



Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **JAN. 9:**
YPN Monthly Meet Up
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: BarrelHouse Brewing Co.
- **JAN. 14:**
District 1 & District 3 Tulare County Board of Supervisors Forum
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Location: 210 Cafe
- **JAN. 15:**
CalSavers Workshop
Time: 10 a.m.
Location: Fresno Pacific University Visalia Campus
- **JAN. 23:**
Ambassador Monthly Breakfast
Time: 8 a.m.
Location: Visalia First



- **The Azores: Jewels of Portugal:**
Aug. 21–30, 2020
- **Bluegrass Country & the Smoky Mountains:**
Sept. 17–25, 2020
- **Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta:**
Oct. 9-14, 2020
- **Israel: A Journey of Faith:**
Nov. 2-10, 2020
- **Thanksgiving in New York City:**
Nov. 23–27, 2020

Collette Vacations, Mayflower Tours, CstlInc
For more information, go to
www.visaliachamber.org/travel



Putting on the Glitz

Friday, Dec. 6 marked the 39th Annual Christmas Tree Auction and this year was one for the books! Sparkle abounded in the Convention Centers Exhibit Hall with this year's theme, "Putting on the Glitz." The 10 extravagantly decorated large trees glittered in the light of the many crystal chandeliers. In addition to the large trees, guests were able to bid on more than 25 silent auction items ranging from wine baskets, to getaway trips to the coast, jewelry, and 14 beautifully decorated small trees. Approximately 1,100 guests enjoyed food from more than 22 of the city's best local restaurants and samples from more than 15 wineries, and breweries. The Sequoia Symphony Orchestras Jazz Quartet performed holiday classics during the VIP hour, while DJ Bliss Event and Entertainment Group had the crowd dancing on a cloud until the late hours of the night.

While the Chamber of Commerce takes the lead in hosting the event, including recruiting volunteers, coordinating the food and drinks, securing entertainment, lighting and decorations, all of the proceeds raised during the night are given directly to the 29 participating non-profit organizations. "This event is a platform to raise money," noted Gail Zurek, President & CEO of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. "To host a fundraiser event takes man power, money and a lot of staff time, and during this time of the year most of the local non-profits are busy trying to fulfill their mission and don't have time to put on an event, so the Christmas Tree Auction is the Chamber's way of paying it forward and supporting our community." The Chamber would like to thank all of the amazing vendors, the generous sponsors, and the more than 100 volunteers who helped to make this annual Christmas Tree Auction the legacy event it is.

Photos by Christina Joy Photography
More photos on page 2



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Beyond the headline

It always happens the same way. When there's an article that makes its way to the national news about our region, our air, our schools or whatever the national news decides is relevant, I start getting text messages.

"Did you see this!?"

Then a Link to a not-so-great article.

The person texting me is just as frustrated as I am. The information used in the article is from a data set that doesn't fully represent us. Often data used is from the Visalia Porterville Metropolitan Service Area, sometimes referred to as "the Visalia Porterville MSA", but the headline always just says Visalia. In today's quick news, headlines matter. It's frustrating when we know the story and that story isn't reflected in the headline. These stories make their way into google searches. They pop up as job seekers look to relocate and as medical groups look to recruit doctors, these stories paint a narrative that isn't reflective of the experiences we all know to be true. These headlines and data make Visalia look to be something it is not.

More frustrating, perhaps, is when local people read the headline and accept the headline as truth. They never stop to ask if their experience differs or why the headline exists. I wish more people looked at the data, its source or scope. Often the numbers are about a much larger subset of our community. The data used is often only a small part of a larger story. When other data points are utilized, a different story emerges. Add a narrative and a historical perspective and it seems like an entirely different story.



Gail Zurek
Visalia Chamber
President & CEO

"It takes a million 'atta boys' to cover one negative comment," the saying goes. The reality is these stories have a lasting impact not only on how we recruit those coming to our community but how we begin to see ourselves. That is, perhaps, what scares me the most. I'm scared we'll start believing all the negative we read. We won't fight back and offer something different.

I love playing "did you know." At various Chamber events and programs, I love highlighting the best and brightest things we've done as a community. Did you know that we produce every yearbook this side of the Mississippi? Or that paper cup (or now paper straw) that your drinking from most likely was made here in Visalia? Do you know how many countries our food feeds? Or that a Visalian invented the inflatable lifejacket? Did you know Edmond Wysinger, a Visalian, fought to have schools be desegregated back in 1890? Mr. Wysinger began the fight to desegregate California schools long before it was mainstream. We have Nobel Prize winners, professional athletes and lots of musicians who call our wonderful community home.

Don't get me wrong. I know we have challenges. I don't dispute that. Heck, as a Chamber, we've pushed to change, address and tackle those challenges. But those challenges aren't what defines us as a community. We need the great news, good news, and brag points to be more top of mind than the last bad headline. We must embrace those things that make us great and not five words at the top of a news article. Be Proud Visalia. Be proud of who we are and share that great news.

