



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



AgroThrive Making an Impact on the World

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A Profile in Leadership: Margaret D'Arrigo

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Building a Better Future for Students

Salinas Union High School District Modernization Construction Projects Near Completion

By Marcos Cabrera, SUHSD Director of Communications

At the Feb. 11 board meeting, Salinas Union High School District Trustee Tracy Filice proudly updated the community on pending construction projects.

"North Salinas High School's building is 40-percent complete," Filice said to a round of applause. "All of the projects are making great progress."

Those projects include the North Salinas High School building, which will reshape the campus. The construction of the new two-story steel-frame permanent building will provide essential space for new classrooms, including dedicated areas for ASB leadership and Sports Medicine, as well as facilities for school administration.

Additionally, the project includes the reconfiguration of the parking lot,

complete with new fencing and gates, and the addition of a covered walkway.

Across town at Salinas High School, a two-story building is also being constructed that will give a new look to the historic campus. Alisal High School is also gaining its own two-story building,

SALINAS HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT see page 8

The City of Salinas Permit Center Is Here to Say 'Yes'

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Californians want to be confident that the structures they use are compliant with safety codes and community standards. They expect the government to ensure these conditions are met. At the same time, Californians also want the government to approve projects and inspect structures in a way that is inexpensive, quick, and easy.

These two demands on the government are sometimes incompatible. The state's legislative branch (the California State Legislature) and the executive branch (the state agencies under the Governor) try to balance public demands by pursuing state codes that are simple, understandable, and effective.

But perfection in lawmaking is elusive. Sometimes state laws are burdensome, complicated, ambiguous, or irrelevant to a specific situation. As a result, no matter where you are in California, you'll hear



complaints about the local process to get a permit. The City of Salinas is no exception.

Complaints and Improvements: Your Chamber's Involvement

Some business owners and

executives claim that Salinas has a bad reputation for how it responds to businesses that want to begin or expand operations in the city. And indeed,

PERMIT CENTER see page 3



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Permit Center - from page 1

the Chamber knows about a few cases in the past 10 years in which businesses left Salinas or chose not to locate or expand in Salinas because they perceived chronic hassles at the Permit Center.

Your Chamber routinely receives complaints from members and other business owners and residents about the Permit Center causing project delays. Without doing a comprehensive examination of each application, your Chamber cannot confirm that the Permit Center is at fault in all of these cases. Nevertheless, the complaints circulate in the community and may influence business and homeowner decisions about seeking permits for activities in Salinas.

On behalf of its members, your Chamber of Commerce has tracked and evaluated the efficiency and responsiveness of the City of Salinas permitting process for decades. This Chamber involvement has at times included the convening of a Business Development Committee to provide guidance and advice to the Permit Center.

There have been at least two previous multi-year campaigns organized by city staff (with Chamber involvement) to improve Permit Center customer service. Regrettably, the Great Recession in the late 2000s/early 2010s and the COVID-19 public health orders in the early 2020s waylaid those two reform efforts.

Compounding the problem during the COVID pandemic was new technology at the Permit Center that was supposed to improve the permitting process but ended up frustrating the public and the staff.

In the past few years, Chamber leaders have noticed the Permit Center is improving in many areas. For example, the Permit Center has significantly expanded the content and substance of its annual reports to the city council and the public. It has sought customer input on its

services and implemented changes to features of the permit process that tend to slow down review and approval. And it recognizes the need for a long-term plan to address an increasing workload and more responsibilities.

The Permit Center Is More Than Just Building and Construction Permits

As outlined on the Permit Services section of its website (<https://www.cityofsalinas.org/Residents/Permit-Center>), the Permit Center “acts as a coordination hub, bringing together representatives from different departments or agencies involved in the permit approval process” to ideally streamline and expedite the permit process for applicants.

In her Feb. 11, 2025 presentation to the Salinas City Council, Community Development Department Director Lisa Brinton emphasized that the Permit Center includes much more than the Permit Services Division, which grants administrative (executive branch) approval to construct, alter, or create new structures within the city limits.

The Fire Division (part of the Fire Department) oversees and inspects fire sprinklers, fire alarms, underground fire line systems, special events, and other fire prevention services. The Current Planning Division oversees zoning and land use, conditional use permits, site plan reviews, new subdivisions, master sign plans, and home occupation permits. The Code Enforcement Division addresses substandard housing, work done without a permit, health and safety standards, and property maintenance. The Engineering Division (part of the Public Works Department) handles Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs), sidewalks, encroachment (intrusion onto public land or someone else’s private land), and development impacts.

The Permit Center is a multi-layered, multi-department operation with a high volume of activities

Want to improve a property in the City of Salinas? Here’s some contact information.

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Website for Paperless Permit Portal: https://salinas-ca-us.avolvecloud.com/Login/Index/Salinas-CA?_t=638756286239161354

This easy, fast online system is always available to apply for certain kinds of building permits, including simple permits for commercial or residential work (solar, reroofing, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and other work to be performed by a single trade), building permits (for alterations, remodels, additions, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), new buildings, and other work to be performed by multiple trades), demolition permits, commercial sign permits, and revisions to existing permits.

performed by a limited staff. Here are some statistics about the Permit Center for 2024:

The Permit Services Division received 26,034 phone calls (a 10% increase from 2023) and engaged in 6,603 counter transactions (a 12% increase from 2023). It also produced 501 city reports.

The Building and Plan Review Division reviewed 7,256 plans, with 4,443 reviews classified as “on time.” It received 3,601 permit applications (a 30% increase from 2023) and approved 2,955 permits (a 31% increase from 2023). In addition, 2,152 permitted projects were finalized as completed (a 24% increase from 2023).

The Building Inspection Division completed 17,866 inspections (a 24% increase from 2023), with 16,850 inspections done in the field and 1,016 done virtually.

The Current Planning Division approved 533 applications and served 1,835 customers at the front desk of the Permit Center at 65 West Alisal St.

The Fire Prevention Division issued 280 permits, checked 542

plans, completed 2,129 inspections, and served 256 customers at the front desk. It also issued 121 fire-works citations.

The Development Engineering Division issued 916 permits, checked 2,908 plans, completed 5,071 inspections, and served 961 customers at the front desk.

The Code Enforcement Division reviewed 227 building permits for compliance, opened 1,703 cases, completed 4,829 inspections, and closed 1,586 cases.

The Permit Department also provided small business support with 482 customer assistance interactions.

‘We Really Value Customer Service’

The Permit Center continues to encourage users to fill out a survey about their experience using Permit Center services. It’s evident that most people initiate business with the Permit Center expecting misery, but then are pleasantly surprised. Survey results for 2024 showed that 73% of people found that Permit

PERMIT CENTER see page 8

Do We Really Understand Just How Unique This Place We Call Home Is?

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair



I grew up in Fremont, California, in the shadows of the foothills above Mission San Jose. Growing up in the '60s, long before the area became known as Silicon Valley, Fremont was an agricultural community that was transitioning to a bedroom community to San Francisco and Oakland. The weather and soil there was perfect for growing vegetables and permanent crops like stone fruit and grapes.

As the land was further developed in the early '70s the debate began on whether expansion should take place in the hills surrounding the area or on the farmland, preserving the beautiful vistas of the surrounding mountains. The mountains won and over the next decade the farmland quickly disappeared. Much like what transpired in San Jose in the '50s and '60s, the farmers in area either retired or moved to the Salinas Valley, Arizona, or Mexico to continue to provide the nation with the vegetables that we had become accustomed to enjoying 365 days a year. That same scenario has repeated itself in other state agricultural areas like southern California, Oxnard, and Santa Maria, to name just a few.

So, what makes the Salinas Valley so special? First, it's important to understand that in all of the earth there are only five regions that enjoy a Mediterranean climate. Contrary to the rest of the world where the winters are dry and cold, and the summers are wet, hot, and humid, a Mediterranean climate is one where the winters are mild and wet, and the summers are warm and dry. These five regions make up less than 2.5% of the world's land mass, but comprise approximately 20% of the world's plant species. We happen to live in one of those special regions, along with the Mediterranean Basin, Central Chile, the Cape region of South Africa, and South/South Western Australia. Beyond residing in the only Mediterranean climate in North America, there are other factors that make our

valley unique and ideal for growing cool weather vegetables and permanent crops.

First, the largest and deepest submarine canyon in the Pacific Ocean sits right off our coast, at the mouth of the Salinas Valley. This canyon is longer and deeper than the Grand Canyon at over 290 miles long, 7.5 miles wide, and more than a mile deep. As many local surfers can attest, thanks to the Monterey Canyon, we have some of the coldest water along the Pacific rim.

When summer temperature's reach high double to triple digits in the San Joaquin Valley, those warm temperatures draw the cool ocean air down the Salinas Valley toward King City. This acts as the valley's thermostat, bringing fog in the morning and cool winds in the afternoon, creating the perfect weather to grow our crops. Along with the ideal climate, centuries of erosion from the Santa Lucia and Gabilan mountains have deposited rich topsoil to the valley floor, providing us with the most productive farm land in the world.

Of course, the engine that makes us the "Salad Bowl of the World" is water. As we debate the future of water resource management and future growth in the county, I'm hearing many of the same arguments that I heard as a teenager in Fremont. Let's not make the same mistake that other regions in the state have made. Let's not forget how vital an economic engine our farming resources are and let's not forget how essential fresh fruits and vegetables are to a healthy, long, and sustainable life. As Joni Mitchell once said, "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you got 'til it's gone."🌱

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Goodwill Central Coast

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Goodwill Central Coast Works to Empower the Community Through Digital Literacy

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

In today's rapidly evolving world, digital skills have become essential for success in nearly every aspect of life, from accessing job opportunities to managing personal finances and staying connected with loved ones.

Goodwill Central Coast (GCC) is dedicated to closing the growing digital divide, by providing individuals with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive in a technology-driven society through GCC's Digital Literacy Program. By offering access to hands-on training, mentorship, and resources, the program empowers participants to build confidence, enabling them to thrive in a society that relies on increasingly digital tools.

