



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



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When Art Means Business: Reflections on Alebrijes & Nahuales in Salinas

By Colleen Bailey, CEO/President SVCC

Last week, I stood in a parking lot and watched two semi-trucks pull away, headed for Houston. Inside were the monumental alebrijes and nahuales, those brilliantly colored, fantastical creatures from Mexico, that spent the summer transforming our community.

The next morning, two of the three artists who traveled from Mexico to install them headed home. Before they left, I took them to dinner, and what they told me is something I will carry with me for a long time: of all the cities they have visited on this

ART see page 8

Better Data May Reveal Effectiveness, Value, and Consequences of City of Salinas Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

In 2023 and 2024, the Salinas City Council enacted four ordinances that establish regulations for a city Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program. In 2025, the Salinas City Council repealed the four ordinances.

A petition signed by city voters calling for a referendum has now brought the repeal of the four ordinances directly before voters for consideration. It’s on the November 2026 election ballot as Measure H. A “Yes” vote on Measure H expresses support for repealing the four ordinances.

Emotional appeals have dominated public arguments about the ordinances. Even the official findings listed in the preface of the Rent Stabilization ordinance refer to community fear and anxiety about not being able to pay the rent. It says that fear of displacement among Salinas renters “has been determined to be a threat to the City’s health and well-being.”

“Your Chamber has identified shortcomings in the data that the city has reported so far to the city council. To be constructive, your Chamber has also prepared a list of recommendations for the city on how it could improve the data reports.

Your Chamber recognizes that the rent is high and the ability of many residents to afford housing is precarious. Fear and anxiety are real.

Data Can Complement the Emotions

However, the city council needs to take data analysis into consideration as well as emotion when it evaluates the effectiveness and value of the four ordinances.

Enough time has passed for the City of Salinas to collect, compile, and examine data to determine if the Rental Registration and Rent

Stabilization Program fulfills intent and expectations. Government interference in negotiating the terms and conditions of voluntary private contracts is a serious matter and needs to be sufficiently justified.

Also, rental property owners deserve to know whether the fees they’re paying to the city are achieving anything more than creating a bureaucracy. For 2026, the city’s Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program is handled by one Planning Manager (partial), one Community Development

RENT PROGRAM see page 5

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Monterey Regional Airport’s (MRY) team works together to deliver an easy, efficient, and customer-friendly experience to our travelers. Our efforts are validated when we receive new and returning passengers, as well as by editors, hospitality industry experts, and readers of *USA Today*. The nationally distributed newspaper has nominated MRY as “Best Resort Airport” in its 2026 Readers’ Choice Awards, a category for which MRY ranked in the Top 5 in 2025. Airport customers can show their appreciation for MRY by voting for our airport every day through October 5, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. (PDT) at 10best.usatoday.com/awards.

These are some of the ways the MRY team and partners work to deliver a top-level travel experience to earn the business and votes of local and visiting travelers:

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terminal, a premier project in the MRY Metamorphosis Safety Enhancement Program, which will open in summer 2027 and deliver a modern, accessible, and enhanced passenger experience.

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Vote for MRY! There is still time for airport customers to help MRY stay at the top of the ranking by voting for MRY every day through October 5, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. (PDT) at 10best.usatoday.com/awards or with this QR code.



Monterey Regional Airport is being recognized nationally as a gateway to the beautiful California Central Coast.

“Our customers mean the world to us and we are committed to giving them a safe, secure, and smooth travel experience, whether they are departing from or arriving to our beautiful region,” said Monterey Regional Airport Executive Director Chris Morello. “We would be honored to have their vote in the *USA Today* 2026 Readers’ Choice Awards to help us show the country what makes MRY so special.”

MRY’s Woody’s at the Airport is also nominated by *USA Today* for “Best Sit-Down Restaurant,” a category it earned the first-place award in 2024.

Please vote for MRY and Woody’s once per day until voting ends on October 5 at 10best.usatoday.com/awards.

Winners will be announced on October 14.

Stay Informed During Construction

As the MRY Metamorphosis continues, the airport team remains committed to delivering a convenient and hassle-free travel experience. Please visit montereyairport.com or follow @montereyairport on Facebook, Instagram, and X for travel advisories. Learn more about MRY and the MRY Metamorphosis at montereyairport.com/transform.



Doing Our Part to Shape Salinas' Future

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair



In last month's Business Journal, I spoke about taking an active role in our community and choosing to be part of the solution that makes Salinas a better place to live. Next month, you will have the opportunity to do just that.

With November comes the midterm election, and there are a number of important races and measures that will impact our quality of life in both the near and long term.

Elsewhere in this issue, Kevin Dayton discusses the candidate endorsements made by your Chamber. I have always enjoyed this process because it gives the independent endorsement committee the opportunity to get to know the candidates, understand what they stand for, and evaluate how they plan to turn their vision into reality.

At the heart of the Chamber's endorsements is one common attribute: an understanding of what Salinas is today and a vision for what Salinas can become tomorrow. A focus on streets and sidewalks is certainly important because it speaks directly to our day-to-day quality of life.

However, without a broader vision for creating a vibrant economy, our city will struggle to compete with neighboring communities.

One need only look west to see opportunities that Salinas is currently missing. Why do residents travel to Marina to shop at Trader Joe's and REI? Why are visitors attending tournaments at the Salinas Soccer Complex, events at the California Rodeo Grounds, or races at the Salinas Speedway staying in Marina or Gilroy because there are not enough hotel rooms available here? These are the types of questions that should drive our long-term planning efforts.

This year's Alebrijes y Nahuales art exhibition is an excellent example of how Salinas can celebrate its culture while attracting visitors from throughout California. The exhibit originated from a

visit to Guanajuato, Salinas' sister city in Mexico. That visit, initiated by Mayor Dennis Donohue, included the Assistant City Manager and Chamber CEO Colleen Bailey.

After meeting the exhibit's curator and learning about successful showings in Paris, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and other cities, the delegation worked to bring the exhibit to Salinas. During the month of August, artists displayed larger-than-life, 20-foot-tall sculptures at 5 locations throughout the city.

Rarely did I pass one of these sculptures without seeing families gathered around it, often representing three generations, taking photos and celebrating the culture of central Mexico and Oaxaca.

Northridge Mall displayed two sculptures in its parking lot and another inside the mall. Mall management reported a significant increase in August visitation, along with longer average visits by shoppers.

The success of the Alebrijes y Nahuales exhibit has already sparked conversations about expanding future cultural celebrations, including a larger Day of the Dead festival. Events like these not only attract visitors who support our local hotels, restaurants, retail businesses, and gas stations, but they also showcase the diverse cultures that make Salinas such a special place to live.

The other key issues on the November ballot are Measures G and H

Measure G is a renewal measure that would indefinitely extend the city's existing 1 percent sales tax, which is currently scheduled to expire in 2030, without increasing the tax rate.

Revenue generated by Measure G supports essential city services, including police, fire protection, emergency response, infrastructure repairs, blight reduction, and the all-important maintenance of streets and sidewalks.

Some may ask why voters are being asked to extend Measure G now when it does not expire for another four years. The answer is that many of the long-range decisions being made today depend on having reliable funding available well beyond 2030. The city cannot confidently invest in critical services and infrastructure if the funding needed to sustain those investments remains uncertain.

The other significant measure on the ballot is Measure H, which would repeal the four ordinances establishing the Rental Registry, Rent Stabilization, Just Cause Eviction/Tenant Protection, and Tenant Anti-Harassment protections.

I believe the original intent behind these ordinances was well-intentioned. Few would argue that housing costs are too high for many Salinas renters or that tenants deserve protection from unscrupulous landlords.

Unfortunately, as implemented, these ordinances have become increasingly one-sided, placing significant financial and administrative burdens on property owners that could otherwise be invested in maintaining and improving rental housing.

In my view, the arguments in support of Measure H ultimately center on two primary concerns.

Rental Registry

The Chamber supported the concept of a Rental Registry because city leaders need accurate data to better understand Salinas' housing market and develop policies that address housing needs.

However, in practice, the registry has become far more intrusive than many anticipated, and this was a concern raised by the Chamber from the beginning.

FUTURE see page 6

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Analyst, one limited-term Administrative Analyst, and one limited term Administrative Aide, for a total of 2.95 FTE (full-time equivalent) positions.

Also, two temporary administrative aides and one temporary office technician have been hired in 2026 to “support growing operational demands.”

Examining the Data Reports and Providing Recommendations

Your Chamber has identified shortcomings in the data that the city has reported so far to the city council. To be constructive, your Chamber has also prepared a list of recommendations for the city on how it could improve the data reports.

Improvements in data reports would increase understanding of the Salinas City Council and the public about the effectiveness, value, and consequences of the four rental regulation ordinances.

1 Data Needs to Be More Accurate, Consistent, and Complete

Here are some examples of flaws in the city’s data reports that undermine the ability of the city council and the public to evaluate the ordinances:

- The 2026 first quarter report indicates two administrative appeals of hearing officer decisions — one from a property owner and one from a tenant. The second quarter report indicates only one administrative appeal in 2026, from a tenant.
- The 2025 annual report does not indicate any petitions submitted in 2025 by landlords and tenants for hearing officer reviews, but the 2026 first quarter report refers to petitions submitted in 2025.
- In the 2026 first quarter report, staff reported three hearing officer decisions in 2026 on petitions submitted in 2025, with no decisions made yet on five additional petitions submitted in 2025. The

Compliance with City of Salinas Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program				
Time Period	Rent Stabilization Registrations (Units Subject to Rent Stabilization)	Rental Registrations (Units Exempt from Rent Stabilization)	Total Registrations	Compliance Rate (Based on 2024 Estimate of 22,724 Occupied Rental Units in Salinas Subject to Program)
2025	8,948	3,990	12,938	56.9%
January 1 - June 30, 2026	9,838	4,516	14,354	63.2%

Operational Expenditures of the City of Salinas Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program	
Time Period	Amount
2025	\$520,040
January 1 to June 30, 2026	\$307,639
TOTAL	\$827,679

TENANT PETITIONS		RENTAL PROPERTY OWNER (LANDLORD) PETITIONS	
Number of Actions	Action	Number of Actions	Action
2025			
"Several" (8?)	Reported Total Number of Petitions Filed by Tenants	?	Reported Total Number of Petitions Filed by Landlords
All Petitions Submitted from January 1, 2025 Through March 31, 2026			
4	Tenant Petitions Pending a Hearing Officer Decision	1	Landlord Petitions Pending a Hearing Officer Decision
2	Withdrawn by Tenants	1	Withdrawn by Landlords
4	Tenant Petitions With Hearing Officer Decision Issued	3	Landlord Petitions With Hearing Officer Decision Issued
1	Tenant Appeals of Decisions by Hearing Officers	1	Landlord Appeals of Decisions by Hearing Officers
7	Reported Number of Petitions Filed by Tenants	1	Reported Number of Petitions Filed by Landlords
as many as 18	Total Number of Petitions Filed by Tenants	as many as 7	Total Number of Petitions Filed by Landlords
All Petitions Submitted from January 1, 2026 Through June 30, 2026			
5	"Active/In Progress" - may include petitions submitted in 2025	2	Landlord Petitions Pending a Hearing Officer Decision
4	Withdrawn by Tenants	0	Withdrawn by Landlords
5	Tenant Petitions With Hearing Officer Decision Issued	0	Landlord Petitions With Hearing Officer Decision Issued
1	Tenant Appeals of Decisions by Hearing Officers	0	Landlord Appeals of Decisions by Hearing Officers
14	Reported Total Number of Petitions Filed by Tenants in 2026	2	Reported Total Number of Petitions Filed by Landlords in 2026

second quarter report indicates five hearing officer decisions on petitions and tenant withdrawal of four petitions but does not indicate whether those petitions were submitted in 2025 or in 2026.

- The 2026 second quarter report indicates 16 petitions received in 2026, but the sum of what’s reported in the categories of petition outcomes is seventeen.
- The 2025 annual report calculated compliance rates (and program budget development for 2026) based on a total of 22,794 occupied rental units in the city. Then, without explanation, the 2026 second quarter report calculates a compliance rate based on “the City’s estimated 30,340 rental units.” This change in the base number of rental units complicates the ability of the city council and the public to compare compliance

rates by year and identify trends in compliance.

The original number is cited in a September 2024 report to the Salinas City Council from a consulting firm, Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS). The revised number is apparently generated by the software that the Community Development Department uses to manage the city’s Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program.

- No information is provided about the apparently substantial number of rental units in Salinas that property owners have not registered.
- None of the data reports provide enough information about the petitions for the city council and the public to determine if the four ordinances are improving conditions for tenants in the Salinas rental housing market.

