



BUSINESS JOURNAL



Inspiring Women to Succeed page 6



Ag and Tech Execs from China Impressed With Ag in Salinas page 7



Cioppino Helps Nonprofit Provide Free Legal Advice to Seniors

For more than 35 years, the nonprofit Legal Services for Seniors has helped more than 90,000 Monterey County seniors with free legal services ranging from financial and physical elder abuse and landlord-tenant conflicts, to scams, Medicare and Social Security problems, and consumer fraud.

LSS helps about 2,500 seniors every year with

CIOPPINO - see page 8

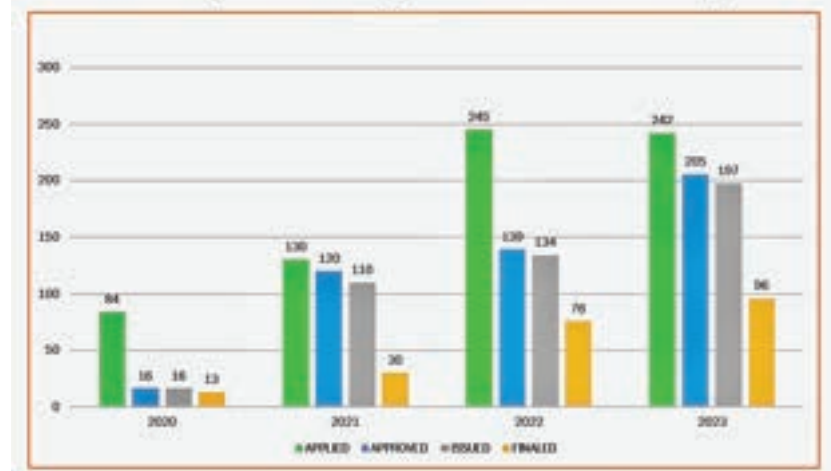
Business Development Committee Input Helps Improve Value of Salinas Annual Permit Center Report

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

The City of Salinas Community Development Department presented its annual Permit Center Report for 2023 to the Salinas City Council at its Jan. 23, 2024 meeting. Your Chamber of Commerce is pleased to report that the city has significantly expanded the format of the report, in particular in how the report now includes data that reveals multi-year trends.

A presentation of multi-year trends in permitting was among the recommendations that the City of Salinas Business Development Committee, coordinated by the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, provided to the Community Development Department at committee meetings in 2023. With the ability to compare data over time, the Salinas City Council, city staff, and the public can get an idea of how city permitting policies and practices

Accessory Dwelling Unit Permits by Year



may encourage or hinder economic growth and job creation.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS ARE HOT

Most noteworthy in the 2023 report was the significant increase in activity for new Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). An ADU is an attached

or detached residential dwelling unit on the same lot as a single-family dwelling unit. An ADU provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.

PERMIT CENTER - see page 8



KEEP RISING

Your family's care, our focus.

Our efforts to improve access to primary care makes your family's health our priority. The Taylor Farms Family Health & Wellness Center - open to all - is proud to serve the South County community through our dedicated focus on prevention, education, diagnosis and care of common health concerns.



Learn more at
SalinasValleyHealth.com/gonzales



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HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER**

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MEDI-CAL AND CCAH ACCESS

We accept Medi-Cal for all your health and wellness needs. We also accept most insurance programs. CCAH Alliance Members: Call 831-430-5505 to request Taylor Farms Family Health & Wellness Center as your Primary Care Provider.



MARCH



Jump Start Microloan Program

IBank's Small Business Finance Center features a microloan program for businesses in low-wealth communities. The Jump Start Loan Program helps small businesses in low-wealth communities start, grow and thrive. Jump Start's goals include assisting underserved groups such as women, people of color, veterans, the disabled and those previously incarcerated

The Jump Start Loan Program can help start or grow businesses for entrepreneurs that may not qualify for loans with traditional lenders or other programs because they are often too new or too small.

Cal Coastal Rural Development Corporation
calcoastal.org
(831) 424-1099

UPCOMING EVENTS

Learn the Basics of Google Ads

Wednesday, March 6th
Webinar, 10 AM - 11 AM



California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank

How to do Business with the GSA

Thursday, March 7th
Webinar, 10 AM - 11 AM

Aprende los Conceptos Básicos de Google Ads

miércoles, 20 de marzo
Webinar, 10 AM - 11 AM



SCAN ME!

Launch Your Food Business from Home

Thursday, March 21st
Salinas Police Department, 10 AM - 10:30 AM

Lance Su Negocio de Comida desde Casa

jueves, 21 de marzo
Departamento de Policía de Salinas, 10:30 AM - 11 AM



Finding Profound Meaning in Service Both Public and Private

by Jennifer L. Williams, SVCC Board Chair

When people ask me why I decided to join the Board of Directors of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, and ultimately become Chair of the Board of Directors, I tell them about the people. So many Chamber members help the community through their businesses and organizations. Many focus on their volunteer work, their religious callings, or their civic involvement. I especially enjoy talking with Chamber members who have discovered a profound meaning for their lives in service.

However, I'll admit my excitement in this leadership position has been tempered with unease and insecurity. I ask myself if serving as the leader of a prominent business organization conflicts with my personal commitment to helping people who struggle in our community. I worry that colleagues and collaborators whom I respect will judge me negatively for leading the Chamber of Commerce.

For over two decades at Natividad Foundation, I've worked in an environment relentlessly focused on helping those most in need. Now I'm serving in a role that's more ambiguous and more complex.

As chair of the Chamber board, I have to address inconsistencies and hypocrisies that I've generally managed to avoid while working on behalf of people who suffer on the margins of society. Is it contradictory to lead an organization dedicated to philanthropically supporting a public hospital and its patients while also leading an organization that advocates for businesses to achieve profits?

As I've become older, I've grown confident that influencing hearts and minds requires stepping out from the safety of righteousness. I recognize that my own life has shortcomings. And I recognize that many people who generate profits and achieve their vision of a successful life also examine their own lives and their own values.

While no institution is perfect, the Chamber tries to

promote its official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." This vision recognizes job creation, economic development, and workforce training as legitimate, desirable ways to address social inequities.

In my role, I also introduce fellow

Chamber members to organizations that the Natividad Foundation supports in its mission. These groups include Arts Council for Monterey County, Center for Community Advocacy, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, Ciclovía, Christmas in Closter Park, LULAC, Relay for Life, Salinas Senior Center, Salinas Valley Pride, and the Veterans Day Parade. In fact, there are Chamber members that support — and have long-supported — these same causes.

For the future, I'm looking for Chamber members with diverse backgrounds and perspectives who seek solutions for a thriving Salinas Valley. These solutions should be innovative and creative, based on robust discussions and better decision-making, fostering cultural understanding, supporting equal access to resources and opportunities, and pushing for prog-

ress and positive change. And these solutions should see the potential of businesses and commerce as a positive force to improve the community.

I encourage non-members to contact me about becoming members, and I encourage members to contact me about following my path to become a member of the Board of Directors. 🌱



While no institution is perfect, the Chamber tries to promote its official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity."

2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **Chair - Jennifer Williams**
Natividad Foundation
- **Chair Elect - Leonard Batti**
Taylor Farms
- **Vice Chair, Events - Amy Gibson**
Central Coast Federal Credit Union
- **Vice Chair, GRC - Aaron Johnson**
JRG Attorneys
- **Vice Chair, Finance - Tom Moran**
Goodwill Central Coast
- **Vice Chair, Membership - Starla Warren**
Founder, HDC Affordable Housing

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Clint Cowden** - Hartnell College
- **Brent Fogg** - Granite Construction
- **Tiffany Fournier** - SlingShot Connections
- **Brenda Granillo** - California Water Service
- **Mark Kennedy** - Green Rubber Kennedy Ag
- **Clement Miller** - Salinas Valley Health
- **John Narigi** - WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca
- **Colby Pereira** - Braga Fresh Family Farms
- **Amy Salmina** - Coast & Valley Properties
- **Tony Sanchez** - Spiffy Clean Services
- **Hugh Walker** - Stonebridge Homes

CHAMBER LIAISONS

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

LEGAL COUNSEL

- **Matt Ottone**

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- **Karin Moss**
President and CEO
- **Willa Doroy**
Operations & Finance Director
- **Gabriel Lopez**
Membership Development Director
- **Jasmine Bhardwaj**
Marketing & Member Services Manager
- **Bryan Cabello**
Digital Marketing Specialist
- **Cesar Chavez**
Digital Marketing Specialist

Info@SalinasChamber.com | 831-751-7725

CHAMBER PRIORITIES

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

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

PARTICIPATE IN OUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Join us in shaping the future of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce! As we strive to enhance our services and focus our benefits on your business needs, we invite all active members to participate in our Annual Membership Survey. Your valuable feedback will guide us in improving the membership experience, ensuring that we continue to be a driving force in building a strong economy and business community in the Salinas Valley.

