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# Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **JUNE 10:**  
Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO Facebook Live  
Time: 8 a.m.
- **JUNE 24:**  
Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO Facebook Live  
Time: 8 a.m.
- **JUNE 25:**  
Ambassador Monthly Breakfast-TENATIVE  
Time: 8 a.m.  
Location: Visalia First



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- **Discover Panama: The Land Between Seas:**  
Feb. 4-12, 2021
- **Irish Discovery:**  
March 16-23, 2021
- **Heritage of America:**  
April 11-19, 2021
- **Culinary Italy/13 Day Tour:**  
April 20-May 3, 2021
- **London & Paris Discovery:**  
Oct. 19-27, 2021

Travel provided by:  
Collette Vacations-CST#:2006766-20  
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## County begins economic recovery

Tulare County takes first step toward taking the local business community off life support from medically induced coma

**Reggie Ellis**  
President and Publisher  
The Sun-Gazette



Many businesses throughout California reopened their doors last Friday, but Staci Welch was ahead of the game. The owner of Exeter Coffee Company decided to reopen her shop last Monday, May 4 and her goal was to restore hope to her local community.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Welch shut down her business six weeks ago. At the time, there was much uncertainty regarding COVID-19. Although she deems herself as a major germaphobe, the decision to close the shop was still a tough one to make.

"I didn't want to be the reason for someone to leave their home," Welch said.

Keeping the shop closed grew more difficult as time went on. She would ride her bike around town and people would constantly ask when she is going to reopen.

"I was missing the community that we built here [at the coffee shop]... the everyday people that came in often and became more than customers," Welch said.

Thankfully, the coffee shop owner was able to utilize resources from the federal government that were meant to aid small business owners during the pandemic. She received a grant and was able to take advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). That measure was included in the CARES Act, which was signed into law on March 27. The PPP helped Welch to keep her employees on payroll instead of having them join the more than 16,000 people in Tulare County who have applied for unemployment in the last eight weeks.

Since she was able to keep her same employees, Welch had discussions with her team about reopening Exeter Coffee Company. She felt the community needed a bit of normalcy and her shop was a big part of the routine for so many people. By reopening her doors, her goal is to restore optimism for the future. While the statewide shelter-in-place orders are still being enforced, the dining area of Exeter Coffee Company is still closed. They are only accepting online orders at ExeterCoffeeCo.com and they have adjusted their hours to Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

"It's very rewarding for everybody to be so happy," she said. "I think it gives people a little bit of hope that things are coming back [to normal]."

### NEXT LEVEL JOBS

This second level of stage 2 will only be allowed if the County medical officer can attest that the entire county has met all of the new five-step criteria outlined by the California Department of Public Health. These include:

■ **Epidemiology stability** – No more than 1 case per 10,000 people in the last 14 days; No COVID-19 death in the past 14 days.

■ **Case investigation/contact tracing** – Minimum of 15 contact tracers per 100,000 people; Temporary housing for at least 15% of the homeless.

■ **Testing capacity** – Minimum daily testing of 1.5 per 1,000 residents.

■ **Hospital capacity** – County or regional capacity to accommodate a minimum surge of 35%; Hospital facilities must have a robust plan to protect hospital workforce.

■ **Protecting vulnerable populations** – Skilled nursing facilities must have more than 14-day supply of PPE on hand for staff with ongoing procurement from non-state supply chains.

Counties must create and submit a readiness plan, which



the state will make publicly available. In his weekly pandemic update, Tulare County HHS director Tim Lutz told the Board of Supervisors that the County had a "theoretical capacity" to test 450 people per day at its own labs but short of 720 daily tests needed to meet the requirement. He did say that commercial labs were included in the testing capacity but the county still needed to verify how many tests they were doing each day and not just the number of positives. Tulare County has also had more than 48 cases in the last two weeks and had 16 deaths in the last two weeks. There was discussion on the board about lobbying for the State to allow counties to "factor out" skilled nursing homes from their equation, something Kern County has already requested.

By this time next week, Lutz said Tulare County will have the capacity to house 14.7 percent of its homeless, just shy of the 15 percent benchmark. The county has already met the goal for surge capacity at local hospitals, and has exceeded it. Tulare County needs 38 hospital beds and has 85 available. For ICUs, the county needs just seven and has 18 beds available.