For many members of the community, a lack of digital skills is a barrier to employment, education, and other daily activities. GCC's Digital Literacy program breaks down this barrier by teaching foundational skills such as using email, creating resumes, and mastering online job applications.

For those looking to advance their careers, the program offers more specialized training, such as proficiency in Microsoft Office, navigating video conferencing platforms, and managing data securely. These skills increase each participant's competitiveness in the job market and help them adapt to our society's evolving workplace environment.

While Goodwill does receive some community referrals and self-referrals, most of the clients arrive through referrals from the Monterey Expanded Subsidized Employment Program (ESE).

"These individuals are referred by Monterey County for subsidized employment at Goodwill stores



and offsite locations for on-the-job training, supervision, and intensive case management," said Adrian Licea, Director of Mission Services. Adrian oversees the supervision of the staff and program services to ensure programmatic and financial contract obligations are met. "Clients come from all different backgrounds and ages, but all of them have children, and are returning to the workforce."

GCC's Monterey ESE program includes three Employment Specialists who deliver intensive case management. Additionally, Nancy Perez, Career Center Coordinator, orients ESE participants to services, including internet access, job boards, employment and training resources, and in-demand positions in the area. She also assists participants with learning effective job search skills, navigating the current labor market, preparing applications and resumes, and conducting mock interviews.

Advantages of entering the job market

Veisia Fale of King City was eager to fully utilize and attend all the classes GCC's Digital Literacy Program offered, especially in the areas of consuming, creating, and communicating online. For some of the skills, such as using Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel, it had been a very long time since she had used those applications. Following the completion of her Digital Literacy classes, Veisia felt much more confident about leveraging those skills in her daily life as well as the job market.

"I was able to see exactly which classes she was interested in, and work with her Employment Specialist to get her signed up, or reschedule for the next available class if schedule conflicts occur," said Alyssa Ferguson, Digital Literacy Coordinator, who provides instruction in group and individual classroom settings to build participants' digital literacy skills and

knowledge in computer basics, internet fundamentals, and common application software.

"It felt great to see her progress with all of the classes."

Participants can obtain digital literacy certifications through Northstar Digital Literacy, a nationally recognized Digital Literacy Program. Beyond employment, the Digital Literacy program strengthens the community by fostering inclusivity. It equips individuals with the ability to access online health-care, educational resources, and social services, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital age. Participants can connect with loved ones, engage with local and global events, and access tools that enrich their lives. By enabling community members to fully participate in today's connected world, GCC is creating a ripple effect of empowerment and opportunity.

"For many people who aren't comfortable with technology, it can be difficult or uncomfortable to ask for help," Alyssa said.

"So many things are done virtually now, especially after the pandemic. Many important meetings, interviews, and even doctor appointments are done online now. Most jobs require some level of computer literacy, and I suspect that this will only continue to become a requirement for many jobs in the future. The sudden shift to a very virtual world has left many people behind, so it can feel intimidating to have to learn all this brand-new tech, especially on your own."

For some, it's a language barrier that makes understanding technology challenging. While more

DIGITAL LITERACY see page 6

DIGITAL LITERACY - from page 5

resources are being made in languages other than English to teach digital literacy skills, people may still need hands-on or one-on-one guidance to practice or understand these skills. "We are finding ways to provide classes in Spanish, since the need is there," Adrian said.

"We have the content translated, we are now planning to have staff members available who can translate."

The Power of Digital Literacy

At its core, digital literacy is the ability to use digital devices, the internet, and social media to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information. It builds on traditional literacy skills to address computer and digital device competency, and includes the following:

- **Information literacy:** The ability



to find, evaluate, and use digital information critically

- **Media literacy:** The ability to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate digital media
- **Communication and Collaboration:** The ability to use digital communication tools and collaborate effectively in digital environments
- **Cybersecurity Awareness:** The ability to recognize potential cyber threats

- **Office Software:** The ability to use office software such as word processors, email, and presentation software
- **Creating and Editing:** The ability to create and edit images, audio, and video
- **Using the Internet:** The ability to use the internet confidently on a mobile phone, tablet, laptop, or PC
- **Communicating Online:** The ability to communicate online using email, social media, or other tools like Zoom and Teams
- **Searching for Information:** The ability to search for reliable information online

A rewarding experience

Alyssa has been with Goodwill for nearly two years, beginning as a Training & Development Associate at GCC's Seaside location before being promoted to Digital Literacy

Coordinator in April of 2023. Before working with Goodwill, she earned a degree in public health, with an interest in community health and community-based nonprofit organizations.

"It is very rewarding to see when the information finally clicks for people in classes," Alyssa said.

"Seeing people become more confident or more skilled with technology is amazing. Especially for those who are seeking employment opportunities, it is great to see those skills directly translate to jobs they now feel confident in applying for."

Ultimately, the Digital Literacy program exemplifies Goodwill's mission of enhancing lives through learning and employment. By investing in the digital education of individuals, GCC is not only transforming lives but also building a stronger, more resilient community. 🌱

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Salinas Valley 2025 Has Been Amazing So Far, and it Just Keeps Getting Better!

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

Compass Church of Monterey County partnered with the Tim Tebow Foundation to host Night to Shine on Feb. 7. This inspiring event is held to honor and celebrate individuals with special needs who traditionally would not attend their high school prom. This event has been hosted for the past 11 years on the Friday before Valentine's Day by churches across the globe.

Compass Church rolled out the red carpets and took part this year as one of the 821 churches across 62 countries! We were joined by families that traveled all the way from Calexico and San Diego. We are now international! Fifty honored guests were celebrated, loved on, and crowned as Kings and Queens — true royalty in God's kingdom! We had a blast on the dance floor with the DJ and sang our hearts out in the karaoke room! It was truly an unforgettable night; we are excited to continue being part of this tradition for the Central Coast in years to come!

We are excited to announce the National Day of Prayer on May 1 at noon. We are expecting more than 500 community members at our Main Street Campus. Compass will be leading a prayer gathering for the Central Coast and nation, along with other pastors from all over the area and elected officials.

Compass Church presents The Great Helicopter Easter Egg Drop on Saturday, April 12 at the Rabobank Stadium in Salinas! The sky-diving Easter Bunny will return with not one, but TWO helicopter drops this year. Your family will get to choose



from Drop #1 at 9:30 a.m. or Drop #2 at noon. Doors will open at 8 a.m. Families must be pre-registered to attend this free-entry event. Children 12 years and under are encouraged to take part in the 100,000-egg hunt on the stadium field. This family-friendly event will be packed with fun — bounce houses, games, and photos with Easter Bunny! Food and merchandise vendors will be available for purchase.

I hope you can make it to one of our upcoming Easter weekend services. Starting on Good Friday, April 18 at 6 p.m. we will be observing this holy day of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. On Saturday, April 19, we will be celebrating His resurrection and praising the Lord; we will have two services to choose from: 4:30 p.m. or 6 p.m. Easter Sunday, April 20, choose from three services, 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m. or 11 a.m.

Celebrate America with us on Friday, July 4, at the Salinas Sports Complex. This family event will include games, carnival rides, and bounce houses. Honor our veterans with a color guard and medal ceremony. Save the date and come enjoy live patriotic music and the biggest fireworks display in Monterey County!

All these events are made possible because of your unwavering support and generosity. If God has put in your heart to be involved in something greater, we would love for you to volunteer with Compass Church, text the word TEAM to 33777. Also, if you would like to receive my daily morning Prayer/ Bible reminder, text PRAYER to 33777. 🌱

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Permit Center - from page 3

Center service exceeded their expectations. Another 24% felt that service met expectations (which could mean that customers came to the Permit Center with high expectations that were fulfilled). Only 3% of people who filled out the survey declared that the Permit Center did not meet their expectations.

Future Chamber Involvement with the Permitting Process

At their strategic planning meeting on Feb. 7, your Chamber's Board of Directors identified Permit Center improvements as a Government Relations priority for 2025. The Chamber also recommended that the Salinas Mayor and City Council discuss improvements to the Permit Center as a priority during their annual Strategic Planning Session.

Your Chamber also wants to see the Permit Center successfully implement its 2025 Action Plan, which was presented to the city council on Feb. 7:

Staffing

- Fill vacant positions (the Permit Center continually struggles to fill vacancies)
- Ensure staffing/consultant resources are in place to manage anticipated Future Growth Area/ North of Boronda permitting volume.

Workflow

- Create specialized residential teams to improve delivery of residential projects.
- Endeavor to establish over-the-counter plan check days for limited permit review and issuance.

Legislative Compliance

- Initiate a City of Salinas Zoning Code Update
- Adopt the new 2025 California Building Standards.
- Ensure compliance with new legislation affecting permitting. 🌱



North Salinas High School new classrooms building. Artist's rendition.

“These new buildings are one step towards modernizing our campuses and giving our community all that they need to succeed.”

— Dr. Zandra Jo Galvan, SUHSD Superintendent



North Salinas High School new classroom building overview. Artist's rendition.



North Salinas High School exterior view of new classroom building. Artist's rendition.

Salinas High School District - from page 1

which will include classroom space to replace decades old portable classrooms. Construction on Everett Alvarez High School's first-ever Performing Arts Center is also underway.

Construction on the three separate two-story buildings began in spring 2024. The buildings each range in cost from \$25.5 million to \$32 million. Funding for the new construction came from a mix of sources, including local bond measures and legislative funds, as well as special reserve money. With the help of community and legislative support, the District has made tremendous progress.

“We are so excited to see these buildings get completed,” said SUHSD Superintendent Dr. Zandra Jo Galvan. “We are entering a new era in our school district, with the goal of helping our students and families get the best learning opportunities and support possible. These new buildings are one step towards modernizing our campuses and giving our community all that they need to succeed.”

Project completion is expected throughout the 2025 calendar year. 🌱



Salinas High School two-story building. Artist's rendition.



Salinas High School, new two-story building. Artist's rendition.

