



Salinas Valley  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# BUSINESS JOURNAL



Jazz at the Ranch 2024: A Spectacular Blend of Music, Cuisine and Community Support page 20



Graves Elementary School District Tackles Failing Water System and Succeeds page 26



Photo courtesy Visit California/Max Whittaker

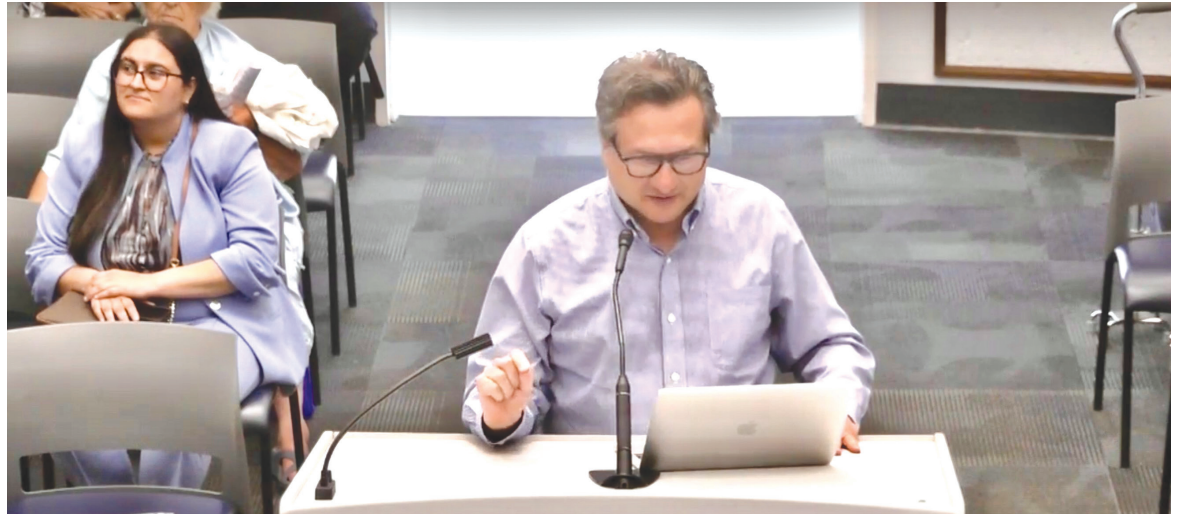
## Tourism 2030 Roadmap Will Guide Tourism and Hospitality Industry for Next Five Years

By **Mac McDonald**, Salinas Valley Business Journal

What's in a roadmap? For those in a younger post-smart phone generation, it's those large multi-fold paper maps one used to buy in gas stations before embarking on a road trip to figure out how to get to where you were going.

Like any good, detailed roadmap, it not only guided you to your destination, it showed you alternate routes, interesting side trips and tourist spots as well as any possible

**TOURISM** see page 18



Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Liaison Kevin Dayton asks the Salinas City Council to request a final report about the final destinations and amounts of Pond 3 effluent sent to the Monterey One Water (M1W) Regional Treatment Facility.

## The Swirls and Eddies of Water Flow from the Salinas Valley

By **Kevin Dayton**, Government Affairs Liaison

**U**nderstanding and tracking Monterey County water flow remains a major challenge for your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. Data is often difficult to obtain. A tangle of agreements connects multiple regional and local water and wastewater agencies and private companies. In addition,

several state agencies have authority or substantial influence over various aspects of water rights and transfers.

Salinas Valley businesses and residents seem particularly interested in how and why water is going from the Salinas Valley to the Monterey Peninsula. The fulcrum of water flow between the

two regions is through the Monterey One Water (M1W) Regional Treatment Plant. M1W is a regional public Joint Powers Agency, founded in 1972, that now provides regional wastewater treatment and disposal for the cities of Monterey, Pacific Grove,

**WATER FLOW** see page 6



# CREATING JOBS — AND AMAZING WORK ENVIRONMENTS



*Award recipients with store locations  
(left to right): Alex Perez, North Main, Salinas  
Amalia Saldivar, Paso Robles  
Taylor Strang, Scotts Valley  
Greg Colomy, Soledad  
Kayla Alonzo, Alisal, Salinas  
Jorge Becerra Huerta, E-Commerce*

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## 2024 RETAIL SUMMIT AWARD WINNERS

### HR HARMONY AWARDS

(building a partnership with HR through collaboration, cooperation, and communication). **Winners:** Alex Perez, North Main, Salinas; Taylor Strang, Scotts Valley; Amalia Saldivar, Paso Robles

### MISSION AMBASSADOR AWARD

(fostering professional growth and workforce training). **Winner:** Jorge Becerra Huerta, E-Commerce

### RETENTION CHAMPION AWARDS

(helping achieve minimal turnover while fostering an engaged workforce). **Winners:** Kayla Alonzo, Alisal, Salinas; Greg Colomy, Soledad

*Congratulations to Goodwill's 2024 Award Winners!*





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# Embracing This Time of Renewal with Optimism

By Jennifer L. Williams, SVCC Board Chair

As the holiday season approaches, the Chamber embraces this time of renewal with optimism, seeing it as an opportunity not only to celebrate but also to tackle longstanding challenges — most notably, filling the CEO vacancy and strengthening the organization for the year ahead.

The Chamber's strategic plan prioritizes Improving Operational Excellence, Growing Membership Value & Reach, Increasing Regional Collaboration, Strengthening Advocacy & Policy Influence with a key current focus on interviewing and hiring a new CEO to lead the organization effectively into the future. Interviews are underway, and we hope to have a new CEO in place soon!

As election results come into focus, the Chamber remains dedicated to pursuing economic growth and addressing key challenges. Regardless of who the Chamber endorsed or who is elected, our commitment is to collaborate with all leaders to serve the best interests of the Salinas community. We believe that progress depends on finding common ground, even when opinions differ. We also value our growing partnership with the new Salinas City Manager, Rene Mendez, who shares our commitment to collaboration in advancing a shared vision for Salinas.

We continued our commitment to listening to you with the recent Chamber Member Survey assessing your opinions about the Amazon project in Salinas. We had an extraordinary response, and we are grateful to each of you for sharing your thoughts with us. The Chamber Member survey results indicate support for the Amazon project, reflecting optimism about its potential benefits for the local economy.

Members also emphasized the importance of Amazon addressing key concerns, with traffic management being a top priority. The survey highlights a desire for a balanced approach, where growth and community

well-being go hand in hand. To that end, Chamber leadership is working to host a forum in the coming weeks with Amazon representatives to create the desired space to dialogue about concerns and solutions as well as defining the Chamber's role with Amazon moving forward.

The high response rate to the Member Survey serves as a valuable reminder to Chamber leadership that we must continue to gauge the members' voices as we represent you in our work to address important policy and business concerns.

In this issue, you'll read the latest effort of our Government Affairs Liaison Kevin Dayton to bring transparency and understanding to Monterey County water issues. Our Board of Directors and Government Relations Committee remain concerned about how wastewater from the Salinas Valley has gone to the Monterey Peninsula through the "Pure Water Monterey" program while farmers have resorted to supplemental wells and privately-owned wells. Kevin continues to identify the changes and acquire the data that will bring clarity to this situation. He also writes about how the City of Soledad and Soledad Unified School District are working as partners to advance water recycling and affordable housing for school district employees. "We need a lot more cooperation in Monterey County between cities and school districts," he tells us.

Finally, don't miss the Chamber Foundation's Children's Shopping Tour at Northridge Mall on Dec. 7. For more information about donating to or volunteering to help with this Salinas holiday tradition, visit [www.salinasmember.com](http://www.salinasmember.com) today!



## 2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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## CHAMBER PRIORITIES

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



# Is it Time to Reconsider Bonds?

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

**B**onds have always been thought of as a vital part of any truly balanced investment portfolio. With stocks and bond often, but not always, being negatively correlated (prices move in opposite directions), bonds can help reduce the overall volatility of a portfolio. But 2022 changed much of what had been previously thought about bonds. When inflation began to skyrocket in early 2022, the Federal Reserve (Fed) took action to curb the path of inflation by rapidly raising interest rates beginning in March that year. By May, the Fed began raising interest rates at the clip of 0.75% (75 basis points) for four consecutive Fed meetings. This created the worst bond market performance in over a century, with the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index dropping more than 13% and long-term Treasury bonds sinking more than 29%.

This dramatically changed many investors' view of the value of adding bonds to a portfolio when even the most conservative investors experienced losses that they never imagined could happen. The bond market remained negative through the end of October 2023 and achieved all the year's gain in November and December.

Enter 2024 with investors anxiously awaiting the Fed to begin to cut interest rates that was thought to revive the sinking bond market. Most intermediate term bonds had near zero rate of return into the summer. Then it happened – at the Fed's September meeting they voted to reduce interest rates by 0.50% (50 basis points). On the anticipation of the Fed taking this action, the bond market began to show signs of life.

One technique some investors employed to curb falling bond

prices was to shorten the duration of the bonds they held. Duration is a measure of a bond's sensitivity to changes in interest rates – short duration will be least affected by changing rates, long duration being the most affected. With shorter duration, bonds could better survive an environment of high inflation and high interest rates. Now that the Fed has begun cutting interest rates, many investors are rethinking the viability of investing in bonds once again.

When rates rose, duration was shortened. Now that the Fed has acted to cut rates, extending duration may make sense. Investors doing so are seeking to take advantage of the environment of softening inflation and interest rates which should positively impact the bond market.

Building the bond "sleeve" of a balanced investment portfolio, however, is more than just focusing on duration. What types of bonds to implement in a portfolio is also important. There are corporate, government, asset-backed bonds to name a few types available. Also, domestic vs. foreign bonds can play a vital role for overall bond diversification. Lastly, bond quality must be a consideration. In this uncertain environment, many investors focus on investment grade bonds, being AAA, AA, A and BBB rated. Lower quality bonds, often referred to as "junk bonds" may add additional diversification. Junk bonds tend to be more positively correlated to the stock market which can be beneficial when the stock market is rallying.