2 Data Doesn’t Consider Possible Unintended Consequences That Could Worsen the Rental Housing Market for the People It’s Supposed to Benefit

During the consideration of the Rent Stabilization ordinance, opponents pointed out that basic principles of market economics predict that government price restraints imposed on rental property owners would distort the city’s rental market and reduce supply.

While current renters would appreciate the strict limits on their annual rent increases (while perhaps resenting unintended negative consequences), new entrants to the rental housing market would have increased difficulty in finding a unit to rent. The rent stabilization ordinance would seem to favor people who already have rental housing at the expense of people looking for it.

None of the data reports to the Salinas City Council allude to changes in the city’s inventory of residential rental units. Chamber representatives heard anecdotal reports (but did not obtain any documentary evidence) that a few property owners may have withdrawn their units in Salinas from the rental housing market in response to city council enactment of the rent stabilization ordinance.

Chamber Recommendations for Future City Data Reports

- Provide statistics and background about owners of rental properties who are still not complying with the Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program. Are there characteristics common to many of the unregistered rental units? (These characteristics could include out-of-area owners, corporate owners, owners of units in specific parts of the city, owners who do not use English as a primary language, owners who are deliberately not registering because they consider the program a violation of their personal constitutional rights, or owners with a history of code violations at their properties.)
- Generate a specific number of units that owners have removed from the rental market since the

Rent Stabilization ordinance took effect.

- Standardize the metrics for determining property owner compliance with the Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program.
- Use one simple, standard, consistent, comprehensive table to report on petitions and appeals, to provide better clarity on the nature of the petitions and also reveal how long it takes the city to resolve them. Here’s how the table could be organized:
- List, in rows, every submitted individual petition (designating them using case or identification numbers to maintain privacy). Then, columns could be used to indicate what kind of party submitted the petition (property owner or tenant), the submission date of the petition, the date of the hearing officer decision or the withdrawal of the petition, the date the petitioner submitted an appeal (if applicable), and/or the date of the final administrative appeal decision.
- An additional column in the table could perhaps include brief summaries of the claims in each petition and mention involvement of legal counsel or other outside entities with the parties in dispute.

Timeline of Legislative Actions Related to the City of Salinas Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program

Date	Action	Designation
January 18, 2022	Salinas City Council votes to recommend staff look at a Residential Rental Registration Program, obtain additional input from stakeholders, hold community meetings, and bring back the inspection component within a year.	N/A
April 4, 2023	Salinas City Council adopts “Residential Rental Registration” - Article I of Chapter 17 of the Salinas Municipal Code.	Ordinance 2663
September 24, 2024	Salinas City Council adopts “Rent Stabilization” - Article IIA of Chapter 17 of the Salinas Municipal Code.	Ordinance 2681
	Salinas City Council adopts “Tenant Protection and Just Cause Eviction” - Article IIB of the Salinas Municipal Code.	Ordinance 2682
	Salinas City Council adopts “Tenant Anti-Harassment” - Article IIC of the Salinas Municipal Code.	Ordinance 2683
June 3, 2025	Salinas City Council repeals Ordinance Nos. 2663, 2681, 2682, and 2683.	Ordinance 2687
July 3, 2025	Proponents of “Protect Salinas Renters 2026” files Referendum of the Repeal Ordinance with City Clerk/ Elections Official for the City of Salinas, who accepted and transmitted it to the Monterey County Registrar of Voters.	N/A
August 15, 2025	Monterey County Registrar of Voters transmits Certificate of Signature Verification which qualifies Referendum of the Repeal Ordinance for the ballot.	N/A
September 23, 2025	Salinas City Council submits Ordinance No. 2687 to the voters of Salinas at the next regular general municipal election to be held on November 3, 2026.	Resolution 23325
June 2, 2026	Salinas City Council calls for the holding of a General Municipal Election to be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026 to ask the voters of the City of Salinas whether an ordinance repealing four rent-related ordinances should be adopted.	Resolution 2026-066
November 3, 2026	Election Day - voters decide on Measure H, a referendum on whether an ordinance repealing four rent-related ordinances should be adopted.	You, the Voters, Decide.

This would give the city council and the public an idea of where compliance problems and conflicting interpretations exist in the language of the four Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization

ordinances. It could also give the city an idea of which people would be potential experts in advising the city on amendments to the ordinances or changes in administra-
tion. 🌿

FUTURE - from page 4

Landlords are required to provide detailed information about their rental units, and the city also requests copies of tenants’ lease agreements. Depending on how those leases are structured, they may contain substantial personal information about occupants living in the unit. For residents concerned about privacy, this level of data collection deserves careful consideration.

Meeting the Needs of Renters

Throughout the debate over rent stabilization, the city heard many compelling stories from tenants facing high rents and difficult housing situations. Those concerns were genuine and deserved

attention.

However, when reviewing the actual performance data for the program, the results appear inconsistent with the level of demand that was originally described.

According to the city’s staff report covering Jan. 1 through June 30, 2026, approximately \$1.24 million was collected while approximately \$304,000 was spent implementing the ordinances during that same period. The report further indicates that 14 tenant petitions for rent reductions were filed, with five still in process, four withdrawn, and five decisions issued. One tenant appeal was also pending. In addition, two landlord petitions for rent increases had been filed, both of which remained under review.

While reasonable people can disagree

on the merits of the program, these numbers raise important questions about whether the benefits are proportional to the costs being borne by landlords. Those funds could otherwise be invested directly into maintaining and improving rental housing.

I do not fault city staff for the cost-benefit outcomes of the program. Staff is simply implementing the policies adopted by the previous City Council.

The good news is that the concerns of both renters and landlords can be improved, if not fully resolved, through collaboration and compromise. Under the Mayor’s direction, the Chamber attempted to bring both sides together through a working group focused on identifying balanced solutions that would protect

tenants while maintaining the viability of rental housing providers.

Unfortunately, after one meeting, it became clear there was not sufficient interest from all parties to continue pursuing a collaborative approach, and the effort dissolved.

Despite that setback, I remain optimistic. Regardless of the outcome of the election, I believe renters, landlords, community leaders, and elected officials can still come together to develop policies that achieve meaningful results. The stakes are simply too high for either side to treat these issues as political battles.

The well-being of working families, renters, and housing providers across Salinas depends on finding practical solutions that move our community forward together. 🌿



Getty Images

Mutual Funds vs. Exchange-Traded Funds

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

For a large majority of individual (retail) investors, purchasing shares of mutual funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs) is often more economical and beneficial by allowing investors to pool their money with other investors to buy stocks, bonds and other investment assets.



As retail investors typically do not hold the amount of cash or assets that institutional investors (i.e., hedge funds) possess, mutual funds and ETFs allow investor money to go further in that they have the ability to own hundreds, if not thousands, of securities rather than buying individual securities themselves.

Purchasing individual stocks or bonds not only requires many hours of research and investment knowledge, but it can also be an expensive endeavor.

Both types of funds are “baskets” of individual securities that can offer investors exposure to a wide variety of asset classes. Because there are many securities

within a fund, they generally provide better diversification than a single stock or bond.

This can minimize overall risk within a portfolio and significantly decrease certain types of risk, specifically concentration risk. Although mutual funds and ETFs are similar in many ways, there are several differences between the two.

One of the main differences between the fund types is how they are traded.

Mutual funds are purchased directly from the fund company rather than on an exchange (e.g., New York Stock Exchange). Orders are executed once per day at the end of the trading day, with investors who invest on the same day receiving the same price.

ETFs, however, trade on an exchange just like a stock and experience intraday price fluctuations based on many factors, including supply and demand. As such,

investors will pay a different price for the fund depending on when the purchase order is executed.

Additionally, the two funds are purchased differently. ETFs, like stocks, are purchased intraday as shares with no minimum investment. ETFs were previously only available as whole shares — no partial shares allowed — however, investors are now able to purchase fractional shares through

some trading platforms and brokers.

Conversely, mutual funds trade at the end of each trading day and may require a minimum investment and can be purchased in fractional

shares or fixed dollar amounts.

Regarding costs, the two fund types differ as well. ETF costs are more explicit, in that they have trade costs/commissions to enact the trade in the market. An ETF can also trade at a discount (below) or premium (above) its new asset

value (NAV), which is the value of the investments within the fund minus its liabilities, divided by the number of shares outstanding in the market.

Since mutual funds do not trade on an exchange, there are no associated commissions. Instead, mutual funds carry an expense ratio, a percentage of fund assets that are taken out annually to cover fund operating expenses.

Mutual funds and ETFs can be passively or actively managed. Passively managed funds are designed to track the performance of an index, such as the S&P 500. The fund will seek to own all or most of the same stocks within the particular index. Passive funds, by definition, cannot “beat the market,” because their objective is to track the underlying index.

Conversely, actively managed funds attempt to beat the underlying index or benchmark. Fund managers will buy and sell securities more frequently to take advantage of price inefficiencies to attempt to outperform the index. 🌱

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ART - from page 1

exhibition's tour, Salinas is the one they would most like to return to. They said Salinas overperformed in every way. It was so welcoming!

That is who we are. And this summer, we proved something else, too: art and culture have a real, measurable economic development impact in our city.

A citywide gallery

"Alebrijes & Nahuales: Fantastic Animals from Mexico" arrived in Salinas thanks to the vision and investment of the City of Salinas and the Salinas Public Arts Commission, with the Chamber

proud to play a central role alongside an extraordinary coalition of partners.

Rather than confining the sculptures to a single venue, we spread them across the community — Star Market, The Vineyard Church, the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex, Northridge Mall, One Main Street, and the National Steinbeck Center.

Families encountered them while grocery shopping, at soccer practice, on a downtown stroll. A grandfather could bring his granddaughter to see the sculptures and tell her about where he comes from. That was the point.

The numbers tell the story

As a Chamber, we talk a lot

about return on investment, so let me share some data.

Northridge Mall, home to several of the sculptures, welcomed 976,500 visitors in August — just shy of one million people in a single month, up 17.9 percent over the prior year, with an average visit lasting more than an hour. For the year, the mall has now recorded 7.2 million visits, up 14.6 percent.

Celia Garcia, Marketing Manager for Northridge Mall, attributed this remarkable increase in foot traffic to the enchanting influence of the Alebrijes y Nahuales, and called the collaboration a wonderful partnership. When a major retail center points to public art as a driver of

nearly a million monthly visits, that is economic development you can measure.

We also invested in reaching every corner of our community. Our bilingual broadcast campaign delivered 263 commercials across KION-CBS, FOX, KMUV-Telemundo, and KCBA-CW between late July and September, generating approximately 197,000 impressions, with English and Spanish spots running side by side.

KION-CBS alone delivered more than 98,000 impressions, including the campaign's highest-rated placement in late August. Marketing in both languages was

not an afterthought — it was a commitment to making sure this exhibition belonged to everyone. And everyone engaged. We had more than 1 million impressions related to the exhibition.

A closing worthy of the run

On Sept. 4, we said goodbye in true Salinas fashion at One Main Street, as part of First Friday Salinas. Guests explored the Small Alebrijes exhibition curated by JC Gonzalez of Urban Arts Collective, and a display of more than 100 student alebrijes created by Gavilan View Middle School students. Artists Ink hosted its Brush Wars live art competition, the Salinas High School Jazz Band and Guelaguetza Salinas performed, Hartnell College Foundation provided free activities for kids, and the band Qiensave closed out the night outdoors.

Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue and Mexican Consul General Neftalí Said Pérez González joined

us for closing remarks — a fitting reflection of the cross-border friendship this exhibition celebrated.

It takes a community

An exhibition of this scale does not happen by accident. It takes vision, investment, collaboration, and a belief that the arts belong in the heart of our community.

Thank you to the City's Parks & Recreation and Public Works teams, who logged countless hours; to artists Rodolfo Echuari, Amauri Sanabria, and Ivan Hernandez, who installed the works alongside our city crews; and to partners including the Arts Council for Monterey County, Hospice Giving Foundation, Hartnell College Foundation, Artists Ink, and so many local businesses who

donated everything from lighting to signage to water tanks.

To every person who sponsored a program, led a workshop, brought a student, or simply stopped to admire these works: thank you.

What comes next

Here is what excites me most: this is a beginning, not an ending. The City has announced plans for a three-week residency with the alebrije fabricators, giving local artists the opportunity to learn how to create large-scale public art.

The goal is to make Día de los Muertos a signature annual celebration in Salinas — one that rivals any such program in the country and reflects the many Mexican

traditions represented in our community. Coming on the heels of another wonderful El Grito celebration downtown, the momentum is real.

