepts a Salinas Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update in 2023

On May 2, 2023 the Salinas City Council received and accepted a "Final Draft City of Salinas Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update." The city council had awarded a contract for this study on February 16, 2021.

The Master Plan was intended to address current and future municipal sewage collection needs, with special attention to the future sewage demands of the North of Boronda Future Growth Area and

of new developments based on the 2017 Economic Development Element of the City of Salinas General Plan.

As noted in the staff report and presentation to the city council at the May 6, 2023 meeting, the City of Salinas planned to use this Master Plan Update as a resource to develop a Sanitary Sewer Capital Improvement Program with potential total cost of \$147 million to \$178 million. It would "assist the City in prioritizing both existing and future sewer collection system needs through repair, rehabilitation, replacement, or new sanitary sewer facilities."

The staff report also stated that "current revenue and capital reserves available in the Sanitary Sewer Enterprise Fund are insufficient to cover expenses of this magnitude." The update would be used to calculate and justify "rate adjustments" for sanitary sewer customers. ("Rate adjustments" are a euphemism for "rate increases.") It promised that "City staff will work closely with the chosen consultant to evaluate financial and rate alternatives, gain input from rate payers, and build consensus for any recommended adjustments."

Chamber Questions Validity of Data in Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update

This Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update provoked numerous questions. Avid followers of Monterey County water policy know that it contained two offhand references to failures of the Monterey One Water (M1W) regional wastewater agency to measure wastewater flow. The City of Salinas has long maintained a cooperative agreement with

City Code	Category	Unit	Sewer Rate per Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) per Month										
			FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30	FY 2030-31	FY 2031-32	FY 2032-33	FY 2033-34	FY 2034-35
1	Business/Government	Location/Each Business (\$ for every 10 employees)	\$4.21	\$12.63	\$12.88	\$13.14	\$13.40	\$13.67	\$13.94	\$14.22	\$14.51	\$14.80	\$15.09
2	Business/Government (11-20 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$8.42										
3	Business/Government (21-30 Employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$12.63										
4	Business/Government (31-40 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$16.84										
5	Business/Government (41-50 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$21.05										
6	Business/Government (51-60 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$25.26										
7	Business/Government (61-70 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$29.47										
8	Business/Government (71-80 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$33.68										
9	Business/Government (81-90 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$37.89										
10	Business/Government (91-100 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$42.10										
11	Business/Government (101-110 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$46.31										
12	Business/Government (111-120 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$50.52										
13	Business/Government (121-130 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$54.73										
14	Business/Government (131-140 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$58.94										
15	Business/Government (141-150 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$63.15										
16	Business/Government (151-160 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$67.36										
18	Business/Government (171-180 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$75.38										
19	Business/Government (181-190 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$79.99										
21	Business/Government (201-210 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$88.41										
22	Business/Government (210-220 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$92.62										
28	Business/Government (271-280 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$117.88										
30	Business/Government (291-300 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$126.30										
35	Business/Government (341-350 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$147.35										
42	Business/Government (411-420 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$176.82										
44	Business/Government (431-440 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$185.24										
53	Business/Government (521-530 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$223.13										
70	Business/Government (691-700 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$294.70										
99	Business/Government (981-990 employees)	Location/Each licensed business	\$416.79										
101	Residence - vacant	Each Living Unit	\$1.09	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
102	Residence	Each Living Unit	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
105	Multi Residence - Apts	Each Living Unit	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
106	Multi Residence - Vacant Apts	Each Living Unit	\$1.09	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
107	Condominium	Each Living Unit	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
109	Retirement Complex	Each Living Unit	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
211	Minimum/ Business Vacant	Location/Each Business	\$1.09	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
221	Hotel/Motel	Each Room	\$2.36	\$7.09	\$7.24	\$7.38	\$7.53	\$7.68	\$7.83	\$7.99	\$8.15	\$8.31	\$8.48
222	Bed & Breakfast	Each Room	\$1.56	\$4.73	\$4.82	\$4.92	\$5.02	\$5.12	\$5.22	\$5.33	\$5.43	\$5.54	\$5.65
231	Supermarket	Location	\$22.98	\$68.95	\$70.33	\$71.73	\$73.17	\$74.63	\$76.12	\$77.65	\$79.20	\$80.78	\$82.40
241	Medical Office	Each Licensed Physician	\$5.62	\$16.87	\$17.21	\$17.55	\$17.90	\$18.26	\$18.62	\$19.00	\$19.38	\$19.76	\$20.16
242	Dental Office	Each Licensed Dentist	\$7.76	\$23.27	\$23.74	\$24.21	\$24.69	\$25.19	\$25.69	\$26.21	\$26.73	\$27.27	\$27.81
243	Rest Home/ Convalescent	Each Bed of Licensed Capacity	\$1.56	\$4.67	\$4.76	\$4.86	\$4.96	\$5.06	\$5.16	\$5.26	\$5.37	\$5.47	\$5.58
244	Surgery Center/ General Hospital	Each Bed of Licensed Capacity	\$9.23	\$27.68	\$28.24	\$28.80	\$29.38	\$29.96	\$30.56	\$31.18	\$31.80	\$32.43	\$33.08
245	Animal Hospital	Location/Each Licensed Business	\$10.33	\$31.58	\$32.21	\$32.85	\$33.51	\$34.18	\$34.86	\$35.56	\$36.27	\$37.00	\$37.74
261	Restaurant - 1 Meal	Each Restaurant Seat	\$0.20	\$0.61	\$0.62	\$0.63	\$0.64	\$0.66	\$0.67	\$0.68	\$0.70	\$0.71	\$0.72
262	Restaurant - 2 Meals	Each Restaurant Seat	\$0.32	\$0.95	\$0.97	\$0.99	\$1.01	\$1.03	\$1.05	\$1.07	\$1.09	\$1.11	\$1.14
263	Restaurant - 3 Meals	Each Restaurant Seat	\$0.61	\$1.82	\$1.85	\$1.89	\$1.93	\$1.97	\$2.01	\$2.05	\$2.09	\$2.13	\$2.17
264	Restaurant w/ Bar	Each Restaurant Seat	\$0.61	\$1.82	\$1.85	\$1.89	\$1.93	\$1.97	\$2.01	\$2.05	\$2.09	\$2.13	\$2.17
265	Bar	Location/Each Business	\$9.14	\$27.42	\$27.97	\$28.53	\$29.10	\$29.68	\$30.28	\$30.88	\$31.50	\$32.13	\$32.77
266	Night Club	Location/Each Business	\$27.39	\$82.18	\$83.83	\$85.50	\$87.21	\$88.96	\$90.74	\$92.55	\$94.40	\$96.29	\$98.22
267	Take-Out Small	1 Cash Register or Checkout Line	\$10.21	\$30.62	\$31.24	\$31.86	\$32.50	\$33.15	\$33.81	\$34.49	\$35.18	\$35.88	\$36.60
268	Take-Out Medium	2 or 3 Cash Registers or Checkout Lines	\$25.12	\$75.35	\$76.86	\$78.39	\$79.96	\$81.56	\$83.19	\$84.85	\$86.55	\$88.28	\$90.05
269	Take-Out Large	4 or More Cash Registers or Checkout Lines	\$45.79	\$137.37	\$140.12	\$142.92	\$145.78	\$148.70	\$151.67	\$154.71	\$157.80	\$160.96	\$164.18
270	Bakery	Location/Each Business	\$8.28	\$24.83	\$25.32	\$25.83	\$26.35	\$26.87	\$27.41	\$27.96	\$28.52	\$29.09	\$29.67
281	Theater	Per Screen @ Each Location	\$13.38	\$40.75	\$41.56	\$42.39	\$43.24	\$44.10	\$44.99	\$45.89	\$46.80	\$47.74	\$48.69
282	Bowling Center	Location/Each Business	\$41.32	\$123.97	\$126.45	\$128.97	\$131.55	\$134.18	\$136.87	\$139.61	\$142.40	\$145.25	\$148.15
283	Gym - 500 Members	\$ for every 500 members	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
288	Gym - 3000 Members	Location/Each licensed business	\$32.70										
289	Gym - 3500 Members	Location/Each licensed business	\$38.15										
290	Mortuary	Location/Each licensed business	\$11.16										
291	School - Minimum	Account	\$1.09										
292	School - Pre Grade 6	School Population	\$0.06	\$0.17	\$0.18	\$0.18	\$0.18	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.19	\$0.20	\$0.20	\$0.21
293	School - Grade 7 -College	School Population	\$0.12	\$0.35	\$0.35	\$0.36	\$0.37	\$0.37	\$0.38	\$0.39	\$0.40	\$0.41	\$0.41
294	School - Boarding	School Population	\$1.15	\$3.46	\$3.53	\$3.60	\$3.67	\$3.75	\$3.82	\$3.90	\$3.97	\$4.05	\$4.14
295	Instructional Facility	Location/Each Licensed Business	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
296	Church - Small (1-100 Members)	Per 100 members	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
297	Church - Large (> 100 Members)	Per 100 members	\$10.90	\$32.70	\$33.35	\$34.02	\$34.70	\$35.40	\$36.10	\$36.83	\$37.56	\$38.31	\$39.08
301	Photo Developer/ Printer	\$ for every 10 employees	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
311	Laboratory	\$ for every 10 employees	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
321	Printer - 10 Empl	Location/Each licensed business	\$5.45										
323	Printer - 30 Empl	Location/Each licensed business	\$16.35										
324	Printer - 40 Empl	Location/Each licensed business	\$21.80										
331	Garage Repair	Location/Each licensed business, \$ for every 10 employees	\$5.45	\$12.11	\$12.35	\$12.60	\$12.85	\$13.11	\$13.37	\$13.64	\$13.91	\$14.19	\$14.47
341	Paint Shop	Location/Each licensed business, \$ for every 10 employees	\$5.45	\$16.35	\$16.68	\$17.01	\$17.35	\$17.70	\$18.05	\$18.41	\$18.78	\$19.16	\$19.54
342	Paint Shop - 20 employees	\$ for every 10 employees	\$10.90	\$32.70	\$33.35	\$34.02	\$34.70	\$35.40	\$36.10	\$36.83	\$37.56	\$38.31	\$39.08
344	Paint Shop - 40 employees	Location/Each licensed business	\$21.80										
351	Industrial Laundry	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$2,217.06	\$6,651.16	\$6,784.19	\$6,919.87	\$7,058.27	\$7,199.48	\$7,343.42	\$7,490.29	\$7,640.10	\$7,792.90	\$7,948.76
352	Commercial Laundry	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$53.21	\$159.61	\$162.80	\$166.06	\$169.38	\$172.76	\$176.22	\$179.74	\$183.34	\$187.01	\$190.75
353	Dry Cleaner	Location/Each Licensed Business	\$13.93	\$41.78	\$42.62	\$43.47	\$44.34	\$45.23	\$46.13	\$47.05	\$48.00	\$48.96	\$49.93
354	Laundromat	Each Washing Machine	\$3.66	\$10.99	\$11.21	\$11.43	\$11.66	\$11.89	\$12.13	\$12.37	\$12.62	\$12.87	\$13.13
366	Car Wash	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$69.90	\$209.70	\$213.89	\$218.17	\$222.53	\$226.98	\$231.52	\$236.15	\$240.87	\$245.69	\$250.61
367	Truck/ Bus Wash	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$44.34	\$133.05	\$135.71	\$138.42	\$141.19	\$144.02	\$146.90	\$149.84	\$152.83	\$155.89	\$159.01
401	Special User	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$277.13	\$831.43	\$848.06	\$865.02	\$882.32	\$899.96	\$917.96	\$936.32	\$955.05	\$974.15	\$993.63