An investment professional can assist in developing a bond sleeve that works well with the stocks that are being held within an investor's portfolio. 🌱

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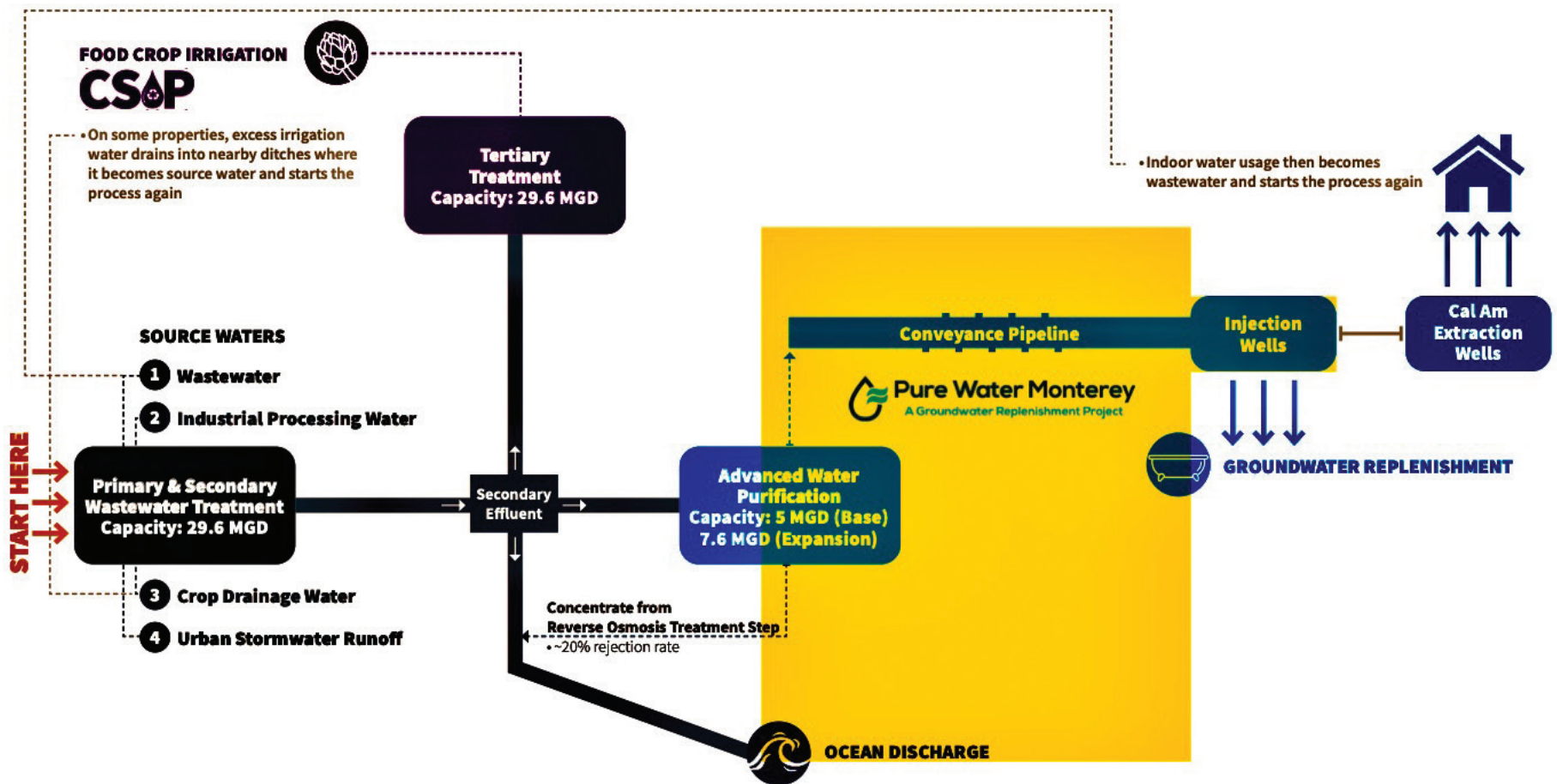
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# ONE WATER



## WATER FLOW - from page 1

Del Rey Oaks, Sand City, Marina, and Salinas; the Seaside County Sanitation District; the Castroville, Moss Landing, and Boronda Community Services Districts; and the former Fort Ord.

In 1990, M1W began operating its large centralized Regional Treatment Plant, which consolidated primary and secondary wastewater treatment of six smaller outdated municipal treatment plants. It's located north of the City of Marina, near the operations of ReGen Monterey (known as the Monterey Regional Waste Management District until 2022).

M1W also produces recycled water (non-potable and potable). Until 2017, it was known as the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA). The M1W board of directors changed the agency's name to reflect its central role in water recycling as well as treatment and disposal.

On Oct. 9, 2024, the Chamber's Government Relations Committee received a presentation on water flow from the M1W External Affairs Director. Following that meeting, Chamber leaders suggested that the next Business Journal include a concise explanation of how and why Salinas Valley water is supplied for agricultural irrigation in the Lower

Salinas Valley and occasionally for drinking water on the Monterey Peninsula. Below is our attempt to explain the water flow in the context of the chronological order of new water infrastructure.

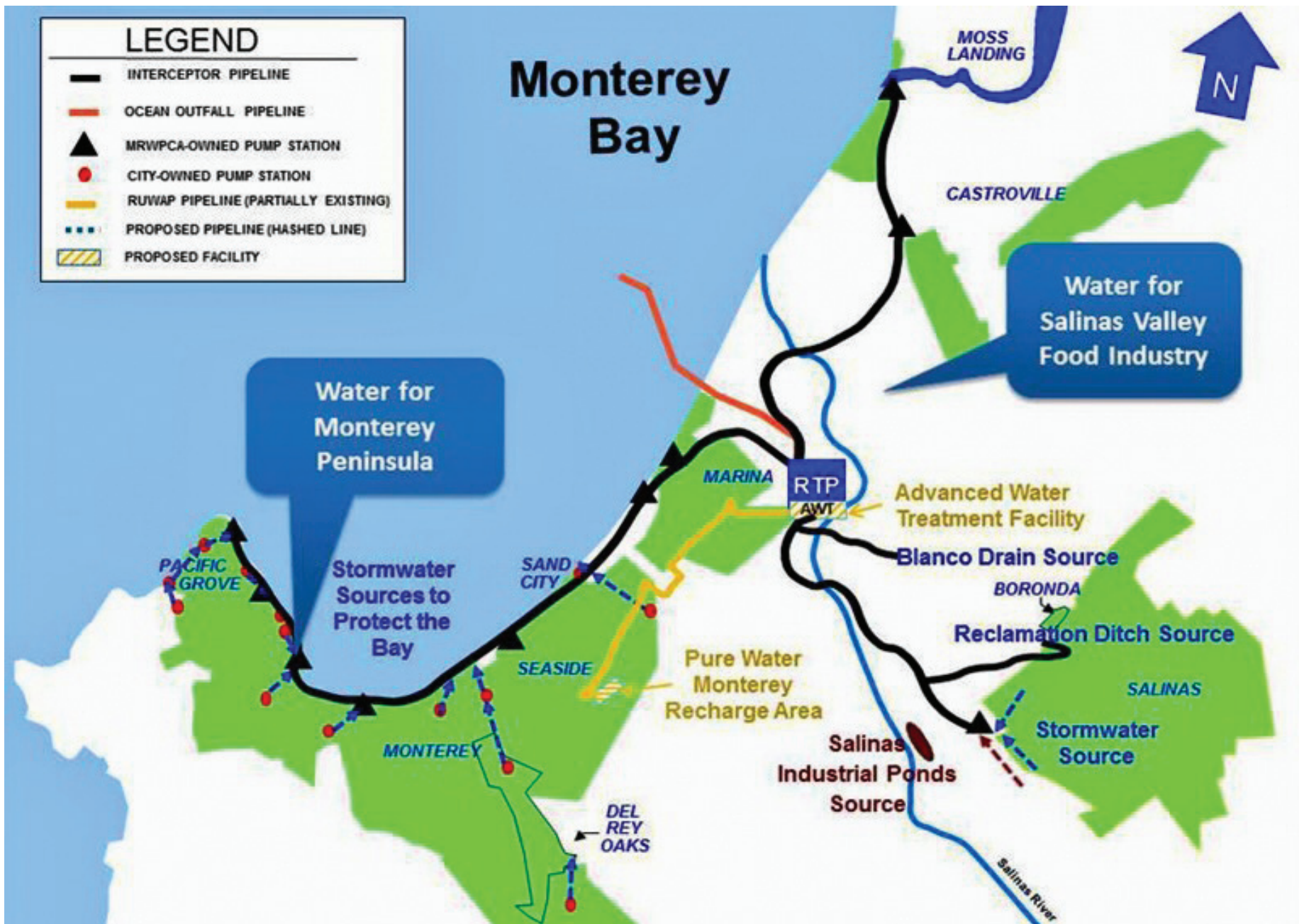
### Municipal Wastewater to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (1998)

In the Lower Salinas Valley, near Castroville, seawater intrusion has occurred over many decades in the underlying 180-/400-foot aquifer. Salinity has reached levels at which farmers cannot use groundwater pumped from wells drilled into that aquifer. After many years of studies and tests, the Monterey County

Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) and Monterey One Water (M1W) began operating the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP, pronounced "See-Sip") in 1998 to allow farmers to irrigate crops with recycled water.

Municipal wastewater (sewage) comes via three interceptors from three areas (Salinas, the Monterey Peninsula, and Castroville/Moss Landing) to the Regional Treatment Plant. After undergoing primary and secondary treatment, the majority of incoming municipal wastewater is diverted to the Salinas Valley Reclamation Project (SVRP) for additional treatment. That water then goes to an 80-acre storage pond.





From there, it flows via gravity through a network of purple pipes to 12,000 acres of farmland near Castroville.

Besides the pipelines, 22 designated supplemental wells were included as part of the CSIP system. Nine of them are still operating.

**Salinas River Water to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (2008)**

In 2008, M1W and the MCWRA began providing additional water supply from the Salinas River to the area served by the Castroville

Seawater Intrusion Project. Water stored during the rainy season in the Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs (in southern Monterey County at the border of San Luis Obispo County) is released during the dry growing season and flows 90 miles down the Salinas River. Eventually, the water reaches the Lower Salinas Valley, where a rubber dam blocks water flow at the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF). After the accumulated river water is filtered and treated with chlorine, it is mixed with the recycled water and

conveyed through the CSIP pipeline network for agricultural irrigation.

When there is a series of dry years, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency does not release reservoir water into the Salinas River beyond the minimum amount needed for fish; therefore, the SRDF does not operate during those times. During drought, reservoir releases rarely flow downstream of King City.

**City of Salinas Industrial Wastewater to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion**

**Project (2013)**

Established during World War II, the Salinas Industrial Wastewater conveyance and treatment system consists of wastewater pipelines in South Salinas that bring industrial processing wastewater (primarily “ag wash” from produce cleaning) to evaporation and percolation ponds near the Salinas River, at the intersection of Davis Road and Reservoir Road.

In the early 2010s, the City of Salinas was dealing with a volume of industrial wastewater inflows



that threatened to exceed the regulatory capacity of the ponds. At the same time, CSIP was short of irrigation water because of drought. The solution for both problems was to have the City of Salinas work with Monterey One Water and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency to divert the industrial wastewater to Monterey One Water's Regional Treatment Plant. The industrial wastewater was treated and then used to provide additional water supply to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project.

In 2013, Monterey One Water and the City of Salinas began trials for diverting industrial wastewater through the Salinas Pump Station to the Regional Treatment Plant. A permanent "shunt" at the Salinas Pump Station was completed in 2015 for this purpose.

#### **New Source Waters to the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project and Seaside Groundwater Basin (2020)**

On Oct. 8, 2015, the M1W Board of Directors approved the original Pure Water Monterey/Groundwater Replenishment Project. This project entailed the construction and operation of several wastewater diversions sites from multiple new sources, including the Reclamation Ditch (which goes through Salinas), industrial wastewater from Salinas, stormwater from South Salinas, the Blanco Drain west of Salinas, the Tembladero Slough west of Salinas (never constructed), and Lake El Estero in the City of Monterey (currently in planning phase).

As indicated in the resolution approved by the board, the project would provide recycled water for three purposes:

1. Up to 3,500 acre-feet per year of advanced purified recycled water would be injected into the Seaside Groundwater Basin for future extraction as potable water for customers of California American Water Company (Cal Am) in the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District

(MPWMD).

2. From all of the new source waters, approximately 4,500 to 4,750 acre-feet per year of recycled water would be provided (in normal and wet years) for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) agricultural irrigation system.
3. A drought reserve (not to exceed 1,000 total acre-feet or 200 acre-feet per year) would be established by M1W so that during times of drought, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency could utilize additional recycled water for CSIP while Pure Water Monterey utilized the stored water to meet its annual contract obligations.

In addition, M1W would provide recycled water under a long-standing 1989 annexation agreement with Marina Coast Water District (MCWD) for its Regional Urban Water Augmentation Program (RUWAP).

RUWAP would provide recycled water for landscape irrigation, including California State University Monterey Bay playing fields, and (as of 2023) the Bayonet and Blackhorse golf courses in the city of Seaside. Finally, extra water would be stored in the Seaside Groundwater Basin as a drought reserve.

Infrastructure was completed in 2020 for the diversion of water from the Reclamation Ditch, Blanco Drain, urban stormwater from South Salinas, and Pond 3 of the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant.