Understanding California AB 2016 and Its Impact on Real Property Owners

By Chiara Veronesi, Attorney, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss

California Assembly Bill 2016 (AB 2016), effective April 1, 2025, brings significant changes to the legal landscape for real property owners in California, particularly in how real estate is transferred after death. This bill aims to streamline the process for determining succession to real property, bypassing traditional probate court proceedings in the below instances.

Currently, estates with gross assets under \$184,500 can pass to a decedent's successor in interest through simplified proceedings that avoid the lengthy and expensive probate process: Small Estate Affidavits for personal property; Affidavits for Real Property of Small Value for real estate up to \$61,500; and Petitions to Determine Succession to Real Property for real estate up to \$184,500. However, due to the median cost of real property in California, these procedures for transferring real property are primarily reserved for fractional ownership interests. Any asset above that threshold not held in trust and with no beneficiary designation must go through probate. AB 2016 introduces a simpler, more-accessible legal process for determining succession to real property following a person's death. Beginning on or after April 1, 2025, if a California resident passes away owning a primary residence valued up to \$750,000, their successor in interest will be able to transfer title to that property through a Petition to Determine Succession to Real Property. If needed, in addition to this Petition, the successor in interest will also be able to use a Small Estate Affidavit to transfer non-real property assets with a gross value not exceeding \$184,500. This amendment to the probate code will greatly reduce



the number of probate proceedings in the State, expediting and simplifying the transfer of real property.

While AB 2016 facilitates the process for smaller estates, it does not replace the need

for comprehensive estate planning, crucial for property owners with larger estates and more complex assets. A well-structured estate plan, including a will and trust, allows individuals to have control over how their assets are distributed after death and ensures that property is distributed efficiently and fairly. Without it, even under AB 2016, property ownership can still be contested. Heirs may disagree on the validity of claims or the distribution of property, which could lead to delays or further legal challenges.

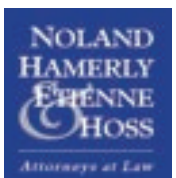
In conclusion, California AB 2016 represents a significant step forward in simplifying the transfer of real property after death, especially for smaller estates. By bypassing much of the probate process, it reduces delays, legal fees, and the potential for administrative confusion. However, the bill does not eliminate the need for comprehensive estate planning. It remains essential for real property owners to have a clear estate plan in place to ensure that property is transferred according to their wishes, avoid disputes among heirs, and address the complexities that may arise with larger estates. By combining AB 2016's benefits with strategic estate planning, property owners can more effectively navigate the future of real property succession in California. 🌱

Chiara Veronesi is in Noland Hamerly's Estate Planning practice group and is based out of the firm's Monterey office. A native of Italy, she is fluent in Italian and Spanish. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. © 2025 Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss.



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Montage Health Welcomes Nick Kite as Manager for Employer Solutions

Montage Health is excited to announce that Nick Kite has joined the team as Corporate Account Manager, leading the newly rebranded Employer Solutions team. With over eight years of leadership experience and a strong commitment to community well-being, Kite is poised to enhance Montage Health's employer solutions offerings for businesses across Monterey County. In his new role, he will lead efforts to develop innovative wellness solutions tailored to meet the needs of local employers and their workforces. His vision includes strengthening existing programs and introducing new initiatives designed to improve employee health and productivity, increase access to medical care and reduce employers medical spend.

Kite is deeply involved in the Monterey County community, where he serves as Chair of the Monterey County Parks Commission, President of Marina Youth Arts, Vice President of the Monterey Stinging Jellies Disc Golf Club, and a board member of the Monterey Moose Lodge. Additionally, he was recently appointed to the Monterey County Economic Development Committee by the Board of Supervisors, further showcasing his dedication to regional growth and prosperity. Born on Fort Ord and currently residing in Carmel Valley with his wife and child, Kite is passionate about supporting the local military community and fostering a vibrant, healthy environment for families and businesses alike.



Pan American Insurance Services Renews Chamber Membership Under New Name: Relation Insurance Services

Pan American Insurance Services, a proud member of the Salinas Chamber of Commerce for more than 50 years, is renewing its membership under a new name: Relation Insurance Services. This change marks an exciting new chapter for the company as it continues to grow and evolve to better serve its clients and community. While the name is changing to that of the parent company, the commitment to providing exceptional insurance services and expert support remains steadfast. Relation Insurance Services looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Salinas Chamber of Commerce and contributing to the growth and success of the local business community.



Lisa Murphy Selected as Next Salinas Assistant City Manager

City Manager René Mendez has appointed Lisa Murphy as Salinas' next Assistant City Manager. Murphy joined the city staff on Feb. 24, 2025, and brings over 24 years of leadership experience, serving most recently as Deputy City Manager for the City of Santa Cruz, where she has been leading significant initiatives, including a fire consolidation project with a neighboring jurisdiction, the development of a mobile crisis response program in partnership with the County of Santa Cruz, and several youth-focused initiatives.

As part of her work overseeing the Homelessness Response Program, she managed efforts to humanely close the city's largest homeless encampment and open Santa Cruz's first city-run temporary homeless shelter. She also provided direct support to the Mayor, City Council members, City department directors, and supported various city commissions and regional joint powers authorities (JPAs).

Murphy previously served as the Director of Human Resources for the City of Santa Cruz for eight years, managing comprehensive HR programs, including employee and labor relations, recruitment, training, benefits, and workers' compensation. She spearheaded the creation of the city's first Employee Engagement Program, developed a succession planning initiative, and revitalized employee training and development efforts. Murphy also served as the city's negotiator for all labor contracts, representing eight bargaining units, including fire and police. Her earlier career includes 13 years with the City of Capitola, where she served as Administrative Services Director, Assistant to the General Manager of the Contra Costa Water District, and a political science lecturer at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Hartnell College. Murphy holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's degree in Public Administration from Golden Gate University.



Banner Year in 2024 for Passengers Served at Monterey Regional Airport

The Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) announced today that for the third consecutive year the airport had double-digit passenger growth, serving 622,543 departing and arriving travelers in 2024. With 311,101 departing and 311,442 arriving passengers—a 19.5 percent increase compared to the previous year—the airport marked a milestone in 2024 with the most passengers served in 45 years. A new airline and destination, along with additional passenger seats by existing carriers, contributed to the airport's busiest year since the closure of Fort Ord in 1994. Highlights include:

- Second daily nonstop flights added to three destinations: >San Diego, on Alaska Airlines>Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, via American Airlines>Denver, Colorado on United Airlines
- Seasonal nonstop service to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, via Sun Country Airlines
- Seasonal nonstop service to Burbank and Orange County in the Los Angeles area, on JSX

Local and visiting travelers benefited from the new flight options and the growing MRV route system.

"The Monterey Region is a welcoming place to live, work, and play, and we thank new and returning passengers for choosing Monterey Regional Airport in 2024 for their leisure and business travel needs," said Executive Director Michael La Pier. "I'm proud of the work our airport team accomplished to make 2024 a record-breaking year for passengers served—all while the airport was actively being reconstructed as part of our MRV Metamorphosis."

The MRV Metamorphosis, which includes multiple safety enhancement projects required by the Federal Aviation Administration, is transforming the airport. The program includes a replacement passenger terminal and adjacent commercial aircraft ramp as well as several support facilities. In 2024, completed and in-progress developments included:

- Relocating the long-term parking lot adjacent to the airport's previous lot while still offering the same number of parking spaces
- Excavating and laying concrete for the new aircraft ramp
- Finalizing the architectural renderings for the replacement passenger terminal

In 2025, significant developments will continue to transform MRV, including completing the aircraft ramp and breaking ground on the replacement terminal. These projects are the next steps toward providing a welcoming, modern, and efficient gateway that represents the charm of the Monterey region, and which passengers, employees, and other airport users will be proud to travel through, work in, and visit.

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT MATT SALYER



Matt Salyer moved to Seaside in 2010 from Modesto to pursue a bachelor's degree in Global Studies at CSU Monterey Bay and later completed a dual master's degree in Global Business & Policy at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. The local wildlife and outdoor opportunities were a major factor in Salyer's decision to stay in Monterey since he enjoys hiking, paddleboarding and the fresh ocean air. Salyer developed a love of business while working on program development at CSUMB, and working as a freelance consultant for start-ups, governments and nonprofits locally and abroad. Salyer's focus on financial strategies for businesses, asset acquisition and wealth management eventually inspired him to become a financial advisor so he could better serve his clients and their needs. Salyer works at Salinas Valley Financial Services, a financial advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, where he specializes in investment strategies, wealth preservation, and estate planning for small businesses and individuals.



Support our Chamber Members

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

Member Name	Member Since	Member Name	Member Since
California Water Service	1962	Express Employment of Monterey County	2019
Valley Trophies & Detectors	1967	Bank of America Financial Center	2021
Monterey One Water	*40 Years*	Christensen & Giannini, LLC	2021
Cushman & Wakefield	1987	ITNMontereyCounty (Independent Transportation Network)	2021
Seneca Family of Agencies	1997	Balance Physical Therapy & Human Performance Centers	2021
IPG International Produce Group LLC	2002	Central Coast Cooling, LLC	2021
Monterey Credit Union - Salinas	2002	Growers Custom Equipment	2021
Salinas Public Library, Steinbeck	*20 Years*	FarmWise	2021
Maureen Wruck Planning Consultants	2006	SAGE, Sustainable Ag & Energy	2021
Monterey County Bank	2008	Monterey Bay FC	2021
Alta Vista Mortuary	*15 Years*	Core6.Marketing	2022
First 5 Monterey County	2011	Adobe	2022
Maya Cinemas	2014	Alisal Long Term Care Pharmacy	2023
Arts Council for Monterey County	2014	Kafens	2023
Monterey County Housing Authority Development Corporation	2014	Smith Medical Pedicures	2024
Disaster Kleenup Specialists	*10 Years*	Monterey County BAR Association	2024
East Bay Tire Co. (Salinas Service Center)	2016	BLANCO CONSTRUCTION SERVICES INC	2024
InterContinental - The Clement Monterey	2016	Gowans & Co.	2024
Kevin C. McWilliams	2018	Hijos Del Sol Arts Productions	2024
Central Coast Community Energy (CCCE)	2018		

A Special Thanks to Our Visionary and Stakeholder Members





RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



CASA of Monterey County Celebrates 30 Years of Advocacy

CASA of Monterey County kicked off its 30th-anniversary festivities with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking three decades of advocacy. Guests learned about CASA's support for youth in foster care and discovered ways to get involved.