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

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MISSION ICONS



Catalyst for Change



Community Convener



Champion for Business

Limiting emergency department visitors

By Regina Sawyer, DNP, RN, Vice President and Kaweah Delta, Chief Nursing Officer

After hearing from patients, the community, and careful consideration, we are now limiting the number of visitors who can accompany patients in our Emergency Department. As you all know, we have limited space in that area, so only two visitors per patient are allowed in the waiting area (one visitor while they are in the ED). We are putting patients in the driver seat.

At admission, they are given two badges to give to the two visitors they want to accompany them; all other visitors are being asked to wait in the nearby Acequia Wing lobby. We know families are concerned about their loved ones, but are hopeful that they will understand that this is in the best interest of all our patients. We are also asking people to keep hallways clear for emergency access. These limits will help us better care for our patients, but it will take a team to enforce.

It will also take a team to educate our community about its importance. We encourage you to share this message with your family and friends to help spread the word about this change in our Emergency Department.

About this publication ...

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COMMUNITY LOYAL MEMBERS

A thriving community starts here!

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

NEW

Business Connector Members:

- 99 PALMS INN & SUITES
- RECOVERY RESOURCES

Small Business Members:

- DANI BLAIN REAL ESTATE
- HISTORIC SEVEN SYCAMORES
- HUNTER RANCH GOLF COURSE
- OSTEOSTRONG VISALIA

RENEW

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

Business Connector Members:

- GLOBE LIFE FAMILY HERITAGE DIVISION
- *KAREN GROSS / STATE FARM INSURANCE
- *KATIE'S CUSTOM FIT
- *QUAIL PARK ON CYPRESS
- VALLEY PACIFIC PETROLEUM
- *VWR INTERNATIONAL, LLC

Small Business Members:

- *BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOME SERVICES

- CALIBER COLLISION
- CALIFORNIA MEDICAL IMAGING ASSOCIATES
- EL ROSAL RESTAURANT
- GOLDEN STATE CARDIAC & THORACIC SURGERY, INC
- *KAWEAH CONTAINER INC
- OWENS VALLEY CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER
- *PALM OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE
- *RAUBER JOHNSON & BLACK
- THE UPS STORE 6731
- TULARE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Small Business Nonprofit Member:

- ACCESS PLUS CAPITAL

**INDICATES MEMBERSHIP IN THE VISALIA CHAMBER 110% CLUB.*

Short-term sacrifice, long-term investment

By Raquel Garcia, M.A., Fresno Pacific University Visalia Campus

What does preparing for a different future look like for you?

For some it's a new look, for others it's a new start at something fresh and for 1 in 4, it will be finishing that college degree. How many times have you entertained the idea of going back to school to finish your degree, but instead convinced yourself that "this isn't the right time" or "it's too expensive" or the one I hear most often "I'm too old to go back to school."

One thing we can be certain of is that

time is going to pass, and we cannot get it back. You can either continue to entertain the idea of completing your degree or just go back and do it! It's a short-term sacrifice, for a long-term investment. I can attest, I was one of those people myself; it was never the right time and I always had a good reason to postpone my schooling.

I eventually found a program that fit my schedule, that was close to work and close to home right here in Visalia. Fresno Pacific University Degree Completion program offered me a one-night per week, accelerated program



that helped me wrap up my business degree in less than 2 years. I chose a degree in Organizational Leadership, it was a cohort model; same night of the week, same group of students working together, and every course was 6 weeks in length.

It wasn't long before I was applying everything I was learning in class, to my work life. Real people, with real experiences, best decision ever! I went on to complete a master's degree while juggling family, my career & volunteer commitments. It was hard, but I did it and so can YOU! I'm not

sure what things would look like for me today if I hadn't gone back and made that decision to invest in myself.

Today, you can choose from 10 different bachelors programs and more than 25 graduate and credential offerings. I encourage you to start this new year with a new you! Give yourself the gift of investing in something that no one can ever take away from you, your education! Your future will surely look different, and so will you!

Visit www.apply.fresno.edu to start your application and use the code REFER to waive the \$40 application fee today. It's never too late, and you are never too old to invest in yourself!

PUTTING ON THE GLITZ: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Eagle Mountain Casino recently donated \$200,000 to **AMVETS Department of California**. Eagle Mountain Casino hosted a Veterans Fundraiser that began on October 1st and ended on December 3rd.

Visalia Parks & Recreation Department partnered with **Sequoia Visalia Kiwanis Club** and to provide a Reading Tree at the **Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center**. The reading tree library is free for kids, teens and adults and allows them to pick up a book and take it home, keep it, share with others or return it for a new book.