For our business community, the lesson is clear. Cultural

investment draws visitors from throughout California, extends their stay, and introduces them to our restaurants, our shops, and our downtown. It strengthens our workforce's connection to this place. And it tells the world that Salinas is a cultural destination — rich in land, rich in values, and rich in creativity.

We did not simply close an exhibition this month. We opened a door — to deeper cultural connections, a stronger arts community, new opportunities for local artists, and a vision of Salinas as a place where culture, creativity, and community come together.

Thank you for helping us prove what is possible when a community comes together around art. We will see you at Día de los Muertos! 🌿

We did not simply close an exhibition this month. We opened a door — to deeper cultural connections, a stronger arts community, new opportunities for local artists, and a vision of Salinas as a place where culture, creativity, and community come together.



Accessible Support!

Counseling Service

*Since 1957, **Family Service Agency of the Central Coast***

has strengthened the community by providing compassionate counseling for people of all ages, identities, and backgrounds navigating life's challenges.

Please reach out for support if you are experiencing depression, anxiety, grief, job loss, parenting stress, relationship concerns, family conflict, or other difficult life circumstances.

Our Service:

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MEMBER NEWS



Monterey Regional Airport Welcomed Community Leaders for In-depth Look at New Terminal

The Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) board and staff welcomed community officials, partners, neighbors, and media on Aug. 29 to tour the replacement passenger terminal, which is currently under construction. The up-close and personal “Dusty Shoes Tour” was led by airport staff and contracting partners. Together they shared construction progress and showed tour participants how locals and visitors will travel through and employees will work at MRY when the terminal opens to the public in summer 2027.



Teen Moms Inc. Holds its Second Annual Diaper Drive

Teen Moms Inc. held its Second Annual Diaper Drive at 101 Wine Press in Prunedale on Aug. 25. Teen Moms received a proclamation from Supervisor Luis Alejo’s office for their determination, perseverance and dedication to serving young mothers and their children in our community. City of Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue and City Councilmembers Gloria De La Rosa and Margaret D’Arriago also provided Teen Moms Inc. with a special recognition for their one-year anniversary.



NHEH Attorney Anne Secker Honored by Monterey County Bar Association for Lifetime Achievement

The award recognizes exemplary service and dedication in the pursuit of justice over the recipient’s career. Since first starting as an attorney and joining Monterey law firm Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss in 1980, Secker has consistently demonstrated a high level of legal expertise and professionalism, a strong work ethic, and inspiring leadership. Her reputation is exceptional among clients, peers, and the judiciary. Secker has long been active in community service, in recent years most notably on behalf of Hartnell College Foundation and Elkhorn Slough Foundation. As a champion of education, she has been an important mentor, especially for aspiring attorneys, and her love of nature and our beautiful region is well known.

Over the years, numerous other organizations have enjoyed Secker’s leadership on committees and Boards of Directors. Secker will be presented with the award at Monterey County Bar Association’s annual fall event in early November. The Fall Bench Bar is a gathering of attorneys, judges, and other members of the bar association. Many of her NHEH colleagues will be in attendance to salute her achievement of this prestigious honor.



Bay Federal Credit Union Welcomes Chris Heck as Vice President, Business Services

Bay Federal Credit Union is pleased to announce the appointment of Chris Heck to Vice President, Business Services. In this role, Heck will lead the development and growth of Bay Federal's Business Services Department, overseeing business loan origination, underwriting, portfolio management, business deposit services, and treasury management, while expanding the credit union's lending and deposit products for local business members.

Heck brings more than 30 years of commercial banking experience with banks and credit unions. He began his career as a teller and worked his way up to senior leadership. Most recently, he served as VP, Business Services at Peak Credit Union. Prior to that, he was VP, Commercial Banker at First Citizens Bank, and held roles at Venture Bank, starting as a Commercial Loan Assistant before advancing to VP, Commercial Banker.

Heck holds a Commercial Lending Certification and completed the Western CUNA Management School program from 2015 to 2017. He previously served on the board of the United Way of Lewis County in Chehalis, Washington, including a term as Board President, from 2005 to 2013.

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RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Lunch Connect with the Steinbeck House

Chamber members gathered at The Steinbeck House for a Lunch Connect, enjoying an afternoon of great food, conversation, and networking. Attendees had the opportunity to make new connections and strengthen existing relationships in one of Salinas' historic settings. Thank you to The Steinbeck House for welcoming our members and helping make another Chamber Lunch Connect a success!



Closing of Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition

The community came together at One Main Street in Salinas City Center for the closing celebration of "Alebrijes & Nahuales: Fantastic Animals from Mexico." Held during First Friday Salinas, the evening featured local art, live music, student exhibits, hands-on activities, cultural performances, and a live Brush War competition. Guests enjoyed performances by the Salinas High School Jazz Band, Guelaguetza Salinas, and Qiensave, while taking a last look at the miniature Alebrijes exhibit curated by Urban Arts Collective, Artists Ink, and more than 100 student Alebrijes created by Gavilan View Middle School students. This incredible celebration was made possible through the collaboration of the City of Salinas, Salinas Public Arts Commission, Chamber, Hartnell College Foundation, Artists Ink, Urban Arts Collective, Arts4MC, and participating artists and community partners.



Ribbon Cutting for CaliDental

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce celebrated CaliDental with a ribbon cutting welcoming the dental practice to the City of Marina. Chamber members, community partners, family, and friends gathered to meet the CaliDental team, tour the office, and celebrate this exciting milestone. CaliDental made the celebration a true community event, with fresh kettle corn, an ice cream vendor, face painting for kids, and plenty of family-friendly fun. The Chamber was proud to welcome Cali-Dental and celebrate their investment in serving local families and the Monterey County community.



Centennial Celebration & Chamber Mixer with California Water Service

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce joined California Water Service for a special Centennial Customer Appreciation and Chamber Mixer, bringing together Chamber members, community leaders, and local professionals for an evening of networking and celebration. Guests had the opportunity to connect, build new relationships, and recognize California Water Service's 100-year milestone and longstanding service to the community. The evening also included refreshments, conversation, and a special prize drawing, with one lucky guest taking home a brand-new, high-efficiency washing machine.



Lunch and Learn with Salinas Valley Health Foundation 'Philanthropy in Action'

At a Salinas Valley Chamber Lunch & Learn, Dr. Bazillia "B" Gutierrez, CEO and Chief Philanthropy Officer of the Salinas Valley Health Foundation, presented how local generosity directly impacts regional healthcare by funding critical initiatives. Key supported programs include the Mobile Clinic, patient and pediatric assistance, workforce development scholarships, and an Emergency Department capital campaign. Gutierrez highlighted how community backing continually expands essential medical access, resources, and patient care throughout the Salinas Valley.



Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our September 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 Coastal - A Small Business Lender	1983	Sacred Heart School	2012
Notre Dame High School	1983	Quail Lodge & Golf Club	2013
Monterey County Office of Education	1986	The Maynard Group, Inc.	2014
<i>*40 Years*</i>		Smith & Enright Landscaping	<i>*10 Years*</i> 2016
Bengard Ranch Inc	1987	Mike Hutchinson	2017
Jim Gattis Investment Properties	1988	Whole Enchilada	2017
Markon, Inc	1988	C4 Consulting	2020
Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST)	1988	Salinas Regional Sports Authority	2020
WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca	1991	Salinas Valley Medical Aesthetics	2021
Hitchcock Farms	1995	Hope Services	2022
The Don Chapin Company, Inc.	1997	Western Pre-Cooling systems	2022
RHC Management Co, LLC dba McDonalds	2000	Brandon Trucking Company	2023
Alvarez Technology Group Inc	2001	North American Mental Health Services	2023
CASA of Monterey County	2002	Arroyo Seco Wireless LLC	2024
CSUMB	2004	Chick-fil-A North Salinas	2025
Aurum Consulting Engineers Monterey Bay Inc	2005	City of Salinas	2025
El Sistema USA/Salinas, Inc - YOSAL	2010	I Cantori di Carmel	2025
Terry Feinberg	2011	Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula	2025

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VISIONARY AND STAKEHOLDER MEMBERS



Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation Celebrates Landmark 75th Annual Children's Shopping Tour

By Athena Morris, TMD Creative

For three quarters of a century, one holiday tradition in Salinas has transformed the lives of thousands of local children. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation is proud to announce the 75th Annual Children's Shopping Tour, taking place on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026, from 7:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m. at Northridge Mall in Salinas.

The tradition started by the Salinas Jaycees in 1951 continues today as the Children's Shopping Tour, pairs elementary students nominated by local teachers based on financial need with community volunteer chaperones.

Each child receives a gift card to select brand-new winter clothing essentials. Participating retailers at Mershops Northridge Mall provide exclusive discounts to ensure every dollar goes as far as possible.

The Children's Shopping Tour is a 100 percent donation-based and volunteer-run event where funds go toward purchasing gift cards for the kids' shopping sprees.

"The powerful impact of this program is evidenced by the number of grown adults who themselves were beneficiaries of the program who have returned to volunteer to take children shopping and ensure the tradition lives on," says Colleen Bailey, Chamber CEO/Executive Director.

Over the past 75 years, the initiative has served generations of

Salinas families, often seeing former beneficiaries return decades later as volunteer chaperones and donors.

How the Community Can Get Involved

- **Volunteer:** Community members are needed as shopping chaperones and event support staff (check-in, tag cutting, staging). *(Note: All adult volunteers aged 18 and older undergo a background check and fingerprinting at the Chamber office prior to the event to ensure child safety.)*
- **Donate:** Individual and corporate tax-deductible donations directly fund gift cards for participating children.

Over the past 75 years, the Children's Shopping Tour has served generations of Salinas families, often seeing former beneficiaries return decades later as volunteer chaperones and donors.

To volunteer or donate to the 75th Annual Children's Shopping Tour, visit salinaschamber.com or call (831) 751-7725.

This event is made possible through the sup-

port of our generous presenting donors and community partners, including Alco Water Service, Harden Foundation, and Mershops Northridge Mall.

About the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening the Salinas Valley community through education, leadership development, and civic outreach initiatives. 🌱



Children's Shopping Tour

Help bring joy to local children this holiday season



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**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 12TH, 2026**



7 A.M. - 12 P.M.

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Chamber of Commerce Endorses Candidates for Salinas Mayor and City Council

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

On Sept. 11, the 2026 Candidate Review Committee of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce interviewed candidates for Salinas Mayor and Salinas City Council.

As authorized under Section 6.2 of the Chamber's bylaws and defined in the Political Action Policy of the Chamber's Business Policies, the Candidate Review Committee was assigned by the Board of Directors to evaluate candidates and recommend endorsements of any who are likely to be "deemed by the Board to represent the best interests of the business community."

Following their interviews, Candidate Review Committee members discussed each candidate and recommended endorsements to the Board. On Sept. 16, the Board reviewed these recommendations and voted on endorsements for the Nov. 3, 2026 election. Here are the endorsed candidates.

Mayor - Reelect Dennis Donohue

Two years ago, Dennis Donohue ran for mayor because "the city was not positioned to meet the needs of the community." Today he declares the city is "moving in the right direction." Under his leadership in portraying Silicon Valley and Salinas Valley as an ecosystem, Donohue has helped to establish Salinas as a global leader in ag tech. He says Salinas can be

considered as the "best rural urban petri dish" for public policies — with visions and plans in the same league as urban reform efforts led by Mayor Daniel Lurie in San Francisco and Mayor Matt Mahan in San Jose.

Donohue touted his experience as mayor, his long history of extensive interaction with the entire community, and his understanding that doing things and changing things through government is hard work and takes a long time.

In addition, he pointed out his capabilities and experience with important regional government entities, including serving on the boards of Monterey One Water (M1W), Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), and Local Formation Agency of Monterey County (LAFCO). The Chamber endorses Dennis Donohue for re-election as Mayor.

Salinas City Council, District 2 - Reelect Tony Barrera

Councilmember Tony Barrera expressed his love for public service and was blunt about the reality of local government: "Once in a while we do great work, but it costs a lot of money." With dismay, he cited various examples of the traditional tension seen in Salinas (and at most California local governments) between the role of the city council to set policy and the role of the city manager and professional staff to execute those policies and administer operations.

He wants the city to evaluate the effectiveness and performance of contract consultants and certain administrative staff.

Your Chamber has always found Barrera to be thoughtful, dignified, and accessible to the people of his district and the city as a whole. The Chamber endorses him for Salinas City Council, District 2.