Grand Opening of La Gran Diabla Restaurant

La Gran Diabla Restaurant celebrated its grand opening, marking an exciting new chapter for co-owners Thomas and Sara. The event featured Aztec dancers, live music, a DJ, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and a chance for one lucky winner to receive a month's supply of free tacos. Visit this vibrant new restaurant at 131 Main St., Salinas.



Lunch and Learn: Finding and Securing Funding for Your Business

The Central Coast SBDC, in partnership with the Cal Coastal Regional Development Center and the Salinas Valley Chamber, hosted a "Money Matters" workshop, equipping local businesses and entrepreneurs with valuable financial insights.



Alliance on Aging Unveils Fresh New Look

On Valentine's Day, the Alliance on Aging revealed its new logo, building signage, and van wrap. Dignitaries and guests joined in the excitement, celebrating a bold new look that symbolizes the organization's commitment to helping older adults thrive.



Grand Opening of the Rising Scholars Center

The Hartnell College Rising Scholars Program hosted the grand opening of the Rising Scholars Center, a dedicated space designed to support justice-impacted students. The center will provide in-person students with access to essential resources, guidance from advisors, and the support they need to thrive both academically and personally.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is Celebrated in March

Over six million Americans are said to have developmental disabilities. It is estimated by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S. that as many as one in six kids (17%) can be dealing with developmental disabilities.

Each March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (A.U.C.D.), and the National Disability Rights Network (N.D.R.N.) work together to highlight the ways in which people with disabilities unite to form strong communities.

In the U.S., National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is observed in March. This class of disabilities can refer to impairments in learning and behavior, such as autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and impairments in physical and/or intellectual functioning such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and Down syndrome.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness about including people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. It also creates awareness of the difficulties that people with disabilities still face in fitting into the communities in which they live.

History of National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Before the 19th century, people with developmental disabilities were treated violently and lived in poor, unhygienic environments. Many were “passed on,” a practice of carting off people to be dropped in another town. More awareness about developmental disabilities spread in this century both in England and in

the U.S.

Social reformers such as Dorothy Dix became leading advocates of the human rights of people with disabilities. Since it was socially unacceptable for a woman to speak in Congress, she asked another reformer, Samuel Gridley Howe, to present her argument for rehabilitating people with disabilities.

The motion was passed in the Senate and the House of Representatives, but was vetoed



by President Pierce. Even the Romantic poets of England such as Byron, Wordsworth, and Keats, who highlighted the goodness of leading a simple life close to nature, were instrumental in prompting authorities to situate asylums in the countryside.

Other reformers and educationists such as Edouard Seguin believed in the benefits of sensory and muscular training to force the central nervous system to “take over” and perform duties that children were otherwise unable to. Maria Montessori was influenced by his methods while working with children with disabilities and other

children.

The nature of training and institutions continued to evolve over the century, leading to an adverse development. Custodial institutions started being established by the end of the century, which essentially segregated pupils from the rest of the community.

It was only after the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970s and 1980s that Ronald Reagan declared March the month for

working at the national and local levels with different forms of disabilities. Some national-level ones are The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (N.A.C.D.D.), National Disability Institute, and the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. If you know of any local chapters or even schools that work with children or adults with disabilities, now is a great time to reach out to them.

Raise funds

Many organizations in the field are non-profits looking to raise funds to provide better and more services to their participants. If you are skilled at marketing, networking, or other related jobs, you can consider using your time to set up a fundraiser in March.

5 Facts About Disabilities

Eugenics was used as a counter

In the early 20th century, it was thought that disabilities could be “cured” through the application of eugenics, which was later discredited as a movement.

‘Feeble-minded’ was a descriptive term

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, people with developmental or intellectual disabilities were referred to as “feeble-minded,” “idiots,” or “imbeciles.”

The cut-off age is 22

According to the N.A.C.D.D., in order to qualify as a developmental disability, the disability has to occur in individuals younger than 22 years.

Schizophrenia was misnamed

Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler first used the word “autism” for a kind of schizophrenia.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness in 1987.

How to Observe the Month

Learn about the rights of people with disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, making it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities. Read about the rights laid down in this Act, which is also enforced by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. You may even be able to support a colleague or friend.

Volunteer for an organization

There are many organizations

AWARENESS see page 15



A PROFILE IN LEADERSHIP

Margaret D'Arrigo, Salinas City Council District 3

By Colleen Bailey, SVCC CEO

This is the first in a series of articles the chamber will write this year to familiarize the business community with our local leaders.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, it is only fitting to begin by recognizing a local businesswoman who has excelled in her professional career and has had tremendous impact by uplifting women in our community.

Margaret D'Arrigo, a third-generation resident of the Salinas Valley, whose multifaceted career spans agriculture, community development, and public service, is now representing District 3 on the Salinas City Council.

Margaret's journey began in District 3, where she was raised among six siblings. Her family's deep-rooted involvement in agriculture ignited her passion for farming and innovation from an early age. This early exposure led her to pursue higher education at the University of California, Davis, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and Managerial Economics.

Instead of immediately returning to work in the family business, Margaret worked for



several agricultural companies in Sacramento and Southern California before venturing out on her own to start a residential and commercial cleaning business.

Eventually, Margaret returned to the Salinas Valley to play a pivotal role in her family's enterprise, D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of California, serving as the Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing. Her leadership was instrumental in driving the company's growth and innovation within the fresh produce industry.

Despite her professional accomplishments, Margaret experienced

gender disparities in the agricultural industry. For example, she remembers being the only woman at a PMA meeting and being asked to take notes and get coffee.

It was during this time that she found herself at a Women in Business expo in Santa Cruz and realized that there was no such networking opportunity in Salinas and decided to do something to fill the gap. Under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce, Margaret co-founded IMPOWER to enrich and inspire women of all ages and backgrounds in Monterey County. The results of this effort far exceeded her expectations.

Though not its original intention, the group raised significant funding that was used to support scholarships for women to attend the Salinas Valley Leadership Program as well as to support nonprofit organizations that focus on women in a variety of ways. Her efforts earned her the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's Award for Businesswoman of the Year in 2009.

A declared life-long learner, Margaret returned to school to further enhance her expertise with an MBA from California State University, Monterey Bay. She

applied what she was learning academically to the start of her own company Margaret-Inc., dba D'Arrigo Consulting, where she is the CEO and mentors young women to reach for the stars.

This past December, Margaret made a successful bid for the City Council seat in Salinas' District 3. In this role, she aims to apply her business acumen to the city government by addressing critical issues such as budget management, housing, and public safety, while reflecting her empathy and deep commitment to the well-being of her constituents.

Margaret hopes to bring stability to the City Council, increase outward communication to the community, and build a keen sense of team between the Council, the Mayor, and the staff. She is committed to being a good listener, to making time for people and to being a force for positive change in the City of Salinas.

Her top priority, however, will remain her two sons, who she credits for teaching her negotiating skills, patience and enduring love and commitment. Margaret D'Arrigo's journey exemplifies the profound impact that women in business can have on their industries and communities. 🌱

Awareness - from page 14

70 is the cut-off for intellectual disability

An I.Q. score of less than 70 qualifies a person as intellectually disabled.

Why the Month Is Important It has a chequered history

While there is much more positive awareness about disabilities now, it has not always been a history of progress. Doctors and educators who were successful in establishing more compassionate conditions had to give way to more rigid forms of institutionalization later. This was questioned only around 40 to 50 years ago.

It's a chance to volunteer

Volunteering for an organization working on disability is a great way to improve our own social and interpersonal skills, even if we're just doing office work. It is a great way to learn something new about ourselves and about another person with a different lifestyle and differing abilities.

It raises our self-awareness

The month reminds us that we're all part of a broad spectrum of intellectual and physical functioning. It is a chance to be more empathetic and to remind ourselves of the challenges we face in our own lives, regardless of our I.Q. or diagnosis. 🌱

Keeping America's Farms and Families Healthy

By Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau

We are already (two months) into the new year — a time of fresh starts and renewed commitments. With all the lists of resolutions and reflections, though, it can be easy to lose sight of the real progress and change that is made with small and steady practices every day.

Let's consider the resolutions on America's farms and ranches — the way farmers resolve to do right and do better 365 days a year — and the real difference that has made for the well-being of our nation.

Keeping Our Families and Crops Healthy

The Make America Healthy Again, or MAHA, platform is generating a lot of interest in how our food is produced. Farmers and ranchers welcome a healthy discussion — we always have. I think we can all agree on the importance of promoting good health for our families and our nation. Sadly, there are few of us who have not been touched by cancer or other serious diseases, and we all want solutions.

A commitment to health is a great way to start the year, and healthy meals start with healthy farms. But it's also important to understand the long-term implications of some ideas being promoted lately. Any discussion around agriculture must first be grounded in sound science if we are going to ensure the affordability, security and sustainability of nutritious food for all Americans.

Our long history of science-based standards has served us well in navigating a sea of new ideas over the years. Take the science and research when it comes to pesticides, for example, where thoughtful, demanding approval processes give farmers important tools to protect and nurture crops while also requiring



these tools pass rigorous testing for safety, health and effectiveness.

Did you know that only 1 in 10,000 pesticide discoveries actually makes it from the lab to the field? What's more, with all the study, testing and review required, it takes around 11 years for a new pesticide to get approved for use. I'd say that's a high, almost impossible, bar to pass. That's why farmers are confident that they can safely use these products on their farms. And keep in mind, many farmers also live with their families on that same land where they are using pesticides. Farmers take our jobs seriously, and we take the health and safety of our families and yours seriously too.