Assistance League holds private shopping events for students at **J.C. Penney's**. These events are a part of the Operation School Bell® Program. In 2018-19 school year they clothed 775 students at a cost of \$66,168.00.

The generosity of the local communities has helped the Operation School Bell Program® expand to provide backpacks stuffed with school supplies for students. At the start of this school year, 1,610 backpacks were distributed to 40 school sites throughout Tulare County. These benefits to students can have far reaching effects. The clothes helped these students, some of whom were homeless, fit in at school and feel better about themselves. The annual survey of those working with students who were clothed found that 81% had a positive change in classroom behavior, 87% had a positive change in individual confidence, and 86% has a positive change in participation in school activities and with their peers.

The **Visalia Fox Theatre** hosted an Irish Christmas in December that included an award-winning cast of Irish dancers, as well as members of the Kerry Dance Troupe, The Kerry Voice Squad and the Kerry Traditional Orchestra.

Trish Arnold of **Thiesen-Dueker, LPL Financial** recently attended LPL Financial's Women Advisor Leaders Forum, an invitation-only conference that brought together more than 100 of LPL's top women advisors to share ideas, discuss growth opportunities, celebrate achievements and nurture a community of women advisors.

The **Tulare County Sheriff's Office** kicked off their toy drive at their December 5th Open House. This year's goal was to collect



enough toys and coats for 500 pre-registered boys and girls, pre-K through 8th grade. During the open house, 30 new bicycles were given away to designated boys and girls in the Sheriff's PAL Program. Recipients were awarded for trying their best to get good grades, stay out of trouble and to be good role models.



Visalia Mall hosted sensory-friendly holiday events this season. Families with all spectrums of special needs got to experience the time-honored tradition of a visit with Santa, in a comforting environment prior to public hours. Sensory-Friendly Santa Experiences were held in partnership with Cherry Hill Programs with Autism Speaks.

Bank of the Sierra recently announced that \$40,000 was awarded to 14 Central Valley nonprofits during the third quarter. The Bank awards \$1,000-\$5,000 grants to 15-25 nonprofit organizations each quarter as part of its Sierra Grant program. In addition, the Bank donated Fresno State Football tickets to two organizations, including ProYouth, allowing 100 children to attend the game.

210 hosted a special evening of history and music with noted Visalian historian Terry Ommen as he presented "Evans & Sontag: A Train Robbers' Story". Attendees had the opportunity to view and bid on historical Evans and Sontag photos and hear Lon Hannah of the Sons of the San Joaquin's new song, "The Ballad of Sontag & Evans".

In September **Kawneer, an Arconic Company** awarded Tulare County Office of Education a \$20,000 grant for their seven STEM events for k-12 students in the area. In November, Goshen Elementary School was awarded a \$10,000 grant to update their playground area. In addition, twenty Kawneer employees and their friends and family helped plant flowers and grass at Goshen Elementary School.



2020 Tulare County Association of REALTORS Officers and Directors Sworn In



Tulare County Association of REALTORS® swore in their 2020 Officers and Directors at the Visalia Convention Center during their Annual Installation & Holiday Luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 4.

Master of Ceremonies, Jim Heaton, introduced (President) Connie Kautz, (President-Elect) Dena Clark, (Secretary Treasurer) Janet Jones, as well as the following Directors: Craig Smith, Kohlee Barbeau, Casey Castillo (absent), Rick Conway, Chris Jolly, Kristina Ross, Richard Carlson, Joseph Nguyen and Matthew Thompson as the incoming 2020 Officers and Directors.

Assembly Member Devon Mathis, Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux, Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward, Visalia Mayor Bob Link, Visalia Council Members Steve Nelson and Brian Poochigian, Porterville Mayor Martha Flores, representatives for Senator Melissa Hurtado and Congressman Devin Nunes, were in attendance to offer their congratulations to the incoming officers and directors. TCAOR Past President, Ed Evans (REMAX), administered the Oath of Office to the incoming Board of Directors, and TCAOR Past President, Ed Morton (Avedian Properties), administered the Oath of Office to Connie Kautz during the swearing in Ceremony. To quote President Kautz, "We look forward to being even more involved in our community. Our relationship with homeowners, business leaders and builders will create a stronger community with affordable housing and community projects which help create opportunities for all."

The 2019 President, Brian Gilbert, officially passed the gavel to Incoming 2020 President Connie Kautz. Mr. Gilbert presented Presidential Award to Janet Jones (Berkshire Hathaway Home Services California Realty).

Laura Dimmer (First Capital Group) presented this year's Affiliate of The Year Award to Diana Jasso (The Money Store). Chris Barbeau (Modern Broker) presented this year's REALTOR® of the Year Award to Carlos Aleman (The Equity Group).

TCAOR members filled the hallway of the Visalia Convention Center with hundreds of new unwrapped toys and blankets, as well as monetary gifts, were contributed by the members in attendance and were donated to CASA of Tulare County for the seventh consecutive year.