Salinas City Council, District 3 - Reelect Margaret D'Arrigo

Looking back on her two years on the city council, Councilmember D'Arrigo notes correctly that "controversies are moving into the past." She sees Donohue focusing on a vision for the city while she focuses more on the day-to-day business of routine city activities, with her emphasis on listening to constituents and being accessible and responsive to them.

Based on her interactions with constituents and other residents, she believes the city council needs to improve the accountability process for employee performance.

Also, city communications need to be oriented more toward serving residents rather than enforcing resident compliance with government regulations. While residents ask the city to improve infrastructure, sidewalks, public safety, park maintenance, and economic development, the city responds with statements about getting around to neighborhood pavement repairs in 10-15 years.

Your Chamber appreciates the

recognition of Councilmember D'Arrigo that excellent communications and customer service are essential if the city is serious about achieving the vision of Donohue (and the Chamber). We endorse Margaret D'Arrigo for Salinas City Council, District 3.

Salinas City Council, District 5 - Elect Irma C. Lopez

The Candidate Review Committee was unable to arrange an in-person interview with Lopez, a member of the Hartnell College Board of Trustees. However, after initiating a phone discussion with the Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison, she answered the standard committee interview questions in writing and returned the questionnaire to the committee before the interviews. Her answers reveal support for economic development and recognition of business as a positive and important contributor to the future of Salinas and Monterey County.

Despite repeated outreach and ultimately some email exchanges, your Chamber was unable to arrange an interview or obtain a completed questionnaire from the incumbent councilmember in this district. He lost an opportunity to speak frankly and directly with a group he has criticized, and the Chamber lost an opportunity to hear his point of view on important policy matters. The Chamber endorses Irma Lopez for Salinas City Council, District 5. 🌱



CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

Youth Recovery Connections (YRC)

Youth Recovery Connections (YRC) is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting youth, adults, and families impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and justice system involvement. YRC provides compassionate support, guidance, coaching, and care management to individuals, groups, and families facing difficult times, including barriers to care, financial or housing issues, and the need for local resources. Their space and staff are safe, supportive, and free of judgment, ensuring that everyone feels empowered to speak up for their needs. YRC's mission is to bridge gaps in care and empower people to live healthy and independent lives. Their motto is "Connecting for Change." They aim to be that bridge that connects people to the care and services they need. We look at the whole person, not just one problem. We believe people do best when they have support in all areas of their lives. Youthrecoveryconnections.org, alucas@yrconnections.org, (831) 313-0882.

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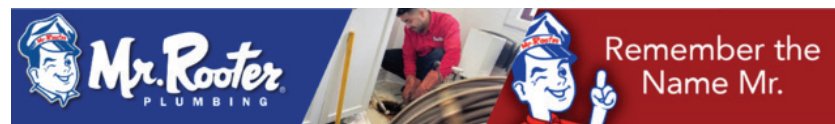
Dorado Roofing

Dorado Roofing LLC is a locally owned roofing company serving Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties. They provide residential roof replacements, repairs, maintenance, and waterproofing with a focus on doing the job right and taking care of the people they work with. As a small business, their reputation means everything to them. They believe good business is built on strong relationships, honest communication, and work they are proud to put their name on. Dorado Roofing takes pride in treating every home like it's their own and building lasting relationships with the people in our community. Doradoroofingllc.com, robertd@doradoroofingllc.com, (831) 676-5751.



DeVeera Inc.

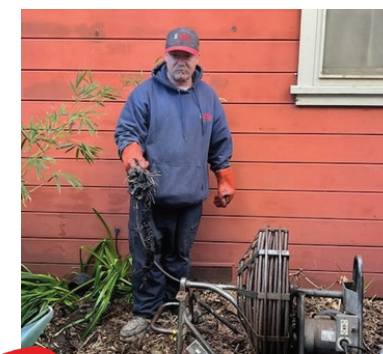
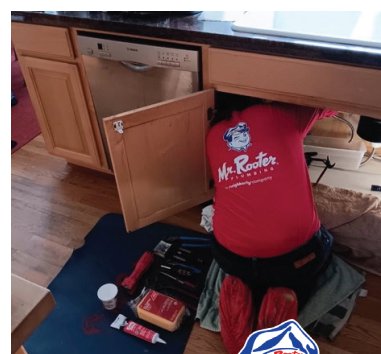
At DeVeera Inc., they approach every client relationship as a partnership. By embedding themselves in your business, they gain a clear understanding of your unique needs, allowing them to deliver IT solutions that make a real difference. Their commitment to transparency, reliability, and consistency ensures they are a dependable part of your team. They focus on proactive solutions and continuous improvement. By monitoring systems and implementing effective IT strategies, they prevent issues before they impact your business. Their aim is to keep your operations secure, streamlined, and productive so that you can focus on achieving your business goals. Deveera.com, jason@deveera.com, (831) 240-4703.



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Halloween Is Serious Business — and a Force for Good — on the Central Coast

Goodwill's biggest retail season is also one of the Salinas Valley's quietest engines for jobs, savings and sustainability

By Goodwill of the Central Coast

For most retailers, Halloween is a seasonal bump. For Goodwill, it is the single biggest retail season of the year — and here on the Central Coast, it has become one of the most powerful engines we have for putting people back to work.

Consider the scale. Americans are expected to spend roughly \$13.1 billion on Halloween in 2025, according to the National Retail Federation, up from about \$7.4 billion a decade ago.

Nearly three in four people plan to celebrate, and the average shopper will spend more than \$100 on costumes, candy and decor. A great deal of that money flows to seasonal pop-up stores selling bagged, single-use costumes — worn once, then sent to the landfill by Nov. 1.

There is a smarter model hiding in plain sight, and it happens to be a nonprofit. At Goodwill Central Coast, Halloween has become a case study in how value, creativity, sustainability and social impact can reinforce one another rather than compete.

Start with the economics. A new costume from a seasonal store can easily run \$50 to \$100. A thrifted costume — a flannel shirt and straw hat for a scarecrow, a trench coat and fedora for a film-noir detective, a vintage band tee and leather jacket for a rock star — often costs a fraction of that.

In a season when many shoppers say they expect to pay more than last year, affordability is not a nicety; it is the whole ballgame. Our model turns the same dollar into a better costume and a smaller bill.

Then there is creativity, and this is where thrift genuinely outperforms conventional retail. A national Goodwill survey found that 62 percent of costume do-it-yourselfers



**HALLOWEEN
COMES ALIVE AT
GOODWILL®**



At Goodwill Central Coast, Halloween has become a case study in how value, creativity, sustainability and social impact can reinforce one another rather than compete.'

turn to thrift stores for their looks, and among those who make their own costumes, 84 percent prefer Goodwill.

Younger shoppers in particular have made secondhand a lifestyle: roughly 80 percent of young consumers say thrifting helps them create outfits no one else has, and three in four believe a secondhand look can be more stylish than something new. Our racks change daily, which makes every visit a treasure hunt and every costume one of a kind.

But the reason Halloween matters most to us has little to do with costumes. It is what the season funds.

Every purchase at a Goodwill Central Coast store generates revenue that pays for job training, career services and employment programs across Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties.

Behind those numbers are real



people: someone rebuilding after incarceration, a young adult aging out of foster care, a veteran finding footing in civilian life. Our founder, Edgar J. Helms, built this organization on a simple conviction more than a century ago — that meaningful work restores dignity, confidence and independence. That is still the return on every Halloween dollar spent with us.

For the business community, there is a sustainability story here as well. Reuse is the original circular economy. Every costume assembled from donated clothing is a set of materials

kept in productive use and out of the waste stream — no new manufacturing, no packaging, no landfill.

As more Central Coast companies set sustainability goals and look for authentic ways to meet them, thrift represents one of the few consumer behaviors that is cheaper, greener and more community-minded all at once. It is rare for the frugal choice and the responsible choice to be the same choice. At Goodwill, they are.

That alignment is why we lean into Halloween each year. It is a moment when the fun thing, the affordable thing, the sustainable thing and the generous thing all point in the same direction — toward a local store, and toward a neighbor who needs work.

There are easy ways for local employers to take part. Encourage teams to thrift their office costumes and host a friendly contest. Clean out storerooms and closets and donate gently used clothing, decor and household goods; the proceeds go straight back into workforce programs. And when the season ends, donate those costumes back so the cycle can begin again next October.

Halloween will come and go, but the work it funds continues year-round. This season, before heading to a pop-up shop, consider what that same spending could do a little closer to home. A costume that costs less, wastes less and helps a neighbor find a job is not just a good deal. It is an investment in the Salinas Valley itself.

To learn more about programs, donations and store locations, visit www.ccgoodwill.org.

Planting the Next Generation: The Salinas Valley Junior Chamber's First Year

By Colleen Bailey, CEO/President SVCC

Leadership rarely begins with a title. It begins with a seat at the table, a hand raised to volunteer, and a community willing to invest in the people who will one day carry it forward.

That belief is at the heart of the Salinas Valley Junior Chamber Program, launched this year by your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

The program empowers emerging professionals ages 22 to 42 across Monterey County through networking, leadership development, and community engagement — connecting rising leaders with Chamber mentors and giving them hands-on opportunities to plan and execute events that strengthen the local business community.

Nine months in, our inaugural cohort has shown us exactly why this investment matters.

A Cohort That Looks Like the Salinas Valley

The 14 members of the 2026 Junior Chamber reflect the full breadth of our regional economy. They come from banking and insurance, law and agriculture services, the arts and education, retail and hospitality, sports and small business — from Bay Federal Credit Union and Ottone & Leach LLP to the Monterey Bay Football Club, the Arts Council for Monterey County, TMD Creative, the Salinas Regional Sports Authority, and Salinas High School.

That diversity is by design. When a young attorney, an arts advocate, a sports executive, and a small business operator sit at the same table every month, the conversations — and the friendships — reflect the community they will one

day lead. It's the same trifecta that has always defined the Salinas Valley: family, business, and community, woven together.

Learning From the Leaders Shaping Our Region

Each monthly meeting pairs the cohort with the people making decisions that shape our valley. In March, Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue delivered a State of the City address at the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex. April brought a Networking 101 conversation with Amy Salmina. In May, Peter Kasavan and Chris Steinbruner shared an update on economic development, and in June, Kevin Dayton and Brenda Granillo tackled water, electricity, and rent stabilization — issues at the center of our region's future. In August, Hugh Walker of Stonebridge Homes led a candid discussion on housing and property management.

This month, the learning moves out of the boardroom entirely. On Sept. 16, members will tour the Taylor Farms facility on Abbott Street, where Marcus Shebl and Raymond Ramirez of the Taylor Farms Foodservice team will share what's new in agribusiness — a fitting deep dive into the industry that built this valley.

Just as important, members teach each other. Every meeting features Junior Chamber presentations, where cohort members share

expertise from their own fields — from public meetings and records law to health insurance, time management, local arts, and updates from the soccer complex. Fourteen individual professionals are becoming a genuine peer-learning network, one presentation at a time.

Leadership by Doing

The Junior Chamber is not a lecture series. It is a working program. Every member serves on at least one of three committees — Meetings, Events, or Career Pathways — and the results are visible across the community calendar.

This spring, members rolled up their sleeves at the Live Well Project Clean Up at the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex alongside Salinas Valley Health. They gathered the young professional community at a May mixer at

Glasshouse in downtown Salinas, cheered on Monterey Bay FC together in June, and toured the California Rodeo grounds in July. The Career Pathways Committee continues its workshop series on Sept. 19, connecting local students and job seekers with real career opportunities.

A Fall Season Full of Momentum

The months ahead may be the most exciting yet. On Oct. 1, members join the Chamber community for Legacy of Leadership at Portobello's.

Then comes the milestone we are most proud of: the Junior Chamber's first Signature Event. On Thursday, Oct. 22, the cohort will host Young Professionals Connect & Lead at Digital NEST in downtown Salinas — a mixer for emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, and young professionals across the Salinas Valley, planned and executed by the members themselves.

This is exactly what the program was built to do: give rising leaders real experience creating opportunities that strengthen our business community.

Registration is open at SalinasChamber.com, and I encourage every young professional in the region to be there. Proceeds from the program support the 75th anniversary of the Children's Shopping Tour.

November brings a session on what an entrepreneur needs to know. And in December, members will help lead one of your Chamber's most beloved traditions — the annual Children's Shopping Tour on Dec. 12 — before closing the year with a program wrap-up and year-in-review.