A commitment to health is a great way to start the year, and healthy meals start with healthy farms. And what about when those farm products get to your home? The U.S. Department of Agriculture releases a Pesticide Data Program Annual Summary to track pesticide

residue on fresh fruits and vegetables — that's in addition to the strict regulations in place from the Environmental Protection Agency. In 2023, USDA found that more than 99% of products tested not only met but exceeded EPA's strict safety standards. That's because farmers are following safety guidelines and using only what is necessary to protect crops and get them safely from the field to your table.

Keeping Our Soil Healthy

Sustainability is also a big part of the healthy food conversation with lots of talk around shifting to an only organic approach to farming. Farm Bureau is 100% supportive of organic farming. But we must keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to advancing agriculture. We have a beautifully diverse landscape across this nation, and one of the great privileges of my job is getting to see agriculture in all parts of the country. I have seen first-hand what

farmers all over this country know from practice: What works in one place isn't practical or sometimes even possible in another — and that's okay. It means we get diverse foods from diverse regions. We get seasonal produce like winter lettuce from Arizona and summer blueberries from New Jersey. That diversity is what gives resilience to our food production system.

American agriculture is the most efficient and sustainable across the globe because we use sound science, technology and innovation. Our overall greenhouse gas emissions are less than 10% of all industries. That's no small feat, given that we are producing more than ever before to feed an ever-growing population. Protecting our crops through the safe use of pesticides and protecting our animals with medicines and vaccines help ensure that we can keep growing the food that fills Americans' pantries.

Farmers and consumers benefit

from the availability, choice and price options of both conventionally and organically grown products. Rejecting conventional farming altogether, however, would be harmful to food security and sustainability with no identifiable health benefit. Let's remember that researchers have found no noticeable difference between organically and conventionally grown food when it comes to nutrition.

Researchers have also looked at the environmental impact of this kind of shift, and they have found it would bring significant loss in yields, greater land use, and an increase in carbon emissions. For example, organic yields are roughly 20% less than conventional, and organic systems of meat and dairy production use 49% more land than conventional.

Keeping Our Food Supply Healthy and Secure

Wholly rejecting safe conventional practices and thoroughly tested products places our sustainability and our food security at risk. We can look back just a couple years to what happened in Sri Lanka to see the devastating impact this shift would have on our food system.

In 2021, the government of Sri Lanka banned certain farm supplies and practices, much like what some people are discussing today in the U.S. Production for their two key commodities, rice and tea, dropped significantly by 20% and 18%. This led the country to an increased dependence on imports and put their farmers on the brink of failure.

Sri Lanka had to reverse the order later that year, but the damage was already done. The country was forced to import hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of food and then help devastated farmers recover. Organic farming still requires measures to protect crops from insects, weeds, disease and fungus. Mandating that all farming shifts to organic, though, would raise the cost of production, increase food costs for consumers, and set us back on sustainability gains. It's important we keep in mind these tradeoffs and avoid mandates or restrictions that could lead to negative unintended outcomes for consumer food choice, price and security. Farmers are always looking for ways to improve. This is a business that requires innovation and resolve. But it is also irresponsible to consider new ideas in isolation. That's why farmers rely on agricultural researchers and scientists to innovate and thoroughly vet new ideas and practices.

If we are going to have meaningful discussion about improvements across agriculture, we must begin by recognizing how our steady commitments have yielded impressive results, and we must ensure farmers can continue to meet the diverse, nutritional needs of our nation. But we, as farmers, have a responsibility to help the public understand the tremendous advances in agriculture over the years. We should also welcome questions about how we grow the food that feeds America. Questions are just an invitation to tell our story and that's a good thing. 🌿



What's the Forecast for 2025?

By Norm Groot, Executive Director, Monterey County Farm Bureau

Everyone wants to know what will 2025 be like with so many changes in government policy and market shifts due to international trade? What will be the local impacts?

Farm Bureau receives media calls from all over the country, and even abroad. Since we are the Salad Bowl of the World, the interest is in how our fresh food crop production, labor relations, and international market exports will react. The crystal ball continues to be a bit cloudy as we finish up the first quarter of 2025.

A lot of local attention has focused on the immigration policies and possible actions that threaten our agricultural and hospitality workforce. Partnering with the county on the ad-hoc committee of community leaders, information is being distributed that provides immigrants their rights in various situations (known as Red Cards). Farming operations are also obtaining information on what their rights are should there be an enforcement action in a local field. The word is out that we are all working to protect our "essential" farmworkers that harvest our crops in the Monterey County area.

It's almost ironic that a few short years ago, during the pandemic, all farmworkers were considered "essential" and now that paradigm has flipped in the recent months, causing undue anxiety in many of our communities.

This then brings further focus to the failed national policies on immigration and documentation. For many years, indeed more than a quarter century, Farm Bureau has advocated for immigration policy reform with our federal elected representatives (Senators and House members). To date, no significant movement has occurred to



correct the failures of the existing policies.

The fact is that we need immigrant labor to work in our fields, and our immigrants who do so deserve a pathway to documentation. Agriculture also has demanded that a temporary worker program be easier to use, less costly, and certainly less bureaucratic. It is imperative that we seek a national solution to immigration policy that provides safety and security in our local communities, as well as those who employ and rely on farmworkers.

After several successful efforts to pass meaningful legislation in the House of Representatives, known as the Farm Worker Modernization Act, the U.S. Senate has failed to act. We must demand better of our federal representatives to ensure that our domestic food supply has the labor needed to keep production moving forward. This is not a partisan issue.

Without this type of reform, we will continue to face increasing challenges to produce our healthy, safe, affordable food supply domestically. The Salad Bowl of the World is but one small part of our domestic food supply, but overall, a huge piece of a healthy daily diet. 🌿

CASA of Monterey County Honors 30 Years of Advocating for Children and Youth in Foster Care

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Monterey County will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2025, marking three decades of dedication to improving the lives of children and youth in foster care throughout the county. Since its founding in 1995, CASA has been committed to ensuring that every child in foster care has a voice, a champion, and the opportunity to thrive.

For 30 years, CASA of Monterey County has trained and empowered community members to serve as advocates for children and youth who are victims of abuse and neglect. These trained volunteers work one-on-one with children and youth in foster care, providing them with a consistent and caring adult presence, navigating complex legal systems, ensuring that educational, medical, and therapeutic services are provided.

"As we look back on our journey, we celebrate the thousands of children and youth we've served and the countless volunteers who have given their time, energy, and compassion to ensure that these children and youth have a brighter future," said Beth Wilbur, Executive Director of CASA of Monterey County. "This anniversary marks a critical milestone in our mission as we continue to expand our services and now also support youth in juvenile justice and truancy."

To address the increasing need, CASA launched its "30 in 30 for 30" campaign on Jan. 1, 2025, with the goal of recruiting 30 volunteers in 30 days in January 2025. This initiative aimed to reduce the current waitlist and ensure that children in foster care receive the critical advocacy they need.

"While we have accomplished so



CASA of Monterey County staff members.



CASA advocates.



Swearing-in of CASA advocates.

much in 30 years, there is still much work to be done," said Danny Little, Chair of the CASA of Monterey County Board of Directors. "We are calling on more community members to join us in this important work. By becoming a CASA

volunteer, you can help a child or youth in need and make a lasting difference in their life."

Anniversary Events to Celebrate CASA's Legacy

Throughout 2025, CASA of

Monterey County will host a number of events to celebrate its 30 years of service, highlight its impact on the community, and raise awareness about the ongoing needs of children in foster care. The year's celebrations kicked off with a



CASA Day & Evening Group.

special 30th Anniversary Kick-Off Event in partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce on Jan. 23, 2025 at CASA's offices at 945 S. Main St. in Salinas.

A community celebration will follow on April 30, 2025, at the Community Room at WeatherTech Raceway, Laguna Seca, bringing together volunteers, supporters, and local leaders to reflect on CASA's achievements and look ahead to the future.

About CASA of Monterey County

Since its inception, CASA of Monterey County has trained over 1,300 volunteers and helped thousands of children and youth in foster care navigate their path to safety and stability. The organization is committed to ensuring that every child has a voice in decisions that affect them and has access to the support and resources they need to build a brighter future. For more information about CASA of Monterey County's 30th anniversary celebrations, how to become a CASA volunteer, or how to support the organization's mission, please visit casaofmonterey.org.

Mission: To recruit, train, and support community volunteers who advocate for children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system. To uphold children and youths' rights and pursue a safe and permanent home while providing the support, empowerment, and resources needed to heal and flourish into adulthood. 🌱

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SCAN ME

Understanding Salinas' New Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance

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

This article is the final segment

of a three-part series discussing the new Salinas Rental Ordinances, which became effective Jan. 1, 2025. The focus of this article is the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance ("Ordinance"), Salinas City Code section 17.02.100 and following. The Ordinance is designed to regulate landlord practices in residential tenancies. The Ordinance enhances existing tenant protections under federal, state, and local laws. It applies to all residential rental units in Salinas, including single-family homes, condominiums, mobile homes, and trailer spaces, with only several exceptions.



Exemptions to the Ordinance

The following rental properties are exempt from the provisions of the Ordinance:

Healthcare and Rehabilitation Facilities: Rental units in hospitals, skilled nursing, or other health-related facilities.

Treatment Facilities and Supportive Housing: Short-term treatment facilities for substance abuse or structured living environments for homeless individuals provided by non-profit organizations, provided the housing is time-limited (up to 24 months) and properly licensed.

Transient Occupancy: Properties subject to transient occupancy laws (such as hotels and motels) unless the rental period exceeds 30 days.