At the very heart of our Chamber of Commerce is you, our member. Your insights and perspectives are crucial in helping us understand what is working well and where we can improve. By participating in this survey, you directly influence the direction of the Chamber, ensuring that it remains relevant and continues to be valuable and beneficial to you and your business.

Through this survey, we aim to gather comprehensive feedback on the various aspects of your membership experience including:

- **Committees and Large Events:** Your thoughts on the effectiveness and relevance of our committees and large events.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Feedback on networking events and opportunities to connect with fellow members.
- **Membership Benefits:** Insights on the value derived from Chamber membership and assessing current benefits or suggestions for additional benefits.
- **Ways to Connect:** Preferences regarding how we communicate with our members.
- **Marketing Opportunities:** Value of our current marketing channels, including our Business Journal and e-newsletters.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** Understanding your overall satisfaction with the Chamber and areas for improvement.

Participating in the survey is simple and will only take a few minutes of your time. Keep an eye on your email inbox for a personalized survey link or visit our website to access the survey directly.

To guarantee that your feedback is included in our membership planning process, we kindly ask that you complete the survey by **March 31, 2024**. Your input is invaluable to us, and we appreciate your time and commitment to strengthening the Salinas Valley business community.

Together, we can shape a Chamber of Commerce that meets the evolving needs of your business and fosters growth and prosperity in the Salinas Valley. Your participation in this survey is a vital step towards that goal.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, and we look forward to hearing from you!



Inspiring Women to Succeed

By Dana Arvig, IMPOWER Board Member

IMPOWER is a nonprofit organization that was the brainchild of Margaret D'Arrigo-Martin and Cathy Schlumbrecht in 2008. These women had no idea at the time how IMPOWER would inspire the business community to support and embrace its mission. The mission of IMPOWER is to Inspire, Motivate, Prepare, and Organize Women to Engage and Reinvest.

Fast forward to 2024, and IMPOWER continues to be a successful venture which gives back to numerous individuals and organizations in support of its mission. By encouraging and supporting women to live their best lives, both personally and professionally, IMPOWER has stood the test of time, remaining a strong organization, even through a global pandemic.

Originally hosting three events per year, IMPOWER continued holding events virtually when in-person events were not possible. Bouncing back as soon as they were able, IMPOWER now hosts two fantastic luncheons each year, which draw hundreds of attendees and always featuring a powerhouse keynote speaker. With dynamic local speakers at each event and the opportunity to network with a diverse group in a fun and comfortable atmosphere, IMPOWER has helped connect people to resources and inspire thousands of women over the years.

Speakers have included self-made businesswomen from all walks of life. These women have overcome adversities of every imaginable sort, including discrimination, childhood trauma, surviving medical challenges, and even the loss of a child to cancer. These women have come through the other side with compelling stories about how they found their way and, in some cases, started a new career or founded their own nonprofit organization, usually with the help and support of other women.

IMPOWER embraces all women



from all walks of life and all ages and backgrounds. Part of that mission includes ensuring that participants (board members, volunteers, and event attendees) know they are welcome and included. Everyone is welcome, from the stay-at-home mom, part-time employee, and full-time career person, to those who might just be getting back on track to finish college or someone who holds a Ph.D. Over the years, a wide variety of causes and professions have been highlighted and supported and represent women from all walks of life.

IMPOWER aims to support girls and women in our community by encouraging attendees to reach out to those in need and take action. Participants often leave an afternoon luncheon feeling uplifted, inspired, and full of positive energy to make a difference. At any given luncheon, it's common to hear people remark on how much they

enjoyed not only the speaker, but the connections made during the event.

The organization doesn't define people based on their personal or professional status — it supports a variety of causes that support women from all walks of life. To that end, IMPOWER was one of the founding contributors and continues to support the Women's Education & Leadership Institute (WELI). WELI helps women get back to school so they can begin (or finish) their college education and work toward becoming self-sufficient and be better prepared to participate in the support of their families. Boosts like these from WELI and other nonprofits return to our community tenfold.

The IMPOWER board currently includes a brand-new mom, business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals from various fields, some of whom are just beginning their careers and some who have 30-plus years in

business and may be close to retirement. The common trait is that they all appreciate women's value as mentors, co-workers, confidantes, and friends and feel that IMPOWER is worthy of their time and energy.

While women founded IMPOWER, the organization strives to impact our entire community positively by supporting and nurturing people through scholarships, grants, and contributions to other nonprofits whose goals align with those of IMPOWER. Continued community support allows IMPOWER to reinvest locally through various channels, including scholarships for women, donations to local non-profits, and opportunities for participants to give back.

Visit www.impowerwomen.org to learn more about this outstanding nonprofit organization or to purchase tickets to our May 2024 luncheon event in Monterey. 🌿

Ag and Tech Execs from China Impressed With Advances in Ag in Salinas

By Steve McShane, Salinas City Councilman

The City of Salinas and Western Growers were delighted to welcome 12 agriculture and food technology executives from China the last week in January. The visit is believed to be the first time Chinese agriculture and food industry leaders have ever come to Salinas.

During the visit, several of the visitors acknowledged the incredible advancements in agriculture Salinas has brought forward in the last 10 years. The highlight was a roundtable discussion that included Paul Farmer of the Monterey County Business Council, Salinas City Councilman Steve McShane and Karin Moss, CEO of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. Farm labor, environmental concerns and workforce development were the top three issues that surfaced.

On their first day, the visitors enjoyed terrific Chinese food at Eagle restaurant before visiting Hartnell College and Farmwise robotics. The second day included a farming visit with Christensen and Gianini, food processing tour with Organic Girl and a robotics demonstration at Valley Fabrication.

The visitors were extremely energized by their time in Salinas and walked away with great interest in doing business with local firms. There was also interest in welcoming Salinas-area agricultural technology leaders to China soon. There is no doubt that local efforts to advance agriculture have global applications. 🌱





PERMIT CENTER - from page 1

ADUs are a small but important component of the city's plan to increase the supply of housing and fulfill the city's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals.

The City of Salinas now probably produces the most comprehensive ADU report of any local government in Monterey County. In fact, it may produce one of the best reports in the state. To present a complete picture, the report categorizes ADU activity as "Applied," "Approved," "(Permit) Issued," and "Finalized" (ready for occupancy).

How huge is the change? In 12 years and two months from 2007 through February 2019, the City of Salinas issued permits for 24 ADUs. That's a rate of about two ADUs approved each year. In the past three years (2021, 2022, 2023), the City of Salinas issued permits for 441 ADUs — a rate of 147 ADUs per year.

There were 617 applications for ADU permits in those three years. This data suggests it might be useful for the Permit Center to analyze why every application does not result in a permit. Changes to the permit process may increase the yield.

One likely reason why permits for ADUs have skyrocketed is that the Salinas City Council voted in March 2019 to exempt accessory dwelling units (ADUs) from payment of development impact fees for a

five-year period. Your Chamber of Commerce supported that exemption in 2019, noting that "housing is the Chamber's top concern and we support sensible actions such as this temporary moratorium that incentivizes the construction of badly needed housing." That exemption expires in April 2024.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MAY BE DISSOLVED AND RECONSTITUTED

Despite the contributions of the Business Development Committee as an advisory group for the Permit Center, some city councilmembers are inclined to terminate the existing committee, which the Chamber has coordinated since its administrative restoration in 2022. Instead, the City Council would establish a new Permit Center advisory committee, independent of the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups, and appoint its members.

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce has a long history of coordinating a centralized advisory group for the Permit Center. Current committee members represent different business organizations and have many years of education and experience related to technical aspects of permits and associated regulations. It would be shame if political appointees transformed this mundane advisory committee into a forum to promote new conditions and impositions on permit applicants. 🌿

CIOPPINO - from page 1

confidential legal representation; protecting more than \$1.2 million of their hard-earned money. They even educate the community with presentations on various legal topics. The organization plays a vital role in safeguarding the rights and assets of seniors who are often financially, or for other reasons, unable to obtain private legal representation.

But all that these legal services take money and as a nonprofit, LSS must rely not only on financial support from sponsors, grants and individual and corporate donors, but from fundraising campaigns and events, such as the Monterey County Weekly's MCGives! campaign and their own Ciao! Cioppino! Dinner & Auction.

Drawing on the Monterey Peninsula's rich Italian fishing heritage and the Salinas Valley's abundant and diverse produce industry, LSS came up with the idea of using this rich and savory fisherman's stew that has its roots in San Francisco of the 1800s as a centerpiece for a fundraiser. Add local wines, desserts from a local purveyor, a raffle, both live and silent auctions and musical entertainment, and you have an event that has become LSS's flagship fundraising event.