On behalf of The Tulare County Association of REALTORS® we would like to thank everyone for attending & making it a memorable event.

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Visalia Education Foundation and VUSD – A Longstanding Partnership



Tamara Ravalin, Ed.D.
Interim Superintendent Visalia Unified School District

(Header is Visalia Unified School District; there's a head shot of Tamara Ravalin in the last issue)

There are many things that contribute to the success of our schools. Dedicated staff, strong curriculum and positive culture are all things that impact the quality of our students' educational opportunities. Community support is also an important element in successful schools, and that support can be seen and felt on our school campuses thanks to groups such as PTAs, PTOs, booster organizations, service clubs, and many others. One longtime friend of VUSD that you might not be familiar with is the Visalia Education Foundation, or VEF.

VEF is a non-profit, public benefit corporation whose purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. The Foundation receives funding through charitable donations and by organizing fundraisers such as concerts, raffles, the annual Band Showcase in October, and the annual "For the Love of Art" dinner, art show, and sale coming up on March 5, 2020. VEF distributes funds directly back to our schools in the form of teacher grants for innovative classroom projects, student scholarships, and increased access to technology and visual and performing arts.

Interested businesses and community members can join VEF in supporting our schools by becoming donors, sponsoring a scholarship or grant, or by attending VEF events. Information on the Foundation can be found on their website at www.visaliaedfoundation.org.

Visalia Unified is grateful to Visalia Education Foundation for everything they do for the students of our district; the support of the community and dedicated groups like VEF is instrumental to our success.



VUSD students learning about robotics with programs made possible by VEF grants.



VEF presenting scholarships to VUSD seniors at high school scholarship night.



VUSD bands performing at the annual VEF Band Showcase.

Understanding Federal Tax Withholdings



By Krystal Parreira, CPA.
M. Green and Company LLP

The 2018 tax year introduced the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), which will still be in effect for the 2019 tax year. For federal returns, TCJA nearly doubled the standard deduction, which reduced the need for many to itemize, removed the personal exemptions, increased the child tax credit, and changed the tax rates and brackets. Because of these changes, a taxpayer may have had an unexpected tax balance due or a larger-than-usual refund. Whether you owed more than expected or received a large refund, it is important to check your withholdings.

The Form W-4 is an Employee's Withholding Certificate that is given to the employer in order to withhold the correct federal income tax from an employee's pay. Prior to 2020, the W-4 form was based off of number of allowances that the taxpayer is claiming, which contained a worksheet based off of personal allowances. The IRS has since made changes to the W-4 form along with the withholding tables to better accommodate the changes from TCJA.

Employees are not required to submit a new Form W-4, but since the new form provides greater accuracy, employees may want to submit a new form in the new year. The IRS has released a Tax Withholding Estimator that will show you what you should be withholding from your paychecks in the upcoming 2020 year, and it can also give you a look back at the 2019 year to determine if you are likely going to owe taxes when you file for the upcoming April 15th deadline. You can access the estimator by the following link, which is also mobile-friendly <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/tax-withholding-estimator>.

One thing to keep in mind is that if the taxpayer does not withhold enough tax or make estimated tax payments, a penalty may be charged, so it is important to use the estimator using accurate data. Some people may love getting a large refund in April, and if you estimate properly, you may not receive a refund, but it is important to remember that the refund was your money to begin with and if you withhold less, you will just receive more money throughout the year in each paycheck instead of in a lump-sum after the government has been holding on to it.

\$400,000 donated to Central Valley Honor Flight and AMVETS

The Central Valley Honor Flight and AMVETS Department of California received an unexpected \$200,000 cash donation Tuesday, Dec. 10. Eagle Mountain Casinos General Manager Matthew Mingrone presented two \$200,000 checks to both organizations that caused mouths to drop and tears to flow.

Eagle Mountain Casino hosted a Veterans Fundraiser that began on Oct. 1 and ended on Dec. 3. Guests generously donated money towards the fundraiser in return for some free play and the fundraiser was so successful that four other Veteran organizations were added to the list.

“On behalf of AMVETS and the whole department and the commander and all of our staff, it is mind blowing what we just received, and I want to thank Eagle Mountain Casino and all the Guests and of course Tribal Council, for all the support and what you’ve done and your continued support and we want to continue partnering with you and making it the best we possibly can and I want to thank you.”

Smokey Rickerd, AMVETS Executive Director

“I’m rarely at a loss for words but I am today. One thing about Honor Flight is just what the mission entails. It gives our Veterans one last mission with honor. Because I’ll tell you this, just like when a church bell rings so loud, it diminishes over time, but when a bell of war rings in a young man or woman life, it takes a long time for that ring to diminish. One thing Honor Flight does well, I believe is to take that ring slightly away because what this check will do is not only make a difference in a Veteran, but to their families and loved ones because when a Veteran can heal well after their service, America is better, their families are better and the communities are better. So thank you.”