Prohibited Harassment Practices

The Ordinance prohibits landlords and their agents from doing any of

the following:

Disruption of Housing Services: Landlords must not interrupt, terminate or threaten to interrupt or terminate housing services (defined as hot and cold water, heat, light, utilities if paid by the Landlord, doors, windows, painting, window shades and screens, refuse removal, maintenance, repairs, replacements, recreational areas, laundry facilities, storage spaces, parking, the right to a one-for-one replacement of roommates, regardless of any prohibition in the lease against subletting or assignment) or any other amenity required under the rental agreement, or by state or local laws. Landlords must continue to provide such housing services without interruption.

Failure to Perform Repairs: Landlords are required to make

timely repairs and exercise due diligence in completing repairs, particularly those that impact tenant health and safety.

Retaliation: Landlords cannot retaliate against tenants for asserting their rights, including requesting repairs or raising concerns about housing conditions.

Sexual Harassment: Landlords or their agents are strictly prohibited from soliciting sexual favors in exchange for any housing-related benefits, including protection from eviction, repairs or maintenance.

Improper Access and Removal of Personal Property: Landlords cannot abuse their right of access or remove tenant belongings without first complying with the statutory procedure set removal in Civil Code section 1980 and following.

Coercion or Intimidation:

Landlords are prohibited from using threats or intimidation to force tenants to vacate or accept illegal rental terms. Landlords are further prohibited from offering tenants payments to vacate ("cash for keys") more than once in six months after the tenant has notified the landlord in writing that the Tenant does not desire to receive further cash for keys offers.

Discriminatory Practices: The Ordinance mandates compliance with all discrimination laws, including those protecting tenants based on race, gender, disability, or other protected characteristics.

Interference with Tenant Rights: Landlords cannot infringe on tenants' rights to privacy or impose unreasonable demands.

Refusing to Accept Rent: Landlords cannot refuse accept or

to cash a rent check or money order for more than 30 days, except as permitted by state law.

This list is not an exclusive list of acts that might be found to be tenant harassment, as the Ordinance is written in such a way that a judge could find other behavior that is intended to interfere with a tenant's occupancy also violates the Ordinance. In addition to these specific prohibitions, harassment also includes any behavior that disrupts a tenant's peaceful enjoyment of their home, ensuring that tenants can live without undue interference from their landlords.

Notice Requirements

Landlords are required to provide tenants with written notice of the Ordinance both when the tenancy begins and whenever a notice of termination is issued. This notice must include the following:

- A statement that the tenancy is governed by the City's Tenant

Anti-Harassment Ordinance.

- A reminder of the landlord's responsibility under the Salinas Municipal Code to avoid acting in bad faith or with dishonest intent.
- A disclosure that landlords who violate the ordinance may be held liable for damages.

This notice must be in writing, in the form prescribed by the City, and include a Spanish-language translation. Landlords must deliver this notice within 30 days of the ordinance's effective date. For properties with multiple rental units, the notice should be posted in a common area. This form may be found on the City of Salinas website: <https://www.cityofsalinas.org/Residents/Community/Housing-Community-Development/Rental-Registration-Rent-Stabilization>.

Additionally, landlords are prohibited from removing key amenities — such as parking, laundry facilities, storage space, backyards,

and kitchen or bathroom facilities — without good cause. Good cause includes when removal is required by law or necessary for safety, or when the tenant consents in writing to the removal.

Remedies and Penalties

Violations of the Ordinance can lead to both criminal and civil consequences. Violators may face misdemeanor charges, punishable by fines of up to \$1,000 per offense or imprisonment for up to six months. Tenants as well as the City may pursue legal action against landlords violating the Ordinance. Violators may be required to pay damages including damages for emotional distress, triple damages and punitive damages. In cases involving tenants who are disabled or 65 years of age or older, fines may increase to \$5,000 per violation. Tenants can also use violations of the Ordinance as an affirmative defense in eviction actions.\

Conclusion

The Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance is intended to regulate landlord-tenant interactions, ensuring that landlords adhere to legal standards and maintain a professional relationship with tenants. Landlords must provide the necessary notices (discussed above) to their tenants, and should familiarize themselves with the Ordinance's provisions and make sure that anyone acting on their behalf, such as property managers or agents, follow the Ordinance. Lastly, landlords are encouraged to consult with legal counsel when any new ordinance is enacted that imposes additional duties on them. 🌱

Geraldine Villa is in Noland Hamerly's Civil Litigation practice group and frequently works on landlord/tenant matters. A Salinas native, she serves on the Board of Directors of the Monterey County Women Lawyers Association. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. © 2025 Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss.

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A Vision for CCA Focused on Hope, Action, and Leadership

By Joel Hernandez Laguna, Center for Community Advocacy

My mom, sister, and I arrived in the Salinas Valley in 1990 — I was 6 years old. We traveled nearly 2,000 miles from Michoacan, Mexico and lived on the border until we finally crossed to the United States. I still remember that day as if it was yesterday.

We came to the valley to reunite with my father, who was working as a lechugero lettuce cutter for a local agriculture company. Shortly after arriving, my mom joined him to help support the family. Working in the fields takes a physical and mental toll on farm workers; I got to witness this by working in the fields during a summer weekend. After that experience, I grew a tremendous respect for farmworkers and their families.

On January 2025, I was appointed Executive Director of the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify, cultivate, and recognize leadership from farmworkers and low-income families to expand opportunities in their lives. Since 1990, the year I arrived in the U.S., CCA has been working with families in the Pajaro and Salinas Valley to improve the housing and health conditions of farmworkers. My vision for CCA is focused on hope, action, and leadership.

At times when families come to CCA, they have a sense of despair due to an inhabitable housing situation, receiving an eviction notification, unlawful rent increase, and/or more. Hope comes when they receive education on understanding their tenant responsibilities, landlord obligations and strategies to improve their housing situation.

Our intention is to always have residents take action to educate or train others on what they learn at



CCA. This results in people identifying peers as community leaders that aim to improve and advocate for the improvement of people's lives. We strive to help farmworkers help themselves.

In 2011, CCA was organizing a community-based committee of residents from Acosta Plaza, a neighborhood in East Salinas, a place I lived in for 17 years. Without a doubt, I volunteered to join the committee and began to help plan and coordinate community events, learn about the community challenges that negatively affect families, and actionable methods to solve them on a long-term basis.

In 2012, I decided to leave my job as a groundskeeper at a golf course in Carmel Valley to pursue a career in community organizing

for CCA that lasted a decade. In 2021, during the hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic, faith led me to the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC). During my four years at CFMC, I was very fortunate to work with a spectacular team and be part of the Virus Integrated Distribution of Aid (VIDA) program, Siembra Latinos Fund and conduct research that would allow for strategic grantmaking to address systemic barriers which often impede people from thriving.

I've now returned home to CCA. This step has brought many firsts, for example, the first volunteer at CCA to do a full circle, from volunteer to Executive Director, first in the family to become an Executive Director, and according to my research, the first person from Acosta

Plaza to become an Executive Director for a local nonprofit. I will continue to serve our community through this role and engagement on the board of directors at Salinas Valley Health and the Big Sur Land Trust.

I will continue to be grateful and blessed because people from many walks of life have invested time, passion, and love that resulted in a migrant son of farmworkers achieving this milestone. Special thank you to my family for their unconditional support. This achievement is not mine, but ours. 🌱

Joel Hernandez Laguna is the new Executive Director of the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify, cultivate, and recognize leadership from farmworkers and low-income families to expand opportunities in their lives.

Salinas Valley Organic Fertilizer Company AgroThrive Making an Impact on the World

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

Gonzales-based AgroThrive has been somewhat flying under the radar, even though it has been manufacturing the world's first fast-acting liquid organic fertilizers for certified organic farmers since 2006.

But AgroThrive is about to step into the spotlight in 2025 thanks to a relationship with big-box giant Costco, which will be supplying the family-owned and operated company with organic wastes that can then be converted into safe and nutritious organic fertilizer through its own proprietary Progressive Digestion Process (PDP).

Simply stated, PDP is a bridge between the growing nutrient-dense mountains of organic waste generated by the food industry, and the organically depleted arable land that must contain organic content in order to continue producing food for the world. AgroThrive was founded on the belief that all organic wastes can be converted to safe and nutritious organic fertilizers via PDP.

PDP harnesses the natural microbial and enzymatic digestion of organic inputs to break down raw materials while creating biological heat, eliminating harmful pathogens in the process. This digestion is achieved without adding any outside inoculum or external heat to kill pathogens. And all this can be done in just 21 days with PDP.

According to Marko Macura, AgroThrive Director of Sales & Marketing, the company's driving force starts with its mission statement: "Our mission is to improve the health of our soils, seas, and skies by safely repurposing nutrient-dense organic wastes into sustainable bio-fertilizers."



Macura, son of founder and CEO Dragan Macura, said that current excessive use of nitrogen-based fertilizers, the most sought-after nutrient for successful plant growth in agriculture, has contributed to the contamination of our country's waterways and adversely affecting marine life habitats and drinking water. The excess nutrients in the lakes, rivers and oceans of the world has led to the massive algal blooms that starve water of oxygen making it inhospitable to oxygen-breathing marine life, creating so-called "dead zones."

Soils that contain organic matter and high microbial activity retain more nutrients and water compared to the soils with minimal organic matter, said Macura. Research by AgroThrive shows that the company can replace up to 30% of nitrogen fertilizer by volume substitution and either retain or improve the yields. In addition, the resulting increase in microbial activity in soil temporarily



sequesters the chemical nutrients in the form of microbial biomass only to release them later for the plants to absorb.

While chemical fertilizers have contributed to the depletion of soil organic matter and microbial life for decades, AgroThrive improves soil

organic matter, support the plant's beneficial microbial communities, and soil ecology. With the absence of excess nutrients in our waterways, dead zones in the oceans and lakes would be repopulated and eventually eliminated altogether, he said.



Food waste is among the top three contributors of greenhouse gas emissions across the world. And not just food waste we scrape off the plate into the garbage can after a meal, but the 40-60% of the inedible waste that comes from animals raised for human consumption. Simply put, Macura said, PDP has the ability to end all greenhouse gas emissions emitted from land-filled food waste.