In June 2022, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) declared that the conditions of its

2015 Amended and Restated Water Recycling Agreement (ARWRA) with M1W could not be achieved and negotiations for a new agreement were necessary for MCWRA participation in Pure Water Monterey. As of October 2023, the two agencies have not agreed on new terms and conditions for a long-term agreement. Once MCWRA pulled out of the agreement, the drought reserve was no longer an option for additional recycled water during drought conditions.

Although M1W is not conveying water to CSIP under the Pure Water Monterey program, it has been conveying industrial wastewater and Pond 3 wastewater to the M1W Regional Treatment Plant under separate short-term temporary agreements with the City of Salinas.



#### **Current Diversions of Pond 3 Industrial Wastewater to Regional Treatment Plant for Either Discharge to Bay or Source Water for Recycling (2024)**

The Salinas River flooded in March 2023 and inundated the evaporation and percolation

ponds of the Salinas River Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant. M1W utilized the permanent diversion facility ("the shunt") built at the Salinas Pump Station in 2015, which allowed the Salinas agricultural processing facilities to continue operating while the flooded ponds were unable to receive industrial wastewater flows.

During the floods, silt from the river was deposited in the ponds and reduced their wastewater volume capacity. As a result, the City of Salinas has since struggled to comply with Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board regulations limiting the height of the water levels in the ponds ("freeboard" is

the height between the maximum water level and the top of the containment vessel).

From Feb. 16 to April 21, 2024, M1W pumped excess Pond 3 water to the M1W Regional Treatment Facility to help the City of Salinas keep its pond levels below regulatory limits. Blended with municipal wastewater, the excess Pond 3 water was conveyed to the M1W Regional Treatment Plant and received primary and secondary treatment. M1W then released the treated wastewater into Monterey Bay via its ocean outfall.

In June 2024, the City of Salinas again asked M1W to help reduce pond levels by pumping wastewater from Pond 3 to the Regional Treatment Plant. The City of Salinas would pay for conveying the Pond 3 wastewater to the treatment plant and would also pay the costs of treatment if the wastewater was ultimately sent to the ocean outfall. However, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency would pay for treatment of any wastewater that originated from Pond 3 and was recycled for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP). The Pure Water Monterey program would pay for treatment of any wastewater that originated from Pond 3 and was recycled for Pure Water Monterey and sent to the Seaside Groundwater Basin.

At its meeting on Aug. 20, 2024, the Salinas City Council approved an agreement with M1W to temporarily divert wastewater from Pond 3 of the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant to the M1W Regional Treatment Plant. Your Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison asked the City Council to request and receive water flow readings at the end of 2024 showing how much water was diverted from Pond 3 and how much went to each of the destinations. The City Council included that directive in their vote. 🌿





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## ALBA Featured on CBS National News: Empowering Farm Workers to Achieve Independence

ALBA (Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association) is proud to announce its recent feature on CBS National News, highlighting the innovative program that supports farm workers in becoming independent farm operators. The segment, covered by Len Ramirez, showcases how ALBA is making a significant impact in the lives of immigrant farm workers, primarily from Mexico and Central America, by providing them with the resources and training needed to succeed in sustainable agriculture. In the segment, several ALBA graduates share their inspiring journeys from farm labor to owning their own farms, demonstrating the effectiveness of ALBA's comprehensive training programs and access to land. "We are grateful for the opportunity to be featured on CBS National News, which helps shed light on the challenges and successes of farm workers striving for independence," said ALBA Executive Director Patricia Carrillo. The program not only teaches essential farming techniques, but also connects participants with local markets, creating a network of support that enables them to thrive in the agricultural sector. "Our mission is to empower farm workers, and this feature amplifies our efforts to promote sustainable farming practices and support our community," said Carrillo. ALBA invites everyone to watch the full segment on CBS National News at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrNTWBj5Hvs> and to support its mission by visiting its website at [www.albafarmers.org](http://www.albafarmers.org) for more information on how to get involved or donate.



## New Vice President of Risk Management Rita Toston Joins Bay Federal Leadership

Bay Federal Credit Union announced the addition of Rita Toston to the Credit Union's Senior Leadership Team as Vice President of Risk Management. Toston will direct the organization's Enterprise Risk Management program and monitor Bay Federal's risk profile. Toston's 20 years of banking experience includes consulting through her own LLC for various small community banks and fintech firms. Her work history includes compliance, audit, and operations roles with Citibank, including Senior Vice President of Compliance Testing, where she supported all U.S. personal banking. "I am thrilled to join an organization that demonstrates an equal commitment to the well-being of both its employees and its members," said Toston. "This dual focus on fostering a supportive and engaging work environment, alongside delivering exceptional service and value to members, truly resonates with my professional values." Her educational background includes a bachelor's degree in management and finance from Park University and a master's in business administration from Ottawa University. She also holds her Certified Regulatory Compliance Manager certification. When she isn't working, Toston enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time with her spouse, her two sons, and their rottweiler puppy, Cody.



## Selina Andrews Appointed Salinas City Finance Director

City Manager René Mendez appointed Selina Andrews as the City of Salinas' new Finance Director. Andrews joined the city one year ago as the Assistant Finance Director and most recently, has been serving as Acting Finance Director. "Filling the Finance Director position has been a top priority for me since coming to Salinas, but it was important to take the time to select the right person," said Mendez. "Selina has done amazing work leading the team as the Acting Finance Director, and I'm confident she is the leader the city needs in this critical role." Sept. 30, was Andrews' first day as Finance Director. She has over 18 years of local government experience, primarily in finance positions with the cities of San Jose and Scotts Valley. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance.



## David J. Gubernick's "Macro to Grand Landscapes" Debuts at ArtWorks @Salinas

The Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC) is excited to announce the opening of "Macro to Grand Landscapes," a stunning photography exhibit featuring the work of renowned nature photographer David J. Gubernick. The exhibit opened on Oct. 4, at ArtWorks @Salinas and will be on display until Dec. 29. "Macro to Grand Landscapes" showcases a vibrant collection of photographs capturing the intricate details of flowers and the expansive vistas of Monterey County. The pieces presented on both fine-art paper and canvas prints invite viewers to explore the beauty found in both the small and the grand. The exhibit will be open weekly from Friday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome to experience these artistic works. In addition to the art on display, there will be two artists' receptions coinciding with Salinas First Friday celebrations on Nov. 1 and Dec. 6, at ArtWorks @Salinas on 262 Main St. in Salinas. Occurring in the evenings, these events provide a unique opportunity to meet the artist and engage with their artistry while enjoying light refreshments, snacks, and music. On Nov. 1, Gubernick's special Artist Talk was titled "Monterey County: Its Beauty and Magic." He discussed his deep connection to the region and shared insights through stunning images. "I share images that give form to feelings, and hope you experience a similar moment of wonder and delight, a gentle reminder of the ever-present possibility of expanding our awareness to embrace the beauty and magic that surrounds us," he said.

## K&D Landscaping Wins Aptos Chamber Business of the Year

K&D Landscaping is proud to announce its recognition as the Aptos Chamber of Commerce's 2024 Business of the Year, an award that highlights the company's dedication to excellence, community involvement, and sustainable practices. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce will also honor K&D's accomplishments at an upcoming event, celebrating their positive impact both locally and regionally. Founded in 1986, K&D Landscaping has grown from a family-run business into a leading force in sustainable landscaping on the Central Coast. The company's most notable accomplishments include:

1. Family-Owned and Operated Since 1986 – K&D remains true to its roots as a family business, providing personalized service and strong ties to the community for nearly 40 years.
2. Providing Jobs to the Local Community – Currently employing 130 staff members, K&D has set an ambitious goal to provide 300 local jobs by 2030, underscoring its commitment to local economic growth.
3. Dedication to Community Beautification – To date, K&D has donated 29 Community Beautification projects, including recent initiatives at the Santa Cruz Animal Shelter in Watsonville, Pajaro Valley Shelter Services, and Rio Del Mar Elementary.
4. National Recognition for Water Conservation – K&D received national attention when they were featured on the cover of Irrigation & Lighting Magazine for their irrigation program at Seascape Resort, which saved an astounding 1 million gallons of water.
5. A Push Toward Sustainability – By Jan. 1, 2025, K&D's maintenance crews will be 100% powered by battery-operated equipment, a significant step toward reducing the company's environmental footprint. K&D Landscaping is also proud of its efforts to lead the region in water management.

In March, the company will host its fourth annual Water Summit, bringing together thought leaders to discuss innovative water conservation strategies. Additionally, K&D's first-ever Charity Golf Tournament raised \$5,000 for United Way of Santa Cruz, further demonstrating its commitment to supporting the local community. "We are deeply honored to receive this recognition," said CEO Justin White. "Our team's hard work and dedication to sustainability and community service are at the heart of everything we do."







## Hartnell College Earns Seal of Excelencia for Going Beyond Enrollment to Intentionally Serve Latinx, all Students

Excelencia in Education, the nation's premier authority on efforts to accelerate Latinx student success in higher education, announced today Hartnell College has earned the prestigious Seal of Excelencia. The seal is a national certification for institutions that strive to go beyond enrollment and more intentionally serve Latinx students. In the academic year 2023-24, Hartnell College served 12,000 students, with 83% identifying as Latinx.

Hartnell College is one of only 17 colleges and universities to earn the Seal of Excelencia in 2024. In 2018, Excelencia introduced the seal to certify trendsetting colleges and universities for their efforts to become learning environments where Latinx, and all, students thrive. This year marks the organization's 20th year of service to accelerate Latinx student success in higher education. The Seal of Excelencia framework represents a rigorous assessment of certified institutions' intentionality and impact in improving outcomes such as retention, financial support, and degree completion for Latinx students by aligning efforts across data, practice, and leadership. Ultimately, this process strengthens efforts to serve all students. Seal certification remains valid for three years, after which institutions have the opportunity to recertify. "An institution earns the Seal of Excelencia by using data, best practices, and leadership to demonstrate alignment that intentionally serves our Latinx community," said Michael Gutierrez, Superintendent/President of Hartnell College. "We are honored to serve as exemplars and to represent one of a select few colleges that are transforming ways that engage, enroll, and graduate today's increasingly Latinx students." Leaders in higher education, business, philanthropy, and government, who are in Excelencia's community of common cause convened in Washington, D.C., to recognize Hartnell as one of eight institutions that earned the Seal of Excelencia for the first time, as well as nine other institutions that earned recertification. The announcement was part of the organization's National Policy Forum, focused on innovating policies to accelerate Latinxs' degree attainment and strengthen our country's civic leadership and workforce. The 17 Seal-certified institutions exemplify the kinds of programs and practices that inform good policy. "The colleges and universities that earn the Seal of Excelencia lead the charge in meeting our nation's degree attainment goals," said Deborah Santiago, co-founder and CEO of Excelencia in Education. "They demonstrate commitment to Latinx student success through impact and ongoing self-assessment." This year's cohort of newly certified and recertified institutions belongs to a collective of 46 colleges and universities that have earned the Seal. Together, they represent less than 1% of all higher education institutions but enroll 17% and graduate 19% of all Latinx students nationwide. Before Hartnell College earned the Seal of Excelencia, Gutierrez made the decision to join Excelencia's national network of Presidents for Latinx Student Success (P4LSS). The network comprises over 200 higher education leaders committed to making their institutions learning environments where Latinx, and all, students thrive. Institutions in the P4LSS network are eligible to apply for the Seal. To earn the Seal of Excelencia, they must demonstrate:

- An intentional, institutional focus on advancing Latinx student success by aligning data and practice;
- Deliberate and ongoing assessment to identify and implement strategies that improve Latinx student achievement;
- Leadership commitment to continue transforming into an environment where Latinx students thrive; and,
- A long-term and unwavering commitment to intentionally serve Latinx, and all students.