Bill Goodreau, Central Valley Honor Flight

“We were extremely excited and blown away with the response from our guests to our Veteran’s promotion. We wanted to show all Veterans how much we respect and appreciate them. We couldn’t think of two better organizations to help us say thanks to all veteran’s. Amvets of California and Central Valley Honor Flight work so hard for our Veterans and were hoping that these promotions help make their efforts a little easier.”

Eagle Mountain Casino

If you would like to donate to or volunteer with the Central Valley Honor Flight and AMVETS Department of California, please contact Bill Goodreau (CVHF) at 555-679-3961 and Sharon Alison-Crook (AMVETS) at (877) 526-1339.

Eagle Mountain Casino is an 18+ full-service casino and is owned and operated by the Tule River Tribe. It features 1,200 slot machines and 11 table games. Eagle Mountain Casino is a short drive from Bakersfield or Visalia.



Ask Jena

DOES THE CHAMBER OFFER WORKSHOPS FOR MEMBERS?

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce hosts and co-hosts workshops that are intended to help our members to grow and develop their businesses. Topics range from Quickbooks, E-mail Marketing, HR, Legal updates and more. We have a CalSavers Workshop scheduled for January 15th at 10am at Fresno Pacific University Visalia Campus that will focus on the new state mandated retirement plan.

Have more questions on how to leverage your membership benefits?

Contact Jena today!
Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 222 North Garden St., Suite 300, Visalia, CA 93291.
559-734-5876
info@visaliachamber.org

HEALTHCARE NOTE

Family HealthCare Network: A Holiday Tradition



This holiday season Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) continued its three-decade-long tradition of providing its neediest patients with food



Kerry Hydash

and gift baskets, and some holiday cheer. The 30-year tradition was inspired by a small group of FHCN staff members who decided that instead of a staff gift exchange that they preferred to offer food and gifts to a couple of families at FHCN’s Porterville Health Center—at the time its only site. Staff members were so overwhelmed by the impact, that the organization established a fund for the annual event. In 2009 the fund was renamed the Anita Fund after one of its clinicians who was a leader in spearheading the effort.

Today, FHCN’s Anita Fund remains a special part of the organization’s efforts to help its neediest patients during the holiday season. What makes the tradition special is that the Anita Fund is funded through the generosity of the FHCN staff. Individuals

and families are also nominated and selected by FHCN staff members. Through monthly staff contributions, the organization continues to help individuals and families who are encountering challenges and need a helping hand during the holiday season.

This year we were proud to extend some holiday cheer to families in 24 communities located in Fresno, Kings, and Tulare Counties. Altogether the FHCN Anita Fund helped hundreds of families this year, which included nearly 300 children. Individuals and families received gift baskets with a blanket, a grocery gift card, an 18-gallon tote of food, and gifts for household members 0-18 years. Our FHCN staff members distributed the baskets from our health centers where patients and their families were welcomed by Santa and members of our FHCN team.

Programs like the FHCN Anita Fund highlight the compassion of our staff members. It is through their enthusiasm and spirit of giving that they continue to impact our patients and their families beyond our health center walls.

CITY UPDATE

City of Visalia updates General Plan for Housing Element



The City of Visalia heads into the New Year having adopted an update to the General Plan Housing Element. After Council approval in December of 2019, this update will serve Visalia as a guide for the next four years.

“The purpose of the Housing Element is to identify the City’s housing needs,

to state the City’s goals and objectives for addressing those housing needs, and to set forth programs to achieve the goals in a manner that is consistent with applicable State and federal laws,” shares Brandon Smith, City of Visalia Senior Planner and lead staff member on the update.

A few highlights of the Update include:

- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Standard Building Plans
 - o Once developed, these plans will be offered to residents as a pre-approved plan that they can use within their rear yard or buildable area.

- Senior Housing Residential Development By Right
 - o As the state law specifically identifies seniors as a group with special housing needs, the Update will remove one zoning obstacle that can delay or prevent senior housing development.
- Downtown and mixed-use residential development by right
 - o Once implemented, this planned program will allow new and expanded residential uses in Downtown Mixed Use and Commercial Mixed Use.

Some aspects of the Element will be implemented immediately while others will be further reviewed and return to the City Council for adoption. To stay up to date on the process, look for updates on the City website and on City social media channels.

For more information regarding the Housing Element Plan, visit www.visalia.city or contact Brandon Smith, City of Visalia Senior Planner, at brandon.smith@visalia.city or (559) 713-4636.

To stay connected with the City of Visalia, sign-up for the weekly “Inside City Hall” newsletter, visit www.visalia.city or connect on social media @CityofVisalia.

THE LAW AT WORK

The Importance of Termination Letters



While it’s never enjoyable, every employer at some point has to terminate an employee.