PDP is fast, energy-efficient, and generates no waste. In addition, PDP generates biological heat that eliminates pathogens to make the resulting fertilizers “food safe,” and the small amount of energy used to run the PDP equipment is generated by solar panels.

Company founder Dragan Macura, who has a background in food science and microbiology, noticed a lot of waste in the food industry, especially meat and fish by-products, and saw an opportunity to develop a process to eliminate this excessive waste. Macura established AgroThrive Inc. in Gonzales

in 2006. He later enlisted his two sons, Marko and Mirko, to join the company. AgroThrive, in addition to domestic companies, has expanded its distribution (AgroThrive is a manufacturer and sells its product to distributors) to Mexico, China, Chile and Vietnam.

AgroThrive is primarily used in commercial agriculture and less than 5% is available for home gardeners and domestic use. The company established a retail side in 2019 and sells two types of liquid organic fertilizer for home gardeners at online sites such as Amazon and Home Depot.

AgroThrive is not looking to expand at this point, but the deal with Costco is a big step forward for the company to fulfill its mission statement “to improve the health of our soils, seas, and skies.”

AgroThrive can be reached through its toll-free customer service number 888-449-2853; its retail website for home gardeners is agrothrive.com, and its bulk agriculture website is agrothrive.ag.



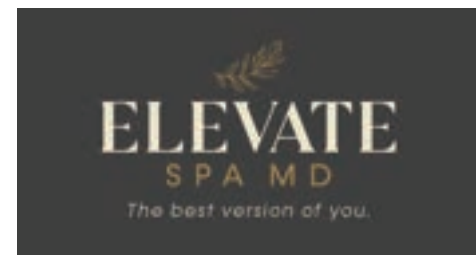
CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

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Elevate Spa MD is your ultimate destination for all things beauty, offering a comprehensive range of services to enhance your natural radiance. Founded by Griselda Castillo, a Latina/Hispanic woman-owned med spa in Salinas, Elevate Spa specializes in Botox, hyaluronic dermal fillers for lips, cheeks, and chin, as well as customized facials, Vitamin B-12 shots, filler dissolvers, brow laminations, lash extensions, body massage and more.

Elevate Spa’s team of skilled professionals is dedicated to providing exceptional care, using the latest technology and techniques to ensure a safe and effective experience. Elevate Spa is committed to elevating your confidence, offering personalized treatments for all genders and pronouns, and creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone. With a variety of financing options, Elevate Spa makes it easy to access top-quality care and achieve your beauty goals.

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The Blind & Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County

Since 1971, The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County has provided free and reduced-cost services to Monterey County residents who are visually impaired, empowering them with education, support, and skills training for independent living. The Blind and Visually Impaired Center’s mission is to empower the blind and visually impaired toward independent living through responsive education, support services, and skills training. The Blind and Visually Impaired Center also provides peer-led support groups held on the second and fourth Thursday of the month from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., and a braille class on the third Thursday of the month from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. Support groups and classes are free, and all can attend. Blindandlowvision.org, Steven@blindandlowvision.org, 831-649-3505 ext. 103



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

MARCH 2025

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 20 members at its meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 12. Here's what they discussed:

1 At the Feb. 11 Salinas City Council meeting, Mayor Dennis Donahue mentioned that the city council was tentatively scheduling a strategic planning session for Saturday, Feb. 22. Your Chamber had sent a letter to the Salinas City Council on Jan. 13 urging them to schedule a strategic planning session and consider discussing 13 topics of interest to the Chamber.

2 Your Chamber's Government Relations Committee continued its monthly discussions on the effects on landlords and tenants of the four rental housing ordinances enacted by the Salinas City Council in 2023 and 2024 related to rental registration, rent stabilization/rent control, and tenant protections. The Government Relations Committee wants to see the Salinas City Council Housing and Land Use Committee resume meetings to discuss the ordinances in a formal, public setting. (In 2024, the city's Housing and Land Use Committee became the vehicle for rent control advocates to expand and refine their draft ordinances, and it has rarely met since that effort concluded.)

3 It was noted that the Salinas City Council Housing and Land

Use Committee would also be an appropriate public forum for city leaders and the public to discuss progress on the city's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals for the 6th Cycle (2023-2031) in its Housing Element of the General Plan. As a model for the City of Salinas to consider, the Pacific Grove City Council has a routine item on its meeting agenda each month titled "Housing Element Monthly Status Update" to ensure accountability on housing.

4 Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue will be one of the four speakers at the Chamber's 3rd Annual Legislative Breakfast on Friday, Feb. 28. (The other three speakers are U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, California State Sen. John Laird, and Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine Pacioni.) It will be interesting to hear his comments about the rental housing ordinances, Measure G renewal, and other priority issues for the Chamber.

5 The Salinas City Council Finance Committee met on Tuesday, Feb. 11, for the first time since Nov. 12, 2024. At this meeting, the committee was presented with a slide showing the devastating effect on the city budget if city voters do not renew the City of Salinas Measure G sales tax before it expires in 2030.

6 At its strategic planning conference on Friday, Feb. 7, the Chamber's Board of Directors

indicated their desire to step up the Chamber's oversight and involvement in regional water policy, particularly as related to the source waters going from the City of Salinas and surrounding farmland to the Monterey One Water (M1W) Regional Treatment Plant for recycling and distribution. Articles in the Chamber's Business Journal have become valuable sources of information for people outside of the system to try to understand what is happening. A few people who have examined the regional water plan over the past four years suspect that it may end up unfavorable for the Salinas Valley, but key data remains unavailable.

7 On Tuesday, Feb. 11, the Salinas City Council received its annual report from the city's Community Development Department about the Permit Center. While city officials noted problem areas to address, generally the performance of the Permit Center and the quality of the report itself show obvious substantial improvement over the past three years. During public comment, the Chamber's Government Relations Liaison praised the Community Development Department for progress and improvement in its responsibilities.

8 The City of Salinas continues to be a top performer among California cities (and counties) in producing and distributing



accessible reports concerning permitting activities related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). During the past several years, the Chamber has been supportive of policies to encourage ADU production in the City of Salinas and unincorporated parts of the County of Monterey. The Government Relations Committee directed staff to ask the City of Salinas for continued policies and reporting that will advance ADUs as a housing supply option in the city.

9 Credit was given to the Government Relations Committee by the Chamber's Board of Directors at its strategic planning conference on Friday, Feb. 7, for overseeing accomplishment of the Chamber's Government Relations multi-year strategic goals. Government Relations strategy and advocacy — and the Business Journal articles related to Government Relations — continue to be top reasons why businesses and organizations join and remain members of the Chamber. 🌱

Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Set to Host 104th Annual Awards Luncheon

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce has announced the eagerly awaited 104th Annual Awards Luncheon, a celebration of achievement, business excellence, and community spirit, set to take place from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at Sherwood Hall in Salinas.

The Annual Awards Luncheon draws more than 400 guests and serves as a unique opportunity to honor businesses and individuals who have made remarkable contributions throughout 2024, shaping the landscape of the Salinas Valley.

The accolades to be bestowed include:

- Small Business of the Year
- Large Business of the Year
- Businesswoman of the Year
- Citizen of the Year
- Agricultural Leadership Award
- Spirit of the Community
- Ambassador of the Year

“In its 104th year, the luncheon not only acknowledges outstanding accomplishments, but also serves as a source of inspiration for others, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation within the community,” said Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey.

In addition to recognizing outstanding businesses and individuals, the event promises to be a premier networking affair, bringing together the entire spectrum of the Salinas Valley business community.

This year’s gathering also features the return of the highly anticipated “Networking Power Hour!” Doors will open at 10:00 a.m., allowing attendees to mix, mingle, and explore captivating member displays in the lobby.

It’s not simply an awards ceremony; it’s an opportunity to engage with the dynamic business landscape of the Salinas Valley. Attendees will have the chance to meet the 2025 Chamber Board of Directors, connect with fellow business leaders, and forge valuable relationships within the community.

The Chamber will also honor dedicated members celebrating 10-, 25-, and 50-year anniversaries with the Salinas Valley Chamber in 2024. We express our gratitude for their unwavering

AWARDS LUNCHEON see page 28

SAVE THE DATE



104th ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON

THURSDAY APRIL 10, 2025

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Nontraditional Bond Funds in a Nontraditional Bond Environment

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

Over the past few years, conservative investors have struggled with holding bonds in their portfolio. Typically viewed as a “safe haven” compared to stocks, bonds have struggled in both bear and bull markets in recent years. Following an aggressive rate-hiking campaign to combat rapidly accelerating inflation in 2022, the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index lost 13.01%.

With interest rates rising, the era of negative stock-bond correlation, which was consistent from 2000-2020, saw a reversal. Although 2023 and 2024 saw positive performance, returning 5.5% and 1.25%, respectively, bond investors have been looking elsewhere for better performance. Additionally, with the positive stock-bond correlation seen in recent years, investors have begun looking outside the traditional bond fund that invests in U.S. Treasuries, U.S. government agency mortgage-backed securities and investment grade corporate bonds to mitigate portfolio volatility from stocks.

In the closing quarter of 2024, the Federal Reserve (Fed) indicated that it was expecting four rate cuts



COUPON	NAME	YIELD		
0.10 %	3 Month	0.18 %	▲	+12
0.30 %	6 Month	0.42 %	▲	+26
0.40 %	1 Year	0.58 %	▲	+36
0.80 %	2 Year	0.80 %	▲	+48
			▲	+51

in 2025. However, at the conclusion of its December meeting, the Fed indicated that rather than four cuts, it was anticipating only one. This notion was further strengthened by a hotter-than-expected January 2025 Consumer Price Index (CPI) report, which showed inflation had ticked up more than expected. As of this writing (mid-February), the CME FedWatch is predicting the next rate cut to come in September, with a 70.2% probability.