The Harvest Ahead

What has struck me most this year is not what the cohort has learned, but what they have given. They haven't waited to be asked. They've facilitated meetings, kept each other on time, pitched presentations, planned events, and shown up for this community again and again — the same quiet lessons of hard work and service that have been passed from one generation

'The 14 members of the 2026 Junior Chamber reflect the full breadth of our regional economy. They come from banking and insurance, law and agriculture services, the arts and education, retail and hospitality, sports and small business.'

Helping Cancer Patients Feel Seen, Supported and More Like Themselves Again

By Chris Haubert, Salinas Valley Health

There are moments during cancer treatment when something as simple as looking in the mirror can feel unfamiliar.

Hair loss, changes to skin and eyebrows, fatigue and the emotional weight of a diagnosis can affect how patients see themselves. Then someone sits beside them, offers a soothing hand massage, helps care for their skin or shows them how to redraw an eyebrow — and they see a little more of the person they remember.

That is the gift of the Lipstick Angels program at Salinas Valley Health.

Since the program began at the Outpatient Infusion Center in April 2026, patients and caregivers have been seeing first-hand the meaningful place that beauty and self-care can have alongside medical treatment.

The program was made possible in part through the Salinas Valley Health Foundation's Partners in Excellence Grant, which helps turn employee ideas for improving the patient experience into reality.

More Than Makeup

Lipstick Angels provides oncology-sensitive skincare, makeup, wellness services and human connection to people affected by cancer. Founder Renata Helfman-Baron was inspired by her grandmother, a cancer and Holocaust survivor whose pre-chemotherapy ritual always included applying her favorite lipstick.

Years later, while volunteering at Cedars-Sinai Hospital,



Madeleine Cooper, Lipstick Angels Monterey Bay Program Manager, greets a patient.

Helfman-Baron saw firsthand how much patients needed human touch, connection and moments of joy.

"Programs like Lipstick Angels make people feel human," Helfman-Baron said. "It makes people feel like themselves again."

The response from patients at Salinas Valley Health has been powerful. One patient described how the service transformed a five-hour chemotherapy appointment into a "positive spa-like experience," with a relaxing hand massage and time spent enjoying the company of a Lipstick Angel

ambassador.

Another patient wrote that a facial and makeup session made her feel like herself again after she stopped wearing makeup following her diagnosis.

"I feel so beautiful and so confident," she said. "This program is like a ray of sunshine during a



Jessica Valero, Manager of the Susan Bacon Cancer Resource Center at Salinas Valley Health.

dark time."

The goal isn't to make cancer disappear. It is to help patients feel seen while going through it.

One Person's Idea Made Possible for the Benefit of Many

For Jessica Valero, Manager of the Susan Bacon Cancer Resource Center, that kind of whole-person care felt like a natural extension of the support already offered at Salinas Valley Health.

With 22 years of experience as an oncology nurse, navigator and cancer-program leader, she had seen time and again how the disease can affect not only the body, but also a person's self-image and emotional well-being.

"Cancer is hard," Valero said. "Patients end up with long-term physical side effects. It affects

your body, your self-image and your mental state."

Valero first learned about Lipstick Angels through her participation in Leadership Monterey County and recognized its potential for Salinas Valley Health. She brought the idea to the Salinas Valley Health Foundation and began the grant process — a first for her that ultimately took more than a year.

When Valero worried about the significant investment, Foundation staff encouraged her to keep going. "All you can do is try," she recalled being told.

The Partners in Excellence Grant supports employee- and physician-generated ideas designed to improve patient experience. The Foundation provided funding for half of Lipstick Angels' annual fee, with Salinas Valley Health sponsoring the other half.

Now, patients are experiencing the impact firsthand. Staff are tracking patients served, visits and hours of service, while feedback from patients and caregivers has been overwhelmingly positive.

"This has surpassed my vision of what I thought the program could bring to our cancer program," Valero said. "You can see the difference."

Perhaps that difference is best captured by the woman Helfman-Baron remembers most: a patient who told her, "I'm not going to hide in my car when I pick my son up from school."

A simple act of self-care had helped her feel visible again.

And behind that moment was something equally powerful: an employee with an idea, a foundation and a medical center willing to say yes, and a program that helps patients remember who they are beyond their diagnosis. 🌿

“
Programs like Lipstick Angels
make people feel human.
It makes people feel like
themselves again.”
— Founder Renata Helfman-Baron

Rancho Cielo Students Take Center Stage at 75th Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance

By Adam Joseph, Rancho Cielo

Most people come to Monterey Car Week to celebrate automotive history. At Rancho Cielo, students are learning to preserve it.

This year, two recent graduates, Max Perez and Aaron Correa, helped do just that at the 75th annual Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. At the same time, current students gained insight into the classic car restoration industry through a series of related activities at Rancho Cielo and across the Monterey Peninsula.

The first was on Aug. 12; Rancho Cielo hosted its second Classic Car Education Day, bringing students face-to-face with leaders in the collector-car world. James Mitchell, founder of Pendine, a car collection management service based in England, and Giles Crickmay, director of Frank Dale, a specialty Rolls-Royce and Bentley dealer also based in England, spoke to a group of Rancho Cielo students and staff, as well as local community members and classic car enthusiasts.

The Piston Foundation, a nonprofit that supports young people who are interested in pursuing careers in the collector car industry, also joined Education Day. Foundation President Jeff Mason discussed the organization's scholarship program and efforts to build pathways for the next generation of skilled technicians.

"The future of the classic car world depends on having skilled people to preserve, maintain and restore these cars," Mason said. "We're proud to support Rancho Cielo students as they take their first steps toward careers in the industry."

A Rare Gem

That same day—one of the world's most unique historic vehicles, a pre-war 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom

II Continental—arrived on campus. Students had the extraordinary opportunity to work alongside master detailers and repair specialists, learning how to detail the vehicle for the Concours d'Elegance.

The Rolls-Royce belongs to Rancho Cielo Board Member Bill Hayward, a businessman and philanthropist who acquired the rare automobile and had it restored to its original condition. He entered it in the Concours with Rancho Cielo in mind.

Hayward has a history of investing in Rancho Cielo students. In 2023, he helped construction students design, build and exhibit a fully sustainable home for the Orange County Sustainability Decathlon.

Rancho Cielo won the competition outright, beating top engineering programs from colleges and universities worldwide. He believed that a Pebble Beach acceptance would offer students another once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and he was right.

Perez and Correa were selected to help Hayward present the Rolls-Royce to judges at the Concours because of the talents they demonstrated while in the classic car program and genuine interest in the industry.

They learned about the rare car inside and out, from its storied ownership history to why professionals wear thin-soled shoes to better feel how an engine is running.

More Milestones

On Aug. 13, at the Ferrari Owners Club Northern California Region's 4th Annual Concours Carmel, over 150 Ferrari owners gathered in Carmel-by-the-Sea. Some of the world's most renowned experts judged the cars, while Rancho Cielo students shadowed the judges and learned about the judging process up close. The students then selected their

favorite cars and presented owners with one-of-a-kind trophies, including rose sculptures they had welded themselves.

At the Pebble Beach Concours Forums, Rancho Cielo students and instructors heard experts from across the industry speak. They even rubbed elbows with one of the automotive world's biggest names, Jay Leno. He participated in a forum celebrating the automotive industry's living history.

The Big Show

Also on Thursday, Perez and Correa joined Hayward and his family in the 1934 Rolls-Royce for the Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance, traveling along the 17-Mile Drive and the Monterey coastline. Hayward wanted the two young men to experience this aspect of the Concours because he, too, had dreamed of such an opportunity since he was around their age.

During the 2026 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, the graduates stood alongside the automotive masterpiece on the show field and helped Hayward present it to the judges. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—thousands apply, and only about 200 are selected to participate. The two young men gained real insight into the process and what a competition like this can feel like for participants.

Hayward and his family were ready when the news was finally announced: The Phantom II placed third in the Rolls-Royce pre-war class. They rode the car to the stage to receive the award, but soon after returning to their spot on the show field, the real triumph came. Hayward was notified that the car had received a special second award: the coveted Montagu of Beaulieu Trophy, which recognized it as the most significant automobile

of British origin at the Concours d'Elegance.

Looking Ahead

Exposure to these life-changing opportunities, which may seem unattainable at first, even for well-resourced individuals, is embedded in Rancho Cielo's mission and everyday work. The nonprofit has always evolved its programming to meet the community's needs, leading to the development of its Classic Car Restoration program, first as a track within its Auto & Diesel Repair program in 2023 and then as a dedicated program in 2025.

Activities across the Peninsula during Car Week, the partnership with the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and champions like Hayward showed Rancho Cielo students and the two graduates that real pathways exist for young people to enter the classic car industry, which needs up-and-coming technicians more than ever.

Believed to be the nation's only high school Classic Car Restoration program, Rancho Cielo is working to change that by introducing students—many from communities with limited economic opportunity—to a highly specialized industry and helping to keep the craft alive.

"The future of the classic-car world depends on having skilled people capable of maintaining and restoring these remarkable automobiles," Hayward said, echoing a sentiment shared by industry leaders and Rancho Cielo instructors. 🌱

Learn more about Rancho Cielo and its Classic Car Restoration Program at ranchocieloyc.org. You can also experience and support its programs and students in action at Rancho Cielo's Culinary Round Up on March 21, 2027, at the Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay. Tickets on sale soon at ranchocieloyc.org. Tiffany Harbrecht contributed to this article.

Bridging the Gap Between Employer and Employees on Financial Wellness

As the talent acquisition and retention landscape continues to be challenging for small and large businesses on the Central Coast, a new study from Bank of America sheds light on how employees are viewing their financial wellness.

According to the new 2026 Workplace Benefits Report, there is a 16-point gap between how employers and employees view employee financial wellness. While 71% of employers believe their workforce is financially well, 55% of employees agree.

This gap highlights an important opportunity for employers to strengthen financial wellness resources and education, helping employees better navigate financial stress and support their overall well-being.

Here are some of the trends and findings in the new BofA survey — uncovering how employers are navigating this unique economic landscape.

Economic Concerns Persist: 76% of employees feel stressed about the economy, 62% are “very concerned about inflation” and 75% cite cost of living as a challenge to their financial security.

‘Investing in your employees will have positive, long-lasting impacts on your business because the gap has implications for productivity, retention and the effectiveness of workplace benefits.’



- Work-Life Balance is the Top Priority:** Underscoring a major shift in career values, the top reason Gen Z/Millennial employees who considered leaving their job ultimately decided to stay was “good work/life balance” (69%).
- Financial Confidence Rises:** 55 percent of employees rate their financial wellness as “good or excellent”, a significant jump from 44% in 2023.
- Credit Card Debt Declines:** The percentage of employees carrying credit card debt dropped 11 points in just one year, from 56% in 2025 to 45% in 2026.
- A Confident Outlook on Retirement:** Even amid economic stress, retirement confidence is rising, with 73% of employees now feeling their savings are on track for retirement, a significant 6-point increase from 2025.
- The Business Case for Closing the Gap:** About half of employers currently offer formal financial wellness programs. Among those who do, about nine in 10 report measurable benefits, including more satisfied, productive and engaged employees with greater talent retention rates. For employers, the takeaway is

clear: investing in your employees will have positive, long-lasting impacts on your business because the gap has implications for productivity, retention and the effectiveness of workplace benefits. Bank of America offers an integrated platform that helps employees identify, personalize and track their goals across their full financial lives — providing support for benefits managers along the way.



Career optimism:

	GEN Z / MILLENNIAL	GEN X	BOOMER	WOMEN	MEN
Next year	64%	65%	69%	65%	65%
Next three years	67%	63%	64%	64%	67%

Career optimism has stayed static.



Why they plan to stay:

Good work/life balance	68%
Compensation	52%
Competitive workplace benefits	39%
Possibility of pay increase	39%

Key preferences by generation:

Good work/life balance	Gen Z/Millennial	69%
Compensation	Gen X	59%
Competitive workplace benefits	Boomer	43%

A Harvest of Hope in the Salinas Valley

By Dr. T.K. Anderson, Senior Pastor, Compass Church

Picture a little boy planting a pumpkin seed. He pats the dirt, waters it carefully, and returns 10 minutes later to check on his pumpkin. Nothing. Apparently, nobody explained that gardens don't offer overnight shipping... (Sorry, Amazon!).

Most of us understand that little fellow. We work hard, pray faithfully, and would appreciate seeing results by Thursday.

But harvest takes time. Here in the Salinas Valley, our fields remind us that growth involves tending, plenty of hard work, and blessings we cannot manufacture.

Autumn invites us to remember



God's faithfulness. After the flood, God promised the ongoing rhythm of planting and harvest (Genesis 8:22).