"Through a rigorous application and interview process, Hartnell College departments and student programs collaboratively evidenced how each serve our student population through practice that is high-impact, culturally responsive, and scalable," said Gayle Pitman, Vice President of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success at Hartnell College.

According to the submitted application, programs and services highlighted include:

- Bilingual services in both English and Spanish
- Mi Casa program, for undocumented students
- High School Equivalency Program (HEP)
- Cohort-mentorship programs
- Math Academy
- Connecting students with internships and careers in STEM)
- Creation of the Basic Needs Office
- Dual Enrollment opportunities for high school students
- Rising Scholars program for incarcerated students
- Strategic placement of education centers in Castroville, East Salinas, King City and Soledad aimed to provide access to education in areas with low educational attainment and in low-income, predominantly Spanish-speaking communities.

The impact of Hartnell College's efforts is evident in the course success rates for Latinx students: 72.8% in 2018-2019, 69.6% during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, and 74.1% in 2022-2023. "Students and families as well as leaders in philanthropy, business, and government look to colleges and universities that earned the Seal of Excelencia when making their institutional choices," said Sarita Brown, co-founder and president of Excelencia in Education. "Excelencia is proud to partner with institutions ensuring America's bright future by advancing the talents of the Latinx community."





## Support our Chamber Members

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

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The Post Box	1983	McSherry & Hudson	2017
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U-Haul Incorporated *10 Years*	2014	Maison Law	2023
Alvarado Street Brewing and Tasting Room	2016	Pacific Homecare Services	2023
		Youth Music Monterey	2023

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





# Honoring Excellence and Innovation at the Strolling Legacy of Leadership Gala

Excitement is building as the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce proudly presents its prestigious annual Legacy of Leadership Gala. It's set to take place on Thursday, Nov. 7, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Portobello's on Main Courtyard, 150 Main St., Suite 116, in Salinas. The Legacy of Leadership Gala brings together prominent leaders and local businesses to recognize and honor those who have demonstrated excellence, innovation, and made significant contributions to the Salinas Valley.

"The Legacy of Leadership is a celebration of the incredible talent, innovation, and generosity that defines the Salinas Valley," says Event Chair Amy Gibson. "I'm honored to Chair this inspiring event that recognizes the leaders who shape our community's growth, spirit, and future."

The Chamber congratulates this year's honorees:

## • Legacy Honoree:

### State Sen. Anna Caballero

State Sen. Anna M. Caballero has made outstanding contributions through her decades of public service and advocacy in the Salinas Valley region. Caballero is currently serving her second term in the



California State Senate, representing the 14th Senate District. Caballero has authored key pieces of legislation, and she is a woman of many firsts. She was the first female mayor elected in the 126-year history of the City of Salinas and the first Latina elected to represent the 28th Assembly District in 2006. In 2011, Gov. Edmund G. Brown hired Caballero to serve as a member of his cabinet as the Secretary of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency. Her mission mirrored her 34-year career fighting for working families. A graduate of UCLA Law School and UC San Diego and born to a family of copper miners from Arizona, Caballero has devoted her life to empowering working families and creating opportunities for them and their children to be successful.

## • Business Philanthropy Honoree:

### The Costa Family McDonald's Restaurants

Born and raised in Turlock, California, Raymond Costa is the proud son of Portuguese immigrant parents who called the Azores their home. His work ethic carried over to a local nursery, where he moved sprinkler pipes and then onto a cheese factory, before moving over to UPS, where he delivered packages for 17 years. In 1995, he became a McDonald's Owner/Operator, opening his first restaurant in Fort Bragg, California. Today, he operates nine restaurants. Costa has always passionately supported several local nonprofit organizations, including the Salvation Army, the American Cancer Society, the California Rodeo-Salinas, The Boys & Girls Club, the California Air Show Salinas, and Rancho Cielo. He is a past Board Member of both the Ronald McDonald House in Palo Alto and the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. In 2017, he established the Raymond H. Costa Family Scholarship, which awards educational scholarships to his employees or their children. Since its inception, the scholarship has awarded over \$419,000 to 151 recipients.



## • Distinguished Business Innovation Honoree:

### Braga Fresh

In 1928, Sebastian and Josie Braga started farming California's fertile soil on what is now known as the Braga Home Ranch in Soledad. Today, the third generation continues the family values of sustainable-organic farming. Braga Fresh sets aside 10% of farmland to beneficial habitat and has the goal of being carbon neutral. Now vertically integrated, Braga Fresh combines innovation with tradition to grow, harvest, and process fresh vegetables and leafy greens through the Josie's Organics and Braga



Farms brands. Their dedication to innovation and environmental stewardship demonstrates their leadership and how they combine modern techniques with traditional values to create a positive impact on both their community and the planet.

## • Young Professional of the Year Honoree:

### Jordan Pratt-Thatcher

Jordan Pratt-Thatcher, a member of the Leavitt Group, has a rich background in sales, where he excelled as both a leader and trainer. He attributes much of his success to the unique skill set he developed while pursuing a career in acting, screenwriting, and producing in Los Angeles. In addition to his professional work, Jordan is passionate about giving back and playing an active role in his community. He is an active member of the Big Sur Land Trust, dedicated to land conservation and education efforts across Monterey County. He also serves on the board of United Way Monterey County and chairs the Emerging Leaders Society through United Way Monterey County. Pratt-Thatcher believes in making connections everywhere he goes and believes we can all work together to make the Central Coast the best place to live and work.



## • Outstanding Business Honoree:

### Paper Tacos

Founded with just \$2,500 of Jesús Ruvalcaba's own savings, Paper Tacos started as a way to combine his love for art, design, and cultural heritage. What began as a small passion project has since evolved into a successful business with a growing customer base. The mission of Paper Tacos is simple: to create bold, funny, and culturally relevant greeting cards that reflect the beauty and spirit of Mexican culture. However, the road to growth has not been without its challenges. Scaling Paper Tacos has presented significant struggles in



managing logistics, fulfillment, and supply chain processes, especially as demand grew beyond what Ruvalcaba could have imagined. Through hard work and community support, Paper Tacos continues to thrive, with over 200 retail wholesale customers, ranging from brick-and-mortar to national retail stores.

This strolling gala will feature a social hour starting at 5:30 p.m., offering a unique opportunity to mingle and network while enjoying wine, hors d'oeuvres, and world-renowned speed painter Amy Burkman. Our Master of Ceremonies will be Showbiz from iHeartMedia, guiding guests through an inspiring program that celebrates this year's honorees. Join us for an evening of recognition, inspiration, and networking with Salinas Valley's brightest leaders. For tickets and more information, please visit SalinasChamber.com or call (831) 751-7725.

This event couldn't be possible without the event's fantastic sponsors. These are the sponsors as of publication date:

**The Chamber thanks the following sponsors:**

**Diamond Sponsor:** Taylor Farms

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For more information, contact the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce at (831) 751-7725 or online at [www.SalinasChamber.com](http://www.SalinasChamber.com). 🌿

# Spreading Hope and Light Where It's Most Needed

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

**A**t Compass Church, we are deeply committed to being a positive force for good in our community. As a church, we believe that our faith compels us to love and serve those around us, embodying the call of Jesus to be the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Whether it's reaching out to those in need or partnering with local businesses, government officials, and civic organizations, our mission is to make Salinas and the surrounding areas a better place for everyone. We see our role as community servants, driven by the principle to "serve one another humbly in love" (Galatians 5:13). In the spirit of service, we have several exciting outreach events coming up, each one designed to impact lives and spread hope where it is most needed.

**Soledad State Correctional Facility Outreach**

On the weekend of Nov. 15, Compass Church will be ministering to over 600 inmates at the Soledad State Correctional Facility. This outreach will include two services designed to provide encouragement, hope, and spiritual guidance to those often forgotten by society. While the world may overlook these men, we are reminded by Jesus' words, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). These services are an opportunity to remind the inmates that redemption, love, and change are always possible through God's grace.

**Thanksgiving Meals for Families in Need**

As Thanksgiving approaches, our hearts are especially focused on families who may be struggling to put food on the table. This year, Compass Church is working diligently to provide hundreds of Thanksgiving meals to families who cannot afford to celebrate with a traditional holiday dinner. We recognize that the Thanksgiving season is about more than just food; it is about sharing blessings, being grateful for the life we have, and coming together as a community. With the help of generous donors and volunteers, we are ensuring that no one is left behind during this special time of year.



**The Great Christmas Toy Drive**

Looking ahead to December, we are excited to announce "The Great Christmas Toy Drive." In partnership with other local churches and organizations, Compass Church will help distribute over 1,000 toys to children across our community. This initiative will culminate at the Salinas Rodeo Grounds during their annual Christmas Tree lighting, spreading the joy of the season.

In addition to this, we are also partnering with Angel Tree, a ministry that provides toys for the children of incarcerated parents. Through this partnership, we will be giving away 500 toys to children who may otherwise feel forgotten during the holiday season. Our goal is to bring joy and hope to families who may not have the means to provide Christmas gifts for their children, reminding them that they are loved and cared for. We believe that every child deserves to experience the wonder and excitement of the season, and through this toy drive, we can help make that possible.

All of these efforts are made possible because of the incredible support we receive from local business owners, city officials, and the dedicated staff members who work tirelessly to keep our community thriving. We are grateful to each of you for your partnership and your commitment to making the Salinas Valley a wonderful place to live and do business. Whether you're contributing financially, volunteering, or simply cheering us on, please know that your efforts are appreciated more than words can express. Together, we are creating a brighter future for our families, our city, and our community as a whole.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to extend a personal message of gratitude to each of you. On behalf of Compass Church, we wish you and your loved ones a season filled with joy, peace, and an overwhelming sense of thankfulness. We are honored to be part of this community and look forward to continuing to serve alongside you as we build a better tomorrow.

God bless you, and Happy Thanksgiving! 🌿





# CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

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Prósperos mission is to provide free banking, access and financial equity for the essential workers in the Latino community. Prósperos replaces costly check cashing and remittances with a fast, free and secure solution that allows customers to save for their financial future.

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*Servicesbyag.com, guillermo@servicesbyag.com, (831) 208-1314*



## BrewJee Coffee Co.

Here at Brewjee we believe that each and every drink is a simple way to enjoy life, something we forget to do all too often. Our drinks are a symbol of self-expression, self-care, and self-awareness. Our goal is to create a warm experience with good vibes and great drinks; a place for you to belong. This is Brewjee Coffee Co.

*Brewjeecoffee.com, BrewjeeCoffeeCompany@gmail.com, (831) 272-4435*



## AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT VANESSA PARRA

DIGITAL NEST, EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



As a Career Matchmaker at Digital NEST, Vanessa Parra's mission is to connect talented members in creative fields with industry professionals, driving growth and opportunity within the Salinas community. With a strong background in marketing communications, social media marketing, and recruitment, she is passionate about elevating the careers of those she serves. The team is dedicated to enriching the professional landscape with skilled, diverse voices.