With rate cuts likely to happen much later in the year, if at all, conservative investors are looking to other bond categories for the fixed income portion of their portfolio. One area that has gained much

attention is nontraditional bonds. The nontraditional bond category contains funds that pursue strategies divergent in one or more ways from conventional/traditional bond funds. These strategies often have very limited portfolio constraints on exposure to credit, sectors, currency, or interest-rate sensitivity. They may also have exposure to a mix of factors such as absolute return mandates (goals of avoiding losses and producing returns not correlated with the overall bond market), performance benchmarks based on ultra-short-term interest rates (such as T-bills), and the ability to use a broad range of derivatives for market- and security-level positions.

Another large subset are self-described “unconstrained” funds, which have more flexibility to invest tactically across a wide swath of individual sectors, including high-yield and foreign debt, and typically with very large allocations. Funds in this group typically have broad freedom to manage interest-rate sensitivity but attempt to tactically manage those exposures to minimize volatility. These funds attempt to minimize volatility by maintaining short or ultra-short duration portfolios, but explicitly court significant credit and foreign bond market risk to generate high returns. Funds within this category often will use credit default swaps and other fixed income derivatives to a significant level.

With rate cuts potentially being pushed out to later in the year, or even next year (depending on the path of inflation and the state of the economy), conservative investors would benefit from exploring options outside of the traditional core bond fund strategy for the fixed income portion of their portfolio. 🌱

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

Awards Luncheon - from page 27

commitment and longstanding partnership with the Salinas Chamber throughout the years.

Various participation opportunities are available, including member displays, individual tickets, and sponsorship. Individual tickets are priced at \$75 for members and \$95 for non-members. To secure a spot, prepaid reservations are required by Friday, April 4, at SalinasChamber.com or

until tickets are sold out.

Don't miss out on this premier celebration of success, community, and collaboration and be a part of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's largest annual event.

For inquiries, contact President & CEO Colleen Bailey at Colleen@salinaschamber.com or call the Chamber Office at (831) 751-7725. 🌱



The luncheon not only acknowledges outstanding accomplishments, but also serves as a source of inspiration for others, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation within the community

— Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Member Orientation**

Wednesday, March 5, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., 119 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join the Chamber for its new and prospective membership orientation to learn a broad overview of membership, how the Chamber can help your business expand your network, increase your visibility, boost your credibility, access business resources, and engage in business advocacy. Register at SalinasChamber.com today. Contact the SVCC Membership Director, Gabriel Lopez, if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you there.

- **Lunch & Learn with Granite Construction: Salinas Hot Plant Tour**

Tuesday, March 11, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., 721 Work St., Salinas

Join the Chamber for a Lunch and Learn experience with Granite Construction. Dive into the fascinating world of road and asphalt production with a guided tour of the facility and discover the processes and innovation behind the work. Enjoy a brief presentation highlighting Granite Construction's rich history, current processes, and commitment to excellence. Along the way, have a delicious lunch, network with business professionals, and connect with others who share a curiosity for learning. Don't miss this unique and informative event.

- **Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting with Elevate Spa MD**

Thursday, March 13, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., 423 Pajaro St., Suite A, Salinas

Join the Chamber on Thursday, March 13, at 5:30 p.m., to celebrate the grand opening and ribbon cutting of Elevate Spa MD, a premier destination for beauty and self-care in Salinas. Founded by Griselda Castillo, a Latina/Hispanic woman entrepreneur, their med spa is expanding to a second location and offers a wide range of services with a team of skilled professionals using the latest technologies and techniques. From Botox and dermal fillers to custom facials, lash extensions, Vitamin B12 shots, and more, Elevate Spa is dedicated to helping you look and feel your best. Highlights for this special evening include exclusive promotions with 20% to 50%-off services; raffle prizes, including free services, skincare products, Botox, lashes, facials, and waxing; complimentary drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and desserts; ceremonial ribbon cutting and live Mariachi performance at 6:00 p.m. to celebrate the occasion. Join us for an evening of celebration, special offers, and community, and experience the Elevate Spa MD difference.

- **Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of the Marjorie R. McNeely Low-Vision Optometry Clinic and Assistive Technology Center**

Thursday, March 27, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m., AOA HUB, 236 Monterey St., Salinas

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County is excited to announce the grand opening of the Marjorie R. McNeely Low-Vision Optometry Clinic and Assistive Technology Center. Light appetizers and refreshments will be served. Since 1971, The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County has provided free and reduced cost services to Monterey County residents who are visually impaired, empowering them with education, support, and skills training for independent living. This new location will further their mission by offering expanded resources and innovative technology to the residents of Salinas and South Monterey County. "With the creation of our second low-vision clinic, we can continue to expand our services into Salinas and South County. Clients will have the option to receive trainings and evaluations in our new Salinas site, or at our other location in Pacific Grove," said Steven Macias, Executive Director. "As many of our clients are dependent on others for travel or rely on MST services, the transit time from King City to Salinas is much shorter than King City to Pacific Grove. We are grateful for AOA to have this partnership and location."

- **Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's 104th Annual Awards Luncheon**

Thursday, April 10, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Sherwood Hall, 940 North Main St., Salinas

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is delighted to announce the highly anticipated 104th Annual Awards Luncheon — a n extraordinary celebration of achievement, business excellence, networking, and community spirit. This event attracts over 400 prominent business leaders and community members in the Salinas Valley region. Opportunities for participation include individual or group tickets, as well as sponsorship options. Prepaid reservations are required to secure your spot — visit SalinasChamber.com to make your reservations.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com



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NON-PROFIT EVENTS

Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services – Jacob's Heart Soirée

March 8, 5:00 – 9:00 p.m., 400 Beach St., Santa Cruz – Boardwalk's Coconut Grove

Join Jacob's Heart for a boldly bright night back at the Coconut Grove in Santa Cruz. Get ready for a night of joy, unity, and purpose as we come together to support local families facing pediatric cancer. Experience an unforgettable evening filled with a delicious dinner, a fun raffle, and heartfelt moments that will leave a lasting impact. Buy your tickets at jacobsheart.org/spring and reach out to eli@jacobsheart.org for any further information.

K&D Landscaping, Inc. – 4th Annual Central Coast Water Summit

March 13, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., 400 Beach St., Santa Cruz – Boardwalk's Coconut Grove

Join K&D Landscaping for the 4th Annual Central Coast Water Summit, an engaging and impactful event bringing together industry leaders, community members, and environmental advocates to explore sustainable water management solutions for our region. This year's summit will feature expert keynote speakers, interactive panel discussions, and networking opportunities designed to inspire innovation and collaboration in addressing water conservation challenges. Attendees will gain valuable insights into cutting-edge technologies, policy updates, and best practices that support a resilient and thriving Central Coast. Whether you're a professional in the water industry, a local business owner, or a concerned resident, this event is your opportunity to contribute to the conversation about protecting our most vital resource. Take the opportunity to be part of the solution.

Hartnell College Foundation – Monterey County STEM Talent Expo

March 19, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., 411 Central Ave., Salinas – Hartnell College STEM Center Lobby

This exciting, free, one-day event will connect STEM industry leaders to talented students, former students, and community members who are looking for opportunities to further their education and career opportunities in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM]. Event Includes: Pre-Event keynote address with Q&A from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. - STEM Expo 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. - STEM education and employment opportunities – more than 30 employers and education partners will host booths and be ready to meet, greet and inform, and more.

California Rodeo Salinas – Clem Albertoni Cowboy Poetry Gathering

March 29, 6:00–10:00 p.m. – Salinas Sports Complex

The 2025 Clem Albertoni Cowboy Poetry Gathering will be held on Saturday, March 29 at the Salinas Sports Complex. Trinity Seely will headline the show. More information coming soon. Tickets are on sale now at carodeo.com for \$80, which includes a full barbecue dinner and the music and poetry show. There will also be a silent auction and no-host bar at the event. Seely, who was a crowd favorite back in 2023, and Andy Nelson, will perform. This is the fourth time the California Rodeo Salinas will produce the Cowboy Poetry Gathering in honor of the great man and renowned cowboy poet, Clem Albertoni.

United Way Monterey County – 2025 Live United Awards

April 30

Join United Way Monterey County for the 2025 Live United Awards. United Way Monterey County is now accepting nominations for individuals and groups who have made a significant impact on our community. From supporting education and youth to aiding those in need and improving the overall quality of life, the Live United Awards recognize the invaluable contributions of volunteers across various categories, including Education & Youth Services, Human Services, Youth Volunteerism, Community Service, Group Volunteers, and Lifetime of Service. Help United Way celebrate the inspiring individuals who make Monterey County a better place.

Impower Monterey County – Spring Luncheon

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

Since 2010, Rancho Cielo's annual Culinary Round Up has provided a unique opportunity for guests to meet and see Rancho Cielo's culinary students in action. It's an evening of fun, food and libations with a Western flair, including an exciting raffle and live auction. Proceeds from the event benefit the culinary program at Rancho Cielo, where the students have a pathway to earning their high school diploma while gaining hands-on culinary training and earning industry certifications. If not for Rancho Cielo's supporters, opportunities like this — to test their skills, to learn service, presentation and plating for large events — would not exist. All of the food and beverages, as well as raffle and auction items, are generously donated by local businesses and help generate additional funds needed for Rancho Cielo to serve its students.

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

Armanasco Public Relations is proud to celebrate our



THANK YOU to the hundreds of regional, national, and international clients who have trusted us along the way. Your partnership has been the cornerstone of our growth, and we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to your success. Over the past four decades, we have enjoyed countless memorable moments and celebrated many incredible achievements. As we look forward to the future, we are excited to continue building bridges and creating opportunities for our clients. Cheers to many more years of collaboration, success, and shared accomplishments!

Armanasco Public Relations is a full-service public relations firm established in 1985 by David Armanasco. Over the years our team has helped clients enhance public perception, establish credibility, develop brand awareness, and create stronger relationships with their target audiences. The added value we bring to our clients is our deep roots in the community and long-standing relationships we have built throughout the region and beyond.



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