City Code	Category	Unit	Sewer Rate per Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) per Month										
			FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30	FY 2030-31	FY 2031-32	FY 2032-33	FY 2033-34	FY 2034-35
403	Chemical Pesticides	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$79.81	\$239.45	\$244.24	\$249.13	\$254.11	\$259.19	\$264.38	\$269.66	\$275.06	\$280.56	\$286.17
405	Water Softener	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$527.66	\$1,583.01	\$1,614.67	\$1,646.96	\$1,679.90	\$1,713.30	\$1,747.77	\$1,782.72	\$1,818.38	\$1,854.75	\$1,891.84
406	Food Processor	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$277.13	\$831.43	\$848.06	\$865.02	\$882.32	\$899.96	\$917.96	\$936.32	\$955.05	\$974.15	\$993.63
407	RecSports Facility	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$66.51	\$199.57	\$203.57	\$207.64	\$211.79	\$216.03	\$220.35	\$224.75	\$229.25	\$233.83	\$238.51
408	Inedible Renderer	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$1,418.92	\$4,256.71	\$4,341.84	\$4,428.68	\$4,517.25	\$4,607.60	\$4,699.75	\$4,793.75	\$4,889.62	\$4,987.41	\$5,087.16
410	Groundwater Discharger	Billed Account (a); Per 100 GPD of water usage	\$125.63	\$376.92	\$384.45	\$392.14	\$399.99	\$407.99	\$416.14	\$424.47	\$432.96	\$441.62	\$450.45

Monterey One Water for wastewater operation and maintenance services, but apparently flow meters to measure wastewater outflows from the city weren’t functioning properly from 2018 to 2022.

Your Chamber asked the City Council at the May 2, 2023 meeting to investigate this revelation. The Chamber subsequently joined other Monterey County business groups seeking information from Monterey One Water about flow meter failures. Eleven documents have now been identified confirming apparent failures to measure wastewater flow.

On Aug. 13, 2024, a Chamber representative asked the Monterey County Joint Water Resources/ Board of Supervisors Leadership Committee to conduct a Phase 2 audit of Monterey One Water to determine what happened with wastewater flow measurements from 2018 through 2022. Nothing has been presented to the public.

Why does accurate measurement of municipal wastewater production matter for City of Salinas ratepayers? In a 10-page letter to Monterey One Water dated July 6, 2023 (with 18 exhibits comprising 48 pages), your Chamber expressed concerns that “the City of Salinas Sewer Master Plan Update overestimates total municipal wastewater flow from the City of Salinas by 7%-8% when it cites old flow totals from 2015-2017 rather than more recent totals from 2018-2022.” Overestimated flow could result in overestimated needs for capital improvements, and thus, unnecessarily high rate increases.

On a broader level, the apparent failure to measure wastewater flow also has significance for water supply projections for the Pure

Water Monterey/Groundwater Replenishment Project (PWM/ GWR), which is supposed to supply recycled wastewater to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) for agricultural irrigation and now delivers recycled wastewater to the Seaside Groundwater Basin for Monterey Peninsula drinking water. While this article focuses specifically on sewer rates for customers, the September 2024 Business Journal included two cover stores about the recycled wastewater controversy: “Chamber Dismayed by First Set of Audit Findings for Regional Wastewater Recycling Agency” and “Uncomfortable But Necessary — An Audit of Water Flow Data.”

City Needs to Repay Money Borrowed Via Sewer Revenue Bonds

After the May 2, 2023 meeting, nothing more was presented publicly to the Salinas City Council about the Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update or proposed rate increases to pay for the Master Plan. Therefore, your Chamber leadership was surprised when The Bond Buyer — a specialty publication for the bond industry — published an article in its Dec. 27, 2024 issue titled “Four-Notch Drop for a California City’s Sewer Revenue Bonds.” The identity of this city was not revealed in the headline, but was obvious from the associated photo of the City of Salinas Rotary Arch on Main Street.

Why did this credit downgrade happen? In 2020, the City of Salinas borrowed \$14,425,000 via revenue bond sales (Sanitary Sewer System Revenue Bonds, Series 2020) for two purposes: (1) fund capital improvements to the city’s Sanitary Sewer System, and (2) “refinance”

revenue bonds it had sold earlier by issuing (selling) new “refund-ing” bonds at a lower interest rate. The City had originally borrowed \$16,000,000 in 1998 through revenue bond sales (Sanitary Sewer System Revenue Bonds, Series 1998) for capital improvements and then in 2012 borrowed \$17,995,000 through revenue bond sales (Sanitary Sewer System Revenue Bonds, Series 2012) to refund the 1998 bonds while funding new capital improvements.

Borrowing money through bond sales is not an uncommon or inappropriate practice for local governments to pay for public works improvements. However, the borrower needs to make sure it can pay back the borrowed money (the principal) along with interest payments to investors who bought the bonds.

In the case of the City of Salinas, revenue collected through sewer fees had not kept up with the financial commitment of the city to maintain its sewer system and pay back the borrowed money. According to a Dec. 23, 2024 statement from S&P Global Ratings (Standard & Poor’s) credit rating agency about the city’s credit downgrade, “The downgrade reflects our view of the utility’s weak financial performance trend based on weak cost recovery practices.” (“Cost recovery practices” are a euphemism for “collection of revenue through charges to ratepayers.”) It noted that “the sewer system had \$13.3 million in debt outstanding at the end of fiscal 2023.”

The S&P statement also reported that the City of Salinas “reports that it has not received a default notice from the trustee to date. Under the bond documents, following a notice of event of default, the city has 180 days to cure any rate covenant

violation and following the expiration of that cure period bondholders can accelerate debt obligations. Management has plans to raise rates in the summer of 2025 to abide by its rate covenant. However, the timing and magnitude of the potential rate increase is uncertain.”

