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# Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- DECEMBER 9:**  
**36th Annual Christmas Tree Auction**  
Visalia Convention Center  
5:30 - 11:00 pm  
Tickets required  
www.visaliachamber.org  
559-734-5876
- DECEMBER 14:**  
**Slideshow Presentation - Colorado Rockies**  
City of Visalia Administration Office  
222 N. Santa Fe  
12:00 pm



**We Invite you to Explore in 2017!**

- The Colorado Rockies: Featuring National Parks and Historic Trains**  
July 14 - 22, 2017
- Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice**  
July 19 - 23, 2017
- Spotlight on Rome**  
September 5 - 11, 2017
- China**  
October 6 - 14, 2017

Collette Vacations  
Mayflower Tours  
Cistinc

For more information, go to  
[www.visaliachamber.org/travel](http://www.visaliachamber.org/travel)

## Some Parts of New Federal Overtime Rule Don't Apply in California

Can California employers count bonuses and commissions toward the new federal salary requirement? Can employees in California be classified as exempt under the "highly compensated employee" exemption?

No, and no. Neither of these two provisions of the new federal overtime rule—which raises the federal salary test for the executive, administrative and professional exemptions to \$913 per week (\$47,476 annually) effective December 1, 2016—apply to California employees.

### Bonuses and Commissions

In addition to increasing the salary test, the new federal rule revises the salary test to allow employers to use nondiscretionary bonuses and incentive payments, such as commissions, to meet a portion of the test.

Subject to certain requirements, employers will now be able to rely on bonuses and commissions to satisfy up to 10% of the new federal salary test for workers outside California.

Overtime /2

Visalia Chamber of Commerce  
222 N. Garden St., Suite 300  
Visalia, CA 93291  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## The Visalia Chamber of Commerce Brings Disney Institute to Visalia

**BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT**

A major component to our mission is providing leadership and educational training. Many are familiar with Leadership Visalia, the Young Entrepreneurs Academy and our monthly Business Academy Workshops. Although these programs are outstanding, we often are asked about front line and/or customer service trainings/workshops available for the business community that will help to strengthen their team, and help their business grow.

In response to these multiple member requests, the Visalia Chamber recently hosted the *Disney Institute* for the third time in 5 years. Given the strong response of previous institutes the Chamber moved the event to the Convention Center where more than 180 business professionals gathered to learn from the industry standard in quality service. For many local employers the local *Disney Institute* allowed them to send multiple staff members to the training. Held locally, this eliminated the cost of travel and accommodations that so often strain a company budget.

As a Chamber we are proud to be able to bring world class trainings to Visalia. We believe that providing educational opportunities to the business community strengthens not just the businesses who attend but the entire city as a whole. The *Disney Institute* focused on teaching local businesses all about Disney's Approach to Quality Service. *Disney Institute* believes "Excellent service does not simply come from a friendly transaction or helpful technology - it is the result of truly understanding your customer's expectations and putting the right guidelines and service standards in place to exceed them". Attendees agreed that there were many informational nuggets that they will be instituting at their place of business in the coming months in order to increase the quality of their service.

One of the overarching themes from the day was "results are driven by overmanaging certain things that most companies undermanage or ignore ... you must learn to be intentional where others are unintentional". Attendees quickly learned that over-



Fresno Pacific University sent staff members to Disney Institute to learn how to better serve their customers

managing does not mean micro managing, quite the opposite. To over-manage something means to put into place very specific processes and procedures that are familiar to all employees so that even the smallest detail is not ignored or forgotten.

The Disney facilitators quoted the Gallup Organization when they noted, "If you do not make an emotional connection with customers, then satisfaction is



Attendees participated in interactive activities throughout the entire workshop.

worthless". The facilitators noted that if a customer comes to your place of business or purchases something from you, they you have to work to create an emotional connection with the customer or else there is a good chance that they will not return. Additional research suggests that organizations that create emotional connections outperform competitors by 26% in gross margin and 85% in sales growth. Emotionally engaged customers are:

- At least three times more likely to recommend
- Three times more likely to re-purchase
- Less likely to shop around
- Much less price sensitive

An emotional connection with customers first starts with internal staff members. It is vital that businesses define and employees understand the common purpose.

The common purpose gives employees a reason to come to work and helps to provide meaning to even the most menial of projects. It is the common purpose that helps a team to work together and strive to provide a better customer experience. Creating a common purpose is one example of how a business can successfully overmanage a part of their business without micromanaging the employees.

There were many other topics covered including breaking stereotypes, creating a compass to better understand customers, and the economics of investing in creating a memorable customer experience. Needless to say there was something valuable for every individual who attended this training.

As a Chamber we take seriously the need to provide high quality educational training and development opportunities for our business community. We appreciate the input from our members and the business community who support our mission and request that we bring opportunities like the *Disney Institute* to Visalia.



## Getting an Education: Leadership Visalia Style

By Colin Franey

Albert Einstein said "Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think." A very appropriate quote which was handed out by the session organizers, just one small touch that made the day truly awesome. Awesome as defined by Merriam-Webster means extremely impressive or daunting; inspiring great admiration. As a future parent of a Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) student, that is how I felt when being presented with the size and scope of how we as a community are choosing to educate our children, the next generation of leaders.

Our day began bright and early, as would any student's, at the newly built Ridgeview Middle School. However this was just a preemptive move for later in the day, our chariot, a school bus of course, picked us up and took us to Oak Grove Elementary K-8th school. We were fortunate enough to witness the Friday assembly which served as an opportunity to recognize various students who had performed or succeeded in a noteworthy manner. Many parents were on hand to see their children receive awards for studious, kind, or morally exemplary behavior. Having been out of the school system myself for over a decade, I was taken back by the number of patriotic songs that were sung. Appreciation and recognition of the freedoms and protections we have in this county is important and I was pleased to see the "Pledge of Allegiance" and America the Beautiful, among others being recited.