## Looking for Child Care?

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# RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



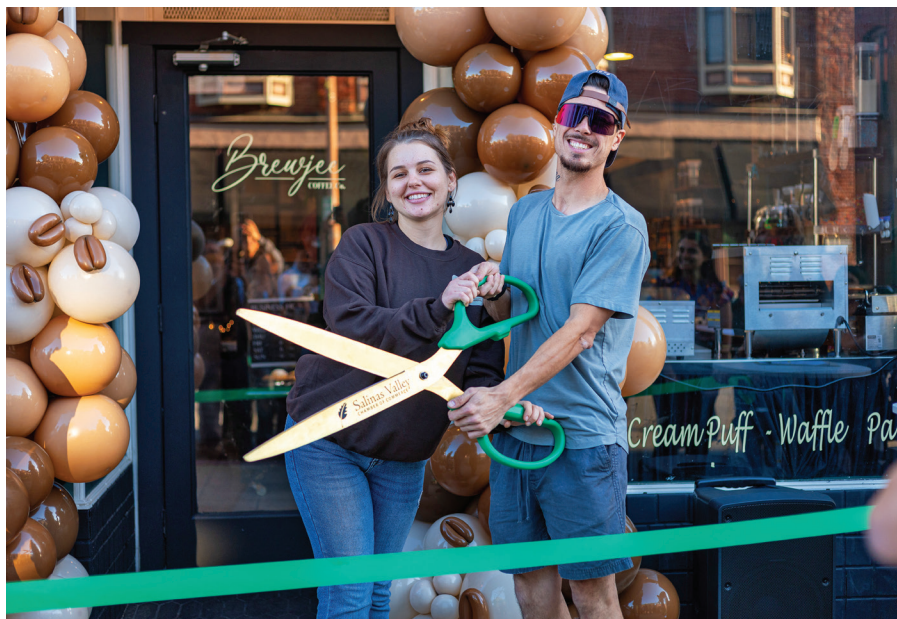
## Elevo's Grand Opening: A New Chapter in Student Success

Elevo hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Salinas, celebrating their new office launch. The event included speeches, live music, and refreshments. Elevo offers programs promoting students' physical, mental, and academic well-being, along with employment opportunities for passionate individuals.



## Salinas Habitats Mural: A Celebration of Culture and Nature

The Salinas City Center and Hijos Del Sol unveiled the "Salinas Habitats" mural, honoring the area's cultural and environmental heritage. The ribbon-cutting event featured local leaders and partners congratulating their continued efforts to beautify Salinas and empower the community, making it a welcoming and inspiring place for businesses, families, and future generations.



## Brewjee Coffee Co.: Brewing Creativity in Salinas

Brewjee Coffee Co. marked its grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by local leaders and community members. Known for its passion and creativity, Brewjee aims to inspire and enrich the lives of customers with each cup brewed.



## Prósperos Grand Opening: Banking for the Future

Prósperos celebrated its grand opening in the Alisal Corridor. Local dignitaries joined the festivities, highlighting Prósperos's commitment to eliminating financial barriers and providing modern banking solutions to all!





Pebble Beach Golf Links. Photo courtesy See Monterey.

## **TOURISM** - from page 1

obstacles or challenges (“winding road,” “narrow bridge,” and so forth).

That’s what See Monterey, a Monterey-based destination marketing and online visitor guide, had in mind when it put together its 24-page “Monterey County Tourism 2030 Roadmap,” which it describes as “a collaborative strategic plan created to guide the local hospitality and tourism industry through myriad changes between now and 2030.”

According to Rob O’Keefe, President & CEO, See Monterey, the Roadmap adapts its 2022 Strategic Plan with input from 10

“Jurisdiction Investment Partners” that included the County and nine cities, as well as the Monterey County Hospitality Association, to reflect the rapid changes in just two years. “Instead of reacting to the future, we’ve involved our community in shaping it,” he writes.

“We had unprecedented level of collaboration, which allowed us to back up and look at the big picture, the whole map,” O’Keefe told the Business Journal. “We’ve got an opportunity to see what’s coming and see the shape of the future and be thoughtful about it with managed growth. The Roadmap is a call to focus on the opportunities and work

together to achieve those goals.”

O’Keefe added that all of Monterey County was involved and included in the creation of the roadmap: “Salinas and the Salinas Valley are absolutely essential to the tourist makeup now and in the future.”

Monterey County attracted 4.5 million visitors last year, generating \$3 billion in economic impact. Tourism will drive more than \$18 billion more in the five years of the Roadmap. In addition, plans are underway to increase the current supply of 12,000 hotel rooms by about 1,000 in the coming years, with new accommodations developed

from the peninsula to Seaside and Salinas. The Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) is set to unveil a new five-gate terminal, enhancing the passenger experience and supporting the case for more nonstop flights. The 10-year reauthorization of the Monterey County Tourism Improvement District (MCTID) in 2023 is generating additional funding to support a managed growth strategy for destination marketing.

“This, combined with ongoing investments from 10 jurisdiction partners, is crucial for sustaining economic vitality and benefiting local communities,” writes O’Keefe. “These dollars drive economic



vitality which in turn supports and improves quality of life for our communities and residents.”

The Roadmap identifies “three clear priorities” for Monterey County tourism to achieve a singular goal to maximize the long-term viability of Monterey County’s tourism economy:

**1. Enhance quality of place.**

“Improving quality of place leads to a virtuous cycle: a better living environment enhances the visitor experience, while tourism investments boost local quality of life. Essentially, a great place to live is a great place to visit, and the billions spent by visitors further enrich the community.”

**2. Stimulate economic development.**

“Tourism is a key economic driver for Monterey County, ranking second only to agriculture countywide and as the top industry on the peninsula. Between 2024 and 2030, tourism-generated taxes will amount to more than a billion dollars. The tourism sector employs nearly 27,000 residents. Stimulating a healthy tourism economy will be vital to building economic success for the entire County.”

**3. Support Managed Growth.**

“Attracting the most valued visitors and balancing tourism with community development is crucial, including managing transportation, infrastructure, housing, and workforce development. Prioritizing community needs ensures that tourism growth enhances rather than disrupts local life.”

While agriculture is the top economic driver in the Salinas Valley and tourism is number one on the Monterey Peninsula, recent surveys have shown that tourism is and can continue to be essential to the economy of the Salinas Valley.

According to a SMARInsights 2024 Visitor Profile Study conducted for See Monterey, 71% of residents



Whale watching. Photo courtesy See Monterey.

recognize that tourism is important for their economy. In fact Salinas came on top in the County, with 77% of residents recognizing the importance of tourism, slightly ahead of most Peninsula cities and other parts of the County.

Lindsey Stevens, See Monterey’s Vice President of Marketing Communications, told the Business Journal that tourism in the Salinas Valley and shining a light on the opportunities to promote tourism in the future is “very important to us.” She pointed out the opening of the California Welcome Center Salinas in the historic Southern Pacific Freight Depot, “ag tourism” such as the Artichoke Trail and wine vineyard tours and tastings, and even the opening of such attractions as the Rising Phoenix Taproom and Beer Garden in King City.

“Travelers want off-the-beaten-path, hidden gems and there are wonderful things to do off Highway 101 and in the Salinas Valley,” she said. “Our goal is to shine a light on those things. We want the community to get a sense of itself, understand that tourism is an economic driver and to understand the opportunities and lean into it.”

In addition to the top three priorities outlined above, the Roadmap

includes 10 key themes from the research studies of both residents and travelers identifying what travelers want and what residents need.

It also outlines key strategies and imperatives for creating managed growth, opportunities and barriers, key collaborators and more in-depth information on both research studies.

While recognizing the importance of tourism, residents are also concerned about impacts on infrastructure, transportation, and housing, which the Roadmap addresses.

“With more insight than ever before into what visitors are seeking and what residents want from their tourism economy, See Monterey is well equipped to take new strategic directions and achieve our vision of a thriving tourism economy that enriches Monterey County’s economic vitality and quality of life,” said O’Keefe.

The MCT 2030 Roadmap, as well as See Monterey’s 2024-25 Business Plan, is available to view at [www.SeeMonterey.com/Members/Tools/Reports](http://www.SeeMonterey.com/Members/Tools/Reports). 🌿



Pebble Beach Photo courtesy See Monterey



# Jazz at the Ranch 2024: A Spectacular Blend of Music, Cuisine and Community Support

By Adam Joseph, Rancho Cielo

Last month, in association with the Monterey Jazz Festival, Rancho Cielo hosted its second annual Jazz at the Ranch concert series and fundraiser. The extraordinary three-day event transformed Rancho Cielo into a haven of world-class music, gourmet cuisine and community spirit, with 100 percent of proceeds benefiting the organization's Arts and Mental Health Programs.

On Friday, attendees enjoyed the electrifying guitar work of longtime Bay Area bluesman Chris Cain and the local talent of the Monterey Jazz Festival Regional All-Star Jazz Combo. Saturday, acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter Sarah McKenzie performed heartfelt melodies that showcased her vocal versatility, while San Francisco crooner Nicolas Bearde and the dynamic Full Spectrum Jazz Band added a soulful touch of R&B.

The weekend closed with the vibrant seven-piece Latin Jazz Collective (featuring percussionist John Nava), who brought their infectious world beats, a dazzling warm-up before the weekend headliner, the iconic multi-Grammy Award winner Los Lobos, moved everyone to their feet. The East L.A. outfit's legendary blend of rock, Tex-Mex and Americana has touched fans worldwide for over 50 years. The natural setting of Rancho Cielo's intimate amphitheater, with sight lines across the Salinas Valley, provided a stunning sunset backdrop to the music.

In addition to the music, Jazz at the Ranch boasted an exceptional culinary experience, thanks to the partnerships of local chefs, restaurants, wineries and breweries that donated time, talent, food and beverages in support of the event.

Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy students, who helped serve the food and created their own



Monterey Jazz Fest All Star Combo



Tacos to Go and Students



Bearde and Full Spectrum Jazz



Blues guitarist Chris Cain.



David Hidalgo of Grammy-winning Latino rock band Los Lobos.



Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos.

innovative apps, delighted attendees as much as the flavors. Academy students also had the opportunity to work alongside the chefs. The hands-on experience reiterated Rancho Cielo's commitment to empowering students through mentorship and real-world learning.

Participating eateries included Amapola, Ardent Culinaire Catering, Bayonet Grill, Cultura Carmel, H Jackson Events, Jerome's Carmel

Valley Market, Star Market, Stonies Taphouse & Bistro, Tacos on the Go, The Meatery and The Salad Shoppe. The wine and beer were provided by Folktales Winery & Vineyard, Other Brother Brewing Co. and Alvarado Street Brewery.

Some of Rancho Cielo's community partners had booths where guests could learn more about their organizations and support of Rancho Cielo,

including Harmony at Home, Monterey County Behavioral Health (MCBH), Montage Health's Ohana, University of California San Francisco Dyslexia Center and Hope, Horses & Kids. Rancho Cielo's Community Outreach Coordinator, Carlos Perales, was also on hand to highlight the unique case management model and holistic direct services provided to Rancho Cielo students.

Jazz at the Ranch is more than just another concert series; it celebrates community, resilience and the transformative power of music, art and education. The event brings people together to support Rancho Cielo while offering an experience filled with incredible music and tasty eats on the magnificent 100-acre campus. It also serves as a reminder of the incredible work that Rancho Cielo does for its students and the loyal support of the community. 🌿

*Rancho Cielo is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that invests in all young people facing challenges for success through diploma education, vocational training, counseling and life skills development in a safe and affirming environment. RC's next fundraising event, the 15th annual Culinary Round-Up, will be on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, at the Portola Hotel & Spa in Monterey. Details at [ranchocieloyc.org](http://ranchocieloyc.org).*



# Leadership Monterey County Members Explore Southern Part of the County

By Mitchell Friedman, Facilitator Leadership Monterey County

**M**ost residents of County of Monterey live near its northern coast or in the Salinas Valley — leaving the vast expanse of its southern coast and inland region sparsely populated and often unexplored even by its residents. Leadership Monterey County (LMC)'s recent exploration of the southern part of the county attempted to rectify this oversight.

Twenty-five participants spent the day visiting with leaders at diverse organizations located throughout the southern part of the County of Monterey. The day began with a visit to the San Ardo site of California Resources Corporation, an independent energy and carbon management company committed to energy transition. LMC participants received an extensive briefing on all aspects of its operations, which highlighted their technical aspects as well as the company's ongoing efforts to communicate about their work to key stakeholders throughout the county.