And when the time comes to let an employee go, it is important to do it the right way. Oftentimes employers get into trouble for how a termination occurred, not why. Drafting a proper termination letter can help avoid such problems.

What should be in a termination letter? Employers may wish to include the following:

1. A notice that the action was a termination (as opposed to resignation, etc.);
2. The date of the termination;
3. The reasons for the termination – avoid being too vague or too specific;
4. The dates and subject matter of prior warnings – this is especially useful when documentary evidence supports prior discipline;
5. Benefits to which the employee is entitled;
6. Circumstances under which the employee had access to a second review or appeal of the termination – here is where an employer may agree to characterize the employee’s departure as a layoff, resignation, or retirement;
7. The employee’s last day of work and what company property



Brett T. Abbott

Gubler & Abbott LLP

must be returned by that date; and

8. The date, time, and place for an “exit interview” – at the exit interview, the employer should notify the employee that a paycheck for final wages, including accrued unused vacation time, will be provided. An exit interview is not required. However, if no interview is done, the termination letter should specify how the final wages will be provided.

A copy of the letter should be given to the employee’s immediate supervisor and a copy should be placed in the employee’s personnel file.

While there are no guarantees that a terminated employee will not seek legal action after a termination, a properly drafted termination letter can go a long way in preventing problems later on.

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 (brett@thecalifornialawyers.com). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinoweth St., Visalia, CA 93291 (www.thecalifornialawyers.com).



2020 Annual Awards

SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATIONS TODAY!

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for the 67th Annual Awards Celebration Categories:

- Large, Medium, Small Business of the Year
- Non-Profit of the Year
- Woman of the Year
- Man of the Year

To nominate an individual or business go to:
www.visaliachamber.org/awards
Deadline for nominations is February 28, 2020

MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

TOP 5

reasons members join the
Visalia Chamber of Commerce

1. Connections with other businesses
2. Business Exposure
3. Want to make a difference
4. Advocacy Efforts
5. Civic Responsibility



VISALIA CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

16 years

Average Membership

Nearly
700 Proud
Chamber
Members

At rates well above
industry standards, our
members say
the Visalia Chamber is:

A Trusted Convener

Problem Solver

Hub of Info

Catalytic Leadership

Innovative & Embrace Change

Embrace Generational Diversity

93% of members say
the Visalia Chamber is
HIGHLY RELEVANT
to their business

75,000

Direct referrals to
Member Webpages in 19

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

Leadership Visalia goes back in time with Education Day Session



The Leadership Visalia cohort took a trip back in time on Friday, Dec. 13th during the Education Day Session.

The day, brilliantly planned by Maria Montes and Araceli De La Torre-Munoz, began at the Visalia Learning Center where we met over refreshments in a festively decorated classroom. We were then fashionably chauffeured in none other than a Visalia School Bus to our first stop of the day, Washington Elementary. We met in a classroom with a small panel including the school's principal, three teachers, the school social worker, and four students. We were given an introduction from principal Liz Serrato, whose passion and love for her students and school was evident with every word she spoke. When asked what makes Washington so special, a student answered, "Because the teachers are friendly and helpful and make learning fun and easy!" If that wasn't enough to melt our hearts, we also learned about the daily reminder given to the students; "Here at Washington, you are loved and we believe in you."

Walking around campus, one can't help but notice the acronym of RISE posted down hallways, classroom walls, and outside of most doors. Standing for Respectful, Integrity, Scholarly, and Empowered, this acts a constant reminder of the character the students are expected to exemplify. With clear expectations, contagiously positive leadership, and such sweet affirmations by a supportive staff, it's easy to understand why, since Serrato's start four years ago, the school has made great strides of improvement both academically and behaviorally.

From Washington, the bright yellow bus took us to Visalia's newest middle school, Ridgeview. Now in its fourth year of operation, the Ridgeview campus accommodates 773 students and a slew of impressive features. We started off in the school's library, which lacked all of the musky, cold nuances of the libraries of memories past and instead had the vibe of a futuristic coffee shop, complete with a lounge area, 3-D Printer, a room of virtual reality headsets designated for Google Expeditions, oh yes, and books. The campus features an open courtyard separating the two multi-story structures that make up the school's classrooms and Gymnasium. Walking through the long halls, the school has an industrial feel with concrete floors and tall ceilings. One of the classrooms we visited is one of the more popular electives that allows students to work with small robots, learning how to build and program them. Our tour of Ridgeview concluded with a panel of staff and students for a Q & A session.