Cioppino, traditionally made from the catch of the day, such as Dungeness crab, clams, shrimp, scallops, squid, mussels and fish, all sourced from the ocean, was developed in the late 1800s by Italian immigrants who fished off Meiggs Wharf and lived in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco, many from the Italian port city of Genoa. When one of these fisherman back in the day came back empty-handed, he would take a pot to the other fishermen asking them to chip in whatever they could (cioppino is said to come from the Ligurian dialect for



"chopped," "ciuppin"). Whatever ended up in the pot became his "cioppino." The fishermen that chipped in expected the same treatment if they came back from fishing empty-handed in the future. The various collected seafood is then combined with fresh tomatoes in a wine sauce. This simple stew later became a staple as Italian restaurants proliferated in San Francisco and moved down the coast to Monterey. In fact, one of the most popular and best cioppino in the state came from Phil's Fish Market, which was located on the water in Moss Landing for many years

This year's Ciao! Cioppino! fundraiser takes place from 5:30 p.m. April 27, 2024 at Weathertech Raceway Laguna Seca Recreation Area Hospitality Pavilion, 1021 Monterey Salinas Highway, in Salinas. Tickets \$150 per person and only 300 tickets are available. This event sells out well in advance every year.

The funds raised by this event will help seniors 60 years and older, with an emphasis on the socially and/or economically needy, with a wide variety of legal issues, including elder, financial and physical abuse, landlord and tenant issues, Medi-Cal/Medicare, estate planning, wills/springing power of attorney/advance healthcare directives, guardianships/limited conservatorship, Social Security, small claims, and consumer law.

For more information on Legal Services for Seniors or for the cioppino fundraiser, call (831) 899-0492 or go to lssmc.org. 🌿



Aera is here for Californians

Aera's technical know-how continues to play a pivotal role in Monterey County providing safe, reliable oil and gas that powers the lives and livelihoods of Californians while innovating for a cleaner energy future.



Join the conversation.



aeraenergy.com



Hayashi Wayland team members have joined CLA.

Now offering greater
opportunities to our team,
our clients,
and our communities.



We'll get you there.

CPAs | CONSULTANTS | WEALTH ADVISORS

CLAconnect.com

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Santa Cruz County Bank turns 20!

Santa Cruz County Bank February 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the opening of Santa Cruz County Bank. Since opening, the Bank has grown to \$1.8 billion in assets, 150 employees, and operates 8 full-service banking offices serving Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara Counties. For two decades the Bank has been committed to providing personalized, relationship-based banking in and for the communities it serves. The doors of its first location opened in Santa Cruz on February 3, 2004. President and CEO, Krista Snelling, states, "As we observe this milestone anniversary, we want to express our gratitude to our clients, community partners, employees, leadership team, shareholders, and board of directors. Through building these meaningful relationships, we remain committed to being a trusted partner and empowering growth, economic vitality, and community well-being."



Kaiser Permanente announces the opening of the 2024 Community Health Grant Application

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to announce the opening of our 2024 Community Health grant application process for the Central Coast, which includes Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. This year's process is by open invitation, and we encourage nonprofit organizations, educational, and governmental entities to apply for a grant in the amount of \$25,000 to address one of the following community health needs:

- Access to Care
- Healthy Eating and Active Living
- Housing for Health
- Mental and Behavioral Health



NHEH attorney William Falor has joined the Legal Services for Seniors Board of Directors

William Falor carries on our commitment to Legal Services for Seniors, a vital nonprofit organization providing legal services at no charge to Monterey County residents who are 60 or older, with emphasis on the disadvantaged. Prior to Bill joining the LSS Board, NHEH attorneys Rob Simpson, Leslie Finnegan, and Chuck Des Roches each served on the Board, including roles as President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Attorney Steve Pearson helped establish Legal Services for Seniors 39 years ago and is currently on its Advisory Council. A graduate of Boston College and Santa Clara University School of Law, Bill joined NHEH last year, focusing his practice on business and real estate transactions and estate planning. He has written articles for the Salinas Valley Business Journal and is a member of Monterey Rotary Club.



Micheal Arensdorf joins Bret Scholl as new partner of Scholl & Arensdorf

Scholl & Company, LLP is proud to announce the promotion of Michael Arensdorf, CPA to Partner and a new firm name of Scholl & Arensdorf, LLP. Michael joined Bret Scholl, CPA six years ago leaving a large regional firm seeking new opportunities. "Michael is truly passionate about proactive planning and particularly getting to really understand what a client needs" says Bret. "Don't get me wrong, Michael is a whiz at tax compliance and filing matters, but he has really embraced getting out in front of issues with planning as what really helps our clients succeed."



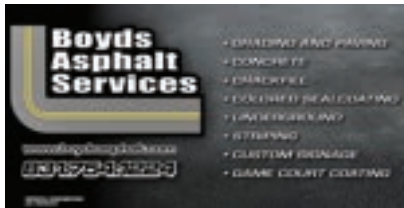
Clinica de Salud receives \$2 million grant from Rep. Zoe Lofgren

Today, U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren announced that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will distribute \$3,752,847 in federal funding to two health centers in Salinas and Watsonville as part of the Health Center Program. "Federally Qualified Health Centers like Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas and Salud Para La Gente provide critical health care services to some of our most vulnerable community members. I'm proud to announce this federal funding that will help ensure residents have access to quality and affordable health care services," said Lofgren.

Lofgren announced the following two grant:

- \$2,214,146 for Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas to continue offering comprehensive healthcare services to residents in the Salinas Valley.

This funding comes from HHS's Health Center Program, which is overseen by the Health Resources and Services Administration, to support community-based and patient-directed nonprofit organizations that provide primary and preventive health care services to underserved populations in the U.S.



Boyds Asphalt Services awarded 2023 Transportation Excellence Award

We would like to congratulate our Chamber Member, Boyds Asphalt Services, for being the Business Award Honoree. Boyds Asphalt Services stripped 13 traffic gardens across Monterey County in Fall 2023. These are the first traffic gardens to be installed in Monterey County, and Boyds Asphalt went above and beyond to help TAMC staff navigate this new type of project. Boyds prioritized the traffic garden project to get it done in a narrow timeframe to help meet the Transportation Agency's grant deadline. They also worked side-by-side with TAMC staff to adjust traffic garden designs in the field as needed.



Cal Water Opens 11th Annual College Scholarship Program

California Water Service Group is now accepting applications for its 11th annual College Scholarship Program cycle, one of the ways that the utility demonstrates its commitment to improving the lives of those it serves. Residents living in areas served by its California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Washington subsidiaries are encouraged to apply for part of the \$80,000 in award money. Four \$10,000 scholarships will be awarded, along with additional scholarships ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000, for the 2024-2025 academic year. The application period will close on Sunday, March 28, 2024. Winners will be announced in the summer.



Salinas Regional Sports Authority Partners to Bring the Orlegi Cup to Salinas

In an exciting collaboration, Salinas Regional Sports Authority (SRSA) is excited to announce the collaboration with Orlegi Sports, which is bringing the Orlegi Cup for U16-U19 teams to the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex this summer, June 28-30, 2024. Orlegi Sports manages and owns teams in Liga MX, and this international tournament is due to invite MLS teams to compete. The Atlas U16 academy team holds the current championship title for Liga MX U16. SRSA is a nonprofit organization committed to building and maintaining high-quality fields for the community. This will be the first international tournament hosted at the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex. This is a significant gain for the Central Coast as the event will bring great notability to the top-tier soccer opportunities to Northern California. The collaboration between Orlegi Sports and SRSA aims to expose young athletes to greater possibilities and elevate the soccer experience in the region by bringing in MX teams managed by Orlegi Sports, like Atlas FC and Club Santos, and encourages collegiate scouts to attend.



Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our March 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
California Water Service	1962	Kevin C. McWilliams	2018
Valley Trophies & Detectors	1967	Central Coast Community Energy (CCCE)	2018
Monterey One Water	1985	Express Employment of Monterey County	2019
Cushman & Wakefield	1987	Balance Physical Therapy & -	2021
Seneca Family of Agencies	1997	Human Performance Centers	
Frontier Self Storage	1999	Bank of America Financial Center	2021
IPG International Produce Group LLC	2002	Central Coast Cooling, LLC	2021
Monterey Credit Union—Salinas	2002	Christensen & Giannini, LLC	2021
Salinas Public Library, Steinbeck	2005	FarmWise	2021
Monterey County Bank	2008	Growers Custom Equipment	2021
Alta Vista Mortuary	2010	Growers Ice Company	2021
Monterey Bay GI Consultants Medical	2010	ITNMontereyCounty	2021
Salinas Senior Center	2010	Monterey Bay FC	2021
First 5 Monterey County	2011	Sage, Sustainable Ag & Energy	2021
Tarpy's	2011	Adobe	2022
Employnet	2013	Astound Business	2022
Arts Council for Monterey County	2014	Brew-N-Krew Ale House	2022
Maya Cinemas	2014	Core.6 Marketing	2022
Monterey County Housing—	2014	Maid in America	2022
Authority Development Corporation		Merrill Farms LLC	2022
Disaster Kleenup Specialists	2015	Alisal Long Term Care Pharmacy	2023
East Bay Tire Co. (Salinas Service Center)	2016	Kafens	2023
InterContinental—The Clement Monterey	2016	State Farm Insurance—J Stretch -	2023
Property Restoration Services	2016	Insurance & Financial Services	

A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members



50,000 EGGS

EASTER EGG DROP



WITH SKY DIVING EASTER BUNNY

50,000 Easter Eggs from Above: Celebrating Easter in the Community

By Pastor Todd Anderson, Compass Church



At Compass Church we are opening the Easter season with a couple of great events in the community. At Cardinale Stadium in Marina, on March 23, we are hosting an Easter event

that children and families will not want to miss.