Oak Grove is somewhat unique in that the campus contains both middle and elementary students. We had a conversation with Principal John Davis on his thoughts of this education model and how that has succeeded at Oak Grove. The class broke into

smaller groups, lead by Principal Davis, Principal's Assistant Pam Ross, and Elementary Assistant Principal Kelly Link, and we rotated through a Kindergarten, 4th grade, 7th grade, and 8th grade class. I was



impressed with the amount of technology in use by both students and teachers; it was seamlessly integrated into classes and seemed to enhance the learning opportunities. After the tour, we sat down with Mr. Jim Sullivan, the Director of State and Federal Projects for VUSD and received a whirl wind presentation on how funding comes in from various sources, how it is distributed, and the equations used to determine funding levels. Needless to say it is very complicated, counterintuitive, and confusing. To end on a high note, we jumped into a school sing-a-long with some of the elementary students and it was a jovial experience.

We then headed out to Sycamore Valley Academy(SVA) and were given a tour by Principal Damien Phillips. SVA is a sponsored charter school, meaning its charter was initially sponsored by VUSD and they work in collaboration on things such as facilities and supplies. However, educationally SVA operates independently and employs a Project Based Learning (PBL) model. We were able to view a number of classes in session, including several mixed age classes. While all the students were excited and willing to engage us, several of the 6th and 7th graders we met were passionate about what they were learning and how they were learning it. One young gentleman when discussing President Andrew Jackson, engaged strongly and intelligently with my classmates, several left the room wondering if they had just met the future President of the United States.

Leadership /4

### VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MISSION ICONS



Business-Government



Business Relations



Promoting Community



Strong Local Economy



## Overtime

(continued from page 1)

This provision does not apply to California employees, however. California law does not allow such payments to be used to meet the exempt salary test.

In California, only an employee's actual salary is considered in determining whether the employee meets the applicable salary test. Although exempt employees in California can receive bonuses and commissions, they still must be paid a salary that meets the applicable salary test.

### 'Highly Compensated Employees'

Under federal law, certain "highly compensated employees" can be exempt by meeting only a minimal duties test if their compensation exceeds a certain amount. The new federal rule changes the annual compensation requirement for this exemption from \$100,000 to \$134,004.

This provision also does not apply to California employees. California law does not have a "highly compensated employee" exemption. For an employee to be exempt in California, the employee still must meet the applicable duties and salary tests for one of the exemptions.

### Preparing for December 1

As a reminder, for executive, administrative and professional employees to remain exempt after December 1, 2016, those employees must be paid at least \$913 per week (\$47,476 annually for a full-time employee). The employees still must meet the applicable California duties test.

If any of your executive, administrative or professional employees are currently paid less than \$913 per week, you must either increase their salaries up to the new federal salary test or reclassify them as nonexempt employees.

If you increase salaries, you must do so for the entire workweek that includes December 1, 2016. For example, if you have designated your workweek as Monday through Sunday, you need to increase salaries on Monday, November 28, 2016.

For help preparing for the change to the federal salary test, see the California Chamber of Commerce Checklist for Complying with the Federal Overtime Rule, and What California Employers Need to Know About the New Federal Overtime Rule.

## You Are Cordially Invited To Join Us For A California Competes Tax Credit Workshop

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) is hosting a workshop on the California Competes Tax Credit. Small, medium, and large businesses are encouraged to attend the workshop and receive instructions on how to apply for this tax credit program.

### Event Details:

Date: December 1, 2016  
 Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
 Location: Tulare Public Library  
 City Council Chambers  
 475 North M Street  
 Tulare, CA 93274

Click here to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tulare-go-biz-california-competes-tax-credit-workshop-tickets-27997141203>

### What is the Credit?

The California Competes Tax Credit (CCTC) is an income tax credit available to businesses that want to locate in California or stay and grow in California.

### Who Can Apply?

Any business can apply for the CCTC and there are no geographic or sector-specific restrictions that impact eligibility. In addition, twenty-five percent of the total credits available each fiscal year are specifically reserved for small businesses.

### Mark Your Calendars!

The next application period begins January 2, 2017 and closes January 23, 2017. Go to [calcompetes.ca.gov](http://calcompetes.ca.gov) to apply.

### About this publication ...

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

# Make your Voice Heard, Buy Local

'Tis the season and you have an important choice. Most people don't realize their power this very weekend. I understand. Power and choice after so much turkey doesn't seem like something you can muster but Visalia is depending on you. You really do have a powerful choice to make.

Today is 'Small Business Saturday'. Around the country we celebrate those businesses that pour their hearts and souls into their products and services, and in doing so make our community more vibrant and strong. Starting, running and keeping the doors of a small business open is not easy. Many have a business idea but actually turning that idea into a reality that pays the bills; why it's a thing to marvel at. The only way these small businesses can continue to thrive is if our community spends money with them. Thus your powerful choice. This weekend as you begin (or finish) your Christmas shopping, use your dollar to support those businesses that keep Visalia a special place to live, work, and raise a family. Shopping local means our neighbors have jobs, our city has funds to pave our roads, and hire more police; it also encourages all business owners by saying that our community respects their ability



**Gail Zurek**  
 President & CEO  
 Visalia Chamber of Commerce

to turn an idea into a reality.

Your powerful choices continue beyond today. 'Giving Tuesday' allows our local charities to highlight their impactful work and, through our donations, allows us to support them. A number of local charities utilize this day to begin their yearend giving campaigns. Visalia has a large number of amazing charities, all of whom impact our community in ways that support those most in need. A Visalia without these charities would be dire, dark and needy. If a charity has touched, impacted or improved your life,

I hope you'd take this day to send a donation as a way to thank them and encourage their work. Not sure which charity to support? Our Chamber can supply a list for you to review.