Four months later, the timing and magnitude of the rate increase is now certain.

Proposed Sewer Rate Increases Are Presented to City Council

Aware of the downgrade in credit, your Chamber waited for the City Council to be informed about the situation and consider a rate increase to solve it. This occurred on March 11, 2025, when staff presented a “Sanitary Sewer Rate Study” based on the 2023 Sanitary Sewer Master Plan Update.

A “rate schedule” has been proposed to triple sewer rates as of July 1, 2025, with an annual escalation rate thereafter of 2% per year. Additional revenue generated by the rate increase is projected to be enough to pay for the next 10 years of routine operations and maintenance costs, scheduled capital improvement projects, debt obligations, and a reserve fund.

Your Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee has discussed this planned 200% increase in sewer rates, especially in the context of rate increases recently imposed by other public utilities, including Monterey One Water. It is regrettable but necessary.

Ratepayers will have an opportunity to object and vote against the rate increase under the authority of Proposition 218. The Salinas City Council plans to hold a public hearing and vote on the sewer rate increase on June 17, 2025. 🌱



Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our May 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
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.	1981	Spherion	2016
Goodwill Central Coast	1983	Platinum Tax, Payroll, and Bookkeeping	2017
Edwards Truck Center, Inc.	*40 Years* 1985	Ocon Family Chiropractic	2018
CHISPA Inc	1987	Silver Point Protection Inc.	2018
Harden Ranch Plaza	1991	Jim Bogart	2019
Enza Zaden North America, Inc.	1993	Salinas Self Storage	2019
Green's Camera World	*30 Years* 1995	Powers Associates, LLC	2020
TAMC (Transportation Agency for Mo Co)	1996	Bandit Systems	2022
1st Capital Bank	2007	Community Human Services	2022
Community Foundation for Monterey County	2007	Matt Huerta Consulting LLC	2022
Lopez Tax Service	2007	Soledad Community Health Care District	2022
Alzheimer's Association of Monterey County	2008	Stonies Taphouse and Bistro	2022
Beverly Meamber	2008	Ameriprise Financial Services	2023
Scudder Solar Energy Systems	2010	DeVeera Technology	2023
A Tool Shed Equipment Rentals Inc	*10 Years* 2015	Equine Healing Collaborative	2023
Alliant Insurance Services	*10 Years* 2015	Varnel Consulting & Training Services	2023
Veterans Transition Center of Monterey County	2015	Chris Cain Law, PC	2024
Wells Fargo Northern and Central California Region	*10 Years*	Graves Elementary School District	2024
Salinas City Center Improvement Association (SCCIA)	2016	Navigator Public Schools	2024
		Salinas Valley Food and Wine Festival	2024

A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members





RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Patria on Main Grand Opening

There was a full house at Patria on Main for its grand opening with its new owner Ernie Amorim and Chef Jose Aranda. Chamber members and guests had the opportunity to taste signature cocktails, take a first look at the new menu, and celebrate the special occasion. Visit the restaurant at 228 Main St., in Salinas.



Fox Theater Mural Unveiling

On March 20, the Chamber gathered with the Salinas City Center Improvement Association, Fox Theater, and our incredible community to celebrate the unveiling of the stunning new Fox Theater Mural by talented muralist Lisa Haas. Attendees were in awe of the breathtaking artwork, which beautifully enhances the downtown landscape.



Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting

With The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County celebrated the grand opening of the Marjorie R. McNeely Low-Vision Optometry Clinic and Assistive Technology Center in Salinas. This new location expands vital services, bringing innovative technology and support closer to residents of Salinas and South Monterey County, a huge step forward in empowering independence.



ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Salinas Valley Chamber Celebrates Excellence at 104th Annual Awards Luncheon

On Thursday, April 10, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce hosted its 104th Annual Awards Luncheon, presented by Chevron. With nearly 500 attendees, the event was a true celebration of community spirit, featuring engaging networking, heartfelt speeches, and inspiring honorees.

"This event was a celebration of our shared commitment to progress and the incredible individuals and businesses that make the Salinas Valley thrive," said Chamber President/CEO Colleen Finegan Bailey. "Our community's strength lies in its people, and today we recognized those who continue to lead with passion, purpose, and heart."

A Day of Networking & Connections at the Networking Power Hour

The festivities commenced with a dynamic networking power hour, presented by Kaiser Permanente, where attendees had the opportunity to forge new connections and reconnect with old friends. The air buzzed with energy as individuals from diverse backgrounds and industries came together, sharing insights and experiences. Outreach booths provided valuable information about local initiatives, resources, and opportunities.

The event also featured a special performance by local CSUMB student and Gonzales native Barbra Ann Wagner, as well as a delicious buffet-style Asian stir-fry lunch catered by The Valley Restaurant and Catering. Presenting



Spirit of the Community Honoree Victor Kong and the Star Market team.

sponsor representative Chanel Jolly of Chevron delivered opening remarks, highlighting the value of collaboration with the Chamber and the importance of community partnerships.

Honoring Outstanding Achievements & Member Anniversaries

Among the highlights included the Chamber proudly highlighting long-time members that were celebrating milestone anniversaries for 10, 25, and 50 years. The Chamber further recognized exceptional individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the vibrancy of our community.

The ceremony featured moving tributes from the distinguished award recipients. Spirit of the Community honoree Victor Kong (Star Market) and Outstanding Large Business honoree Bryan Lamb (Northridge Mall) took to the stage with their teams, emphasizing the people behind their success.



Kaiser Permanente, ready to welcome guests at the Networking Power Hour.



Citizen of the Year Honoree Josh Hostetter with family, friends, and colleagues from the City of Salinas.

Ambassador of the Year honoree Laurie Martin expressed heartfelt gratitude and spoke about the importance of volunteerism and the joy of community service. Citizen of the Year Josh Hostetter reflected on his years of service as a firefighter, sharing how a recent career-ending injury brought his family and community even closer.

Outstanding Small Business honoree Signs by Van, Jeremy Vanderkraats, shared their father-son journey of growing a small dream into a company

engaging in projects locally and nationally, while Bardin Bengard of Bengard Ranch (Agricultural Leadership) reflected on their evolution as grower-shippers feeding the nation. Julie Packard (Businesswoman of the Year), founder of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, highlighted its global impact with over 70 million visitors and her continued work in ocean conservation and education.

These heartwarming speeches resonated throughout the venue, reflecting on the impact of their work and the

power of service, resilience, and leadership. Many recipients were met with thunderous applause and standing ovations as their achievements and dedication were celebrated.

A Look Ahead

As the Chamber's Annual Meeting, a symbolic passing of the gavel took place between Past Chair Jennifer Williams and incoming Chair Leonard Batti. Williams shared 2024 highlights, including the Chamber's series of listening sessions with members and stakeholders, strong membership growth, and staff recognitions. She also acknowledged 2024 Board Members and retiring Board Member Starla Warren. Batti then outlined the Chamber's mission, strategic direction, and advocacy priorities, while introducing the 2025 Board of Directors.

Thank you to our many sponsors that made this event possible:

Presenting Sponsor: Chevron

Diamond Sponsor: Taylor Farms

Platinum & Networking Power

Hour Sponsor: Kaiser Permanente

Gold Sponsors: Salinas Valley Health, Mag One Media, and Bengard Ranch

Silver Sponsors: Alliant Insurance Services, Alvarez Technology Group, California Water Service, Covered California for Small Business, Green-Rubber Kennedy Ag, Natividad Foundation, Northridge Mall, Pinnacle Bank, Scudder Roofing, West Coast Community Bank, Wescom Financial, and Voler Strategic Advisors

Bronze Sponsors: Bay Federal Credit Union, Braga Fresh, CLA (Clifton Larson Allen LLP), Coast and Valley Properties, California Strawberry Commission, D'Arrigo California, Etheric Networks, Fenton & Keller, Granite Construction, InterContinental The Clement Monterey, Integris Wealth Management, LLC, Kasavan Architects, K&D Landscaping, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Monterey County Bank, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss, Pacific Valley Bank, SSB Construction, The Don Chapin Company, and The



Past Chair Jennifer Williams was thanked for her service by incoming Board Chair Leonard Batti and CEO Colleen Bailey.

Maynard Group

Media Sponsors: KION TV and iHeartMedia

Artwork & Design: TMD Creative

In-Kind Sponsors: Mission Linen Supply, Blossom Backdrops & Booths, Signs by Van, and Matsui Nursery

Catering: The Valley Restaurant and Catering

Appreciation and Special Thanks

The Salinas Valley Chamber would like to express gratitude for all the attendees, honorees, sponsors, and partners who made this event a great success. A special thank you to Event Chair Amy Gibson, Ambassadors Maggie Rodriguez, Jan Burnett, Laura Kershner, Daniel Philpott, Margaret Noroian, and Rancho San Juan FFA for their valuable support of the event along with the Chamber team Gabriel Lopez, Jasmine Bhardwaj, Cesar Chavez, Kevin Dayton, and Mac McDonald.