To start things off, the Easter Bunny will be parachuting into the stadium to 3,000 waiting kids. A local skydiving icon will be starting this event by descending softly from the clouds

dressed as the Easter Bunny. As if that wasn't enough fun, a helicopter will pour eggs from the sky onto the field. There will be 50,000 eggs for children up to 5th grade to collect and exchange for candy. There is a limit of the first 3,000 kids, so you will want to register for this free event at compasschurchmc.org.

In the planning of this event, demand was so high that we are doing a second Easter egg drop of 50,000 eggs on March 30, in Rabobank Stadium at the Rodeo Grounds in Salinas. The Easter Bunny is skydiving in, and it will start at 10 a.m. as well. Registration at compasschurchmc.org.

org is required (limited to the first 3,000 kids and also free).

On Easter weekend we remember the death of Jesus and celebrate his resurrection. You are invited to join us at 1044 S. Main St. in Salinas for Good Friday services at 6 p.m. on March 29, and Easter services on Saturday at 5 p.m. and Sunday at 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11 a.m. I look forward to meeting you and your family.

My prayer for you this Easter season is that you will know the power of our risen Savior and celebrate everything God has done for you, your family, your business, and our community. Amen. 🌿



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **One-Year Anniversary Ribbon Cutting with Soledad Grocery Outlet**

Saturday, March 2 • 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

401 Nestles Rd., Soledad

Join us for a one-year anniversary celebration with Soledad Grocery Outlet. Celebrate this special milestone with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Spin the wheel of bargains, kids free face painting, Branding Iron Ranch Trailer serving free Chimichurri Chicken Tacos, Mariachi, Folklorico Dancers, and more. RSVP today!

- **Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony with Golden State Paint Company**

Thursday, March 7 • 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

333 Main St., Suite A, Salinas

Join us in celebrating the grand opening of Golden State Paint Company! As the newest independently owned Benjamin Moore retailer in your neighborhood, we're thrilled to embark on this exciting journey of serving our community with top-quality paints and expert advice. Be among the first to explore our store's unique ambiance and discover the extensive range of Benjamin Moore paints. Come celebrate with us as we eagerly open the doors to our new store. We can't wait to welcome you and share the joy of color with our community. Your presence will make this truly special. See you there!

- **Lunch and Learn with ARCPoint Labs**

Tuesday, March 12 • 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

119 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join us for an insightful Lunch and Learn session with Spenser Smith from ARCPoint Labs of Salinas and Monterey. Dive into the crucial aspects of reshaping your company's Drug & Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy for 2024. Key highlights include policy crafting, legal compliance, addressing common oversights, effective implementation, and employee education. Equip your company with the knowledge to foster a safe, legally compliant, and productive work environment. Don't miss this opportunity to stay ahead in workplace safety management! The event will take place in-person at the Chamber office and via Zoom. RSVP at SalinasChamber.com today!

- **15th Anniversary Celebration & Ribbon Cutting with Loaves, Fishes, and Computers**

Thursday, March 14 • 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

830 Park Row, Salinas

Join Loaves, Fishes & Computers (LFC) in celebrating their 15th anniversary at their new location! Since 2009, LFC has worked with the Central Coast to bridge the digital divide by providing low-cost and free computers, technical assistance and repair, and digital literacy classes to low-income families, individuals, seniors, and veterans. Come to learn more about LFC and our services, enjoy refreshments, and tour our new facility. If you have any questions, contact our SVCC Marketing and Member Services Manager, Jasmine Bhardwaj, via email at Jasmine@salinaschamber.com or by calling 831-751-7725.

- **STEM Talent Expo 2024**

Wednesday, March 20 • 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Hartnell College, 411 Central Ave. Salinas

Are you passionate about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)? If so, we have an exciting opportunity for you! Join Us at the STEM Talent Expo! This one-day event is a unique opportunity to connect with STEM industry leaders, explore educational paths, and discover career opportunities that await in the dynamic fields of STEM. For more information, visit mcstemtalentexpo.com.

- **103rd Annual Awards Luncheon**

Thursday, April 11 • 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Sherwood Hall, 940 North Main St., Salinas

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce the eagerly awaited 103rd Annual Awards Luncheon, an unparalleled celebration of achievement, business excellence, networking, and community spirit. Presented by Chevron, the Annual Awards Luncheon draws in over 400 distinguished guests. Participation opportunities are available, including member displays, group tickets, and sponsorship. Individual tickets are priced at \$55 for members and \$95 for non-members. To secure your spot, prepaid reservations are required at SalinasChamber.com.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



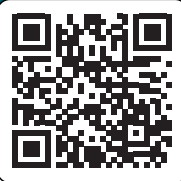
For more information: www.salinaschamber.com

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CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

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We believe our community's greatest resource is the health of its people. Our family of organizations is dedicated to pursuing optimal health for all people in Monterey County,



MONTAGE
Health

from birth to end of life. We believe optimal health achievement requires proactive partnering with physicians and other clinicians, healthcare and community organizations, and, most importantly, each person we serve. Achieving this goal requires our ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional value-based care that is:

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- Restorative (facilitating recovery from illness or injury), and
- Palliative (maximizing well-being when recovery is not possible)

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Montagehealth.org, Tymeesa.rutledge@montagehealth.org, 831-624-5311

Margaret Salazar, CENTURY 21 Showcase, REALTORS®

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MargaretSalazarHomes.com, Margaretsalazar333@gmail.com, 831-800-7341

Golden State Paint Company LLC

Our mission at Golden State Paint Company is to provide exceptional quality paint, supplies and services that inspire creativity for our customers. We strive to create a welcoming environment where both professionals and DIY enthusiasts can find the inspiration, guidance and products they need to bring their painting projects to life. With a focus on sustainability and customer satisfaction, we aim to be the go-to destination for all your painting needs, offering a diverse range of products, expert advice, and a commitment to painting a brighter future, together.

George@goldenstatepaint.com, (831) 676-0290



The Risk of Requiring Employees to be Civil at Work

By Charles Mullaney, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss



The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) protects the rights of non-managerial employees of most private sector employers to engage in “concerted activity,” regardless of whether they are unionized. “Concerted activity” includes employees discussing their wages and benefits or other working conditions with each other. Employers can be subject to unfair labor charges if the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) interprets their work rules as restricting concerted activity.

For five years, employers had relatively clear guidance on workplace rules that were allowed under NLRA standards. Under the Boeing Co. decision, the NLRB placed work rules into three categories: (1) always lawful; (2) warranting individual scrutiny; and (3) always unlawful. Unfortunately, for employers, this categorical approach has been scrapped and so has much certainty regarding workplace rules.

On Aug. 2, 2023, the NLRB's Stericycle, Inc. decision reverted back to a modified version of an old “reasonable interpretation” standard reviewing work rules from the perspective of an economically dependent employee who contemplates engaging in workplace discussions with co-workers. If the employer's workplace rule could be reasonably interpreted to “chill” employees from exercising these rights, it is deemed presumptively unlawful. Further, employers must now narrowly tailor their policies to legitimate business needs — ambiguity in policies will be construed against employers. The new standard applies retroactively so an employer has no defense that its work rules were appropriate under the prior standard.

In practice, what does this mean? Under the old Boeing Co. standard, civility rules requiring employees to be respectful and subjecting employees to discipline for insubordinate conduct were always lawful. But under the new standard, overly broad civility rules may be presumptively unlawful. An NLRB Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) applied the new standard to find that the following fairly standard policy in a Starbucks handbook is presumptively unlawful: “Partners are expected to communicate with other partners and customers in a professional and respectful manner at all times.” The ALJ found that the rule was presumptively unlawful because “respectful” and “professional” language is not always apparent, and an employee could reasonably interpret the rule as prohibiting concerted activity.

Starbucks argued that the purpose of this policy was to advance workplace civility. The ALJ stated that maintaining basic standards of civility is a legitimate and substantial business interest in the workplace but that the policy as worded was overbroad, vague, and susceptible to being interpreted by employees as prohibiting them from discussing work conditions with each other. Further, the ALJ said that Starbucks failed to show that it was unable to advance those interests with a “more narrowly tailored rule” but gave no input as to how the employer could more narrowly tailor the rule.

Given this updated NLRA standard, employers should review their handbooks for workplace policies that could be interpreted as restricting employee communications and modify them to avoid liability under the NLRA. 🌱

Charles Mullaney is an attorney with Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss in Salinas. His practice focuses on labor and employment law. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. © 2024 Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss.



RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



New and Prospective Member Orientation

Guests joined Membership Director, Gabriel Lopez, for an informational orientation on Chamber member benefits, how to get involved, and how we could meet and exceed member marketing goals and expectations.



T-Mobile in Soledad

T-Mobile hosted the official grand opening of its first T-Mobile store for south Monterey County. This passionate team looks forward to serving the community and expanding T-Mobile's products and services.



Quarterly Ambassador Meeting

Your SVCC Chamber Ambassadors had their quarterly meeting to discuss upcoming Chamber happenings, ways to serve our members, and build a stronger business community.



Fastest Labs Salinas

Fastest Labs of Salinas celebrated its opening in Salinas through a ribbon-cutting ceremony. SVCC Board Members, Tiffany Fournier and Brenda Granillo, presented a Chamber plaque to the owner, Kumar Vijayendra in recognition of the grand opening.

End Your Winter ‘Hibernation’ by Cleaning and Decluttering, Followed by a Donation to Goodwill

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

The month of March marks the highly anticipated arrival of spring, a season synonymous with renewal, rejuvenation — and a good house cleaning.

The origin of the time-honored tradition of spring cleaning is difficult to trace, although some sociologists believe it’s linked to Nowruz, a Persian new year holiday that falls on the first day of spring. The annual tradition is called *khaneh tekani*, which translates literally to “shaking the house.”

When the calendar turns to March 21, Americans celebrate the official arrival of spring in many ways — but our winter “hibernation” always triggers an urge to tidy up. Energized by more sunlight and inspired by nature’s new growth and renewal, we begin to shake our houses free of clutter.

Goodwill Central Coast offers a variety of options to help with that endeavor, making it easier to donate unused or unwanted items shaken loose. Donating to Goodwill is not just about getting rid of things; it’s about giving your items a second life while helping the community. Such an effort not only clears out the home but also contributes to a meaningful cause. GGC’s mission fuels employment in the community, helping those facing obstacles to employment find their way toward self-sufficiency.

DECLUTTER AND DONATE

Spring cleaning can be a daunting task, because before you can really get down to scrubbing, dusting and sweeping, you need to declutter. This will make cleaning easier, but also the satisfaction of having a clutter-free and organized space makes it worthwhile.

It also helps reduce stress and anxiety. Studies show that when clutter in our home starts mounting, our stress levels rise right along with it. Home



Getty Images

organization is one of the most universal stress triggers. It signals to your brain that work isn’t done.

To help in the decluttering process, it’s important to first make a schedule. Walk through your home: What areas need the most work? Where do you skip during routine cleaning? Those are the best places to start. Regardless of where you start, having a plan will keep you focused on the task at hand.

The implications of inhaling dust, combined with the stress of coming back to a cluttered work space, can take a toll. Since we’re all spending more time at home (and in our home offices specifically), keeping a neat work space is more important than ever.

Set aside some time to:

- Dust and organize your office
- Look through your junk drawers and

desk drawers.

- Organize your closets

You may be surprised how fresh you feel after you eliminate unnecessary stress from your life.

Leave the rest up to Goodwill Central Coast. In a typical year, GCC receives more than 650,000 donations, totaling more than 26 million pounds of clothing and household items. From those generous donations, it fuels jobs programs and diverts nearly 20 million pounds of trash from landfills. It’s a win-win proposition — for the people and the planet.

With 30 convenient drop-off sites, GCC makes it easy for anyone to have an impact on their local economy and the environment.

For donating high-value items please call donor services at (800) 894-8440 and someone will be happy to assist. 🌱

To make donating easier, Goodwill Central Coast provides the following services:

- Free home pickups are available for large amounts of items (some restrictions apply). Those interested should send their address, telephone number and pictures of the items they would like picked up to donorservices@ccgoodwill.org.
- Free weekly or monthly pickup service from businesses/schools/organizations. Please contact donor services at **(800) 894-8440** in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties.
- Donation drives can net an organization, school, club or nonprofit thousands of dollars. Goodwill Central Coast can provide a truck to collect goods and someone to sort the donations, making it a hassle-free way to contribute significantly.

New Residential Rental Registry Program Provokes Questions Without Answers

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Each year the Salinas City Council votes to approve a city budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Most recently, the City Council voted on June 13, 2023, to approve its annual budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, encompassing July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

Unexpected circumstances and emergencies typically occur after budget approval that require the City Council to authorize some minor budget adjustments halfway through each fiscal year. On Feb. 6, 2024, the City Council considered minor changes to the 2023-2024 budget, including additional spending (supplemental appropriations) for a few programs.

Most of the proposed spending increases were uncontroversial and related to fulfilling unanticipated needs of the police and fire departments. However, one item deep in the list caught the attention of your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce: \$143,000 to the Residential Rental Registry program to fill a "projected deficit due to insufficient revenue."

While the Chamber has received a scattering of complaints from rental property owners about the city's new Residential Rental Registry program, we have not seen any formal reports to the Salinas City Council evaluating the success of program implementation to date. The request for another \$143,000 was a surprise to the Chamber.

"INSUFFICIENT REVENUE" OF \$143,000 FOR RENTAL REGISTRATION PROGRAM

As many Chamber members know, the Residential Rental Registry program has been one of the most controversial policy issues before the Salinas City Council in recent years. During the development of this program, Chamber representatives participated in a Technical Advisory Committee created

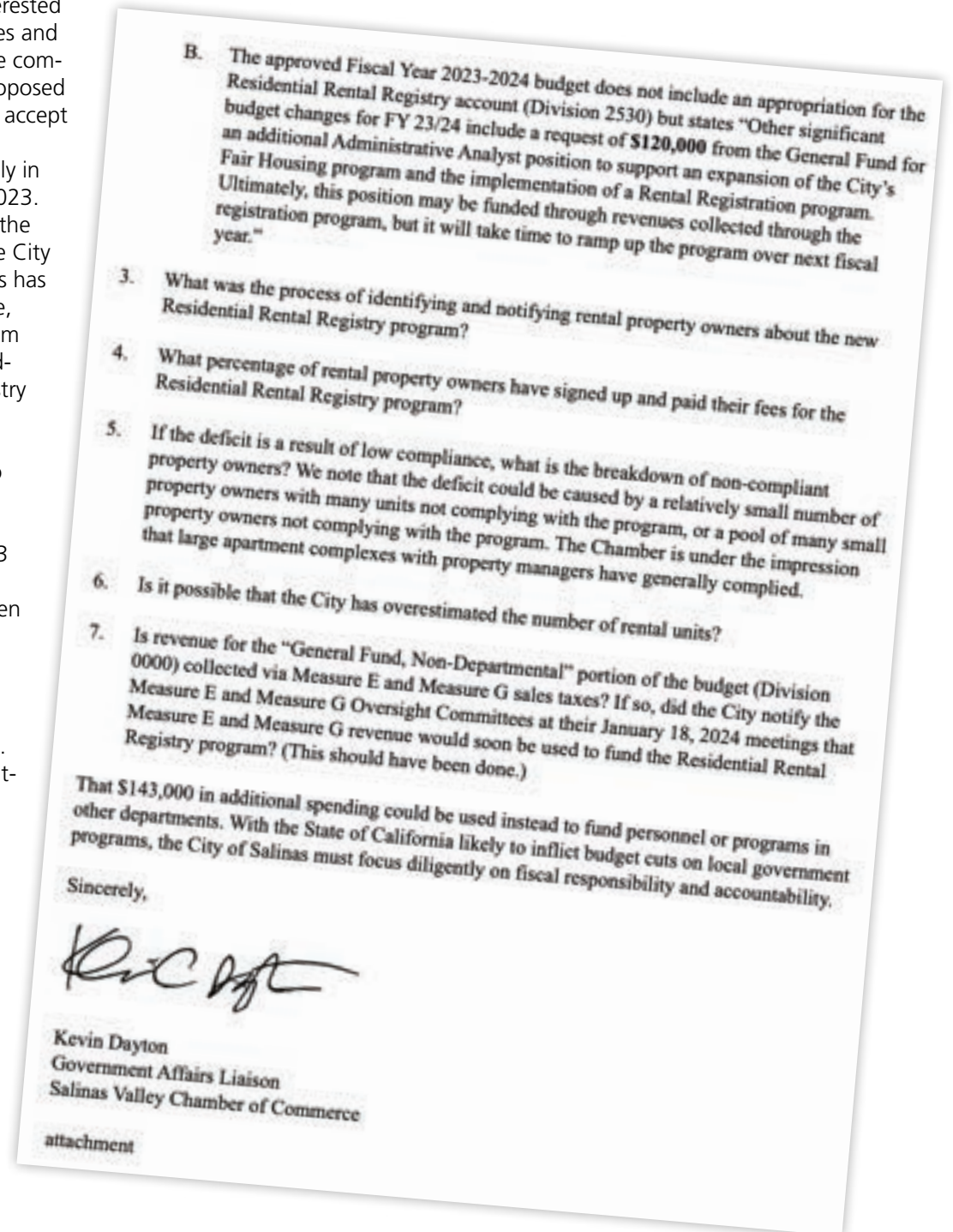
by the city's Community Development Department as a forum for interested parties to discuss their objectives and concerns. It was hoped that the committee could help develop a proposed ordinance that all parties could accept as a reasonable compromise.