I hope this weekend and the weeks that follow you embrace the power your spending power has in supporting our community. Being deliberate about shopping local and supporting local charities means we have a stronger community, a community we all want. You control the types of businesses that thrive here; you control the charities that deliver service here. Please make your voice heard, Buy Local.

#GIVING  
 TUESDAY

## COMMUNITY LOYAL MEMBERS

A thriving community starts here!



### New

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce would like to welcome our newest members. We encourage individuals and businesses to support Chamber Member businesses.

- AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN (AAUW) Civic & Service Clubs 559-623-9066
- AMTRAK SAN JOAQUIN Transportation
- ANGEL'S MAID & JANITORIAL SERVICE Cleaning Services 559-804-974
- ART BY MACARENO Arts, Culture & Humanities 559-308-8660
- ELAINE MARTEL Civic Minded Individual
- FRONTGATE PROPERTIES Real Estate 559-805-6106
- INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS, FOUR CREEKS LODGE #94 Non-Profit
- JP ELECTRIC & SOLAR Electrician & Electrical Services 559-733-8313

### PIPELINE.CHURCH Religious 559-972-0225

PROJECT 2535 Non-Profit 559-303-7445

### ROSELAND STUDIOS Event & Conference Centers 559-901-9552

VISALIA MODERN DENTISTRY Dental 559-334-2013

### VOLT WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS Employment Agencies 559-732-2587

Galante Bros Enterprises\*  
 Goodies Cookies & Specialty Cakes  
 Hanford Sentinel, The\*  
 Integrated Care Systems  
 Leavitt United Insurance Services\*  
 Marriott Hotel\*  
 Media Solutions, Inc  
 The Perez Law Firm \*  
 Rabobank-Main Street\*  
 Realty Stars  
 Sam Logan/Merrill Lynch  
 San Joaquin Valley Homes\*  
 Santa Fe Aggregates  
 ServiceMaster by Hellstern  
 Westgate Gardens Care Center

### Renewing

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce thanks the following companies for renewing their commitment to the community of Visalia.

- American Ambulance of Visalia\*
- Cline's Business Equipment Inc.\*
- Collette Vacations
- Courtyard Aesthetics\*
- Edward Jones/Mandy Basra Financial Advisor\*
- EMD Networking Service\*
- G J Gardener - Tulare County\*

\*Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.



# Local CEO's Bring New Ideas and Perspectives to Young Entrepreneurs Academy Students

"Emerging leaders need mentors to guide them, but they also need a network of peers to reassure them that they are not on the path alone." - Alyse Nelson, President & CEO, Vital Voices. The Young Entrepreneurs Academy CEO Roundtable is an annual event, the purpose of which is the help provide YEA! students with the first glimpse of their potential new business network and to demonstration that they have a lot of support from the local business community. On Thursday, November 17th four local business leaders met with the YEA! students to give advice, answer questions and help teach the students how to make connections in the community. The four panelists included: Kellie Black, Owner/Chef, MACHE; Tony Benevento, C.F.O, ServiceMaster by Benevento; Caity Meader, Executive Director, Family Services of Tulare County; and Jennifer Pendergraft, General Manager, Visalia Rawhide Baseball.

Each of the students had the opportunity to ask the panelists questions and learn what it takes to become successful business professionals in our community.

"What has been your biggest obstacle?" For most of the panelists the answer included proving themselves to others. All of the panelists were



YEA! students networking with Kellie Black, owner of MACHE

relatively young when they began to run their business, which meant that they had big shoes to fill or a big expectation to meet. Caity Meader noted, "it was hard being very young in my new position and proving to the community that I was up for the challenge and that I could handle the responsibilities that came with being the Executive Director when the previous director has been so well known and respected in the community".

Other obstacles included learning how to delegate. For Kellie Black, MACHE is her baby. In the past she had been a one man show, and now with success she is growing the business which means that she needs the help of others, she has to trust that the people she surrounds herself with will do what is best for the business.

"What is your college/education background?" This particular questions prompted a variety of answers. Two panelists told the students about how they had always wanted to be in business so they have degrees in that area, while the other two received degrees in different fields which they felt helped them to look at their business with a new viewpoint. More than anything, the students were encouraged to pursue what was most interesting to them, and to be open minded. Each panelist said that where they were today was not where they had initially planned to be. Another point of emphasis was to never stop learning new things.

"What keeps you going when it gets tough?" Panelists took their time to make sure that the students understood that being an entrepreneur is not an easy road but that it is rewarding and exciting if you are passionate about your business. Tony told the students that failure happens every day and that they should learn to embrace their mistakes. "As long as you are learning something from your failures/mistakes then you are moving in the right direction." Kellie also stated, "if you are going to fall down, fall forward and be willing to ask for help, because no one can do it alone".

We would like to thank the CEO panelists for helping the YEA! students to better understand the journey they are beginning. Each panelist brought a different perspective, and the students each got the chance to see what is in store for them as they work to accomplish their dreams.



YEA! students and CEOs



**GROUNDBREAKING • GRAND OPENING • RIBBON CUTTING • CEREMONIES**



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208 W. Main St. Suite B • 559-429-4277



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**G.W. STEWART'S Salon & Gift Emporium**  
430 S. Church St. • 559-734-9294



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**St. Paul's School**  
6101 W. Goshen Ave • 559-739-1619



Ribbon Cutting

**Roseland Studios**  
20925 Ave 322, Woodlake • 559-901-9552



Ribbon Cutting

**Kaweah Delta Hospice**  
623 W. Willow St. • 559-733-0642



Ribbon Cutting

**Central Valley Recovery Services**  
320 W. Oak Ave Suite A • 559-625-2995

Congratulations to **California Water Service**. They celebrated their 90th Birthday this month at the **Visalia Convention Center**. As part of the celebration they made donations to the **Valley Oak SPCA**, **ImagineU Children's Museum** and the **Bethlehem Center**.