The seasons keep changing, but the God who sustains them remains faithful.

Lamentations 3:23 celebrates His daily mercies with these words, "Great is your faithfulness."

Perhaps your current season feels more like winter. You're worried about your business, carrying a family burden, or waiting for an answer that hasn't come. Reach out to God. You don't need impressive words.

"Lord, I need Your help" is a wonderful place to begin. Psalm 145:18 reminds us, "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." He hears your cry. His faithfulness means you can trust His care, even while you wait.

God's help may arrive differently than you expect. Sometimes He gives strength for the next step, wisdom for a hard decision, or a caring person who walks beside you through the uncertainty.

That's one reason I'm excited to invite you to Compass Church's Night of Worship on Sunday, Oct. 11, at 6 p.m.

Nicole McLean will be our guest worship leader for the

weekend, and I hope you'll make plans to join us!

A gifted vocalist and songwriter, Nicole co-wrote Highlands Worship's "Jesus You Alone," featured in CCM Magazine. In an interview with "Louder Than the Music," she shared her passion for helping people connect with God and developing the gifts of others.

Bring a friend for an evening of worship, prayer, and renewed hope. Whether you attend church regularly or simply need encouragement, there is a place for you.

Come ready to sing, or simply come ready to listen. My prayer is that you'll leave with a lighter heart and a fresh awareness of God's love for you.

I love bringing Christian leaders from around the nation to experience our community. I want them to see what I see... hardworking people, generous hearts, and neighbors who care.

Their visits give us an opportunity to spotlight the Salinas Valley and the wonderful people who make it home.

Then mark Sunday, Oct. 25, for our Fall Festival, following each of our three Sunday services! The

Compass Church parking lot will be filled with games, rides, and a fantastic atmosphere for the entire family. Bring the kids, invite your neighbors, and enjoy some time together.

A little laughter and a day away from our screens might be exactly what the family needs.

Serving this community as a local pastor is one of my greatest joys. I'm honored to work alongside such wonderful business owners and leaders throughout the Salinas Valley. Strong relationships make a

strong community, and we are always better and stronger when we work together.

Let's keep listening, extending kindness, and finding common ground. We can disagree respectfully

without allowing negativity or divisive voices to pull us apart.

Our shared mission of building a better community must always come before personal recognition. Every time we choose cooperation over self-promotion, our neighbors benefit.

May God renew your hope this October, bless your family, and help us cultivate a harvest of kindness together. 🌱

'Serving this community as a local pastor is one of my greatest joys.

I'm honored to work alongside such wonderful business owners and leaders throughout the Salinas Valley. Strong relationships make a strong community, and we are always better and stronger when we work together.'



New Above-Ground Water Storage for the Salinas Valley? Not At This Time

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

On Aug. 13, 2026, the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) board of directors voted 9-2 to select one preferred set of infrastructure projects and water management strategies to ensure the amount of water leaving Salinas Valley aquifer subbasins is balanced with the amount of water going into them.

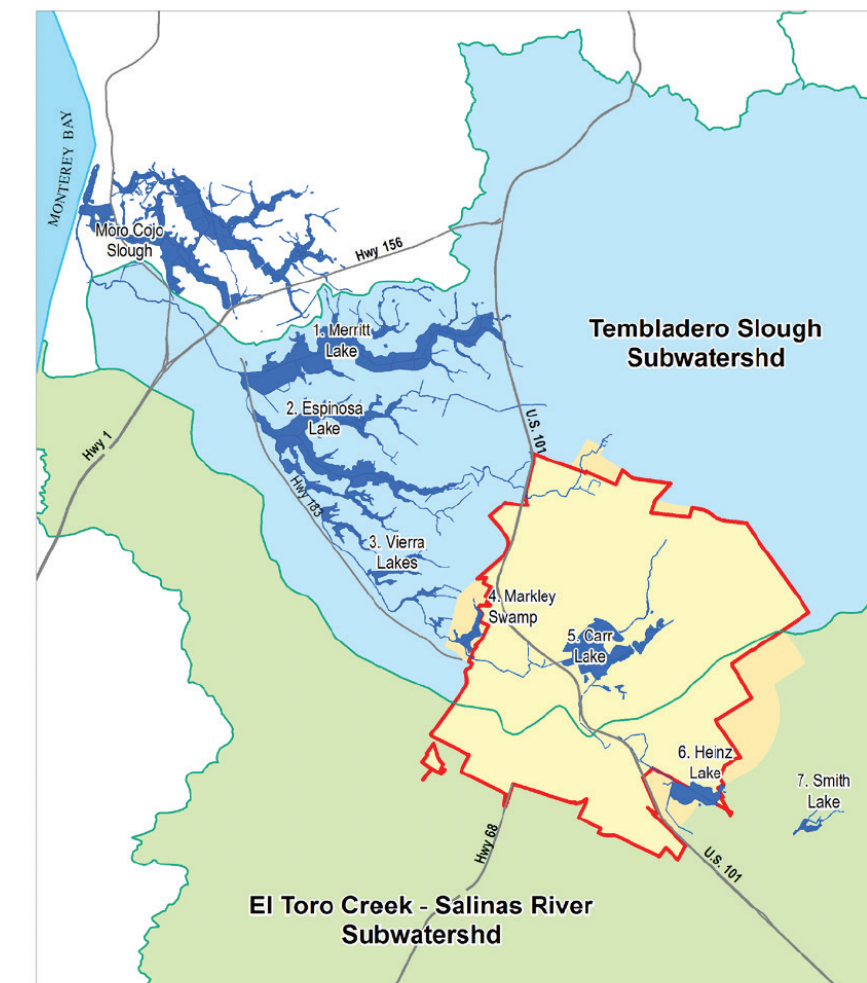
This is the condition of “sustainability” sought under the state’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014, also known as SGMA (pronounced SIG-ma).

Identified as Portfolio 3A of the Projects and Management Actions of the Integrated Implementation Strategy, the plan selected by the SGMA board (and recommended by staff) is one of several developed with the assistance of several consulting firms actively involved for many years in local water supply and demand analysis and strategies.

Preparation, consideration, and selection of plans to maintain “sustainability” in groundwater aquifers is a contentious exercise. Most obvious among the controversies is assigning responsibility to pay for the tremendous cost of water projects.

Portfolio 3A will cost an estimated \$1.06 billion to build and \$74 million in ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) costs each year.

Some Monterey County residents who actively follow Salinas Valley (and Monterey Peninsula) water supply and demand issues have suggested that perhaps the selected portfolio is not creative or



Urban Watershed Management Program

Figure Q-4:

Lower Salinas Valley Historic Wetlands and 7-Lake System

Lower Salinas Valley Historic Wetlands and 7-Lake System. (Source: 2006 City of Salinas Stormwater Management Plan.)

diverse enough.

For example, they ask why the SVBGSA preferred proposal does not emphasize above-ground water storage (surface water reservoirs). They point out that the Nacimiento

and San Antonio reservoirs in southern Monterey County are an important means to store water for the Salinas Valley during the dry season. Why not build and use more reservoirs?

Below is a brief explanation of what’s happening, followed by some potential answers to why reservoirs are not part of the solution.

Why Is a “Portfolio” of Projects Even Necessary?

SVBGSA’s selection is a key decision in its plans to comply with SGMA, a state law meant to ensure that human extraction of water from underground aquifers (for example, through pumping via wells) does not result in more water leaving underground aquifers than what comes in.

Water comes into aquifers naturally through infiltrating precipitation and percolation surface water (such as creeks), groundwater flow from other basins, and also artificially thorough water infrastructure such as wells, pipelines, and tunnels.

When more water is removed from an aquifer than the amount that enters it, the aquifer is “overdrafted.” The State of California Department of Water Resources (DWR) designates the Salinas Valley subbasin closest to the ocean (the 180/400 Foot or “Pressure” Aquifer Subbasin) as “critically overdrafted.”

If an aquifer near the ocean is overdrafted, seawater may move inland to fill the space created by the drop in groundwater levels. This process is called “seawater intrusion.” Sodium chloride (salt) infiltrates the aquifer and makes wells unusable for agricultural irrigation and drinking water.

Not surprisingly, the 180/400 Foot Aquifer Subbasin has experienced significant seawater intrusion, along with the neighboring Monterey

Subbasin, which is located in the City of Marina within the jurisdiction of the Marina Coast Water District.

Wells have been shutting down since 1938 because of it. DWR issued its first report confirming seawater intrusion in the Salinas Valley in 1946.

There have been major efforts to stop the seawater intrusion, including the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP), the Salinas Valley Water Project, and significant improvements in agricultural irrigation efficiency. But the seawater intrusion continues today.

In its mission to comply with SGMA, SVBGSA solely manages five of the nine subbasin aquifers associated with the Salinas River: 180/400 Foot, East Side, Langley, Forebay, and Upper Valley. The Monterey subbasin is managed by the Marina Coast Water District (MCWD) Groundwater Sustainability Agency in cooperation with SVBGSA.

The Seaside Basin has been managed since 2007 by a Watermaster under a different, much older state law. The two Salinas Valley subbasins within San Luis Obispo County — Paso Robles and Atascadero — are not managed by the SVBGSA and have their own Groundwater Sustainability Agencies.

SGMA requires Salinas Valley groundwater subbasins to achieve “sustainability” by 2040. If DWR and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) conclude that SVBGSA has not adopted or implemented a serious sustainability plan, the state can take over management of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin within Monterey County.

What Is Portfolio 3A?

As recommended by its staff, the SVBGSA board selected Portfolio 3A among three final proposals for consideration. Its cost was somewhat less than other proposals, its effectiveness was described by

staff as “close to meeting seawater intrusion criteria,” it “avoids undesirable results for groundwater levels in the 400-Foot Aquifer and Eastside Subbasin,” and it reduces demand for groundwater through meaningful but not overbearing “demand management” measures. (These include conservation, increased water use efficiency, land use changes, and fallowing of farmland.)

Portfolio 3A also outlines three major capital improvement projects:

1. The Brackish Groundwater Recharge Project (BGRP) will use a line of coastal wells (an “extraction barrier”) to extract saline groundwater from the 180/400 Foot Aquifer in areas where seawater intrusion has occurred. This brackish water will be desalinated through reverse osmosis at an industrial water treatment plant.

Then, much of the desalinated water will be injected back into the ground as an “injection barrier” to keep seawater intrusion at 2017 levels or even reverse it by drawing seawater back toward the coastline. Some water will also get delivered to municipal water users in the City of Salinas. Water production estimates are 37,700 acre-feet per year (AFY).

2. The Castroville and Eastside Canals (C&E) Project would divert up to 100 cubic feet per second (cfs) of excess winter flow from the Salinas River at an intake location just upstream (south) of the existing Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF). Water would be conveyed via pipelines to wells for injection into the 180/400 Foot Aquifer and to surface recharge basins in the central Eastside Subbasin, where the water would percolate underground.

No water customer would have access to any direct water

deliveries through this project. Water production estimates are highly dependent on rainfall and range from 4,800 AFY to 24,700 AFY.

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) holds Permit #11043 from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to divert Salinas River water. That permit was awarded in 1957 for open canals that were never built, and although the canal name officially remains, the conveyance system will consist of pipelines.

3. Castroville Seawater Intrusion Program (CSIP) Optimization would upgrade infrastructure and improve operations of this recycled water agricultural irrigation system near the mouth of the Salinas River. CSIP was completed in 1998, and the physical system has been deteriorating.

Recharge Basins as a Destination for Water

Although surface water storage (surface reservoirs) aren’t part of Portfolio 3A, there is a variant of surface water storage: recharge basins proposed for the central Eastside Subbasin. Water would be conveyed to these basins, where it would percolate into the ground and recharge the aquifers underneath.

SVBGSA will need to identify locations in the Eastside Subbasin that would maximize percolation effectiveness. A Soil Agricultural Groundwater Banking Index (SAGBI) developed by the University of California, Davis indicates that the best locations for recharge in the Eastside Subbasin — based on surface soil conditions are the several tributary streams that drain from the western slopes of the northern part of the Gabilan Range and flow westward into the Salinas River.

These tributaries include Alisal Creek, Natividad Creek, Gabilan Creek, and Santa Rita Creek (all of which eventually flow into the City of Salinas), and Chualar Creek and Quail Creek farther south. However, underneath the surface soil of the Eastside Subbasin are old alluvial fans from creeks. These may hinder or prevent recharge as the relocated water percolates deeper toward the 180/400 Foot Aquifer.