The committee met repeatedly in 2019 and again in 2022 and 2023. As staff ended up reporting to the City Council in April 2023, "the City through a series of 22 meetings has made diligent efforts to engage, collaborate and solicit input from community stakeholders regarding the Residential Rental Registry Program."

Finally, the series of meetings was completed. A letter to the Salinas City Council from the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce dated Feb. 28, 2023 announced "We believe an acceptable compromise has been achieved."

On April 4, 2023, the Salinas City Council enacted the Residential Rental Registry program on a 7-0 unanimous vote. The staff report for the item outlined a budget of \$399,706.05 for the program, which included expenditures for staff time, software and support systems, and tenant/landlord services and resources.

Two months later, the approved Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget indicated that \$120,000 would fund "an additional Administrative Analyst position to support an expansion of the City's Fair Housing program and the implementation of a Rental Registration program."



BUDGET see page 20



Getty Images

BUDGET - from page 19

CITY COUNCIL DOWNPLAYS CHAMBER'S QUESTIONS AND APPROVES THE NEW SPENDING

Staff requested the additional \$143,000 to the Residential Rental Registry program without explanation or context. Therefore, the Chamber sent a letter to the Salinas City Council before its Feb. 6, 2024 meeting recommending that councilmembers "remove that line item from the proposed supplemental appropriations and instead consider it as a separate agenda item at your next meeting."

Also included in the Chamber's letter to the City Council were "seven questions you could ask to bring clarity to the \$143,000 deficit." To bring extra attention to the questions, the Chamber's Government Affairs Director spoke during public comment and asserted that the seven proposed questions were credible and worthy of discussion.

The Chamber was not alone in raising concerns about program accountability. A representative of the Monterey County Association of Realtors (MCAR) also asked for an explanation of the program's \$143,000 deficit. And a manager of large apartment properties in the City of Salinas provided testimony about apparent flaws in implementation of the program.

With these questions raised in a public forum about the Residential Rental Registry program, Councilmember Steve McShane asked staff to provide greater detail about the \$143,000 deficit. Staff

informed the City Council that "revenue collection has been slow," with "only \$45,000 collected."

However, staff expressed a belief that "depending on the number of units and compliance with the program," there would be enough registration fees collected in future years to fully fund the program and even generate a surplus.

Staff also suggested that the deficit existed because the program is new. As noted above, the City Council approved the Residential Rental Registry program on April 4, 2023, with the registration period beginning on July 1, 2023. (The registration period was July 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2023, with late fees charged after a 45-day grace period ending Nov. 15, 2023.) A few other Salinas City Council members said they agreed with the staff explanation that the funding deficit was understandable, considering that the program is new.

In the end, the City Council voted 7-0 to approve the additional budget expenditures, including the \$143,000 for the Residential Rental Registry program. There was no direction to staff to prepare any reports evaluating its implementation.

This issue goes beyond rental properties. Chamber members should be aware that the City Council could have instead used the \$143,000 to fund personnel or programs in other departments. With the State of California likely to inflict budget cuts on local government programs, the City of Salinas must focus diligently on fiscal responsibility and accountability. 🌱

Enhancing Employee Benefits with College Savings Vehicles

By Haley Hitchman, Hastie Financial Group

In the current economic environment, employee retention is a significant concern for companies. Employers are looking for ways to enhance the employee benefits they offer, to not only keep their top talent, but also make more attractive offers to prospective candidates.

Companies looking to stand out compared to their competition have been considering new benefits they haven't offered or known about before. Most companies offer some type of health, life insurance and retirement savings programs to their employees, however, a benefit that is becoming more popular is to offer company-sponsored education savings plans, such as a 529 plan.

With the cost of college steadily increasing over the last several years and student loan debt surpassing \$1.75 trillion in 2023, many are seeking the guidance to help them save for their children's education.

These plans are an advantage to those employees with kids trying to save for college. In fact, in a survey done by Edward Jones, 86% of respondents said they would likely participate in an employer-sponsored education savings program. These plans can work similarly to a retirement plan where contributions are taken directly from an employee's paycheck and deposited into a 529 account for that employee.

Even though an individual can open a 529 account on their own, having the ease of the contributions deducted directly from a paycheck helps an employee budget and be consistent in making contributions to reach their goals.

If you are not familiar with 529

plans, they are simply an account that you set up in your name for the benefit of a beneficiary. Then, after-tax contributions can be made up to the annual gift exclusion and invested in a diversified portfolio. Individuals can contribute up to the annual gift exclusion, which is \$18,000 for individuals or \$36,000 if married filing jointly in 2024, or can contribute up to five years' worth of the annual gift tax exclusion amount to a 529 in one lump sum.

If the distributions from the account are used for qualified education expenses, any investment gains are tax-free. It is advisable to review IRS Publication 970 for guidance on qualified withdrawals, but these rules have been expanded to include a lot more than in the past.

The inevitable question for many is, what are the options for the account if a child does not go on to college? Recent legislation has expanded what can be done with balances in a 529 account. A portion of the balance can be converted to a ROTH IRA; however, there are some restrictions. The Roth IRA receiving the funds must be in the name of the beneficiary of the account and must have been maintained for 15 years or longer. There are limits on how much can be converted, such as annual IRA contribution limits and a lifetime limit of \$35,000.

As the rules tend to change with the passing of legislation, it is always advisable to consult with a financial professional if this is a consideration. 🌱

Haley Hitchman, AIF®, CPFA®, is a Financial Advisor with locally owned Hastie Financial Group and can be contacted at haley.hitchman@hastiefg.com.



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



Why our Brand of Agriculture is Essential

By Norm Groot, Monterey County Farm Bureau

The Salinas Valley is known as the Salad Bowl of the World — mainly because we produce much of the fresh food items that the consuming public puts on their dinner tables each night. A healthy diet includes the fresh veggies, leafy greens, and berries produced nearly year-round here in Monterey County.

Our farmers and ranchers know how to adapt. We've seen how farming in Monterey County has evolved considerably from the days of the rancho haciendas; what we produce here barely compares with where commercial farming started over 150 years ago with grain crops, dairies, and then sugar beets. The crop types grown have endured constant change, adapting to both new agronomics as well as market conditions.

Improved irrigation technologies and infrastructure, as well as better agronomics for producing quick-turn crops such as lettuce, broccoli, and spinach, have driven that change. Advances in vineyard production technology have yielded better wine grapes while utilizing less resources, such as water. We are similarly known for our outstanding berry production fields and the bounty of strawberries produced locally each year. And we have taken food safety practices to a higher level, becoming the model for the rest of our nation, ensuring a safe fresh food supply.

All this change takes innovation on the part of our farmers and ranchers, as well as those who support us with research and field trials. We are constantly moving forward with sustainability practices that profoundly improve efficiency and yield; farmers care for the resources in our working environment. And now, innovation is taking many of our farms into regenerative practices.

We call this our brand of intensive

agriculture because we can produce nearly year-round with the resources of soil, water, and climate that makes the Salinas Valley a high-value food production region.