**Congressman Devin Nunes** joins Trump's transition team. "In this role, I will advise President-elect Trump on the appointments of his Cabinet members and on appointments to other top positions in



the new administration," according to a statement from his office.

Melanie White, Vice President of **Hellwig Products** was awarded SEMA Woman of the Year. The **Business Journal** ranked the **Visalia Mall** as #4 in the Central San Joaquin Valley in regards to gross leasable square feet.

Fresno-based **Wathen Castanos** is participating in a new coastal community featuring more than 1,000 homes in the city of Marina in Monterey County.

Wathen Castanos is one of the first two builders on the project, called Sea Haven, which will feature nearly five acres of picnic and lawn park areas, more than a mile of walking trails and access to some of the city's most popular hiking and biking paths.

**The Visalia Police Department's** Explorer POST32 participated in the 2016 Central Coast Explorer Competition this past weekend. The Explorers did exceptionally well taking first place in the areas of Domestic Violence, Crisis/Hazard Response, and Individual female obstacle course. They also took home trophies in several other areas including crime scene investigation and oral board examination. Congratulations on a job well done!



**BOARD SPOTLIGHT**

**Andrea Camarena**



Andrea Camarena is the owner of Goal Line Media which she opened 18 months ago. **Why is it important to be a Chamber member?**

The Chamber of Commerce provides very effective networking opportunities as well as fosters community pride with the Ambassador program and other community outreach programming.

**What is your favorite thing about your job/company?** My favorite part of my job is creating something that helps someone else reach their goals. There is a wonderful satisfaction that comes with seeing the immediate and positive effects of a press release that I've crafted, or a video I've put together for a client. I've been very lucky get to work with non-profits and students.

**What do you like to do when you are not working?** I absolutely love working; it's more like playtime for me. But when I'm not running around with a camera or designing something on my computer, my favorite place to be is the soccer field. Playing, coaching, watching, it's something that my entire family does together so soccer is a very important part of my life.

**What is your favorite place to go in Visalia when you are not working?** I love meeting clients and friends in Downtown Visalia. It's a beautiful area and you can find just about everything your belly or your heart desires in the downtown shops and restaurants.

**AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT**

**Theresa Polich**



Theresa Polich is the Work-Based Learning Coordinator for Visalia Unified School District-Career Technical Education. She has been with Visalia Unified for the last two years.

**What are some of the ways you'd recommend getting involved/working with/partnering with the Chamber?** The Chamber of Commerce is an awesome resource. It provides opportunities to network with local businesses and provide students with work-based learning opportunities. These opportunities not only allow students to explore, develop and prepare for careers, but it allows businesses to provide leadership opportunities for their employees.

**What has Chamber Membership meant for your company?** It has been about building relationships in the community. I'm privileged to be a Chamber Ambassador. It has allowed me to network with amazing business partners and has kept me up on the growth and development of our community. Our partnership with the Chamber has helped guide VUSD in prioritizing the needs of business partners and better prepare our students for the future.

The best part of Visalia is collaborating with people that are passionate about their work and love the community. Visalia is a small, big town. Business leaders help in all aspects of the school district and support in countless ways. The community is still very focused on educating all students and encouraging them to be an active resident in the future.

**What is your favorite local charity/non-profit?** I have been involved with Happy Trails Riding Academy since their start. This unique opportunity enriches the lives of students, parents, families and the community. The program gives individuals the opportunity to be more independent and improves their quality of life. Again, the success of Happy Trails is a statement to the way Visalia and the surrounding communities support ALL charities and organizations.

**Are Millennials Really Bad at Saving Money?**

Written by **Igor Ferrera, Principal Financial**

During meetings with clients of the "baby boomer" generation, it never ceases to amaze me how often I hear comments like, "My son is in his mid-20s and still living at home," or, "It concerns me that the last thing on my daughter's mind is saving money." Realistically, are millennials really bad with money as a generation? The data says otherwise. According to a new Bankrate study, "Millennials are saving more money than any other age group, with 62% stating they are saving more than 5% of their incomes... with 29% of millennials saving more than 10% of their incomes."



As a whole, millennials are positioned to have the highest savings rate of any other generations. During the recent "financial crisis", young professionals have a unique perspective on careers, life, and money. Millennials saw firsthand the importance of having a nest egg to fall back on, because jobs and higher incomes are never guaranteed. The uncertainty which came with the recent downturn has been ingrained in our minds.

Aside from retirement, another reason to save is millennials don't stay in jobs nearly as long as baby boomers once did. The days of a nice pension after 30-40 years of service are dwindling. According to March 2013 figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and money-rates.com, only 8 percent of private-sector companies offered

a defined benefit retirement plan (pensions) to their employees. This fact, among other factors, is a major reason why millennials often don't stay at one job for very long. According to Future Workplace, "Ninety-one percent of Millennials expect to stay in a job for less than three years, which means they would have 15-20 jobs over the course of their working lives!" This is important to note, because as millennials are making this generational shift to stay in one job for a short period of time, the urgency and importance of saving becomes tremendously more significant. How difficult would it be for you take a career change/risk without emergency savings? Would it be easier if you had 3-6 months of living expenses in the bank? Most of us would prefer the latter.

Although millennials and young professionals are doing a much better job at saving than most expect, the reasons to save have expanded. Millennials not only want to be cognizant of retirement, but need to stress and prioritize maintaining reserves for emergencies and opportunities which may come our way. Save early and save often my friends!