In Closing

Overall, the 104th Annual Awards Luncheon is more than just a premier networking event — it's a powerful reminder of strength, community connections, and the heart that defines the Salinas Valley — its people. The Chamber is proud to honor those who continue to make a difference and looks forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead. To stay up to date on Chamber happenings, visit SalinasChamber.com or call (831) 751-7725. 🌱



From left to right, Beth Wilbur of CASA Monterey County, Joanne Bravo of Rancho Cielo, and SVCC Event Chair Amy Gibson of Wescom Financial.



California Resources Corporation, from left to right, Brett Bane, Ali Zauner, and Albert Madrid.



A full crowd at the 104th Annual Awards Luncheon.



Outstanding Large Business of the Year—Northridge Mall. From Left to right Brooke Stewart, Rebeckah Spears-Ruffie, Bryan Lamb, Maria Martinez, and George Rawson.



The Braga Fresh team celebrates its 10th-year anniversary with the Chamber.

Investing During Periods of Market Volatility

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

News outlets have been inundating investors recently with a bleak outlook for the market and economy due to the uncertain future of tariffs and their potential effects on inflation, stocks, bonds, and the overall economy.

Uncertainty in the market can cause significant angst and fear among investors, which can sometimes lead to poor decision-making and suboptimal investment performance. However, high levels of volatility can give investors a chance to reevaluate their investment objectives, risk tolerance, and goals.

Below are a few important principles to keep in mind while navigating market declines to help alleviate some of the pain associated with volatility.

Investors wouldn't be human if they didn't fear loss. Nobel-Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman demonstrated this with his loss aversion theory, showing people feel the pain of losing money more than they enjoy gains. The natural instinct is to exit the market when it begins to decline, just as greed can prompt investors to jump in when stocks are performing well — both of which can have negative effects. Investors can overcome the power of emotion by focusing on relevant research, quantitative data, and time-proven strategies. Additionally, consulting with a financial professional can help investors navigate uncertain or volatile market environments.

Unfortunately, market downturns are part of the normal market cycle. Over long periods of time, stocks have trended higher, but history also shows us that market declines are an inevitable part of investing. On average, from 1954 to 2023, the S&P 500 has dropped 10% about once every

18 months and 20% or more about every six years. Each downturn, however, has been followed by a recovery and, over time, a new market high.

Time in the market always beats timing the market. No one can accurately predict short-term market movement, and investors who move money out of the market risk losing out on periods recovery and performance that follow downturns.

Research from the Wells Fargo Investment Institute suggests that missing a handful of the best days over longer time periods drastically reduces the average annual return an investor could gain by simply holding on to their investments during market sell-offs.

Over the past 30 years, missing the best 30 days (based on S&P 500 Index returns from Feb. 1, 1994, through Jan. 31, 2024) took the annual average return from 8.0% per year down to 1.8%, which was less than the 2.5% average inflation rate over that same period. In addition to staying invested during downturns, diversification can also help to mute volatility. By spreading investments across a variety of assets classes and categories, investors can buffer the effects of volatility on their portfolio.

Lastly, it is beneficial for investors to create an investment plan — and stick to it. Although emotional responses to market dynamics is completely normal and investors can feel quite nervous or uncertain, the actions taken during these periods can have profound effects on their investment success. A sound investment plan should address several aspects, including investment objective, short- and long-term goals, and risk tolerance. 🌱

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

Salinas and Monterey County, Get Ready to Celebrate America!

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

On Thursday, July 4th, Compass Church is proud to once again host Celebrate America, an unforgettable evening of patriotism, community, and celebration, at the Rodeo Grounds in Salinas.

Last year, more than 14,000 people gathered with family and friends to honor the freedom we enjoy and the heroes who've preserved it. This year, we're planning for even more. And trust us, you won't want to miss it. This is a FREE event for the community.

From the first note of patriotic music to the moment the final firework lights up the night sky, Celebrate America is a tribute to everything we hold dear. The event includes a high-energy family festival, live music, delicious food vendors, and interactive activities for kids of all ages. But the highlight moments are truly unforgettable. It all begins with a skydiver descending with a massive American flag and culminates in the largest fireworks show in all of Monterey County.

One of the most meaningful parts of the evening is our medal ceremony honoring local veterans and active-duty military personnel. These courageous men and women represent the heart of our nation's history. Their selfless bravery built and protected the freedom we celebrate on the 4th of July.

History reminds us that freedom has always come at a cost. In July of 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail, saying, "I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure it will cost to maintain this Declaration, yet through all the gloom I can see the



rays of ravishing light and glory."

Those rays still shine today through every veteran, every service-member, and every American who lives with gratitude and courage. Celebrate America

is not just about fireworks and fun. It's about remembering the price of liberty and passing on a legacy of patriotism to the next generation.

Compass Church is honored to host this annual community tradition. But an event of this size only happens with the partnership of generous local sponsors. We'd love to invite the business community to come alongside us and help make this year's event even more impactful. Whether you're a small business, a large organization, or a family-owned brand, there are many creative ways for your name and logo to be featured throughout the festival.

From vendor booths to banners, stage mentions, and online visibility, your support makes a difference. It's a chance not only to market your brand to thousands of attendees but to invest in a community moment that unites us all.

You can explore sponsorship opportunities and sign up today at www.compasschurchmc.org.

So, mark your calendars. Bring your patriotism, your loved ones, and your American pride. This 4th of July, let's Celebrate America together at the Rodeo Grounds in Salinas with gratitude for the past, joy in the present, and hope for the future.

We'll see you there under the stars. 🌱

Pastor T.K. Anderson
Compass Church

Are You a Polluter?

If So, You May Have to Pay Your ‘Fair Share’ of Damage

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

There’s a bill in the California legislature requiring “fossil fuel polluters to pay their fair share of the damage caused by greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere” from 1990 to 2024, and ultimately up through 2045. It is Senate Bill 684 and Assembly Bill 1243, the “Polluters Pay Climate Superfund Act of 2025.”

Apparently, the Polluters Pay Climate Superfund Act of 2025 is based on the idea that the People of California want experts to find the “polluters” who are causing droughts, floods, fires, and sea inundation during winter storms. Once identified, those polluters would be forced to pay damages to the state in an amount calculated by experts. Then, the state would spend that money on projects and programs that help disadvantaged people, restore the natural environment, and respond to community disasters caused by the polluters.

It’s possible that a majority of state legislators want the bill to become law: Senate Bill 684 passed the California State Senate Committee on Environmental Quality by a 5-3 vote on April 2. Listed supporters of the bill tend to be critical of free market economics, while listed opponents are mainly businesses and labor unions that represent private sector trade workers. The California Chamber of Commerce opposes the bill.

You’ll be initially relieved to know that this bill is not targeted at the demand side: the people who use fossil fuels. It’s very difficult for an ordinary person to get through modern American life without using petroleum-based products or using energy that’s generated at least in part from petroleum-based



Getty Images

products. We are all polluters.

While the bill identifies entities involved in “extraction, production, refining, sale, or combustion of fossil fuels or petroleum products” as the cause of climate change, it does not assess fees on people who drive to work in a vehicle with a combustion engine, use a propane gas grill, fly across the country to visit Grandma, or play sports with plastic implements on artificial turf.

It’s targeted at the supply side: individuals, trustees, agents, partnerships, associations, corporations, or other legal organizations — including foreign nations — that hold or held majority ownership interest in a business or successor business operating in California that engages or engaged in extraction or refining of fossil fuels. This includes “third parties.”

So if you’re part of a small business involved with fossil fuels, you don’t need to initially worry about a bill for billions of dollars from the State of California coming in the mail (presumably delivered by an electric-powered postal vehicle). Businesses are exempt if one billion or less metric tons of aggregate fossil fuel emissions are attributable to them globally during the covered period.

So, who are the polluters responsible for more than one metric tons of aggregate fossil fuel emissions throughout the world? No one wants to say. As stated in the Legislative Analyst’s report to the California State Senate Committee on Environmental Quality, “It is not clear at this time exactly which companies would be implicated in the cost recovery demand envisioned.”

How much would these unknown

polluters be charged? Under the bill, a “climate study” would determine the cost of damages to nature and humanity in California caused by fossil fuel use. (This would be the cost of gross damages, not net damages calculated after any possible cost benefits of fossil fuels are subtracted.) The polluters would then be assessed and have to pay into a special fund run by the State of California.