Lunch and a wine tasting at Scheid Vineyards in Greenfield followed, with Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez (District 3) speaking to the group after they dined. Next, the group toured the Third Street Apartments in Greenfield, an example of how a local developer partnered with industry to provide housing for an important segment of the workforce, farmworkers. The day concluded at City Hall in Soledad, where staff members briefed LMC participants on exciting economic development currently underway there.

In short, it was a full and fun day that offered LMC participants unique insight into critical issues and vital organizations. To learn more about their experiences, and the LMC program in general, visit <https://www.leadership-mc.org>.





# Children's Shopping Tour

Saturday, December 7

Every year, in December, our community comes together to make the holiday season brighter for hundreds of children. This is a cherished event where children in need are paired with volunteers for a day of shopping.



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# Rent Stabilization in Salinas

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

**O**n Sept. 24, 2024, the Salinas City Council unanimously adopted rent stabilization and tenant protection policies. These policies are organized in three ordinances identified as a Rent Stabilization Ordinance, Just Cause Eviction/Tenant Protection Ordinance, and Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. These ordinances are effective Jan. 1, 2025.

This article is the first article of a three-part article series about these new ordinances. The article addresses only the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (“Rent Ordinance”). The other parts of the ordinance will be discussed in later articles.

## Some properties are Exempt

Single-family homes, condos, properties built after 1995, rental units which are deed restricted as affordable housing by a regulatory agreement or similar document, rental units in hospitals, convents, monasteries, extended medical care facilities, rental units in a hotel, motel, or room in boarding house, rental unit in an institutional facility including a hospital, medical care facility, residential care facility, are all among the residential properties exempt from this Rent Ordinance.

This Rent Ordinance targets multifamily buildings built before 1995.

This, however, could change if Proposition 33 is adopted by California voters in November. If Proposition 33 is adopted repealing the Costa-Hawkins Act, then single-family homes, condos, and properties built after 1995 will not be exempt.

## Limits on Rent Increases

The ordinance limits annual rent increases to 2.75% or 75% of the most-recent 12-month increase in the Consumer Price Index for All

Urban Consumers (CPI-U) Series, whichever is less. Only one rent increase in a 12-month period is permitted and that 12-month period begins on the date of the last rent increase regardless of whether that rent increase occurred prior to the effective date of the Rent Ordinance.

## Landlord’s Ability to Petition City to Charge More Than Rent Caps

Landlords can petition the City to charge more than the rent caps contained in the ordinance by filing a Fair Return Petition. To file a Fair Return Petition, the landlord obtains the Petition Form from the City and must serve the completed form on all tenants. The petition should be supported by whatever documentation the landlord has that justifies a rental increase above that allowed by the ordinance’s rent caps.

In reviewing the petition, the City will examine changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), the pattern in recent rent increases or decreases; changes in property tax or other taxes related to the property; deterioration of the property other than normal wear and tear; any failure of the Landlord to provide adequate Housing Services or to comply with applicable state rental housing laws; and other relevant evidence demonstrating the landlord is not receiving a just and reasonable return.

In no event may the landlord seek a rent increase exceeding the amount authorized by state law which is no more than 5 percent plus the percentage change in the cost of living, or 10 percent, whichever is less. See Cal. Civ. Code 1947.12. The landlord must pay to the City, in advance, all costs associated with the City’s review of the Fair Return Petition, including

the costs of any experts that the City determines are necessary to rule on the petition. The landlord must pay all of the City’s estimated costs before City will process the petition.

The tenants have 30 days from the date of receipt of the Fair Return Petition to respond and provide the City Attorney any materials the tenants want the City to consider in deciding the Fair Return Petition.

The City must make a decision on the Fair Return Petition within 90 days after the City deems the petition complete. Any person aggrieved by the decision may appeal to the City Council.

## Landlord Petition to Pass Through Certain Capital Improvement Costs

With permission of the City, a landlord may file an application for a capital improvement plan with a request to pass-through certain capital improvement costs to tenants once work on the rental has been completed. This petition should include the actual cost of completed capital improvements to the rental unit based on actual expenses amortized over the life of improvement and does not include the ordinary repair, replacement and maintenance or costs attributable to bringing a rental unit into compliance with health and safety laws.

A tenant may file a financial hardship application that will exempt them with respect to any rent increase based on a pass through of capital improvement costs.

## Tenants Can Petition for Rent Reduction

A tenant may request a rent reduction if he or she believes that the landlord has demanded rent in excess of the maximum rent

permitted by the Rent Ordinance, if the landlord has reduced housing services (defined as all amenities related to the unit) or if the landlord fails to maintain the unit in a habitable condition as required by state or local law. The “Rent Reduction Petition” may request a refund of, or decrease in, rent proportional to the amount landlord accepted in excess of the maximum rental limitations, or the landlord’s reduction in housing services or the failure to maintain the rental unit in a habitable condition.

The tenant must provide the landlord a copy of the Rent Reduction and the landlord has 30 days from the date of receipt to respond to it.

The tenant bears the burden of establishing a reduction is necessary. A Hearing Officer may consider factors such as the landlord’s failure to comply with the Rent Ordinance, reductions in housing services, and habitability violations. The Hearing Office must make a decision within 60 days. Any person aggrieved by the decision may appeal to the City Council.

## Notice Requirements

Salinas landlords are required to notify tenants (both current and future) of this Rent Ordinance. On or before commencement of a tenancy or a rental increase, the landlord must provide tenants written notice that the tenancy is regulated by this Rent Ordinance. The notice must detail the tenant’s rights under this ordinance such as the right to submit a complaint, Rent Reduction Petition, the tenant’s right to respond to any Fair Return Petition and of the ineffectiveness of any rent increase if the requirements of the ordinance are not met.

**Rent Stabilization** see page 27





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

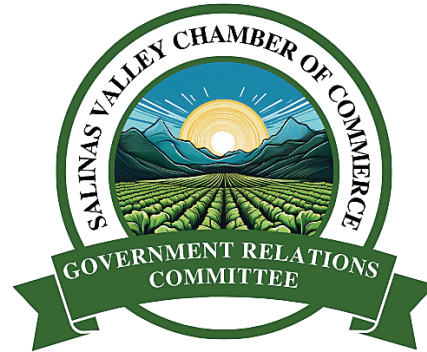
# NOVEMBER 2024

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

**Y**our Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 17 members at its most recent meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 9. As usual, the Committee discussed several priority issues.

**1.** The committee heard an overview of the history and operations of the Monterey One Water (M1W) regional wastewater agency (formerly known as the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency) from Mike McCullough, Director of External Affairs. McCullough also answered several somewhat technical wastewater questions from committee members regarding wells, billing procedures, agreements for recycled irrigation water (such as what the Marina Coast Water District uses through its Regional Urban Water Augmentation Program - RUWAP) and potential crop damage from total dissolved solids (TDS) in recycled irrigation water (such as sodium chloride and other salts).

**2.** History of Monterey One Water and Its Relationship with the City of Salinas. McCullough observed that the City of Salinas was still growing quite bit in the first decade of the 2000s, and some city leaders were accusing M1W of not improving and expanding the municipal wastewater system to accommodate future city development. It was believed that the 33 million gallon-per-day (mgd) capacity of the Salinas Pump Station would be inadequate, and a second major interceptor pipeline was needed between the Salinas Pump Station and the M1W wastewater treatment plant near Marina (located on land adjacent



to the landfill within unincorporated Monterey County jurisdiction).

But in the end, the municipal wastewater flows from the City of Salinas declined instead of rising. The period of 2008-2012 (often referred to as the Great Recession) generally brought a halt to new development. The City of Salinas engaged in capital improvement projects to upgrade its sewer system. People conserved water with low-flow fixtures and reduced water use in response to drought and high water prices. In recent years, the population of Salinas has declined.

In the early 2010s (after a plan derailed in 2011 to build a large desalination plant in Marina), representatives of various government agencies began an earnest discussion of increasing water production through recycled water. M1W had been successfully recycling municipal wastewater into crop irrigation water since 1998 through the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP). In addition, its Regional Treatment Plant (built in 1989) had unused capacity.

With that experience and background, M1W was ready to become

the fulcrum of what has become the Pure Water Monterey/Groundwater Replenishment Project (PWM/GWP). This project currently treats wastewater to very high standards and then injects it into the Seaside Groundwater Basin for future use as drinking water for the Monterey Peninsula.

While Pure Water Monterey was in preliminary development, the City of Salinas had another imminent wastewater issue. Agricultural processing facilities in South Salinas were producing an increasing amount of "ag wash water," such as chlorinated water used to clean vegetables for bagged salad kits. This wastewater was being conveyed to the evaporation and percolation ponds of the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant, located adjacent to the Salinas River near the intersection of Reservation Road and Davis Road.

Although the City of Salinas had expanded and improved this facility multiple times since its establishment during World War II, there was a danger of pond overflow to the Salinas River and a violation of conditions in the city's federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The solution? Convey some of the industrial wastewater to the Regional Treatment Plant as part of the Pure Water Monterey/Groundwater Replenishment Project (PWM/GWP).

Today, M1W is receiving water flow from multiple sources in and around the City of Salinas, including municipal wastewater, industrial wastewater directly conveyed to the treatment plant (using "The Shunt" at the Salinas Pump Station), treated industrial wastewater from the final percolation pond

of the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant (Pond 3), stormwater from South Salinas (dry flow and first flush flow from the first big rainfall of each rainy season), and drainage water from the Reclamation Ditch. (There are also a few smaller water sources.)

**3.** Committee members reported hearing anecdotes about property owners responding to the new rent stabilization ordinance by pulling their houses out of the rental market. Meanwhile, if California voters approve Proposition 33 on the November ballot, the number of Salinas rental units subject to rent increase limits will significantly grow.

**4.** The committee agreed to collect data about the City of Salinas rental housing market. Some Chamber members believe the new city limits on rent increases will have the unintended effect of reducing rental housing availability.

**5.** At its Nov. 13 meeting, the Government Relations Committee will discuss City of Salinas efforts to increase housing supply. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce proposed some housing strategies to the Salinas City Council in a Sept. 23 letter.

**6.** According to a recent survey, Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce members are generally supportive of the planned Amazon fulfillment center, but they would also like to see Amazon (and/or its developer Scannell) invest in projects and programs that respond to valid community concerns about impacts on traffic and housing. 🌿

# Partnerships in the City of Soledad Between the City and School District

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

**Y**our Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce understands the value of partnerships and cooperation in improving our businesses, organizations, governments, and communities. As stated on our website, the Chamber is “an association of businesses organized to build a strong local economy by promoting sound government and an informed community.”

Therefore, your Chamber is pleased to see measurable progress on two examples of inter-agency cooperation in the Salinas Valley. The City of Soledad and the Soledad Unified School District are partners for two projects: (1) recycled water use and (2) affordable housing for school district employees.

Both projects will advance the Chamber’s official vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.” They are models worthy of being emulated elsewhere in the county.

## Cooperation for Recycled Water

The City of Soledad is located in the Forebay Subbasin of the Salinas Valley Groundwater Basin. It obtains its potable water from five groundwater wells (Well Nos. 06, 07, 09, 10, and 11). It also owns and operates South County’s only tertiary wastewater treatment plant (allowing wastewater to be recycled).

The City of Soledad has long considered its potable groundwater and wastewater management needs as it anticipates population growth. In December 2005, the Soledad City Council adopted an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), which included an intent to recycle



wastewater to reduce groundwater use. In May 2006, the Soledad City Council adopted a Long-Term Wastewater Management Plan (LTWMP) for implementation of the goal.

As is typical in California, it has taken almost 20 years for the city to get its proposed water infrastructure planned, designed, and funded. Construction is only partially done.