Using the Seven-Lake System as Reservoirs

Before the construction of the Reclamation Ditch, the Lower Salinas Valley once had seven major seasonal lakes as well as many smaller lakes. The so-called Seven-Lake System included Merritt Lake, Espinosa Lake, Vierra Lakes, Markley Swamp, Carr Lake, Heins Lake (aka Heinz Lake), and Smith Lake.

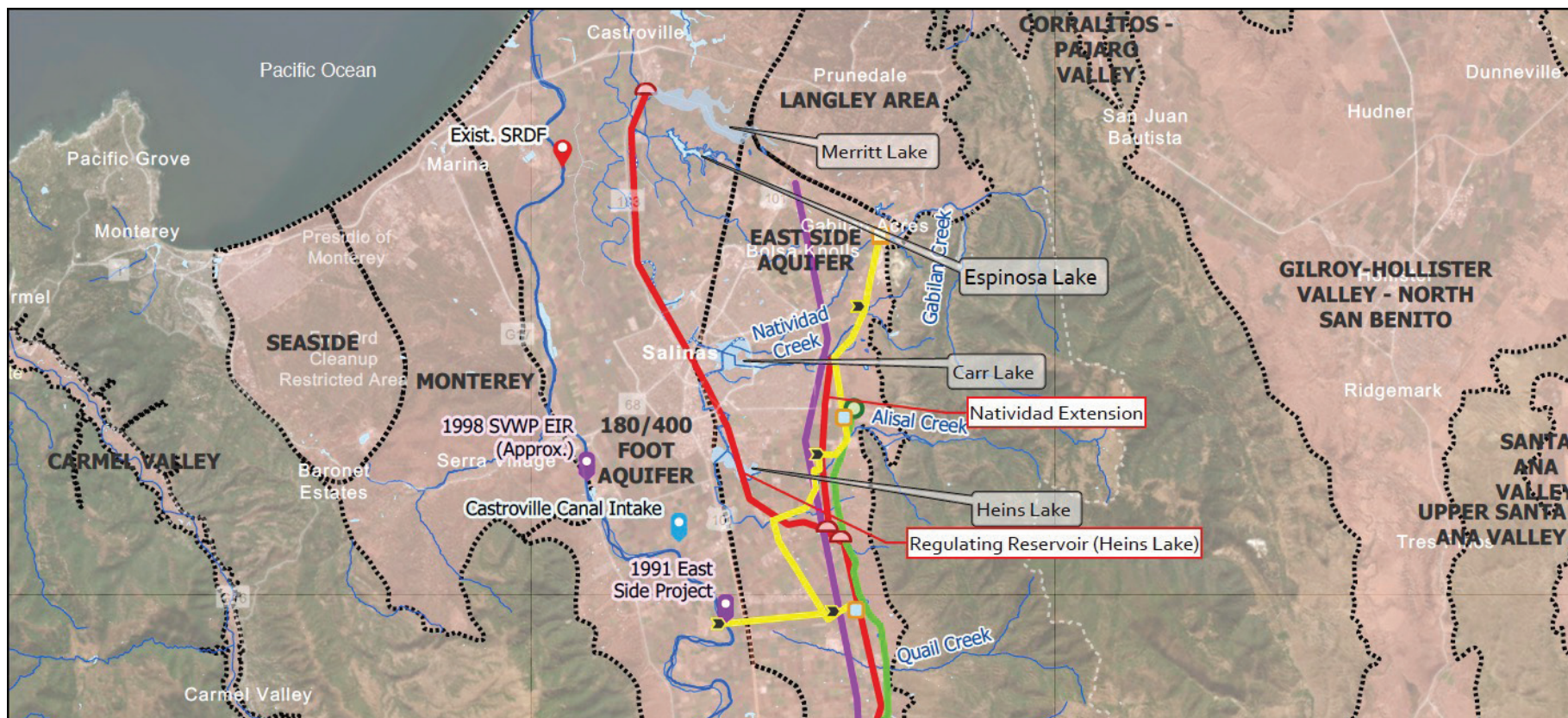
At various times, the sites of these lakes have been considered as locations for surface water storage or reservoirs. Heins Lake was mentioned in a 1946 DWR state report as a potential site for 300 acre-feet of storage. Espinosa Lake and Merritt Lake were considered for storage in a 1998 environmental impact report for what eventually became the Salinas Valley Water Project.

One of these lakes, Lake Merritt aka Merritt Lake, was again considered for water storage in conjunction with the SVBGSA Integrated Implementation Strategy.

Merritt Lake and a Conceptual “Gabilan Reservoir”

A component of some rejected portfolio ideas was an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) program, referred to as Northern Eastside Injection, involving an above-ground surface water reservoir. New pipelines and pumps would be built to bring excess winter water flow from the Salinas River to the reservoir.

Industrial plants would be built



The Seven-Lake System continues to inspire ideas for water storage. (Source: 2026 Castroville and Eastside Canals and Alternatives Preliminary Feasibility Study, Appendix F.)

at the reservoirs for water treatment up to indirect potable water standards. Then, the treated water would be conveyed via pipelines to wells that inject the water into the underground aquifers. That water would later be extracted via wells for municipal drinking water.

This is not an outlandish concept; in fact, an ASR program has been operating in Monterey County for more than 15 years.

Through an ASR program run jointly by the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MCWMD) and California American Water Company (Cal Am) under a SWRCB permit, excess winter flow from the Carmel River is conveyed to the Seaside Groundwater Basin and treated before injection for underground storage. It's later extracted as drinking water for the Monterey Peninsula.

The two proposed reservoirs for Salinas River ASR were Merritt Lake and a new "Gabilan Reservoir" built on one of the creeks flowing from the Gabilan Range. Merritt Lake was considered at a capacity of 13,000 acre-feet (AF) or 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) with an assumed maximum water surface elevation of 36 feet.

"Gabilan Reservoir" was considered at a capacity of 25,000 acre-feet (AF) or 100 cubic feet per second (cfs) with an assumed maximum water surface elevation of 570 feet.

At This Time No Surface Water Storage Is Planned, for Valid Reasons

Consultants surmised that Merritt Lake's limited capacity for storage would constrain portfolio objectives. And the cost was deemed

unreasonable.

One estimate claimed the construction of a reservoir at Merritt Lake would cost \$117 million and the construction of a Gabilan Reservoir would cost \$355 million.

Another obstacle to using Merritt Lake as a reservoir or building a new Gabilan Reservoir is that MCWRA's Permit #11043 would likely require use of the diverted Salinas River water within 30 days of diversion. Storage in Merritt Lake or Gabilan Reservoir would have to be brief under that particular permit.

Why not amend the water permit or apply for a new permit? That's an onerous task. Permits require evaluation of environmental impact and public input. A 2025 consultant's report to SVBGSA warned about "stakeholder acceptance" of new reservoirs:

"Selection of potential reservoir sites will likely be controversial. In-stream reservoirs on tributaries in the foothills will be difficult from an environmental and public acceptance standpoint. Off-stream reservoirs in the valley (e.g., Merritt Lake) will be limited in capacity and require taking agricultural land out of production.

Further investigation would be needed into the feasibility of using sites for seasonal water storage that are currently used for drainage/flood control purposes."

The trend for dams in California in the 21st Century is demolition, not construction. The San Clemente Dam on the Carmel River is one example, and the Los Padres Dam that still exists on that river has been considered for demolition. Don't expect any new dams or reservoirs in the Salinas Valley either. 🌱

Voting Yes on Measure H Is a Vote for Less Government Regulation on Rental Property Owners in Salinas

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Voters in the City of Salinas have a choice in November 2026 between maintaining or eradicating a substantial package of new laws meant to regulate the contractual relationship of rental property owners and their tenants within city limits.

On the city ballot is a “referendum,” a direct vote of the people to approve or reject laws or parts of laws enacted by a legislative body. Referendums are authorized under Article II, Section 9 of the California Constitution. This referendum for Salinas voters about rental property regulations is designated on the ballot as Measure H.

Voting YES for Measure H means you want the new regulations to be repealed so they are no longer a legal requirement for rental property owners.

Voting NO for Measure H means you want the new rental property regulations to remain in the city’s municipal code and require rental property owners to comply with them.

This vote on Measure H does not affect existing state or federal laws that already regulate rental housing. It’s a city law and a city issue.

Some voters are apparently struggling to understand the meaning of a YES vote versus a NO vote for Measure H. In addition, people have been confused by the long and complicated process since the late 2010s of various factions fighting over and flipping over regulations on rental property owners.

Legislative History of the Rental Registration and Rent Stabilization Program

On Dec. 4, 2018, the Salinas City Council received “The Salinas Plan,” a report from a consulting firm called the National Resource Network. While this plan is better known today for its proposed strategies to reduce city spending, the report also included recommendations to adopt a rental registry and inspection fee program and enact policies to ensure safe and healthy conditions in rental housing.

On Nov. 5, 2019, the city council approved the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, which included policy goals



to enact a “Just Cause Eviction Ordinance” and a “Rental Registration and Inspection Program.”

Acceptance of The Salinas Plan and the Alisal Vibrancy Plan by the Salinas City Council was then cited by city staff and supporters of rental regulations as legislative intent to require rental property owners to register their units with the city and provide information about them.

Your Chamber pointed out that rental regulations were a marginal part of public discussion about these comprehensive plans.

On Jan. 18, 2022, the city council voted to direct staff to prepare an ordinance, still in effect, that requires private property owners to register their rental units with the city, provide the city with information about those units, and pay a fee.

Over the next year, the Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison participated in a city Technical Advisory Committee of interested parties to discuss the development of language for this ordinance.

On April 4, 2023, the city council voted unanimously for the “Residential Rental Registration Program.” It took effect on July 1, 2023. Your Chamber submitted a letter to the city council dated Feb. 28, 2023, stating that “the committee worked toward creating an ordinance with language that all parties could accept as

a reasonable compromise” and “We believe an acceptable compromise has been achieved.”

The letter urged the city council to pursue an increase in the supply of residential units through new construction and the hiring of an Economic Development Director. It warned against a quick rush to enact additional regulations on rental property owners.

Something happened behind the scenes in the months after the city council enacted the Rental Registration ordinance. The Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison was removed from the Technical Advisory Committee and supporters of “Rent Stabilization” were given a dominant voice in city policy discussions. The city council accelerated a push for new ordinances that would substantially regulate price increases and tenant relationships.

On Sept. 24, 2024, six weeks before the November 2024 mayor and city council elections, the Salinas City Council enacted three more ordinances. The city’s “Rent Stabilization” ordinance strictly limits the percentage by which certain private property owners can raise rent annually.

Also, the city council enacted “Tenant Protection and Just Cause Eviction” and Tenant Anti-” ordinances, which include provisions that

regulate the relationship of rental property owners and their tenants. The city's Community Development Department launched the Rent Stabilization program on Jan. 1, 2025.

If the city council regarded their vote for Rent Stabilization just before the election as a campaign strategy for victory on Nov. 5, they were mistaken. A new mayor and four new city council members subsequently took office with different ideas about how to make rents affordable for ordinary households.

On June 3, 2025, the city council voted 5-2 to repeal the four ordinances, with the repeal scheduled to take effect on July 3, 2025. But in the following months, a coalition in support of the four ordinances collected enough voter signatures on petitions to compel the city council to either rescind their repeal of the four ordinances or place a referendum on a future ballot for voters to decide on repeal of the four ordinances.

On Sept. 23, 2025, the city council voted 4-3 to direct staff to submit the repeal ordinance to the voters for the Nov. 3, 2026 election. Your Chamber of Commerce worked



On the city ballot is a 'referendum,' a direct vote of the people to approve or reject laws or parts of laws enacted by a legislative body. This referendum for Salinas voters about rental property regulations is designated on the ballot as Measure H.

in various ways to see if interested parties would be able to reach a compromise on the regulation of rental housing and avoid a voter referendum.

Fundamental ideological differences about the nature of property rights and the proper relationship between rental property owners and tenants undermined any efforts to identify a middle ground. Both sides felt the people were behind them and their position would be upheld by voters in a referendum.

On June 2, 2026, the city council held a final vote to put the referendum on the November general election ballot. 🌱

JUNIOR CHAMBER - from page 18

of Salinas Valley leaders to the next for more than a century.

When I look at this group, I don't see participants in a program. I see future board chairs, business owners, and civic leaders. I see the entrepreneurs and the workforce of the next generation, already putting down roots.

Every community's future depends on who it chooses to invest in. Through the Junior Chamber, your Chamber Foundation has made its choice — and to our founding cohort, our mentors, our speakers, and the businesses that have opened their doors, thank you for making the first year one to remember.