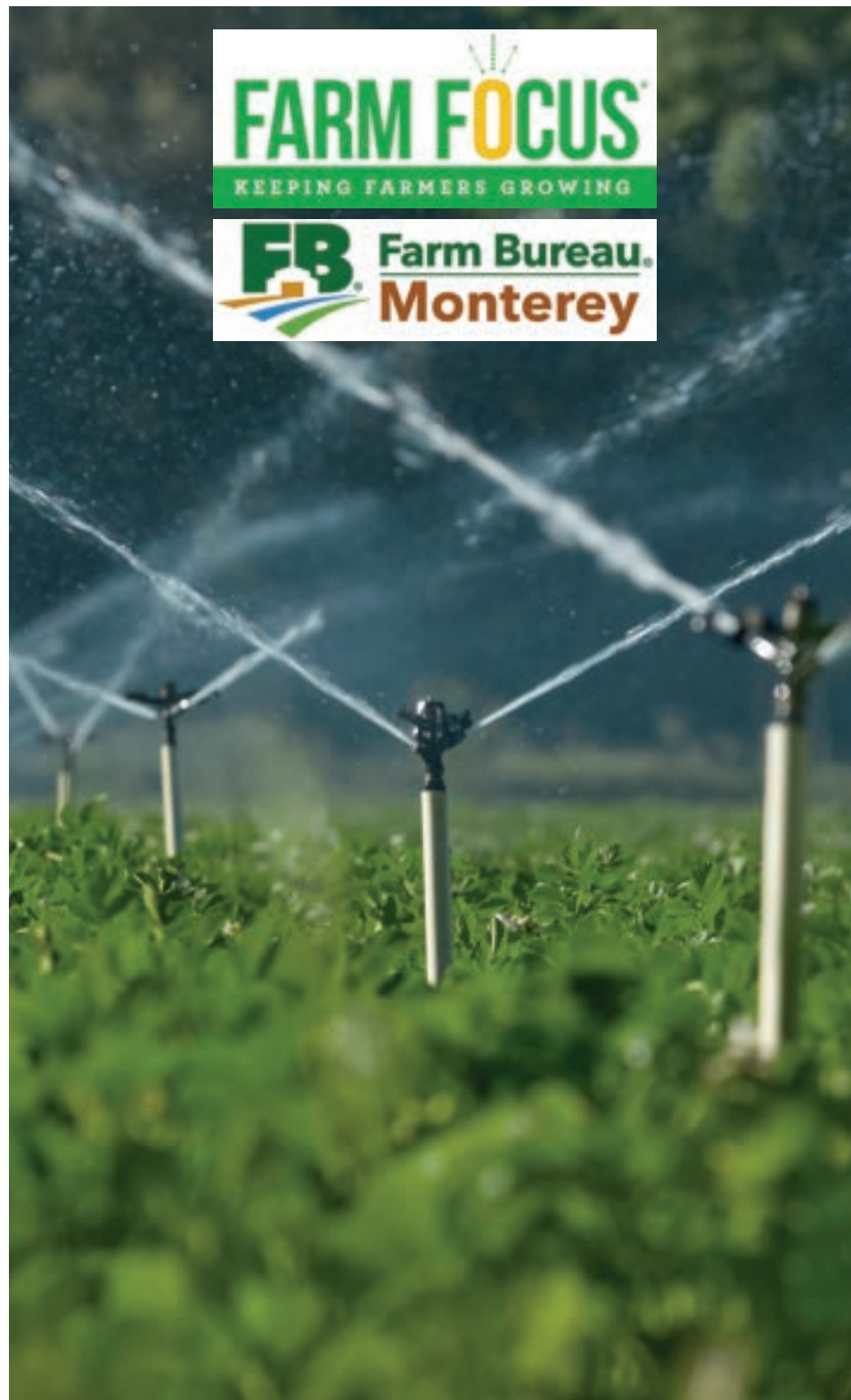
We harvest almost continuously due to crop rotations and market supply demands. It takes a lot of hands to harvest those fresh food items, simply because it is difficult to develop robotic harvesting tools that replace skilled hand-eye coordination. Farmworkers are treated with dignity and respect and many earn well above the minimum wage level due to their skills and endurance in physical labor situations. Farm employers are the only sector building workforce housing in Monterey County with a significant number of units.

Resources are important also — farmers reduced irrigation water use from groundwater by nearly 20% in the last 25 years, mainly due to technology improvements. Farm fields produce abundant harvests each season due to farm practices that enhance soil health. Future investments in our water resources will ensure that farming can continue here.

Having a working environment is the reality where farmers have been managing their resources for 150 years in a manner that allows continued production on the same fields with decreasing inputs and scientifically based agronomics — meaning we continue producing more with less.

As we consider our food security in the coming decade, and the importance of a reliable, safe, and affordable domestic food supply chain, let us not overlook the great accomplishments of our farmers and ranchers each year. Our brand of intensive agriculture is what puts fresh food on our table each and every day.

This makes our brand of agriculture unique, but also essential. 🌱



Overtime for Farmworkers: What Happened After AB 1066?

By Norm Groot, Monterey County Farm Bureau

For many decades, farmworkers have been vital to the harvesting of food crops in the Salinas Valley and other parts of Monterey County. Much has been stated about the wage levels of farmworkers, and particularly, the hours worked when harvesting seasonal crops.

With the well-being of farmworkers in mind, the California Legislature passed AB 1066 that extended overtime hours to farmworkers after 8 hours of work each day, or 40 hours each week. AB 1066 mandated overtime pay for farmworkers at the same as most other employees in other economic sectors (previously, overtime in agriculture was after 10 hours a day due to accommodate seasonal harvesting hours).

A recent study report from Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics, University of California, authored by Alexandra E. Hill, determined that overtime pay for farmworkers did not result in the intended result.

“Overtime regulations are intended as worker-protection policies aimed at improving worker well-being by requiring higher pay for working long hours. However, there is little analytical evidence on their impacts and there are a variety of potential outcomes,” writes Hill in her study report. “For example, at one extreme, if individual worker hours and wages remain unchanged after the laws are implemented, workers would benefit from higher incomes for the same time at work. At another extreme, if employers reduce hours to remain below the new thresholds, worker incomes could fall, making workers who value the extra income more than additional leisure time worse off. In this case, employers would also need to hire additional workers, invest in labor-saving or labor-augmenting technology, or make larger business changes like switching

to less labor-intensive crops.”

What seems to have occurred is the latter scenario, where farm employers have reduced hours to maintain a non-overtime pay situation for farmworkers. This results in lower income each paycheck, as hours have been reduced to meet the new overtime standard. Relying on worker-reported federal data, the research found that farmworkers in the state worked 15,000 to 45,000 fewer hours in 2019 and 2020 while making \$6 million to \$9 million less per week than they would have if the farming industry had continued to use the existing 10-hour workday exemption.

“In 2019 and 2020, the two years following the phase-in of California’s new overtime standards for agricultural workers, the average California crop worker experienced reduced hours and earnings,” states Hill.

Of particular note is that labor unions, including the United Farm Workers, supported the passage of AB 1066 as a way to increase farmworker earnings each paycheck. Contrary to the bill’s intent, civil rights icon Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers labor union, stated the change in earnings may result from global warming’s negative impact on local agricultural production; she added that, given how strenuous farm labor is, fewer hours spent working may be its own benefit.

The unintended consequence of this legislation has led to reduced hours for farmworkers by farm employers, to avoid additional costs for labor (the most significant cost in crop production), and to maintain a balanced bottom line each year.

Many farm employers already pay significantly higher wages than the current California minimum wage of \$16 per hour, plus benefits such as healthcare and retirement programs,

because of the competition for farmworkers in a diminishing labor pool. Additional costs for overtime hours appear to be a threshold that farm employers are not willing to cross. Too bad that farm employers were not heard in opposition to AB 1066 when considered; farmworker pay would have remained at least the same. 🌱



S A V E T H E D A T E



April 11, 2024

SalinasChamber.com For More Information



Hartnell College Shines in USDA Agricultural Export Market Challenge

By Richard Morales, Director of Communications & Marketing, Hartnell College

In an unprecedented showcase of academic excellence and practical learning, Salinas' Hartnell College has been distinguished as one of the 19 minority-serving institutions selected to participate in the 2024 USDA Agricultural Export Market Challenge. This inclusion not only highlights Hartnell College's commitment to agricultural education but also positions Hartnell as a pioneering community college amid a prestigious group of higher-education institutions.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small, announced this selection, emphasizing the initiative's role in equipping American farmers with the knowledge and expertise needed to access new and better markets through trade. The program, developed in collaboration with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), aims to prepare future leaders in global agricultural trade, offering a unique blend of academic challenge and professional development.

EMPOWERING FUTURE AGRICULTURAL LEADERS

The Agricultural Export Market Challenge stands as a dynamic learning platform, inviting junior and senior undergraduate students to immerse



themselves in the complexities of global trade. Participants will gain invaluable insights into diplomacy, economics, marketing, and trade policy, directly contributing to their professional growth and readiness to enter the global agricultural sector.

Hartnell students will join their peers from across the nation in developing comprehensive market entry strategies for fictitious American companies. This hands-on approach not only tests their theoretical knowledge but also hones their practical skills in real-world scenarios. The winning team will have the distinguished opportunity to meet with USDA leaders in Washington,

D.C., further enhancing their understanding of the agricultural trade landscape.

A TESTAMENT TO DIVERSITY AND EXCELLENCE

This initiative aligns with the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to advancing racial equity and supporting underserved communities, as outlined in Executive Order 13985. Hartnell College's participation underscores our dedication to creating opportunities for all students, particularly those from minority backgrounds, to engage in meaningful and impactful educational experiences.

As the only community college participating in this year's challenge, Hartnell College stands proud among an impressive roster of institutions. This distinction not only reflects Hartnell's academic rigor and commitment to agricultural education, but also highlights the exceptional talents and potential of its students.