Phase I of the plan included the 2010 completion of a \$49 million wastewater treatment plant upgrade and expansion that would allow production of recycled wastewater. Phase II entails construction of a conveyance system to deliver recycled wastewater from the Water Reclamation Facility to irrigate urban landscape and recreational fields. In April 2015, the City completed a Recycled Water Master Plan for infrastructure needed to distribute recycled water to all 15 city parks

and various school district athletic fields.

New transmission mains that connected existing reclaimed water transmission mains to the Water Reclamation Facility were completed in 2017, and a pipeline to convey recycled water for irrigation at the city’s four-acre Veteran’s Park was completed in 2019. But the city still needed to install a new pump station at the Water Reclamation Facility for sufficient pressure to convey recycled water to the landscaping and fields. Also, the restrooms and drinking fountains at Veteran’s Park needed to have separate connections for potable water (while the rest of the park’s water use shifted to recycled water).

In 2023, the City of Soledad greatly expanded its opportunities for conversion of all urban landscaping and athletic field irrigation in the city to recycled water. It received a \$16.6

million grant from the California Department of Water Resources Urban Drought Relief Program. This will fully fund the Soledad Recycled Water Conveyance Project, which includes the connections and infrastructure needed to irrigate City of Soledad and Unified School District turf areas with recycled water. Design of the project was 60% completed as of October 2024, with construction yet to begin.

Meanwhile, in September 2024, a landscaping company began the separate process of converting Veterans Park turf irrigation from potable water to recycled water. After this individual project is finished, the park will continue to use potable well water for irrigation until the larger Recycled Water Conveyance Project for the whole city is completed in late 2026.

On Oct. 23, 2024, the Soledad City Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the Soledad Unified School District for the sale, purchase and delivery of recycled water. This solidifies the commitment of the district to buy water as the City of Soledad proceeds with design and construction of the Recycled Water Conveyance Project.

Ultimately, the Recycled Water Conveyance Project will allow the City of Soledad to replace 165-170 acre-feet (54-56 million gallons) per year of groundwater pumping with recycled water. This past summer, the need for the City of Soledad to complete and operate a recycled water system was highlighted when the city’s most productive well (Well No. 11) went out of service, with both the pump and motor needing

**Soledad** see page 28



# One of Monterey County's Biggest Annual Fundraisers Kicks Off Nov. 14

By Mac McDonald, Salinas Valley Business Journal

If you've attended a local music or arts event, received free legal or tax advice or health care services, adopted a rescue dog, enrolled your child in a youth program or after-school activities, received food assistance or even participated in a Pride events, you have most likely experienced or interacted with one or more of the 206 nonprofit groups that are part of this year's 15th annual Monterey County Gives! fundraising campaign, which kicks off Nov. 14, and runs through Dec. 31.

Last year, a whopping 8,000 donors raised more than \$11.9 million for 208 Monterey County nonprofit organizations, adding to the \$68 million raised since the campaign's launch in 2009. And the interest shows no signs of flagging.

"Every year I'm amazed at the amount we raise, I'm just blown away by the generosity of the community," says Christine A. Dawson, Senior Vice President of Philanthropic Services for the Community Foundation for Monterey County, one of the three organizations that collaborate on the campaign, which include the Monterey County Weekly and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation. "The word continues to spread around Monterey County and the interest it generates around the community. It's become a year-end phenomenon."

The campaign officially kicks off on Nov. 14, with all 206 nonprofits listed on the website ([mcgives.com](http://mcgives.com)), with info on what the organization does, its mission and what they hope to use the funds for. Dawson says they try to make it as easy as possible for potential donors to find a charity (or two) and donate.

"People donate everything from

\$5 to \$100,000, so everybody can be a philanthropist," she says. "It's like online shopping for charitable giving, and it's safe because all our nonprofits are already vetted. We try to make it easy and fun to give."

Dawson says donors adopt a variety of strategies for giving. Some may select their favorite charity and give their entire donation to that group, others adopt the "scatter approach" by giving to a few or several organizations. The organizations are listed by category, so if you love dogs, for example, or your interest is in the arts or education, you can find a nonprofit that matches your interests. In addition donors can give through popular apps such as PayPal, Venmo and Apple Pay to make it more convenient. And they not only accept money, but stocks and IRA

Qualified Charitable Distributions.

At the end of the campaign, each nonprofit receives 100% of their donations, along with a pro rata-match on the first \$75,000 raised. The Community Foundation for Monterey County also gives out \$5,500 in grants in four categories:

- **\$2,500 Ingenuity Grant:** This grant is awarded to one nonprofit that demonstrates ingenuity and creativity through their approach in resolving their sector's challenges.
- **\$1,000 Largest Number of Donors Award:** This award will be given to the nonprofit that has the most donors.
- **\$1,000 Most Donors 18-35 Years Old:** This award will be given to the nonprofit that receives the most donations from

those who are 18-35 years old. It is meant to challenge younger readers and participating organizations to generate excitement around youth philanthropy, and for the next generation to experience the feelings of joy and reward that accompany acts of generosity. The goal is to jumpstart vital lifelong partnerships between younger donors and the local nonprofit community, with the hope that as their financial position grows so will their contributions and involvement.

- **\$1,000 The Florence Haspel Zeve Award for Women, Families and/or the Arts:** Created in memory of Florence Zeve, the award will be given to one nonprofit for their initiative for women, families and/or the arts, a program that deserves special recognition.

Last year, Peace of Mind Dog Rescue received an additional \$1,000 award for largest number of donors and Monterey Peninsula Pride received a \$1,000 award for most young donors (ages 18-35). The Florence Haspel Zeve Award of \$1,000 went to Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County and the \$2,500 Ingenuity Award was presented to Everyone's Harvest.

Matching funds are provided by individual donors as well as Gunde and Ernie Posey Family Foundation, Taylor Farms, Neumeier Poma Investment Counsel, Colburn and Alana Jones Foundation of the CFMC, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Cannery Row Company, Harden Foundation, Nancy Eccles and Homer M. Hayward Family Foundation.

For more information, go to [cfmco.org](http://cfmco.org) and to donate, starting Nov. 14, go to [mcgives.com](http://mcgives.com). 🌱

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# Graves Elementary School District Tackles Failing Water System and Succeeds

By Michelle Ross, Graves Elementary School District Superintendent

**G**raves Elementary School District, a small historic school nestled in Salinas, has faced significant challenges in maintaining its basic infrastructure. The district operates on a well system that serves as its primary water source, but due to its age, the system began to fail, threatening the school's access to clean drinking water and the ability for students to wash their hands.

While the well could still supply water for the restrooms, the failing system left the district in a precarious situation, as a complete replacement was urgently needed. However, the district's extremely limited budget meant that funding such a critical project was beyond their reach.

Faced with this crisis, the district sought help through donations and fundraisers. Despite the community's efforts, the funds raised fell significantly short of the amount required for a full replacement. The district's efforts received a much-needed boost in September 2023, when the Monterey County Office of Education stepped in with a \$150,000 loan, allowing the district to begin the well replacement process.

At the same time, I connected with Jamie King-Iseman of King Inc.,



a firm known for providing client-focused solutions in facility planning, program eligibility, and project financing. Jamie's expertise and dedication played a crucial role in helping the district navigate the complexities of funding and completing the project. Her support, combined with the district's persistence, allowed Graves Elementary to make significant progress toward resolving its water issues.

The well replacement project was set for completion by the end

of October 2024, with full funding secured through state facility and financial hardship resources. This crucial milestone not only ensures that the students and staff will have reliable access to clean water but also marks a turning point in the district's ability to provide a safe and healthy learning environment.

The district has already repaid the loan from the Monterey County Office of Education, showcasing the commitment of both local and state partners to support small schools in

times of need.

To celebrate this achievement, Graves Elementary School District, in partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 14, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. at the school site at 15 McFadden Road, in Salinas. The event will honor the collaboration of educational partners, supporters, and the community who came together to ensure a brighter future for this small but resilient school district. 🌱

## RENT STABILIZATION - from page 23

The notices will be in a form prescribed by the City Attorney and must be delivered in the language primarily used by the tenant, English and Spanish.

### Compliance is Mandatory

Failure to comply with the Rent

Ordinance can result in civil and criminal penalties including but not limited to statutory damages three times the amount by which the payment exceeds the allowable rent, or for statutory damages of \$1,000, whichever is greater, damages for emotional distress and punitive damages.

Additionally, any person convicted of violating the Rent Ordinance is

guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction can be fined up to \$1,000 and jailed for not more than six (6) months.

### Recommendation

Landlords should determine whether their rental unit is subject to this ordinance, familiarize themselves with the details of the laws,

consult with legal counsel and give the necessary notices to all tenants.

*This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. Geraldine Villa is in Nolan, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss'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. 🌱*



replacement. At the same time, the city's Well No. 10 and Well No. 6 were out of service for pump and motor repairs and replacement. This meant that three of the city's five drinking water wells were out of commission. The Soledad City Council held a special meeting on July 31, 2024, in order to declare an emergency.

### Cooperation for Affordable Housing for School District Employees

In 2020, the board of the Soledad Unified School District placed a bond measure on the November ballot that authorized the district to borrow \$13.75 million for district construction via bond sales. It authorized funding for school improvement projects, but also authorized funding for workforce housing to rent to district teachers and staff. Measure N was approved by 62.86% of voters (3,328 out of 5,294 voters).

As often happens in California, this project has taken time to get moving. On Sept. 29, 2021, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter to the Soledad City Council and Soledad Unified School District Board of Trustees expressing support for the concept:

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce recognizes the lack of housing that's available and affordable for ordinary Monterey County residents. It's a major obstacle to our formal vision of a "thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families, and businesses succeed via economic opportunity and growth."

We are enthusiastically tracking your plan toward construction of workforce housing dedicated to Soledad Unified School District teachers. At a time when proposals for new housing in Monterey County

face well-funded public resistance and burdensome regulatory and cost challenges, educational agencies have an appropriate role to play in building and operating housing for their employees.

Please keep us informed about your progress. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce will support your efforts for housing as opposition and challenges arise.

The new complex will have 20 units and will include a lounge area, conference room and library, and a bike room. A development services company called Education Housing Partners prepared a schematic design in 2022 to submit to the City of Soledad, and on Sept. 8, 2022, the Soledad Planning Commission approved a permit to build it.

Arrangements for a property transfer have been ongoing for years. The Soledad Unified School District is purchasing two adjacent parcels of land at 183 Soledad St.

owned by the Successor Agency to the Soledad Redevelopment Agency and a third adjacent parcel owned by the City of Soledad. (Local redevelopment agencies in California were dissolved in 2012.)

The transfer was delayed in 2023 after benzene gas from the soil was discovered on the property. This was regarded as a "hazardous material" that required mitigation and remediation. The City of Soledad disputed the significance of the finding. A "Soil VOC [Volatile Organic Compounds] Vapor Gas Mitigation System" will be installed on the property.

On Oct. 23, 2024, the Soledad City Council voted on an Affordable Housing Agreement with the Soledad Unified School District. The district will be responsible for managing three affordable units in the 20-unit apartment complex: two rental units reserved for very-low-income households and one unit reserved for a moderate-income household. 🌱

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# Goodwill Central Coast Embraces the Art of Convenience Through its Donation Centers — Six with Drive-Thrus!

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

Let's face it: Convenience is the comforting companion of our modern lives. Whether we're ordering fast food with a few taps on our phones or sending a quick text message instead of a handwritten letter, convenience can help save time, energy and effort — while reducing frustration.

Sometimes convenience has a dark side. For example, tossing unused or unwanted items into the trash significantly contributes to environmental pollution by filling up landfills with materials that can take hundreds of years to decompose. This releases harmful chemicals into the soil and groundwater while also consuming valuable resources used to produce new items.