Success, after all, is never just about the harvest. It is about the people who plant the seeds — and this year, the Salinas Valley planted well. We encourage those who are interested in participating in the second year of this program, or the leaders' of local businesses who employ such individuals to apply for the second year of this program by applying at <https://www.salinaschamber.com/salinas-valley-junior-chamber-program/>. 🌱

For more information about the Salinas Valley Junior Chamber Program, visit [SalinasChamber.com](https://www.SalinasChamber.com) or call (831) 751-7725.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Alvarez Technology Group Ribbon Cutting & 25th Anniversary Celebration**

Thursday, Oct. 15, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.,

209 Pajaro St., Salinas

Join Alvarez Technology Group as it proudly celebrates 25 years in business with a special Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting and Open House. Since 2001, ATG has been honored to support local businesses and organizations with reliable IT services, cybersecurity, and trusted technology guidance. This milestone is about more than years—it's about the relationships, partnerships, and community that made it possible. What to expect: official ribbon cutting with SVCC and MPCC; light refreshments and beverages; tour of ATG office and meet the team; networking with local business leaders, clients, and partners. We'd love to celebrate this exciting milestone with you!

- **Lunch and Learn with Raven Drum Foundation**

Tuesday, Oct. 20, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.,

119 E. Alisal St., Salinas

Learn somatic experiencing techniques for emotional regulation and stress management through rhythm, sound, and mind-body connection. Raven Drum Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting veterans, first responders, and individuals in crisis through experiential programs that integrate rhythm, mindfulness, and community-based healing. Founded by Lauren Monroe and Rick Allen, the Foundation combines evidence-informed wellness practices with the unifying power of music to foster resilience, emotional regulation, and connection. Since its inception, Raven Drum Foundation has served thousands through immersive experiences designed to support recovery, presence, and long-term well-being.

- **Young Professionals Connect & Lead**

Thursday, Oct. 22, 2026, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.,

210 Salinas St., Salinas

Join us on Thursday, Oct. 22, for Young Professionals Connect & Lead, a mixer hosted by the Salinas Valley Chamber Foundation's Junior Chamber of Commerce for emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals across the Salinas Valley. What to expect: networking with young professionals from across Monterey County; hors d'oeuvres and non-alcoholic beverages included; and supporting a great cause—the 75th Children's Shopping Tour. Entry fee is \$15. Register at SalinasChamber.com.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

- **ArcPoint Labs Salinas Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**

Tuesday, Oct. 27, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.,

635 Sanborn Place, Salinas

ARCpoint Labs of Salinas invites the community to celebrate an exciting new chapter with the official launch of its new division, Any Lab Test Now, on Tuesday, Oct. 27. Locally owned by Spenser and Belle Smith, ARCpoint Labs has built its reputation on providing convenient, confidential testing services with a trusted local team. The addition of Any Lab Test Now expands those services even further, giving individuals and businesses greater access to a broad range of lab testing options, convenient service and faster results.

Guests are invited to stop by between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m. to learn about the expanded services, meet the team, and enjoy a relaxed community celebration. Sip local wines, savor small bites from Pizza Factory, enjoy Crumbl Cookies, and have some fun with life-size Connect 4, Jenga and KerPlunk, plus trivia games to test your skills. A community ribbon-cutting event will take place at 5:15 p.m. in partnership with SVCC and MPCC. The event is open to the community. Come celebrate a growing local business, connect with the team and discover the expanded testing resources now available right here in Salinas.

- **Lunch and Learn with Monterey County Business Council**

Thursday, Oct. 29, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.,

119 E Alisal St., Salinas

Join Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce on Oct. 29 for a Lunch and Learn with Monterey County Business Council. More information coming soon. Save the date and register today. SalinasChamber.com.

- **Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of Youth Recovery Connections**

Thursday, Nov. 5, time TBA,

111 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join us for Youth Recovery Connections' (YRC) grand opening and ribbon-cutting event of their Salinas office. YRC is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting youth, adults, and families impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and justice system involvement. YRC provide compassionate support, guidance, coaching, and care management to individuals, groups, and families facing difficult times, including barriers to care, financial or housing issues, and the need for local resources. Their space and staff are safe, supportive, and free of judgment, ensuring that everyone feels empowered to speak up for their needs.

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT DAN FIGUEROA



Dan Figueroa is a lifelong resident of Salinas. He is a recent graduate from CSUMB (Class of 2022) and started his career in insurance while he was attending college selling personal line products such as Home and Auto Insurance. Recently, he has transitioned from a Property Adjuster to Employee Benefits Account Executive/

Producer at Leavitt Central Coast Insurance Services in Salinas.

After seeing Leavitt's involvement with the local community, he was motivated to give back to the community where he was born and raised. He looks forward to his involvement in the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Back to School: Laws Regarding Employee Leaves for School-Related Activities and Discipline

By Kali Smiley, Fenton & Keller

With the new school year underway, employers may need to permit some employees to take unpaid time off from work to attend their child's school-related activities or disciplinary meetings. Below are a few school-related leaves that employers must allow employees to take.



or childcare provider, excluding planned holidays, a natural disaster, or the school or childcare provider has requested the child be picked up.

Employees must provide their employer with reasonable notice of the

planned absence unless the time off is needed for an emergency situation, in which case the employee is required to give notice as soon as possible. An employer may request that the employee provide documentation from the school or childcare provider as proof that the employee participated in the permitted activity on a specific date and at a particular time.

School Suspension

All employers must allow an employee who is a parent or a guardian of a student to take unpaid time off to attend school with their child following a suspension if the school requests the employee's attendance. Employers must allow an employee to take this leave so long as the employee gives the employer reasonable notice of the absence.

School-Related Activities Leave

The California Labor Code provides that employers who have 25 or more employees at the same location must allow eligible employees (parents, guardians, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, or persons who stand in place of the child's parent) to take up to 40 hours of unpaid leave per year to (1) enroll their child in school (K-12) or a licensed childcare; (2) participate in school or childcare activities such as school visit or behavioral or discipline problems (other than the situation discussed above); or (3) address a childcare or school emergency such as a closure or unexpected unavailability of the school

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NON-PROFIT EVENTS

First Friday Salinas — Arts Council for Monterey County

Oct. 2, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., Downtown Salinas

First Friday Salinas is a monthly tradition designed to transform Downtown into a consistent, positive space for community and culture to thrive. Come and enjoy an evening of local art, live entertainment, delicious food, and shops open late. Bring your friends and family to Salinas City Center and discover something new every First Friday of the month — you won't want to miss it!

Taste of Markon — Rancho Cielo

Oct. 2, 5:00– 8:00 p.m., 710 Old Stage Road, Salinas – Rancho Cielo Campus

Celebrate the 11th Annual Markon Chef Summit with an unforgettable culinary event featuring top chefs from across the country — all in support of Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy. More details to come.

Walk With a Doc Breast Cancer Awareness - Salinas Valley Health

Oct. 3, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m., Fort Ord National Monument – Badger Hills Trailhead

Salinas Valley Health Invites you to join their physician and healthcare providers for their monthly walk and talk that will inspire and inform. This month they are joined by Amy Lantis-Stemerman, MD, Medical Director for the Nancy Ausonio Breast Health Center. Let their unique health and wellness programs connect you with your best life.

Live for Ross Foundation's Take-Out BBQ Fundraiser

Oct. 3 11:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m., 240 Mortenson Ave., Salinas – Salinas Airport

Join the Tarp family and #LiveForRoss Foundation for their 2026 take-out BBQ Fundraiser at Mo's River Road Grill in Salinas. Each \$70 ticket

includes a steak entrée with sides, enough to serve four to five people. The #LiveForRoss: A Fund for Safety Awareness & Vocational Readiness honors Ross Tarp-Braasch by promoting safety awareness and supporting students in vocational education like welding and ag tech programs. For more information, go to the #LiveForRoss Foundation website at: <https://liveforross.org/bbq-fundraiser/>.

Steinbeck House Tour – The Steinbeck House

Oct. 17, 2:30 – 3:30 p.m., 132 Central Ave., Salinas

Step inside the home where John Steinbeck was born and grew up and discover the stories that shaped a literary legend. Every third Saturday of the month join Valley Guild docents for a guided tour of the Steinbeck House. Due to the popularity of the tours and to provide the best experience for all guests, reservations will be required to guarantee a tour time. Walk-ins are welcomed based on availability. Please call (831) 424-2735 to reserve a spot for one of the following tour times: 2:30 p.m., 2:45 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 3:15 p.m. or 3:30 p.m. Each time slot is limited to a maximum of 10 guests. Tours last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The gift shop will be open following the tours.

Youth of the Year – Boys & Girls Club of Monterey County

Oct. 28, 5:00– 7:15 p.m., 1441 Canyon Del Rey Blvd., Seaside, Embassy Suites

Youth of the Year is the highest honor awarded to a Boys & Girls Club member—a recognition of leadership, service, academic excellence, and commitment to community. Outstanding teens from the clubs compete for scholarship awards and the opportunity to advance to regional and national levels of the competition. Held at Embassy Suites by Hilton Monterey Bay Seaside, this inspiring evening features a welcoming reception, powerful speeches from club youth, and the announcement of the Monterey County Youth of the Year. Join them for a night that honors courage, celebrates achievement, and uplifts the next generation of leaders.

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

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When an employee is notified of an emergency condition at their child's school, the employee must, when practicable, notify their employer about the emergency condition prior to leaving work or refusing to report to work. If an employee is unable to give prior

notice, it is expected they give their employer notice as soon as possible.

Discharging, threatening to discharge, demoting, suspending, or otherwise discriminating against an employee for taking time off pursuant to the leaves granted to eligible employees under California law is prohibited.

Therefore, all employers should be aware of what laws they are subject to and ensure that their policies and procedures are maintained and updated to address all leaves. Moreover, human resources personnel, managers, and supervisors should be aware of the available school-related leaves so they will recognize when or if an

employee's request for time off is a leave protected under California law. 🌿

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



MONTHLY UPDATE | OCTOBER

More Than A Market

The Downtown Salinas Farmers Market is more than a place to pick up fresh produce. Each week, the market brings together local farmers, small businesses, vendors, families, and community members in the heart of Downtown Salinas. Shopping at the farmers market is an opportunity to discover locally grown foods, meet the people behind the products, and support entrepreneurs from throughout our region. From seasonal fruits and vegetables to prepared foods and locally made goods, every visit offers something different to explore. The market also provides an inviting reason to spend time downtown. Visitors can shop the market, connect with neighbors, discover local businesses, and enjoy everything Downtown Salinas has to offer. Whether you stop by every week or are visiting for the first time, the market is a place to shop local, eat fresh, and stay connected to the community.



Fresh This Month OCTOBER PRODUCE & RECIPE

October brings the flavors of fall to the Downtown Salinas Farmers Market. As the seasons begin to change, shoppers can look for locally grown favorites such as broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, celery, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, apples, pears, winter squash, pumpkins, and leafy greens. It's a great time to explore the market, discover what local growers are harvesting, and bring home fresh ingredients for comforting fall meals.

Try This: Roasted Fall Vegetable & Apple Bowl

Put your October market finds to good use with a simple and flavorful seasonal bowl that brings together some of fall's freshest ingredients. Chop winter squash, carrots, broccoli, and apples into bite-sized pieces, then toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and a touch of cinnamon. Spread everything evenly on a baking sheet and roast at 425°F for 25–30 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender and lightly browned around the edges. Serve over your favorite grain, such as quinoa or brown rice, or pair with fresh leafy greens. Finish with a drizzle of honey or balsamic vinegar for a colorful, satisfying fall-inspired meal made with ingredients you can find at the farmers market.



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Protecting Kids. Expanding Access. Strengthening Our Community.

According to the recent Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), access to healthcare services is one of our region’s top health concerns. The Salinas Valley Health Mobile Clinic helps address this need by bringing essential health services directly to underserved communities. Our Mobile Clinic helps keep children healthy through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program – a federally funded initiative that provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children.

Access to these important vaccines – regardless of a family’s ability to pay – provides children a better chance of getting their recommended vaccinations on schedule and staying healthy.

Eligibility

- Children 18 years or younger

Criteria (must meet one):

- Medi-Cal
- Uninsured
- American Indian or Alaska Native



For more information about our mobile clinic services, scan the QR code.



Some childhood vaccines don’t just protect your children, they can also help keep grandparents, older adults, and family members who are sick from getting very ill. Vaccinating children is one of the best ways to protect the whole family.”

– Orlando Rodriguez, MD
Family Medicine Specialist &
Salinas Valley Health Chief Medical Officer