- <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/consumer-index/millennials-boost-savings-but-financial-security-slips.aspx>
- <http://www.money-rates.com/personal-finance/employee-pension-plans-disappear.htm>
- [http://futureworkplace.com/wp-content/uploads/MultipleGenAtWork\\_infographic.pdf](http://futureworkplace.com/wp-content/uploads/MultipleGenAtWork_infographic.pdf)



## Explore the Colorado Rockies Featuring National Parks and Historic Trains



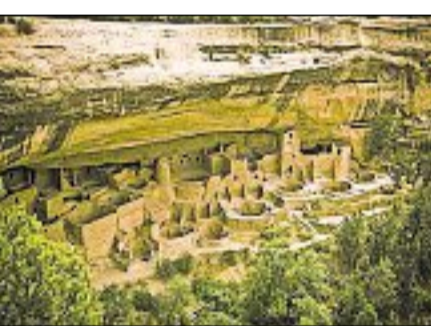
Join the Chamber for a Slide Show Presentation - December 14th at 12:00 pm at the City Administration Office located at 220 N. Santa Fe.

The Visalia Chamber is offering the opportunity to explore the Colorado Rockies with an inclusive package featuring National Parks and historic trains. The trip is 9 days and includes 12 meals, hotel accommodations and roundtrip airfare from Fresno. The trip will depart on July 14th and return on July 22nd 2017.

For anyone who loves the majestic outdoors this is an amazing tour filled with breathtaking scenery and historic landmarks. Travelers will enjoy scenic tours of Colorado and Utah while traversing the Rocky Mountains and exploring four national parks. The trip will begin in the "Mile High City" of Denver. This adventurous tour includes Rocky Mountain National Park and the "Roof of the Rockies", Arches National Park, the world's largest concentration of natural sandstone arches, Canyonlands National Park and the Island in the Sky mesa.

After three national parks, travelers will experience Colorado National Monument and travel along the Rim Rock as they journey to the Colorado wine country where they will learn about the region and sample wine at a family owned winery during the winemaker's dinner. Next on the agenda is a little bit of history as travelers drive south to Durango and the small mining town of Silverton, a National Historic Landmark where it is "all aboard" the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. This railroad was an 1881 coal-fired, steam-powered locomotive. In the evening, the group will enjoy an Old West adventure filled with traditional cowboy food and entertainment. After a restful night travelers will venture to Mesa Verde National Park known for the mysterious Spruce Tree Cliff Dwellings built between 1211 - 1278. Finally the tour will travel to Colorado Springs, and a visit to Manitou Springs, home of Pikes Peak the legendary symbol of the 1959 Gold Rush. Here travelers will journey aboard the Pikes Peak Cog Railway, the world's highest cog railroad.

For more information on the Chamber travel program, contact Sue Summers at 559-734-5876, or visit the website at [www.visaliachamber.org](http://www.visaliachamber.org).



## A Holiday in the City Opens December 5<sup>th</sup>



In December, the public is invited to visit a spectacular exhibition of hand-painted porcelain buildings, figures, plazas and parks depicting a delightful holiday cityscape of the past. The exhibition, entitled A Holiday in the City, will be held in the lobby of TCOE's new Administration Building and Conference Center. Dozens of illuminated homes, civic buildings, businesses, churches and restaurants will be featured in the 55-foot long display. Dotted among the buildings are dozens of figures - carolers, ice skaters, shoppers and diners - all bundled up for the holidays. A Holiday in the City is drawn from a collection of porcelains donated to the Tulare County Office of Education Foundation by Tulare County Board of Education President Chris Reed and her husband, Gary.

Holiday /6

## THE LAW AT WORK

# The Law at Work



Taking the Minimum to the Max: California to Increase Minimum Wage to \$15.00

For better or worse, the year 2016 is almost over. So that means, just like last year, there are some new labor and employment laws on the horizon. Some have a narrow scope, affecting only a select few employers. Others affect nearly everyone. Here's a brief rundown of some important new laws for 2017.

**California's Fair Pay Act** - In 2017, California's already exacting equal pay law is expanding beyond gender to include ethnicity and race (SB 1007 and 1241). The law now prohibits employers from paying employees of one race or ethnicity less than similarly situated employees of a different race or ethnicity.

**New "All Gender" bathroom rule** - Beginning March 1, 2017, all businesses are prohibited from labeling any "single-user toilet facility" as either "male" or "female" (AB 1732). The law defines a "single-user toilet facility" as "a toilet facility with no more than one water closet and one urinal with a locking mechanism controlled by the user."

**Arbitration provisions** - Many employers require their employees to sign arbitration provisions, meaning any employment disputes are resolved through arbitration proceedings and opposed to civil court. Judges are getting stricter on these provisions, often striking them down and allowing employees to proceed with their claims in the court system. A new law (SB 1241) now states that employers cannot require California employees to arbitrate (or litigate) their claims in other states. The law also prohibits requiring arbitrators to apply laws from other states.

**Domestic violence leave notice requirements** - Under this new law (AB 2377), any company with 25 or employees is required to notify their employees of their rights to take time off (protected) for domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Employers must "inform each employee of his or her rights" upon hire and at any



**Brett T. Abbott**  
Gubler & Abbott LLP

time thereafter upon request. The Labor Board will create a form for this type of leave and make it available by July 1, 2017.

**Juvenile convictions** - A new law (AB 1843) prohibits employers from asking applicants or employees, or even considering information relating to, arrests, convictions, or other similar proceedings that occurred while the applicant or employee was subject to the "jurisdiction of juvenile court law."

**Increase in minimum wage** - On January 1, 2017, the minimum wage for companies with 26 or more employees will increase to \$10.50 per hour.