Back aboard the school bus, we headed off to Redwood Highschool where we dined at the Ranger Café. The café is part of an elective class that allows students to learn



the basics of culinary skills and take what they've learned to competition. The student's served a Caesar Salad, followed by Chicken Cordon Blue (with an impressively executed phyllo pastry), steamed rice, and concluded with a decadent slice of chocolate cake. With happy stomachs, we took one last bus ride back to the Visalia Learning Center where we would conclude our day, but not before first learning about the widely controversial PBIS, implemented by the VUSD. PBIS, or Positive Behavioral Intervention Services, is a three-tiered system aimed at improving the behaviour of students by the systematic implementation of practices and effective use of data. Brandon Gridiron, who has led the effort in implementation at VUSD broke down how the system works and the reasons he believes it to be beneficial to the students. He was joined by Ben Dhillon, Director of Emotional Wellness, Gina Fabrizio, District Psychologist, and Ivan Rodriguez, Program Director of Visalia Youth Services who all answered the classes questions around PBIS and VUSD. The day ended with a surprise visit by Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.

With a lot to take away from this great day, one thing is clear; with so much excellence displayed by the leaders of our local schools, I'd say the future of education is looking very bright for Visalia.

Leadership Visalia Announces their 2019-2020 Community Project

By Jacob Daniel,
Gateway Financial Group

The Leadership Visalia cohort is proud to announce their 2019-2020 community group project aimed at recognizing and aiding elementary students' emotional wellness. At the beginning of the year, each participant contributed their ideas of what the group project could be. These ideas ranged from community gardens to building a tiny housing community for the homeless. With dozens of great ideas in the air, the realities of costs, fundraising, and completing it all within eight months left many ideas, like our beloved tiny homes, in theory.

With many potential projects now ruled out, the class was torn between two projects; planting Oak trees, and installing Buddy Benches with VUSD. The cohort was split into four teams that would oversee their respective areas of the project; Fundraising, Logistics, Curriculum, and Public Relations. The different groups gathered as much information as possible regarding the two projects and presented them to one another. After presentations were made and discussions were had, the class was unable to come to a unanimous decision. So, by popular vote, we decided to make the Buddy Bench the centerpiece of our project and the trademark of our year.

The purpose and heart behind the Buddy Bench is to foster friendships on the playground and spread a message of kindness and inclusion to students who might otherwise feel alone by providing a safe place where they can go. A student sitting at the Buddy Bench acts as a silent signal for others around to include and befriend them, encouraging an environment of fellowship and togetherness.

Our mission is to raise funds to provide a bench to as many Visalia elementary schools as possible within our designated fundraising cap of \$20,000.00. The cost of each Buddy Bench is approximately \$1,000, which includes shipping, installation, and a bronzed plaque with the sponsor's name or any name the sponsor would wish to honor or dedicate.

Each Visalia elementary school was sent an application that will be used to help determine which schools will receive a bench. With each bench, comes curriculum that will be given to the teachers and presented to the students. The curriculum aims to ensure that both staff and student body alike are educated in the mission, sociology, heart, and practical implementation of the Buddy Bench.

With nearly half of our year already behind us, the cohort is excited to begin seeing all of our efforts come together to have a lasting impact on future generations!

Join our effort by emailing info@visaliachamber.org or by calling the Visalia Chamber office at (559) 734-5876.

TECHNOLOGY AT WORK

New Security to Ring in 2020

techcare

360

(Needs the Technology at Work header and the techcare 360 logo that was in the last issue and on the Premier sponsor page)

If you remember a few months ago, we wrote an article talking about Ransomware and how devastating it can be to you and your

data. This month we dive deeper into one way to secure your data better with 2-factor authentication.

What is 2-factor authentication?

2-factor authentication is a security technology that makes sure that the person logging into your account is you and only you. It does this by using 2 of these factors: 1) something you know, 2) something you have, or 3) something you are. We will dive more into what this means.

How does it work?

Most of the time you can use the "something you know" as your password you already use for your email or computer. "Something you have" could be your smart phone or your work phone. "Something you are" is something unique to you like your thumbprint or facial recognition. In most cases, you would login as usual to your computer or your email and then approve the login with some form of second form of login like your smart phone.

Why is this necessary?

The 2-factor authentication makes sure that you are the only one logging into your account. This means that even if your password is hacked or stolen, the hacker would also have to have your second form of authentication. This is of course highly unlikely. If you are a business owner, this can give you piece of mind that your employees aren't sharing passwords.

Increased Security but Not Perfect

There are still ways to go around the security of 2-factor authentication if you are clever enough and have years of computer knowledge. However, it increases the complexity and therefore increases the complexity for the hackers as well. This gives you better piece of mind that your data and computer are in your hands only.

How do I start?

Most major email providers have this feature for free if you enable it. Microsoft and Google email both have 2-factor free of charge. However, it can get complicated as most providers have their own individual app. If you have multiple online accounts, this can mean yet another app to install on your phone. If you would like to combine all those services to one and you own a business, companies such as Duo Security allow you to have one app for multiple logins such as your computer and your email. We suggest calling your IT provider to setup a service like this.