Hartnell looks forward to supporting its team as they embark on this exciting journey, confident that their participation will inspire current and future students to pursue excellence, embrace challenges, and contribute positively to the global agricultural community. 🌱

The teams who will compete in the 2024 Spring Semester of the Challenge hail from the following minority-serving institutions:

Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wis.*
California State University, Fresno, Calif.*
Cal Poly Pomona, Pomona, Calif.*
Colorado State University – Pueblo, Colo.
Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Fla.
Florida International University, Miami, Fla.
Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley, Ga.
Hartnell College, Salina, Calif.
Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Inter American University of Puerto Rico – Aguadilla, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico
Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Mo.*
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, N.M.*
North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro, N.C.*
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas*
Regis University, Denver, Colo.
San Diego Mesa College, San Diego, Calif.
St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas*
Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas*
Texas A&M University – Kingsville, Kingsville, Texas

**Denotes teams that have participated in past years*

Five Elected Officials Keep Chamber Members Informed on Public Policy Issues

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

On Feb. 23, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce presented members with a friendly, structured forum to hear perspectives from elected public officials representing the people of the Salinas Valley. The 2nd Annual Vision of Valley Vibrancy Legislative Breakfast was held at the Hartnell College main campus in South Salinas, where attendees also had a chance to see new buildings funded by the college's Measure T bond measure and the earlier Measure H bond measure.

After receiving a welcome from Michael Gutierrez, Superintendent/President of Hartnell Community College District, attendees heard remarks from five elected officials: California State Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, California State Sen. John Laird, U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Monterey County Board of Supervisors Chair Glenn Church, and Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez, who focused on his role as Chair of the South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority Board of Directors.

A general theme from all speakers was the desire to work collaboratively between political parties and in conjunction with other government bodies to solve societal problems. While partisan politics has always existed in Congress, Lofgren asserted that political infighting has recently become much worse, thus undermining the ability of the federal government to get much done.

Rivas and Laird reported that the significant state budget deficit for fiscal years 2022-23 to 2024-25 would hinder the state's ability to address current problems. (That deficit was estimated as \$73 million by the California Legislative Analyst's Office on Feb. 20.) Both the Assembly and the Senate have Democratic Party



The Salinas Valley Health team was well represented at the breakfast.

supermajorities, but Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature take opportunities to collaborate on various matters.

Church observed that challenges facing the Board of Supervisors today (such as affordable housing) remain the same as when his father served on the Board of Supervisors in the 1970s. He said one additional issue has developed: highway and road conditions that were good in the 1970s have deteriorated as governments reduced funding for road and highway maintenance.

On a positive note, Lopez reported that the South Salinas Valley



From left to right, County Supervisor Glen Church, SVCC board chair Jennifer Williams, U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, and County Supervisor Chris Lopez

Broadband Authority is on the verge of becoming a leading national example of a government broadband program to bring fast, affordable broadband to all residents of rural areas. The South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority was established as a Joint Powers Agency in May 2022, to deploy open-access municipal broadband across Soledad, Gonzales, Greenfield, King City, and

unincorporated areas of Monterey County in District 3 (the South Salinas Valley).

The Chamber plans to hold the annual Vision of Valley Vibrancy Legislative Breakfast again in 2025, and will also hold additional, more casual events for members related to Government Relations throughout 2024. Please consider attending! 🌱



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AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT JAN BURNETT

PRODUCTION MANAGER AND MORTGAGE LOAN OFFICER,
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 our customers expectation. 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 our local area including the California Rodeo and the California Airshow and Membership Chair for the Womens 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 love puppy – AraBella.



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NON-PROFIT EVENTS

SCCIA - 1st Fridays Art Walk

March 1, 5:00 p.m. – Salinas City Center, Salinas

Every first Friday of the month, numerous downtown establishments extend their operating hours, featuring live music, showcasing local art, hosting book signings, conducting wine tastings, poetry readings, and presenting special promotions. We invite you to join us in celebrating these vibrant cultural and other offerings. Come out and celebrate!

Partners For Peace - Pathways to Success in Soledad

March 2, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., 441 Main St. Soledad

Partners For Peace presents Pathways to Success on Saturday, March 2, 2024, at Main Street Middle School in Soledad from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. This will be a day filled with workshops for families who will explore several resources, and enjoy food, swag bags, and fun. Guest speakers will be Soledad Mayor, Anna Velasquez and Chief of Police, Damon Wasson. Parents, youth, and caregivers are encouraged to attend and participate in hands-on workshops including career pathways. Resource booths will highlight services available in the Soledad community. This is a free event and everyone is welcome. To register, call 831-754-3888 or go to www.partners4peace.org.

Alzheimer's Association - Salinas Dementia Family Caregiver Support Group

March 6, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m., 1130 San Vicente Ave., Salinas

Support groups create a safe, confidential, supportive environment or community and a chance for participants to develop informal mutual support and social relationships. They also educate and inform participants about dementia and help participants develop methods and skills to solve problems. Join us for our in-person meeting. You can also call the 24/7 helpline at (800) 272-3900.

Salinas Valley Speech Pathology – Power Over Parkinsons

March 13, 5:00 p.m., 450 E. Romie Lane, Salinas SVH Conference Room

Power over Parkinson's is a new resource in Salinas for those with Parkinson's and their families. Each month we will have a speaker who will provide information including the latest research about Parkinson's. The speaker at the January meeting will be Dr John Morgan, MD. He is a neurologist who specializes in movement and has Parkinson's himself. Dr Morgan is a professor at the Medical College of Medicine in Augusta, Georgia, and is the director of the college's Parkinson Foundation Center of Excellence. Join us and empower yourself over Parkinson's! Conference Room the SVH parking structure.

Active Seniors, Inc. - Monthly Luncheon

March 14, 11:45 a.m.-1:30p.m., 100 Harvest St., Salinas

\$12 for members and nonmembers. The lunch is prepared by our professional chef, Michael Gaines, and his crew of volunteers. There is always a program following lunch. Lunch is served at noon but come early and have a social time with friends. Please call 831-424-5066, email asi@activeseniors.org, or come in to make a reservation. Our website, activeseniors.org, will have a link to the newsletter where the menu and program are listed.

Big Sur Land Trust – Let's Go Outdoors! San Jose Creek Hike

March 22, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., 4860 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel – Palo Corona State Park

Every step of this hike was made possible through our partnership with the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, California State Parks, and Point Lobos Foundation as collaborative members of the Lobos Corona Parkland project — along with generous donors and funders. Shuttles will transport hikers from Palo Corona Regional Park (Rancho Cañada) to the Ishxenta State Park San Jose Creek trailhead, which is only accessible through guided hikes. From there, we will meander up the gentle incline along San Jose Creek, looking for early wildflowers along the way. After crossing over San Jose Creek's three magnificent redwood bridges, we will arrive at the meadow that will be our turnaround point. This hike is a beautiful reminder that collaboration can bring beautiful change and that our actions are stronger when taken together. We are grateful to our partners and to our donors for each step forward that we take together.

See Monterey! - 14th Annual Whalefest Monterey!

April, 13, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Old Fishermans Wharf, Monterey

The 14th Annual Whalefest Monterey is set for April 13 and 14, 2024 at Old Fisherman's Wharf and the Custom House Plaza – Monterey State Historic Park. A notable change this year includes a marine science-oriented Symposium at the Stanton Center on Sunday, April 14th, and interactive marine-themed exhibits on Custom House Plaza on Saturday, April 13th, among many other engaging activities for all ages.

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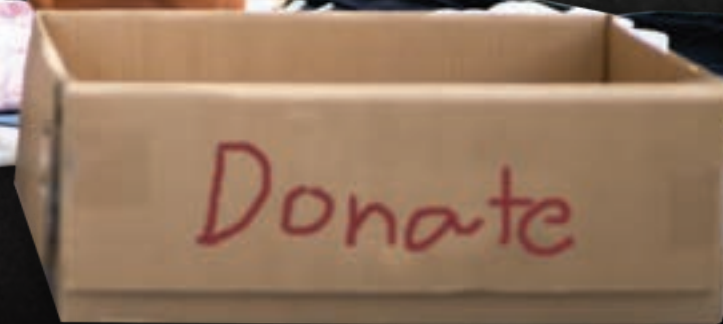
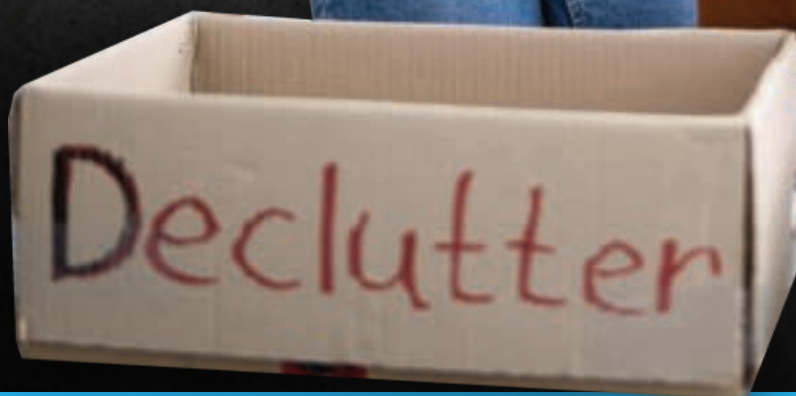
With its promise of new beginnings, spring is the perfect time to give your house a thorough cleaning!

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