It’s likely the entities ultimately implicated as polluters are companies from whom you buy products or use services. Perhaps those companies will declare bankruptcy after they are assessed, thus forcing you to stop polluting and pursue a lifestyle that doesn’t involve fossil fuels.

Or perhaps they will simply pass the costs onto you, the end-user polluter. 🌿

Spring is the Perfect Time to Declutter, Creating Unity and Shared Purpose at a Goodwill Community Donation Drive

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

For nearly a century, Goodwill Central Coast has helped build stronger communities by supporting individuals facing barriers to employment. At the heart of GCC's mission is a powerful, yet simple idea: Every donation has the potential to transform a life.

With stores and donation centers in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties, this nonprofit uses the proceeds from donated goods to fund vital job training and employment services. These programs help many of our friends and neighbors overcome challenges, such as lack of experience, limited education, or gaps in employment, giving them the tools and confidence to succeed in the workforce.

Each year, GCC collects more than 630,000 donations, amounting to millions of pounds of goods redirected from landfills. This effort not only promotes environmental sustainability, but it also supports a circular economy, where donated items are resold, repurposed and reused — extending their life and purpose.

A sense of shared purpose

One of the most rewarding ways to support Goodwill's mission is by hosting a community donation drive. Whether organized by a school, club, business, or nonprofit, these events create a sense of unity and shared purpose. Goodwill Central Coast provides everything needed: a donation trailer, an on-site team member, and a clear process for collecting and sorting items. In return, host organizations receive compensation based on the volume of donations collected — making it both a fundraiser and a service project rolled into one.



"Hosting a donation drive isn't just about gathering items," said GCC's Vice President of Retail & E-Commerce Alan Martinson. "It's about inspiring generosity, raising awareness about sustainability, and most importantly, opening doors for people who want to work but need a little support to get there."

There are many reasons to host a donation drive:

- **Engage your community:** A drive brings together students, parents, local businesses, and neighbors for a shared mission.

- **Raise funds for your group:** For every truck filled with donations, Goodwill Central Coast compensates your organization.

- **Promote sustainability:** Keep usable clothing, household items, and other goods out of landfills while giving them a second life.

- **Make a local impact:** Donations directly support job training and employment services for individuals in our community.

The process for hosting a drive is

quite simple:

- **Pick a date:** Your group selects a convenient day for the drive.

- **Goodwill provides a trailer and team:** A friendly Goodwill Central Coast employee will be on-site to help collect and sort donations.

- **Fill the truck, earn rewards:** The more you collect, the more funds your group raises — so the challenge is on!

- **Engage your group members:** There is a task for everyone on the day of the drive.

A fun and easy way to give back

Hosting a donation drive isn't just about collecting goods — it's also a team-building experience that fosters well ... goodwill. It's a chance to connect, inspire generosity, and have fun while making a lasting difference. Plus, it's a fantastic way to introduce younger generations to the power of giving back.

Groups may inquire about hosting a donation drive www.ccgoodwill.org/donate/donation-drives/. Have

questions or interest in hosting your own donation drive? Contact donorservices@ccgoodwill.org, or call the GCC donor services department at (800) 894-8440. Groups must download a registration form, a guidebook, a donation drive flyer template and a W-9 form. Forms can be emailed to donorservices@ccgoodwill.org or faxed to (831) 421-0588.

Arrange a home pickup

In addition to donation drives, Goodwill Central Coast offers free home pickups for larger donations, business and school collection services, and even vehicle donations through a partnership with Cars Helping Charities. These convenient options make it easier than ever for community members to give back and make an impact.

Every bag of clothes, every donated kitchen appliance, and every secondhand purchase contributes to a future where more individuals can access the training, tools, and confidence needed to thrive in the job market.

Your support helps transforms lives

When you donate to Goodwill Central Coast, you're not just giving away old clothes or household items — you're giving people a second chance. Here's how your generosity makes a difference:

- **Job training and employment services:** The sales from donated items fund essential career development programs, helping individuals gain the skills they need to secure meaningful employment.

- **Sustainability and waste reduction:** Your donations keep millions of pounds of goods out of

- landfills, promoting an eco-friendly, circular economy where items are repurposed and given a second life.

- **Digital Literacy:** Whether you're re-entering the workforce, looking to improve your job prospects, or simply want to gain confidence in using technology, this program offers the tools and support to help you succeed.

- **Stronger local economy:** By supporting Goodwill, you're investing in your own community, helping people become self-sufficient and strengthening local businesses through workforce development.

Making giving back easy

Goodwill Central Coast makes it simple to support our shared communities with convenient and impactful donation options:

- **Convenient donation drop-off sites:** Find a location center near you to donate quickly and easily.

- **Free home pickup for large donations:** Have a significant amount to give? GCC will come to you. Just email donorservices@ccgoodwill.org with your address, phone number, and pictures of the items.

- **Business, school and organization pickups:** Goodwill offers weekly or monthly pickup services

for local businesses, schools and organizations across Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. Call (800) 894-8440 to schedule.

- **Donate your car:** Ready to declutter your garage and transform your space into something more functional? Through GCC's partnership with Cars Helping Charities, transfer takes only a matter of minutes. Donating avoids all the headaches involved in trying to sell a vehicle and may, in the long run, be more profitable to you as a tax deduction. For more information or to fill out a vehicle donation request,

visit www.ccgoodwill.org/donate/vehicle-donations/.

Your role in a brighter future

Being part of a community isn't just about where you live — it's about how you show up for those around you. Every donation, every purchase, and every act of support strengthens the Central Coast and empowers individuals to succeed.

Remember, spring cleaning season is here! Next time you clean out your closet or search for a unique thrift find, remember: You're not just decluttering or shopping — you're making an impact. 🌱



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting with Goldberg & Ibarra**

Monday, May 12, 12:00– 1:00 p.m., 306 Capital St., Suite 102, Salinas

The Chamber is thrilled to celebrate the grand opening of the Law Offices of Goldberg & Ibarra. With over 25 years of dedicated service to the Central Valley, their experienced legal team, led by attorney David Ibarra, continues to set the gold standard in the legal field. Specializing in workers' compensation, personal injury, and social security cases, they are committed to securing the compensation and benefits their clients deserve. Join the Chamber in honoring this milestone as they uphold their legacy of excellence, integrity, and unwavering advocacy for our community.

- **Chamber Member Orientation**

Tuesday, May 20, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., 119 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join the Chamber for an informational orientation with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's Membership Director, Gabriel Lopez. We welcome new and prospective members to learn more about member benefits and how the Chamber can help you meet and surpass your marketing goals. Lunch will be provided. If you have any questions, please contact Lopez at Gabe@salinaschamber.com or call (831) 751-7725. Join us in-person at the Chamber Office or via Zoom.

- **Free Workshop — Business Boost with APEX**

Wednesday, June 4, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., 119 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join the Chamber for Business Boost, a free workshop designed to help local businesses and entrepreneurs start, grow, and thrive with expert guidance and no-cost support services. Hosted by the Central Coast SBDC and Monterey Bay APEX Accelerator, in partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, this hybrid workshop will provide valuable insights into Business Advising & Growth Strategies — learn how the SBDC's expert advisors can help you develop a business plan, secure funding, increase your revenue, attract more clients, and expand your operations; Government Contracting Opportunities — discover how the APEX Accelerator can guide you

through the process of securing local, state, and federal contracts to grow your business; Live Q&A with Experts — get your questions answered by experienced business advisors and contracting specialists. Whether you're just getting started or looking to scale your business, Business Boost will equip you with the tools and knowledge to succeed — all at no cost to you.

- **RVS Technology Group 25th Anniversary Celebration**

Thursday, June 12, 4:30-6:00 p.m., 228 Main St., Salinas

Since opening their doors in 1998, RVS Technology Group has been proud to serve the Tri-County area, officially expanding their services to the region in 2000. Dedicated to helping businesses stay connected, secure, and ahead of the curve, RVS offers a full suite of services including managed IT, cybersecurity, network solutions, and tech support. Now, you're invited to Sip, Savor & Meet the Team at Patria Restaurant, located at 228 Main St. in Salinas, on Thursday, June 12 from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. Enjoy local wines, delicious small bites from Patria, and connect with the RVS Technology crew to learn more about what they do. Don't miss the ribbon cutting with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce at 5:00 p.m. to celebrate 25 incredible years of innovation and service. Raise a glass to tech, teamwork, and the exciting road ahead.

- **California Rodeo Salinas & Monterey Regional Airport Chamber Mixer**

Wednesday, June 18, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., 200 Fred Kane Drive, Monterey

Join the Chamber, the California Rodeo Salinas and Monterey Regional Airport Chamber Mixer with the Salinas Valley and Monterey Peninsula Chambers of Commerce as they all gear up for the California Rodeo Salinas in July. Dust off your boots, throw on your cowboy hats, and join in for a fun evening in celebration of one of Salinas' most beloved events. Tickets cost \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members. Pre-register at SalinasChamber.com.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program Unfurls Its Largest Group of Banners Yet

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

In only its fourth year, the Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program will showcase its biggest group of heroes, 107, during its spring rotation from mid-May to mid-July to honor the men of Company C of the 194th Tank Battalion, which fought in World War II.