We realize that 2-factor authentication sounds like just another form of a password and that is frustrating. It can also save you a lot of time, money and stress in the long run. We hope you have had a wonderful holiday and that you have a wonderful 2020! Welcome to a new decade! Let's make it a secure one.

Tulare County Board of Supervisors District 1 & District 3 CANDIDATE FORUM

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LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

THE EVOLUTION BEGINS 3.26.20

CLIP & SAVE



CALENDAR - JANUARY 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6 City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., City Hall	7	8	9 YPN Meet Up, 5:30 p.m., Barrelhouse Brewing	10	11
12	13	14 District 1 & District 3 Tulare County Board of Supervisors Forum, 6:30 p.m., 210 Café	15 CalSavers Workshop, 10 a.m., Fresno Pacific University Visalia Campus	16	17	18
19	20	21 City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., City Hall	22	23 Ambassador Monthly Breakfast, 8 a.m., Visalia First	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

THANK YOU TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS:

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CIGNA, CSET, E.D.I.S., Lamp Litter Inn, M. Green and Company, Naked Nut Southern California Edison

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SHRM registration

Join the SHRM T/K Legislative Director, Faith Lisle Driscoll, Jan. 7 as she reviews the new laws, regulations and judicial opinions affecting California employers this year. She will discuss policies, practices and recommended handbook changes to ensure compliance with the laws that take effect in 2020.

These include:

- Banned no-rehire clauses in settlement agreements (AB 749)
- No arbitration agreements re FEHA claims (AB 51)
- FEHA statute of limitations extended to 4 years (AB 9)
- Expanded lactation accommodation requirements (SB 142)
- New protection does hair styles such as braids, locks and twists (SB 188)
- Employee classification (AB 5) A

Attendees will be provided with practical tips for applying the changes in the workplace and communicating them through employee handbook revisions. Bring your notepad and questions to get the most out of this session

Jan. 7, 2019

Registration: 8:30 a.m.

Presentation: 9 a.m. to Noon

Visalia Marriott at the Convention Center

For questions, please contact Shelly Little: president@shrmtularekings.org



You Might Not Catch The Flu, But You Could Catch a Rate Hike

By Stacy Morris, CEO, Employer Driven Insurance Services, Inc.

It's that time of year when it seems as though everybody around you is sneezing and sniffing and just plain miserable. It seems the only way to avoid becoming a flu victim yourself is by overdosing on Vitamin C, Zinc and any other remedy people throw at you, or taking the easy path...the flu shot.

After all, every place we go advertises free or "no cost" flu shots, so why not?

Coming from somebody in the health insurance industry, I can assure you that free is never really free. In fact, the flu shot is merely one example of a larger problem we face - the lack of transparency in our healthcare system.

When the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) was passed in 2010, one of the most celebrated aspects amongst society were the services which would be covered at no charge to insured patients. This included the flu shot since it is on the list of federally recommended vaccines. Sure, there may be insurance stipulations such as a limited set of locations, or specific facilities to have your insurer cover the cost, but if the rules are followed, the insurer must cover the cost in full.

As a patient with insurance, I can walk into any of these facilities, get my free flu shot, walk out and go about my day. However, as somebody in the insurance industry I also get to see the backend of the transaction and it certainly raises concern. There is a wide discrepancy for what insurers pay for the same flu shot. This is a large part of what is wrong with America's health system.

Kaiser Health News did a recent study across insurers where it found dramatic differences among the costs for its own staff. At its Sacramento facility, Kaiser paid \$85, and it paid a little more than half of that at a clinic in Long Beach. Meanwhile, a drugstore in Washington, D.C., was paid only \$32 for the same flu shot.

Now, one could argue that a flu shot, even in the most expensive range, is still a low cost item. I would agree. However, for the tens of millions of Americans who get vaccinated each year, a price discrepancy of \$50 for each person adds up quickly.

I will always expect to see a variation in price based on demographics, quality ratings, metrics, volume and other factors. However, these things don't come into play with a service such as the flu shot. There are many different negotiation factors which lead to the acceptable price between the provider and health payor. As a member, this information is not openly available to us. If it were, we could be a more educated consumer and select the facility which really does charge less.

The educated consumer has more control than he or she may believe. It is the consumer who chooses which covered facility to use, and the insurance company will be obligated to pay the agreed upon rate on the backend. If consumers widespread chose the facility with the best pricing, the insurance company would be put in a position to lower its rates (or refund the excessive profit to its members). On the other hand, if the facilities had to publish what they charged for services, thus leading to more educated decision making on the consumers behalf, the more expensive facilities would see less utilization. If that facility wanted to stay relevant in today's market, it too would have to lower its pricing to bring business back.

This is not a cure all for today's insurance issues, but it would certainly start us in the right direction.

Reaching the top is no accident

It takes hard work, planning and a little direction from someone who knows the way. Don't fail to plan. Plan to succeed.



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