**Smoking law changes** - California already has strict prohibitions against smoking at work. Numerous new laws make the requirements even stricter. Prior smoke-free workplace laws did not cover employers with five or fewer employees; the new laws do. Also, employers used to be able to permit smoking in company break-rooms; not anymore. Finally, old laws didn't cover places like hotel lobbies, banquet rooms, bars/taverns and warehouses. The new laws eliminate these exceptions and cover virtually all employers.

Change appears to be the only constant in California employment law. Keeping up to date with the ever-changing legal landscape isn't always easy, but it is important. See you next year with a whole new slate of laws.

This article is for education and information purposes only; it should not be construed as legal advice. If you have an employment law question for inclusion in a future article, contact Brett T. Abbott at Gubler & Abbott LLP ([bta@thecalifornialawyers.com](mailto:bta@thecalifornialawyers.com)). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott LLP, (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinoweth St., Visalia, CA 93291 ([www.thecalifornialawyers.com](http://www.thecalifornialawyers.com)). Read Mr. Abbott's blog on employment law issues at <http://work-law.blogspot.com>.

## Spring Dedication Planned for Open Arms House

Hospice care is a compassionate and team-oriented approach to medical care for the terminally ill. A hospice house, such as the Open Arms House that will open in 2017, is as close to home as possible while still supplying the necessary round-the-clock care.

"Most hospice houses are operated by a single hospice agency and they have a license like a skilled nursing agency," said Open Arms House Board President Carol Nickel. "They cost millions of dollars to build and millions to operate." Even so, several members of Kaweah Delta Hospice Foundation Board decided to start a separate organization to open a hospice house in Visalia.

After looking at hospice houses around the state, the Open Arms House board members finally found the kind of hospice house that they were looking for near Santa Barbara. "They came back and said 'We're going to do this,'" said Nickel.

Board Member Angela Biscotti explained how everything started happening quickly. "We've had divine intervention this whole journey." In January, the board filed as a 501c3 nonprofit and started raising money. "In February, we asked the Kaweah Delta Hospice Foundation Board to change its bylaws to give money (to Open Arms House)," said Biscotti. The foundation loaned \$259,000 interest-free for 10 years to purchase the house, and \$41,000 was a gift for renovation, said Nickel. A realtor told them about a house about to come on the market that might fit their needs. Unfortunately, when

a few board members visited, they saw that the house was split level and had a pool.

"It was going to be a challenge to remodel," said Nickel, who added that there was a house right across the street at 3234 W. Iris Court in Visalia with a 'for sale' sign. "We walked in a said, 'This is it!' We opened escrow in April and it closed in May."

The board held an open house in early June to announce its new location. The neighbors in its residential area were supportive of the new facility. "The day before we had the open house, I took a brochure to every house in the neighborhood," said Board Member Merrilyn Brady. "Without exception, everyone who was home was thrilled that this was coming to the neighborhood."

About \$170,000 has been raised for Open Arms House, but the fundraising and other efforts continue. Architect Larry Lewis has drawn up plans to remodel the house, adding three bedrooms, converting the garage and adding a circular driveway. Plans have been approved by the city and contracts have gone out to big. Construction may start by the end of November.

The cost to stay at the house will be \$150 a day, which will be paid by the guests' families "But if they cannot pay, we will provide the care," said Nickel "we won't turn anyone away." Open Arms House will have six bids and be available to all five of the hospice agencies in Tulare and Kings Counties, according to Nickel.

## Leadership

(continued from page 1)

We had the opportunity to eat lunch at SVA and hear from Ms. Ruth Dutton the Founder and Superintendent of SVA about the differences in how charter schools are funded and the challenges that can pose.

We hopped back on the bus for one last ride back to Ridgeview Middle School. We received a tour of the beautiful new facility by Principal Mr. Michael Yates. We had a chance to interrupt both a robotics and a choir class and were treated to neat demonstrations of skills and talent in both. The day ended in the school library where Robert Groeber the Assistant Superintendents for Administration Services of VUSD and Nathan Hernandez CFO of VUSD on how

upcoming state wide propositions, Prop 51 and Prop 55, could impact education here in our community. Mr. Vincent Salinas joined us for the discussion and provide a different prospective, creating an opportunity for an informative back and forth on issues we were about to vote on.

Our first student organized and led day session was a huge success and set the bar very high for future sessions. I would like to thank Mrs. Lisa Walsh and Ms. Andrea Navarette for their hard work. The day moved breezily between locations, they succeeded in finding one single topic - education funding, and used it as a vehicle to explore and compare local education systems. I am not sure I am any closer to determining where my future children will be educated, but now I have a much clearly picture of all the options out there.

## Calling all Employers with Jobs to Fill!

Senator Andy Vidak has teamed up with U.S. Congressman David G. Valadao and Tachi Palace for the Third Annual Central Valley Career and Resource Expo on January 26, 2017 in Lemoore.

With high unemployment in the Valley, connecting people looking for a job with people who have jobs is a top priority. If you are an employer with jobs to fill, you are invited to participate in the Expo.

What makes this Expo different is that all booth participants have current job openings. Serious job applicants come to the Expo because they know their chances of landing a job at this event are much higher than many job fairs. Last year's Expo featured over 80 employers, and over 300 job applicants attended.

**WHEN:** Thursday, January 26, 2017  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WHERE:** Tachi Palace Bingo Hall  
17225 Jersey Ave, Lemoore

If you are a business with job openings and would like to be part of the Expo, or if you would like more information about the Expo, please contact Claudia Salinas in Vidak's Hanford district office at 559-585-7161 or [Claudia.Salinas@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Claudia.Salinas@sen.ca.gov).

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## VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Volunteers Make a Difference

Successful schools become that way for many reasons. Good teachers, a strong curriculum, informative assessments, a positive culture, and kids who are excited about learning are all important contributors to effective schools that help students achieve at high levels. No one thing is responsible for a successful school, and everything has impact in some way. One thing that has much influence on effective schools and reflects a strong community is parent volunteers.