The banner program honors veterans and active-duty service members who call or have called Salinas home with a display of banners along Oldtown's Main Street.

The banners will be unfurled on Main Street in Salinas on May 10, to coincide with Armed Forces Day, May 17, and Memorial Day, May 26, with each banner honoring a soldier in the tank battalion that was once headquartered in Salinas before shipping out to fight the war in the Philippines. The year 2025 also marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

"This year we have 107 banners, which is the largest we've ever done," says Hiram Libby, one of the founders of the program. "The 80th anniversary seemed like a good time to bring attention and focus on a group of men and what they went through during the war. We know they had deep roots in the area and we felt the significance of the event, and that they had spent enough time here to qualify as Hometown Heroes."

The event Libby is referring to is the devastating Bataan Death March from April 9-17, 1942, during which around 72,000 to 78,000 U.S. and Filipino prisoners of war were forced to march across the Bataan Peninsula under tortuous conditions. Only 54,000 reached the camp. The deaths are estimated to be between 5,500 to 18,650.

Company C of the 194th Tank



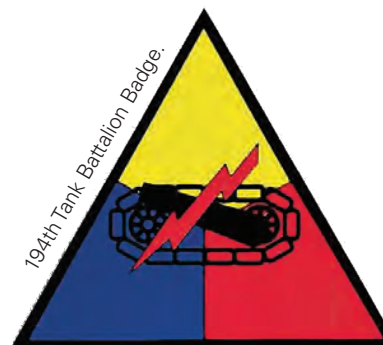
Air Force veteran Edward M. Dowd's banner near Main Street's distinctive arch.



Co-founder of the Hometown Heroes Banner Program and Air Force veteran, Rick Phinney's banner on Main Street.

Battalion was among those forced to march under horrendous conditions — only 47 of the 107 men in the company returned home. As a result, Salinas lost more men per capita in that march than any other town in the United States.

Salinas, in fact, has two memorials dedicated to these heroes, the Bataan Memorial Park, at Monterey Street and East Market Street; and a memorial dedicated to the soldiers at the Boronda History Center, located at Boronda Road and Calle Del Adobe. Both sites serve as poignant reminders of the sacrifices made by the soldiers of Company C and are



accessible to the public for those wishing to pay their respects.

Libby said that it was relatively easy to find information on Company C, given the significance of the march, the proximity of the library at the former Fort Ord, and the wealth of information on the internet. In fact, he said that only three to four images of the soldiers out of 107 were unavailable.

The large blue banners feature the soldier's photo, name and branch of service and are installed on street lights on South Main Street, usually two to a pole.

A banner-unveiling event will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, at the downtown arch on Main. After brief remarks, participants and guests will walk down Main Street to the train



Alicia Diaz, a Marine Corps veteran, stands under her Hometown Heroes banner.

station, the last location in Salinas these soldiers experienced before traveling to Fort Lewis, Washington, and then to the Philippines.

The same banners will also be displayed during a six-week period in the fall, from October through Veterans Day week.

Libby said if you want to honor your own veteran with a banner, simply submit a photograph in uniform, along with the name and branch of service, to the Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Committee. To submit a veteran or for more information, go to: <https://www.salinashometownheroes.org/>.

Leadership Monterey County 2025 Participants Gain Insight into Hospitality and Education

By Mitchell Friedman, Leadership Monterey County

Leadership Monterey County (LMC) kicked off its 2025 edition with two programs that set the stage for an exciting and professionally rewarding experience for its 32 participants.

The first program focused on the hospitality industry, as it looms large as a critical driver of the economy in Monterey County. The day began with a visit to the Inn at Spanish Bay, where participants toured the property and met with representatives who shared their perspectives on the history and culture of the Pebble Beach Company.

Next, the group heard from industry leaders who shared their experiences and insight into ongoing operational challenges as well as efforts to market the County of Monterey as a tourist destination. Speakers included leaders from the tourism management program at CSUMB; the Portola Hotel; and See Monterey.

Special thanks to the Monterey County Hospitality Association for contributing to the panel presentation. Lunch was sponsored by See Monterey and was held at the Intercontinental The Clement Monterey Hotel. The day concluded with a tour of the Monterey Conference Center.

The second session of the 2025 Leadership Monterey County (LMC) program focused on education. Longstanding structural changes affecting

public and private institutions alike, not to mention the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic and recent political developments, loomed large throughout the day's presentations and subsequent discussions.

Speakers included leaders from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC); California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB); Hartnell College; the County of Monterey Office of Education; and Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). In addition, the speakers representing the four postsecondary education institutions (UCSC, CSUMB, Hartnell College, and MPC) highlighted their ongoing efforts to prepare students for careers by partnering with local business and other community members — with the goal to provide opportunities for students to cultivate professional skills, whether through internships, experiential and service learning projects, and other arrangements.

In short, the programs on hospitality and education were fun-filled days that offered LMC participants unique insight into critical issues and vital organizations. To learn more about their experiences, and the LMC program in general, visit <https://www.leadershipmc.org>.

Mitchell Friedman, EdD, APR, is a Facilitator for Leadership Monterey County and can be reached at mfriedman@mcabc.biz.



Pictured from left to right: **Mike Millett**-Director of Business Development, **Jessica Perez**-Senior Relationship Manager, **Ramon Castro**-Business Development Officer, **Mirna Hills**-Director of Treasury Management, **Robert Mina**-Senior Relationship Manager, **Glenna Datta**-EVP Regional Executive, **Scott Gillett**-Senior Relationship Manager, **Dana Hart**-Relationship Manager, **Jim Scattini**-Business Development Officer, Not pictured: **Sue Storm**-Market President and **Jefferson Sruiz**-Relationship Manager.

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The California Civil Rights Department Adopts Regulations Regarding the Use of AI in the Employment Context

By Bradley J. Levang, Fenton & Keller

As employers increase their utilization of artificial intelligence (“AI”) and automated processes for workplace and employment decision-making, the California Civil Rights Department (“CRD”) recognized the need to regulate these systems to prevent bias and ensure fairness for applicants and employees.

On March 21, 2025, the CRD voted to approve those regulations. Should the California Office of Administrative Law thereafter approve these regulations, they could go into effect around July 1, 2025. These regulations seek to ensure fairness and transparency in the use of automated technologies that impact hiring, promotion, firing, and other employment decisions.

The pending regulations define “automated-decision system” as a computational process that screens, evaluates, categorizes, recommends, or otherwise makes a decision or facilitates human decision making that impacts applicants or employees. An Automated-Decision System may be derived from and/or use machine-learning, algorithms, statistics, and/or other data processing or artificial intelligence techniques. This definition addresses systems that rely on data analysis to make predictions or recommendations that can influence employment-related outcomes. Examples of automated-decision systems include those that screen resumes, assess job applicants’ qualifications, evaluate employee performance, or predict future job success based on historical data.

Some examples of automated-decision systems include those that:



Getty Images

- Use computer-based tests, such as questions, puzzles, games, or other challenges to make predictive assessments about an applicant or employee; that measure skills, dexterity, reaction-time, and/or other abilities or characteristics; and/or that measure an applicant’s or employee’s personality trait, aptitude, attitude, and/or cultural fit;
- Direct job advertisements or other recruiting materials to targeted groups;
- Screen resumes for particular terms or patterns; or
- Analyze facial expression, word choice, and/or voice in online interviews.

The focus of these regulations is on technologies that make decisions regarding employment benefits. Accordingly, these regulations exclude technologies such as word processing software, spreadsheet software, calculators, data storage,

domain registration, or similar technologies that do not make such decisions.

Under the pending regulations, employers must ensure that their use of automated-decision systems does not result in disparate treatment, discrimination, or adverse impact on any protected group, including race, gender, age, disability, or any other characteristics protected by the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (“FEHA”). This prohibition extends to the design, use, and output of automated-decision systems. In particular, the pending regulations prohibit the use of an automated-decision system that improperly restricts, excludes, or classifies individuals; expresses a preference for certain individuals; or communicates or advertising in a manner intended to discriminate. For example, it would be improper to use an automated-decision system to determine an applicant’s religious creed or medical condition

based on the applicant’s days of availability to work.