Another key piece of reopening the economy is the county's ability to determine who someone infected with virus has come in contact with, a process known as contact tracing, to notify others of possible infection, test them, and then start the process over. Contact tracing enables the state to suppress the spread of the virus to avoid outbreaks and allows us to maintain our health care capacity and confidently modify the stay at home order. To work toward these goals, the Governor announced a partnership with the University of California, San Francisco and University of California, Los Angeles to immediately begin training workers for a landmark contact tracing program that will help contain the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic while the state looks to modify the stay at home order. The partnership will include a virtual training academy for contact tracers. The first 20-hour training will begin

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### A new frontier

I've never been a fan of westerns but recently I found my oldest son watching one. I asked what he liked about the genre. For him westerns had a clear hero, a set of overarching guiding principles, and a simple 'handle it' approach he liked. He mused "wouldn't real life be better like that?"

Life in January verse life in June almost seems unrecognizable. We have endured untold difficulties. I believe the real effect of this will not be seen and felt for years. Not only in those directly affected by a loved one dying of COVID but from a shift in how we do just about everything. I worry deeply about our children and the long-term ways they will process our world, fear, germs, and interact with friends. I worry about our seniors. Real human interaction is critical to their comfort, care, and health. I worry about a growing divide between those that think their "side" is right and are unwilling to listen and care for others with a view different than theirs. But all hope is not lost.

We are on the dawn of a new frontier. As we work to figure out what is "next" for our families, businesses, and communities, we get to be pioneers forging a new path. Yes, that is right, get to be. We chose our response. We decide on how to write our comeback.

Business has always needed to be nimble and responsive to market trends. Sure, lately many of us were lulled into a slumber of success. What had always worked, kept working, and we were happy. Well, what worked in January may not work in June.



**Gail Zurek**  
Visalia Chamber  
President & CEO

And that is okay. We are nimble. We will respond. I'm proud of businesses that are fighting to adapt, listen to customers, and find ways to strengthen their place in our marketplace. It isn't easy and we certainly know success isn't quick.

Your chamber is nimble and responsive too. Your Chamber of January looks different than your Chamber in June. We got our fight back. Our mission has a laser focus. We have been lulled out of our slumber and have fought for you in new and important ways. From making sure our businesses were included in federal aid, to countless how-to and best practices workshops, and lots of conversations with members about best practices, realignment strategies, and navigating this new space, we serve as a valuable resource. It certainly has not been easy but new members join referencing our hard work. Renewing members, despite facing hardships, send in their dues wanting us to keep at it. To all members, thank you. You give meaning to our work. We so value you and helping us prove that membership is so much more than a sticker.

Perhaps as we tackle this new frontier, we take a lesson from the old westerns. Let us use a clear set of guidelines (The Customer is Always Right, Service is King, Quality over Quantity, Constantly Innovating, Never Settling) to help steer us. We get back to business adopting a - we can "handle this" pioneer approach. If anyone can be successful, Visalia Chamber Members can be.

Visalia Chamber of Commerce  
222 N. Garden St., Suite 300  
Visalia, CA 93291  
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## VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MISSION ICONS



Catalyst for Change



Community Convener



Champion for Business



**BOARD SPOTLIGHT**

**Name:** Matthew Ainley  
**Company:** 4Creeks / 4CG Construction  
**Title:** Principal Engineer (4Creeks), President (4CG Construction)

**Why do you serve on the Chamber Board of Directors?**

To help be a part of leading our local businesses forward in innovation, customer service, community involvement, and stewardship of resources.

**What has the Chamber done in the last 12 months that has helped your business?**

The Chamber has provided exposure for our companies, helping to building our reputation and market standing.

**What's your favorite family tradition?**

Thanksgiving Dinner or Easter at the Cattle Ranch in Elderswood.

**Does your family have a "motto" – spoken or unspoken?**

"For my country often, for my King always..." (that's the old school one)

**What was your first job?**

Delivering pizza for Me-n-Eds on Ben Maddox Way

**About this publication ...**

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**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.

**Community Investor Member:**

- SAVE MART SUPERMARKETS

**Business Connector Members:**

- TRAIN LIKE A GIRL STUDIO

**Small Business Members:**

- ELAINE RIDER/STATE FARM INSURANCE AGENCY
- MY FATHERS HOUSE VISALIA INC

- PASADENA PRIVATE WEALTH

**Renewing**

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

**Community Investor Member:**

- Gateway Financial Planning Group
- Gropetti Automotive\*

**Business Builder Members:**

- Pacific Southwest Container\*
- Voltage Multipliers, Inc.\*

**Business Connector Members:**

- Dan Freitas Electric, Inc.\*
- Elite Medical - RTO Systems Incorporated\*
- La Quinta Inn\*
- Lawrence Tractor Company
- Mitchell Insurance Services
- R-N Market
- Roller Towne
- Serpa Packaging Solutions\*
- ServiceMaster by Benevento\*
- Suncrest Bank
- World Wide Sires