I was reminded of this last month when I attended our annual PTA Presidents and Principals Luncheon. At that event, our PTA presidents honored their principals by recognizing the great partnership that happens between parents and schools. Parent-school organizations come in a couple forms. Many of our schools have PTAs—official Parent Teacher Associations that link to a state- and national-level organization. Some of our schools have PTOs—parent teacher organizations that take on different forms. Both PTAs and PTOs are great organizations that help coordinate parent support for schools at all levels and are much supported by school folks. As a principal, I appreciated what these groups brought to my school, for having a group of people who would help in any way that we asked was a priceless asset. As Superintendent, I have seen and value this support even more.

Parent volunteers get involved in schools in lots of ways beyond PTA and PTOs. Some parents seek to take part in the education of their children by volunteering in classrooms or libraries. Other



**Todd Oto,  
Ed.D.**  
Superintendent, Visalia  
Unified School District

parents rally around a specific school activity. Booster groups for athletics, performing arts, and other competitive teams, for example, are hugely important at all levels of our district. The resources, time and energy that parents provide to extra- and co-curricular activities help make good programs great ones and are indispensable.

The value that parent volunteers bring to schools is validated by research. Parents who get involved in their children's schools frequently help their kids set goals, demonstrate increased enthusiasm and higher expectations for learning, support good study habits, ask about learning, value learning new things, and encourage reading. The sum of these byproducts of being involved with schools is clearly associated with higher student achievement, up to as much as two or three years' increased learning for their children.

The world we live in has changed much since the time many of us were students in public schools. Today, safety dictates that we must be extra careful about who works with our kids. I know that parents and the community understand that being careful means that sometimes we must have some protocols in place to ensure safety, but I know also that we cannot allow those protocols to be significant barriers for parents, for the support that parents bring to our schools is extraordinarily valuable to our kids. On behalf of the district, I offer my most sincere thanks to every parent who helps us to advance our students toward futures with limitless opportunity.

## Sequoia Prompt Care now offers x-ray services in East Visalia

VISALIA – Patients who are in need of a chest x-ray or believe they have suffered a fracture or a break, can now get care at one location – Sequoia Prompt Care at 1110 S. Ben Maddox, Suite B., in East Visalia.

The clinic's new radiology suite is an added convenience for people who choose to visit Sequoia Prompt Care for their urgent care needs, said John Leal, manager of Sequoia Prompt Care, a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District,

"This is another step to help our patients save time," said Leal, noting that x-ray services were added as a result of patient feedback. Construction on the suite started over the summer and was recently completed.

Sequoia Prompt Care already offers people the following two steps to save them time:

- A QuickPass feature that allows them to skip the waiting room by calling 559-624-5800
- A website <http://sequoiapromptcare.org> that allows them to see wait times for our two locations and choose the shortest wait.

Sequoia Prompt Care provides care for general illnesses and offers everything from physicals to workers' compensation care. Patients are seen by a physician, a physician assistant, or a nurse practitioner. Walk-in patients are welcome. Cash and most insurance are accepted.

For more info on Sequoia Prompt Care, Call 559-624-5800.

Hours by location are:

**1110 S. Ben Maddox Way, Suite B.**  
Hours: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., weekdays;  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekends

**820 W. Akers St., Suite 100**  
(inside Sequoia Medical Plaza at Akers Street and Cypress Avenue).  
**Hours:** 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., weekdays;  
9 a.m. to 2 p.m., weekends

## Bank of the Sierra Strengthens Tulare County Communities with \$19K in Grants for 3rd Quarter

Bank of the Sierra Strengthens Tulare County Communities with \$19K in Grants for 3rd Quarter

Community Bank's Sierra Grant program funds 6 non-profits that serve Tulare County

Bank of the Sierra announced that a total of \$19,000 in grants were

awarded through its Sierra Grant program to 6 different non-profit organizations that serve communities in and around Tulare County. 17 total organizations throughout the Bank's footprint received a total of \$63,000 for the 3rd quarter. Each quarter the Bank commonly awards 10 to 20 organizations with grants of \$1,000 to \$5,000 based on the specific needs of the organization.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Tulare County provides advocacy, community education, and family support for those affected by mental illness. With the \$2,000 Sierra Grant that NAMI-Tulare County received, they plan to fund a number of new programs and initiatives, including scholarships for mental health conferences, and NAMI in the Schools, which uses education to increase awareness and reduces stigma surrounding mental illness in the schools system.

The Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance, which received a \$2,500 grant, is a community-driven organization that addresses the housing and support needs of those experiencing homelessness in Kings and Tulare County. The grant will be applied to the group's Project Homeless Connect, a one-day forum designed to conveniently provide services like ID cards, haircuts, and dental and vision screenings free of cost.

Bank President and CEO, Kevin McPhail expressed his appreciation for the grant recipients this quarter. "Bank of the Sierra is happy to recognize organizations that help improve the communities we live in, and these organizations were chosen for demonstrating that commitment to their community."

## Suncrest Bank Appoints Visalia Market President

VISALIA, Calif. Suncrest Bank (OTCOX:SBKK) recently announced the appointment of Mr. Dave Brett as its new Market President for the Visalia area, and surrounding communities.

Mr. Brett most recently managed the Visalia branch of Bank of the West and has deep roots in the local community. Suncrest Bank's President and CEO, Mr. Ciaran McMullan said, "We are delighted to be appointing someone with Dave's experience and outstanding track record of success in growing his local banking business". McMullan added, "Suncrest is committed to putting talented, local leadership in place in each of our markets throughout the Central Valley".