The pending regulations seek to encourage employers to take proactive steps in evaluating and mitigating the risks of bias and unlawful conduct associated with AI technologies. If an employer’s automated-decision system is found to have discriminatory effects, the employer could be subject to liability. Evidence, or lack of evidence, of anti-bias testing or similar proactive efforts to avoid unlawful discrimination, including the quality, efficacy, recency, and scope of such efforts, the results of such testing or other effort, and the response to the results is relevant to any claim or defense. In other words, to mitigate potential liability it may be a good idea for employers to conduct a disparate impact analysis of their systems to evaluate and ensure that the automated-decision system does not lead to discriminatory outcomes.

Employers may be held accountable not only for intentional discrimination but also for the unintended discriminatory outcomes from their use of automated-decision systems. But, the pending regulations also broadly define an “agent” to include any person acting on behalf of an employer, directly or indirectly, to exercise a function traditionally exercised by the employer, such as applicant recruitment, applicant screening, hiring, promotions, decisions regarding pay, benefits, or leave. While the application and impact of this definition remains an open-question, it could potentially expand the potential scope of liability for both employers and their third-party “agents” who provide automated-decision systems.

These pending regulations are the latest instance of California seeking to address the use of AI and automated systems in the employment context. Since the topic of AI in the employment context is not going away, it may be a good idea for employers who use automated-decision systems to begin thinking about their use of such technologies and how to minimize the risk of liability from using those technologies.

For example, employers should initially assess and regularly audit their existing automated-decision systems to ensure that they are not unintentionally biased. This includes evaluating data sources for fairness, testing the systems for disparate impact, and adjusting algorithms to mitigate any identified issues.

Employers should also consider establishing and documenting comprehensive policies for using automated-decision systems, including procedures for the use of automated-decision systems. These policies should identify and address data sources, audit processes, and using the results of those audits.

Additionally, employers should evaluate any agreements and relationships they have with third-parties who provide automated-decision systems. In particular, employers should inquire with such third-parties how the employer can conduct a disparate impact analysis of the automated-decision system. Further, given potential questions concerning possible liability exposure, employers should be ready to review and negotiate agreements with third-party providers of automated-decision system, perhaps with the assistance of their legal counsel. 🌱

Bradley J. Levang is an associate attorney with Monterey law firm Fenton & Keller whose practice focuses on employment law litigation and counseling, and general civil and business litigation. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice.

Small Businesses Face a Tumultuous Future

By Antonio Aguilar, Small Business Majority

Small business owners have been forced onto a roller-coaster of uncertainty and chaos over the last few months. Federal funding cuts put healthcare access and small business resources at risk, while tariffs and mass deportations threaten to destabilize the economy. It's hard enough for small businesses to succeed without the federal government putting additional hurdles in their path.

According to the Department of Health Care Access and Information, California has the third highest cost of care in the nation with the average monthly premiums for families with employer-provided health coverage in California's private sector nearly doubling over the last 15 years. Therefore, it's not surprising that small businesses that offer health coverage to their employees are struggling with rising healthcare costs.

Affordability is particularly dire for small business owners and their workers. Small Business Majority's research found that rising costs force entrepreneurs to make changes to their healthcare offerings, with 24% dropping health coverage altogether. This harms small businesses because when an employee can't access health insurance through their employer, they're more likely to find a job at a larger business that can afford to offer it.

Beyond affordability, access to healthcare is under threat for low-income entrepreneurs and their employees. Congress' budget will require Medicaid cuts to meet its spending reduction targets, which would create a significant budget shortfall for Medi-Cal. State policymakers must be prepared to act so that the small business community isn't harmed by reduced benefits

and restricted eligibility.

Five million adults — one third of Medi-Cal beneficiaries — have enrolled in Medi-Cal through the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Medicaid expansion and could lose their health coverage. Furthermore, if federal Medicaid funding is capped, California would then bear the cost. Many Californians who own or work for a small business could see their benefits reduced or lose their coverage due to stricter income eligibility requirements if state policymakers respond with cuts to Medi-Cal.

Additionally, federal immigration policy is impacting the small business community. California is home to 10.6 million immigrants who account for 40% of our state's entrepreneurs and 32% of our workforce. Many immigrants are afraid to show up to work due to fear of deportation, including some Central Valley farm workers who have stayed home. This uncertainty hurts immigrants, their communities and local economies. Without their labor, small farms will be unable to harvest all of their produce, impacting both their profit margins and the other small businesses they supply.

Unfortunately, the small business community is also struggling with tariff threats. While America's tariff policy changes daily, the uncertainty it creates is constant. For many entrepreneurs, any cost increases are devastating if they're already operating on thin margins.

In contrast with some bigger businesses, most small businesses do not have the capital needed to stock up on a significant amount of inventory or raw materials ahead of time to try to outrun the tariffs. They will be forced to pass along some of the cost to consumers, who are increasingly unwilling to

pay higher costs after years of inflation. Yet even if broad tariffs are not implemented, the threat of a trade war causes instability for small business owners as suppliers raise their prices in anticipation.

While entrepreneurs are coping with these challenges, federal small business support and resources are under threat. President Trump recently issued an executive order reducing operations at the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). CDFIs are often the only lender willing to provide low-interest loans to small businesses who lack the collateral or financial history to qualify for traditional bank loans and MBDA resource centers help small businesses access government contracts, assist with global business development and provide strategic business consulting.

Reducing or eliminating access to capital and business development resources will only hurt California's small business owners and their ability to contribute to our local economies.

This uncertainty is bad for small businesses, their workers and our communities. I urge Congress and the administration to put an end to tariffs and mass deportations and maintain funding for critical small business resources and healthcare programs. In lieu of assistance from Washington, it will be critical for California's state lawmakers to step in to support our local small business community. 🌱

Antonio Aguilar is the Central and Northern California Senior Outreach Manager at Small Business Majority, a national small business organization that empowers America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. May is National Small Business Month. For more information on SBM, go to smallbusinessmajority.org.

Salinas Valley Health Celebrates 72 Years of Commitment to Community Health

By Chris Haubert, Salinas Valley Health

Salinas Valley Health opened its doors on April 20, 1953, and has been caring for the people of our community every day since. We are grateful for the vision of our founders: business leaders and civic-minded individuals who dreamed of bringing high-quality healthcare to the Salinas Valley and who made that vision a reality.

Planning began in 1941, was stalled by World War II, and resumed following the postwar years. Construction of the facility began in 1952 on a plot of land donated by agricultural leader Bruce Church. Constructed without federal or state funding, President Dwight D. Eisenhower recognized Salinas Valley Health as “an admiral example of local self-reliance and initiative.”

Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital, as the facility was initially named, was built at a cost of \$3.3 million, spanned 108,000 square feet and ranked as one of the most modern in the West. Surplus war supplies were purchased to defray expenses. Spending was strategic, and quality was key. That focus on fiscal responsibility remains just as strong today.

A publicly elected board of directors governs the healthcare system district, which serves approximately 230,000 people and reaches from Moss Landing to just north of Soledad. Generations of families have trusted Salinas Valley Health with their medical care at every stage of life. As one of the largest employers in Monterey County, the public district healthcare system has long believed in the value of community partnerships that support the overall health of the region it serves.



Aerial view of completed hospital in 1953.



The front entrance of Salinas Valley Health facilities today.

- The Salinas Valley Health Foundation empowers the community to advance high-quality compassionate healthcare through collaborative work with philanthropic businesses and individuals.
- More than 300 volunteers, ages 15-91 years, support a broad spectrum of volunteer service positions and student programs for fourth grade through college level.
- Salinas Valley Health, in partnership with Montage Health, established an affordable health coverage option, Aspire Health, for the people of Monterey County.
- Working together, Salinas Valley Health and Montage Health created the Monterey County Diabetes Collaborative to address a disease epidemic in proportion in Monterey County.

Salinas Valley Health has expanded to become more than a place to visit when sick or during medical emergencies. Today, it continues to focus on growth as a relied-upon resource for health and well-being with outreach, education and support programs that benefit our diverse community.

- In South County, Taylor Farms Family Health & Wellness Center is improving access to primary care with a wide range of state-of-the-art care services, including prenatal care, behavioral health, diabetes care and education, podiatry, cardiology, gastroenterology, orthopedic surgery and more, delivered by bilingual medical providers and staff.

Today, [Salinas Valley Health] continues to focus on growth as a relied-upon resource for health and well-being with outreach, education and support programs that benefit our diverse community.

- Our Mobile Clinic, launched in 2020, brings care to underserved areas of Monterey County with regular visits. With nearly 20,000 patient visits thus far, primary and preventive care has been provided free of charge. The Mobile Clinic also connects patients with supportive services and medical resources (such as glucose testing kits) that can make a

life-impacting difference.

- Blue Zones Project Monterey County has reached tens of thousands of lives in its work to bring people and a broad array of organizations together with a focus on sustainable changes to improve the health of our region.