Goodwill Central Coast embraces the art of convenience and the pursuit of efficient use of resources. Donate to Goodwill and you work toward the greater good, while protecting the environment by reusing items and minimizing our waste footprint.

GCC understands the need for convenience and has made it easier than ever to donate second-hand goods by offering 30 donation centers across Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties.

Donating your gently used items gives them a second life while supporting GCC's mission to create sustainable job opportunities and strengthen communities.

## Donate from the comfort of your car

To enhance the donation experience, GCC has embraced one of America's favorite conveniences — the drive-thru. While drive-thrus first gained popularity in the fast-food industry in the late 1940s, Goodwill has now applied this concept to donation centers. Among GCC's 30 donation centers, six now feature drive-thru service, with more planned in the future. This added convenience allows donors to quickly drop off gently used items from the comfort of their car.

Donating through these centers not only

helps people declutter, but also supports Goodwill Central Coast's mission to create sustainable job opportunities and strengthen local communities. The process is simple: look for the iconic "Smiling G" logo and the familiar blue and orange signage, then pull up to one of the centers where friendly attendants are ready to assist. They help with unloading, keep the areas tidy, and ensure that donations are secure from theft.

## Find a local drive-thru

The following six donation sites offer convenient drive-thru service:

### Atascadero

8310 El Camino Real #A, Atascadero

### Marina

266 Reservation Road, Marina

### Salinas – North Main

1325 N. Main St., Salinas,

### Salinas Outlet

1566 Moffett St., Salinas

### San Luis Obispo Outlet

880 Industrial Way, San Luis Obispo

### Santa Cruz

204 Union St., Santa Cruz

In a typical year, GCC receives more than 630,000 donations, totaling more than 25 million pounds of clothing and household items. From those generous donations, GCC diverts more than 17 million pounds from landfills, helping preserve and protect the Central Coast landscape. And the money raised helps fund programs that put more than 13,000 people back to work, while helping rehabilitate others who are trying to be productive members of society.

## How to let go of what you don't need

Over the years, we all accumulate things — whether from impulse buys, gifts, or sentimental items passed down from family. Whatever the reason for holding onto them, there comes a time to start letting go and free up space in your home.

Do any of these excuses sound familiar?

- "I paid good money for that."
- "I might need it someday."
- "It was a gift."
- "It belonged to a family member."

If these thoughts are creeping into your mind, it might be time for a purge. There are signs that it's time to let go:

- Storage spaces are overflowing and no longer contain what they should.
- You spend more time organizing than using the space.
- Items in your home no longer have a dedicated place.
- Your garage is so cluttered you can't even park your car — or walk through it!

The truth is, if you don't use it, need it, or love it, it doesn't belong in your home. According to wellness experts, a home should be a peaceful sanctuary, not a space overwhelmed by clutter.

## Purging tips for a more peaceful home

Here are a few strategies to help you declutter and create a more serene atmosphere:

- **Be honest about how often you use something:** If an item has been sitting unused for more than six months, it's probably time to let it go. Picture that item finding a new home with someone who truly needs it, thanks to a Goodwill purchase — and remember that your donation supports someone else on their path to employment.
- **Eliminate duplicates:** Do you really need three spatulas or five similar mugs? Go through your kitchen drawers, your shoe rack, and even old toy bins. There's surprising freedom in owning just one of something!
- **Try the "maybe" box method:** For items you're unsure about, put them in a box and mark it with a future date, like "donate by X date." If you haven't missed those items by that time, let them go. When the date arrives, donate anything still in the box

automatically.

Decluttering isn't just about getting rid of things — it's about creating a space that reflects your true needs and helps you feel more at ease. By donating your unused items, you're not only improving your own home, but also giving someone else the chance to benefit from those things and supporting a good cause.

## What to donate

GCC is especially interested in donated clothing, shoes, housewares, small electrical items, and small electronics.

What's more, all monetary donations and donations of clothing and household goods that are in "good" condition or better are entitled to a tax deduction, according to Federal law. The Internal Revenue Service requires that all charitable donations be itemized and valued, and GCC provides an estimated value list here.

In addition, Goodwill Central Coast provides the following services:

- Free home pickups are available for large amounts of items (some restrictions apply). Those interested should send their address, telephone number and pictures of the items they would like picked up to [donorservicescc@ccgoodwill.org](mailto:donorservicescc@ccgoodwill.org).
- Free weekly or monthly pickup service from businesses/schools/organizations (please contact donor services at 800-894-8440).
- Donation drives which can net an organization, school, club or nonprofit thousands of dollars are available this fall and the spring of next year in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties
- For donating high value items, call GCC donor services at (800) 894-8440.

Through Goodwill Central Coast's donation services, it's never been easier to give back to the community while decluttering your home — making both your life and your community a little brighter. 🌱





# NON-PROFIT EVENTS

## Salinas California Women for Agriculture Santana Row Bus Trip

*Nov. 2, 7:30 a.m., Santana Row, San Jose*

The Salinas Valley Chapter of California Women for Agriculture (CWA) invites you to embark on Salinas Valley's premier shopping experience with 200-plus of your closest girlfriends. The Bus Trip will transport participants in luxury coaches to and from San Jose to enjoy a fun-filled day of shopping and dining at Santana Row. The day begins with a delicious champagne breakfast and concludes with a dinner box to enjoy on the bus ride back to Salinas. Please consider joining us or sponsoring this fabulous event. We are super excited for what we can accomplish together to raise funds for our scholarship program for deserving young women in Agriculture for the Tri-County area. Please visit our website at <https://www.salinas-cwa.org> or contact Cheryl Penrose at (831) 710-0394 or [cheryl@visveg.com](mailto:cheryl@visveg.com)

## Hospice Giving Foundation - Dia De Los Muertos Celebration

*Nov. 2, 2:00 - 6:00 p.m., Hartnell College – Student Center*

On Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024, Hospice Giving Foundation, in collaboration with Hartnell College and Hijos Del Sol Arts Productions, will celebrate the fourth annual Dia de los Muertos event from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. This is a free community gathering to honor and remember our loved ones who are no longer with us. This year, the event features multiple agencies providing information, entertainment, and resources. The afternoon will culminate with a procession, a program filled with music, dance, and song. In addition, the Student Center and Steinbeck Hall will be filled with altars dedicated to the loved ones of our community partners.

## Alzheimer's Association - Salinas Caregiver Support Group

*Nov. 6, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., 1130 San Vicente Ave., Salinas*

If you have a family member who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia disorder, a caregiver support group can offer you an opportunity to find out more about available community resources, learn from others who are going through similar experiences, and obtain additional educational materials. Our Salinas caregiver support group meets monthly, on the first Wednesday of each month, without a fee. In partnership with: Harden Foundation, this program is funded in part by Hospice Giving Foundation, Community Foundation for Monterey County, and Monterey Peninsula Foundation, host of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

## Monterey County Film Commission – Hollywood in your Backyard

*Nov. 14, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., Hofsas House Hotel Poolside Meeting Room, between 3rd & 4th Ave on San Carlos Street, Carmel-by-the Sea*

The Monterey County Film Commission invites you to a one-of-a-kind opportunity to meet and mingle with entertainment industry professionals at the Hollywood in Your Backyard mixer. This exclusive networking event will be held on Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., at the charming Hofsas House Hotel in Carmel-by-the-Sea. Enjoy a delightful evening with peers and industry veterans, all while sipping on exquisite local wines and sampling delicious small bites. Whether you're a filmmaker, actor, writer, or someone passionate about the creative arts, this is your chance to connect and be inspired by others in the film community. Tickets are just \$15 (\$12 for PRG members listed on [FilmMonterey.org](http://FilmMonterey.org) PRG) and include a complimentary glass of wine and light refreshments. But hurry — space is limited to only 70 attendees, so don't wait to secure your spot. Event details: Date: Nov. 14, 2024 Time: 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Location: Hofsas House Hotel, Poolside Meeting Room, between 3rd and 4th Avenue on San Carlos Street, Carmel-by-the-Sea. Tickets: \$15 (Non-PRG Members), \$12 (PRG Members). Includes one glass of wine and refreshments. Purchase tickets at Eventbrite. Don't miss this opportunity to engage with the local film industry and enjoy a fantastic evening with fellow creatives. For more information, visit [www.FilmMonterey.org](http://www.FilmMonterey.org).

## The Steinbeck House – Winemakers Dinner

*Nov. 15, 5:00 p.m., 132 Central Ave., Salinas*

Join us for a special dinner event featuring Odonata wines. The event will be held at the Historic Steinbeck House on Nov. 15 at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$65 per person, and all gratuities will go towards the upkeep of the historic house. For more details, please visit our website at [www.steinbeckhouse.com](http://www.steinbeckhouse.com).

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



# UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Legacy of Leadership Strolling Gala**  
*Thursday, Nov. 7, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Portobello's on Main, 150 Main St., Salinas*  
It's almost time for the Chamber's most popular fall event — the Legacy of Leadership Gala! The event is set to take place on Thursday, Nov. 7, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., at the Taylor Building/Portobello's Courtyard in Salinas. The Legacy of Leadership Gala brings together prominent leaders and local businesses to recognize and honor those who have demonstrated excellence and business innovation and made significant contributions to the Salinas Valley. Tickets can be purchased for \$75 (member rate) and \$95 (non-member rate) at [SalinasChamber.com](http://SalinasChamber.com). If you have any questions, contact the Chamber office at (831) 751-7725.
- **Graves Elementary School District Well Unveiling & Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony: A Celebration of Community and Resilience**  
*Thursday, Nov. 14, 5:00 p.m., Graves Elementary School, 15 McFadden Road, Salinas*  
Join us for a special ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of Graves Elementary School District's new well system. After facing challenges with an aging water system, Graves Elementary has overcome the crisis thanks to the collaboration of local and state partners, including a vital loan from the Monterey County Office of Education and expert guidance from King Inc. The project ensures reliable access to clean water for students and staff, securing a healthier future for the district celebrate this important milestone with us and honor the hard work and support that made it possible.
- **Children's Shopping Tour — Volunteers and Donations Needed**  
*Saturday, Dec. 7, 7:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Northridge Mall, Salinas*  
The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation invites you to be part of a heartwarming tradition that brings joy to the holiday season — our annual "Children's Shopping Tour." This cherished event is set for Saturday, Dec. 7, and we need volunteers to help make it a day to remember. Whether you're distributing gift cards, helping with set-up, cutting merchandise tags, or serving as a chaperone assisting the children as they pick out new clothes, there's a role for everyone to get involved. Your support will bring smiles, warmth, and holiday cheer to local kids, making a meaningful impact. Join us and be part of the magic this holiday season.

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



## “Pinnacle Bank cares about the community.”

We appreciate Pinnacle Bank's outstanding service and support for community non-profit organizations like us. Our professional banker, John Tilley, made our transition super smooth—so we can focus on providing the very best care for medically fragile children and their families.

- **Margy Mayfield, Executive Director**  
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## COMMUNITY REPORT 2022-2023

Our latest Community Report is now available online. In the report you will find valuable information about advancements in our specialty care areas, important community health data and a variety of resources available to you and your family in the community we serve.



## PATHWAYS TO WELLNESS

Whether you're managing a chronic condition, working on your fitness or looking for ways to de-stress, Salinas Valley Health can put you on the path to wellness. You will find free and budget-friendly classes, programs, events and support groups to help you live your best life.



## MOBILE CLINIC

Our mobile clinic provides preventive and primary care for those in medically underserved areas. The state-of-the-art 40-foot vehicle features modern medical equipment, and is staffed with clinical professionals and a community health advocate. Scan the QR code for more information and to schedule an appointment.