Mr. Brett said, "I am excited to be joining such a strong and up-and-coming community bank, with a genuine dedication to customer service". Mr. Brett's appointment comes in advance of Suncrest opening its new flagship location at 501, Main Street, Visalia which is scheduled for early January. "The addition of Dave to our Visalia market team, together with the opening of our new state-of-the-art branch, will make Suncrest a truly formidable competitor in the Visalia market and a great choice for new customers to consider", added McMullan.



# White Christmas

DECEMBER 9, 2016 | 5:30PM - 11:00PM

PUBLIC PREVIEW  
2:30 - 4:00PM

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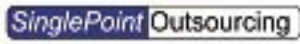


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**CALENDAR - DECEMBER 2016**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 Visalia City Council Meeting	6	7	8	9 36th Annual Christmas Tree Auction	10
11	12	13	14 Travel Slideshow Presentation 12:00 pm 220 N. Santa Fe	15	16	17
18	19 Visalia City Council Meeting	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Chamber office closed for Christmas Holiday**

## Provost & Pritchard Expands with Addition of Three New Staff Members

Fresno, CA: Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group has expanded with the addition of three new staff members in three of the firm's offices. The newest professionals on staff include: Trelawney Bullis, EIT, as an assistant engineer based in the firm's Clovis office; and Harrison Hughes, EIT, as an assistant engineer, and Richard Baker as a senior construction manager, both based working in the Fresno office.

"We are excited to once again grow our staff as Trelawney, Harrison and Richard all join the Provost & Pritchard team," said Ronald Samuelian, Provost & Pritchard's president. "Trelawney and Harrison will provide engineering services for our agricultural and civil design projects. Richard's construction expertise will expand our in-house capabilities to provide construction inspection services for our clients' projects."

Baker has over 28 years of experience in the construction services field, where he worked on public works and capital improvement projects as resident field inspection, construction inspector, quality assurance inspector, and lead inspector. Projects have included water resource projects, water system improvements including pipeline construction, land development projects, roadway improvements, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, sewer systems upgrades and installations, water treatment plant expansions, and more. In addition, he worked as a consultant to the state of California's Department of Water Resources, Division of Engineering to provide construction inspection on the California Aqueduct System, and served as a liaison with local agencies and provided assistance with

encroachment permits.

Bullis is a recent graduate of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in bioresource and agricultural engineering and minored in irrigation water science. Her experience includes designing irrigation systems through researching irrigation efficiency, analyzing field data, and irrigation requirements for various crop types.

Hughes has two years of experience in the engineering industry, and graduated from California State University, Fresno where he obtained a bachelor's degree in civil engineering with a minor in mathematics. Hughes' experience includes civil engineering, hydraulics, water resources engineering, hydrology, urban storm water management, transportation planning design, and water quality control design.

Established in 1968, Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group has a strong tradition of engineering and consulting excellence throughout California. With office locations in Fresno, Clovis, Visalia, Bakersfield, Modesto, Los Banos, Chico and Merced, the firm features a mix of seasoned professionals, complemented by younger staff with fresh ideas. Provost & Pritchard specializes in civil and agricultural engineering, environmental and land use planning, hydrogeology and geology, surveying, and construction management services in the areas of water resources, municipal infrastructure, agriculture, site development, and environmental compliance. For more information, visit [www.ppeng.com](http://www.ppeng.com) or email [info@ppeng.com](mailto:info@ppeng.com).

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## 2017 San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Awards Honoring Valley Projects and People that reflect Smart Growth Principles

**Holiday**  
(continued from page 4)

Mrs. Reed, who serves as a trustee representing the Porterville area, has been collecting the porcelains for over 25 years. "As the collection grew, we began to think about how we could share it," said Mrs. Reed. "By donating it to the TCOE Foundation, we know that children of all ages can enjoy the village scenes each year during the holidays."

The exhibition will open to the public on Monday, December 5, and remain on display through December 29. The public is welcome to visit the free exhibition Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. A Holiday in the City will be open 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. December 27-29 and closed Saturdays and Sundays, and December 23 and 26. The TCOE Administration Building and Conference Center is located at 6200 S. Mooney Blvd. in Visalia. No reservations are required.

"We are so grateful for the Reed's gift of these charming pieces of art," said Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "We hope that parents and grandparents will take the opportunity to bring their children to experience the warmth and magic of A Holiday in the City."

FRESNO - The Community and Regional Planning Center at Fresno State and American Planning Association - California, Central Section are pleased to announce the call for nominations for 2017 San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Awards. The awards program recognizes outstanding achievements and practices in the built environment.

In 2009, the San Joaquin Valley's eight regional transportation agencies created the awards program to encourage quality in planning and development, with the smart-growth oriented 12 Blueprint Principles as the basis. The hope was to provide visual examples of attractive, functional and environmentally friendly projects that could have relevance throughout the Valley. Over 50 projects and individuals have received awards since the program began.

"We were greatly honored to receive a Blueprint Award in 2015 for our work on the Newberry Building in Downtown Stockton. Moreover, it was inspiring to learn about other innovative projects

in the San Joaquin Valley and how these awards push design and development in our region to the highest standards. We look forward to participating in upcoming Blueprint Awards activities," said David Garcia, Chief Operating Officer of Ten | Space Development in Stockton.

The 2017 awards program is seeking nominations in the following sustainable development categories: residential, commercial, mixed use, downtown revitalization, transportation enhancement, and historic revitalization. Nominations are also sought for individuals who have shown enthusiasm and tenacity in promoting the smart-growth principles.

Nominations are open to all 8 counties of the San Joaquin Valley. The deadline to receive nominations is February 3, 2017. For more information and to apply, visit [www.valleyblueprint.org](http://www.valleyblueprint.org).

Award recipients will be recognized at the 12th Annual San Joaquin Valley Spring Policy Conference hosted by the Fresno Council of Governments on March 8-9, 2017.