More than 300 physicians serving through a network of 46 locations provide exceptional care through 53 specialties, including highly sought-after cancer, maternity and orthopedic services. While we don't do what we do to win awards, consistently high marks for patient safety, achieving the highest distinction a healthcare system can earn for nursing excellence and earning national recognition for clinical service are a testament to the dedication of our team's commitment.

In celebrating our 72nd anniversary, we honor the past, and we look forward to our ongoing growth in providing quality healthcare delivered locally to everyone. We appreciate our publicly elected board of directors, the many community members and business leaders who are part of our success, and we deeply value the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. 🌱

Interim, Inc. Celebrates 50 Years of Transforming Lives and Building Community in Monterey County in 2025

This year marks 50 years of Interim's service to Monterey County, celebrating a legacy of housing, healing, and hope for adults living with mental illness. Since its founding in 1975, Interim has provided not only life-changing mental health services and affordable housing, but also, an enduring sense of community that empowers individuals to rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose.

A Visionary Organization Built on Connection and Care

This milestone honors the vision of advocates and leaders like Barbara L. Mitchell, who served as Executive Director from 1984 to 2023. Under her leadership, Interim grew into a model of compassion and innovation, spearheading housing and rehabilitation programs that prioritize human connection alongside practical support.

Interim has long recognized that recovery is not just about providing services but about fostering a sense of belonging. Shared spaces in its housing developments and peer-led initiatives have created opportunities for mutual support, where individuals build friendships, grow together, and find strength in a community of understanding. This focus on inclusion and empowerment remains a hallmark of Interim's approach today.

Addressing Monterey County's Housing Crisis with Compassion

Monterey County's natural beauty comes with a cost — the region's housing market is among the most expensive in the nation. For adults with serious mental illness, who often rely on government insurance programs as their primary income, securing stable housing is nearly impossible without support.

Interim has made affordable, supported housing a cornerstone of its mission, addressing this critical gap with subsidized rents and integrated services. Most residents contribute an average of



Interim Inc. staff members are all smiles at an Agency Staff Event in 2023, held in June each year.

\$300 per month toward rent, enabling them to optimize their limited fiscal resources while accessing the resources they need to thrive.

"Housing is foundational, but it's the comprehensive support services, accessibility to such services and resources, and fostering a healthy community that make long-term stability possible," said Dr. Rhiyan Quiton, Interim's current Executive Director.

Over the past five decades, Interim has developed more than 20 supportive housing projects totaling over 300 beds. Moreover, these beds are comprised of permanent, transitional, or short-term rehabilitation beds, providing a continuum of housing options towards stability and hope to thousands of Monterey County residents.

A Half-Century of Impact and Innovation

Interim's achievements are a testament to its holistic approach to mental health care, which combines evidence-based practices with a deep commitment to individual dignity. Among its many accomplishments, Interim has:

Developed housing that goes beyond shelter, offering supportive communities where residents can rebuild their lives. **Pioneered programs** such as Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), crisis services, and dual-diagnosis care to meet evolving and critical needs. **Created vocational training opportunities**, empowering clients to achieve independence through educational engagement and meaningful employment.

Reduced stigma through education, advocacy, and with peers leading the way, fostering understanding and acceptance of mental health challenges.

At the heart of these accomplishments is the belief that everyone deserves a chance to contribute, connect, and thrive. By involving clients in the planning and operation of programs, Interim ensures that their voices are heard, and their strengths celebrated. Today, over 20% of Interim's workforce consists of individuals with lived experience in mental health recovery, further reinforcing the organization's culture of inclusion and empowerment.

Looking Ahead to a Bright Future

As Interim celebrates this golden milestone, it remains focused on addressing the urgent need for affordable housing and comprehensive mental health services. Plans for the Marina Kai Apartments, a 23-unit supported housing development, exemplify this commitment to growth. The organization also expanded its reach in 2024 with a new office in Soledad, improving access for South County residents.

"Interim's 50th Anniversary is a celebration of hope, resilience, compassion, and the extraordinary power of community," said Quiton. "We're building on our past to shape a future where everyone in Monterey County has the opportunity to thrive."

Join the Celebration

Interim invites the community to participate in a year-long series of festivities, culminating in a fall celebration event highlighting distinguished individuals and achievements while raising funds for affordable housing initiatives.

As Interim steps into the next 50 years, its commitment to delivering housing, healing, and hope remains stronger than ever. For more information about upcoming events and how to support Interim's mission, visit www.interiminc.org. 🌱

ABOUT INTERIM, INC.

Interim, Inc. is Monterey County's leading provider of mental health services and affordable housing for adults living with serious mental illness. Founded in 1975, Interim offers residential treatment, social support, homeless outreach, and vocational programs designed to empower individuals to live, work, and participate fully in their communities.

Contact: Interim Inc. P.O. Box 3222 Monterey, CA 93942 Phone: (831) 649-4522
Email: info@interiminc.org Website: www.interiminc.org



NON-PROFIT EVENTS

Bubbles and Bunco – Steinbeck House

May 2, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m., 132 Central Ave., Salinas

Mark your calendars for a night of fun, food, drinks and prizes! Steinbeck House is hosting a Bubbles and Bunco Fundraiser. If you don't know how to play, no worries we will be there to help you. Great prizes to be won. Thank you to the event's sponsor, Odonata. Space is limited. Call and reserve your spot.

First Fridays! – Salinas City Center Improvement Association

May 5, 5:00 – 11:00 p.m., Old Town, Salinas

On the First Friday of every month many of the downtown businesses stay open later than usual and many host live music and wine tasting as well as have special promotions going on.

Impower Monterey County – Spring Luncheon

May 8, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., 350 Calle Principal, Monterey – Monterey Marriott

Local author Lisa Crawford Watson will be discussing her recently published memoir at Impower Monterey County's Spring Luncheon at the Monterey Marriott's beautiful Ferrante Room in downtown Monterey. In "What We Wished For: An Adoption Story," Watson dives into her personal journey of adoption, a story of trauma, empathy, hope and forgiveness. A memoir which reveals needs and enduring memories from deeply personal experiences. "This is a narrative I felt compelled to write as a way to heal and connect who might find solace in my words."

Blue Zones Project Monterey County – Hike & Wine at the Vineyards

May 11, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., 37500 Foothill Road, Soledad – CRU Winery

Join us through the picturesque vineyard trails of Valley Farm Management and CRU Winery, where you'll breathe in the fresh air and soak in the natural beauty that surrounds Soledad. This hike is not just about exercise; it's about fostering connections, embracing nature, and cultivating a sense of well-being. After the hike, you'll have the opportunity to wine taste at CRU Winery with 2-for-1 tastings and 10%-off bottle purchases

for hike participants. Participants are also more than welcome to bring their own snacks to enjoy a little picnic afterwards. Spaces are limited, so reserve your spot today and be part of this enriching journey towards a healthier, happier you. Comfortable clothes and walking shoes recommended. And don't forget your water! Hike is easy to moderate, with some inclines, 2-4 miles routes; 45-minute to 1-hour walk.

Sweetheart Soiree – California Rodeo Salinas

July 11, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., 1034 N. Main St., Salinas – Salinas Sports Complex

Giddy up, cowgirls! You're invited to the Sweetheart Soiree, brought to you by the California Rodeo Salinas and presented by Kaiser Permanente. Saddle up on July 11th for a rootin' tootin' luncheon, where the rodeo will be tipping its hats to all the fierce and fabulous ladies of the West. This is no ordinary shindig — it's a wild and wonderful celebration of rodeo fans, rodeo friends, and all-around good-time-gals. With a grand entrance that'll have you feeling like a rodeo queen, this soiree will be serving up pampering and entertainment galore. So grab your boots, your hats, and your besties, and let's kick up some dust! Savor mimosas skillfully crafted and served by dashing cowboys, relish a delectable lunch, sip on your favorite beverages, indulge in an exciting auction, and much more. A portion of the event's proceeds will be directed toward supporting the noble cause of the Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund and the California Rodeo Salinas Scholarship Fund.

Trashion Show – Alliance on Aging

Aug. 22, TBA, 2700 17 Mile Drive, Pebble Beach – Inn at Spanish Bay

Tickets on sale starting May 1. Get ready for a wild and wonderful night where art, fashion, and outrageous creativity collide — all in support of Monterey County's seniors. The Trashion Show is not your average runway event. It's fun, funky, and fuels the vital services that help older adults thrive in our community. All proceeds go directly to Alliance on Aging's critical senior services. Ticket info: regular seats, \$200; runway seats, \$225. Tables of eight available. To purchase tickets, call (831) 655-7564 or (831) 655-4246, contact Nicki at: npasculli@allianceonaging.org. Mark your calendar, grab your most creative outfit, and join us for a night you won't forget.

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