**Small Business Members:**

- American Ambulance of Visalia\*
- Armstrong Property Management\*
- BJ Perch Construction Inc.
- Brewbakers
- Bryson Cancer Care, Inc.
- Gerald M. Schneider, D.D.S.
- Farm Credit West\*
- Forcum/Mackey Construction\*
- Frank's Appliance Sales & Service\*

- Houk & Hornburg Inc.
- J.R. Nelson's Roofing, Inc.
- Kentucky Fried Chicken - Noble
- McAuliff & Wood Orthodontic Specialists
- Pine, Pedroncelli & Aguilar, Inc.
- Security Self-Storage\*
- Sequoia Foot Care Group
- ServiceMaster by Hellstern
- Sherwood Law Offices \*
- SMS Property
- The Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria
- Valley Industrial & Family Medical Group
- Visalia Family Practice Medical Group \*
- Visalia Plumbing\*
- Vollmer, Daniel, Gaebe & Grove, CPAs\*
- Zeeb Commercial Real Estate\*
- Business Builder Non-Profit Member:**
- Crescent Valley Public Charter\*
- Small Business Nonprofit Members:**
- Central California Blood Center\*
- The Creative Center\*
- Family Services of Tulare County\*
- Self-Help Enterprises
- Soroptimist International Of Visalia\*

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

**AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT**

**Name:** Kiley Arce  
**Company:** Tulare Outlets  
**Title:** Marketing & Special Events Manager

**How has the Chamber and the Ambassador Program helped you or your business to grow?**

Being part of the Chamber's Ambassador Program is not only rewarding for my organization, but for my personal development and growth as well. Due to this Program, I have made connections with like-minded individuals, learned so much about local organizations, experienced professional development and so much more. It has broadened my view of our community and I am very grateful for the opportunity to represent Tulare Outlets in such a fun way.

**Why is it important to employees to get involved in the Visalia Chamber programs and events?**

Just as it takes stepping out of your comfort zone to succeed in other aspects of your life, the same can be said about your Chamber membership. Though it might be a cliché, the more



you give, the more you receive and I believe that the more involved you are, the more you attend, the more you get to know others, all equates to how much your membership will impact your life and business. Plus, the

programs and events are always a good time so why not get involved?

**The best part of working for your company is?**

Growing up in Porterville, I always did my back to school shopping at Tulare Outlets. Now, I help create experiences for all shoppers whether they're visiting for the first time in years or they're little ones who just visit to make a wish in our fountains. It is so rewarding to work at a place where I can focus my mindset on growth and involvement such as the Ambassador team. At the Outlets, it is all about our shoppers and I love building on the experience we are creating for them every day.

**Where is your favorite place to go in Visalia with friends and family?**

It's so hard to pick just one! If I had to choose I'd say my favorite place to go with friends and family would be BarrelHouse in downtown Visalia, especially nights when they have yummy taco trucks and Young Professional Network meetups.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Wednesday, May 6 with the goal of training 20,000 individuals in two months.

Lutz said the county has 35 staff members trained for contact tracing, or 7.3 staff per 100,000, about half of what is needed. Staff reported that they are working with Visalia Unified School District to employ school nurses to boost their numbers. Supervisor Kuyler Crocker suggested staff should reach out to the Tulare County Office of Education and larger school districts that employ their own nurses.

The biggest hurdle may be ensuring that local nursing homes have a 14-day supply of PPE. Lutz said only 16 nursing homes had responded to the county's request for information and none of them met the criteria. He also noted that the State, not the County, licenses and regulates these facilities, leaving his staff without the necessary leverage to ensure compliance.

**SMALL TOWN WORK**

Just around the corner from Exeter Coffee Co. sits The Grove, an antique store that will soon take up half a block of the city's main street. Owner Dan Weiss says he reopened on May 1 out of necessity. In addition to losing income at the business, he was denied unemployment, passed over for the Paycheck Protection Program and left out of the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan.



"I had no income at all," he said.

It was especially difficult after he invested much of his savings into renovating a vacant building next door in a joint venture with his fiancé Susan Goode. The couple took over the prime real estate at the northeast corner of Pine and E streets with plans to open the new antique shop last month.

"It's put quite a damper on our plans," Weiss said. "I have not been happy with the way the government has handled everything. There's too much government taking over too many things."

Luckily, Weiss said, his shop is located in Exeter, where the city administration and police department have been extremely supportive of small businesses. He said there has some been some increased interest since the Governor announced the reopening of some industries but most of his businesses will probably remain online until more downtown businesses reopen.

"We've always sold our items online but it's been a lot more recently," Weiss said. "We won't see things back to normal until there

is more foot traffic in downtown, but I'm not sure how many other businesses will be left."

Sandy Blankenship, executive director of the Exeter Chamber of Commerce, said her office has been getting weekly updates from city administration about changes during the stay-at-home order and more recently from the police chief. She said those open dialogues allowed her office to offer guidance to businesses that they can reopen but should consult with human resource professionals, attorneys or county and state officials.

"Some of these shops are really struggling and we all want them to back to business," Blankenship said. "Local authorities aren't going to have a problem with it but they may be putting a state license at risk."

Blankenship estimates that about two-thirds of her membership are still closed or only doing business online, including the chamber office, but there is a newfound optimism that more businesses will be able to open soon. The chamber has even decided to press forward with its plans for its annual Fall Festival community celebration in October.

"We will hope for the best and prepare for the worst," she said.

**SMALL BIZ IN A BIG TOWN**

Steve Nelsen, executive director of Downtown Visalians, said many of his members held soft openings last week on Thursday and Friday, after the County released its guidance on the Governor's amended order. He said many businesses are glad to be open but still sore from rules that were applied inequitably between corporate retail chains, which were allowed to stay open because they also sold groceries, and small businesses forced to close in a sweeping order void of nuance.

"Am I safer in a big box store with 100 people and 25 employees or a smaller store with just two people, an employee and a customer?," Nelsen has repeatedly said. "I think we all know the answer, but that's not what happened."

The City of Visalia took a more vocal stance on businesses reopening before last week. A month earlier, the city announced on its website that it "may take action against" businesses if they did not comply with the Governor's order. Nelsen, who is also the vice mayor of Visalia, reminded residents at May 7 City Council meeting that the city has not issued any fines or citations.

"Since Day One we have said we will follow Governor's requirements and the Health Department's requirements," Nelsen said at the meeting. "What we have asked businesses to do is follow the Governor's executive orders."

Lori Heeszeel had just taken ownership of Sol Bol restaurant in downtown when the pandemic hit. She was one of three restaurants downtown to reopen after hearing of the Governor's new rules on May 4 hoping there would be more people interested in ordering out.

"I feel like there has been more people," she said. "We had our first repeat customers over the weekend."

Sarah Ashoori, vice president of Ashoori & Co. Jewelers, opened her store on Mooney Boulevard a week before the new orders. She said both she and her husband have health conditions that make them vulnerable to the virus but they were willing to open to put their employees back to work by following social distancing



recommendations for a few people working in a 3,200-square foot store.

"You can make our community shine or die," she told the Council at its May 4 meeting. "Small business in our community are your backbone and they are the ones who support you."

On Thursday, May 7, the Visalia Chamber of Commerce sent its members a "Re-Opening Business Resource Kit." In its kit, the Chamber recommends establishing a plan that includes clear objectives, policies and safety protocols, including a plan to advertise and promote your reopening, as well as a contingency plan if a second wave of the outbreak occurs and businesses are forced to rethink their business model again. Businesses should consider amending hours of operation and staff hours, train employees on new protocols and screening employees and customers by taking their temperature or to check for symptoms of the virus.

"We wanted to provide something to help our members think through the Governor's announcement," Visalia Chamber CEO Gail Zurek said. "This is not intended to take the place of County or State guidelines."

The resource also includes local companies where business owners can purchase PPE, have signs or new documents printed, plumbers, HVAC and electricians to ensure things are working properly after being vacant for three months, IT support, custodial services, etc.

For industry specific recommendations, California's Resilience Roadmap (covid19.ca.gov/roadmap) includes guidelines for 17 different sectors of the economy including agriculture and livestock, auto dealerships, communications, construction, delivery services, food packing, hotels and lodging, logistics and warehousing, office workspaces, real estate and retail. The State is recommending that once plans are completed they should be "posted in the workplace to show your customers and your employees that you've reduced the risk and are open for business."

"Our intent is to keep everyone as safe as possible," Zurek said. "We encourage businesses to seek advice from the list of resources as the rules can be a moving target when the County is making decisions on daily numbers."

**World Wide Sires** recently announced their new area sales director. Laura Gordon will serve as a new area director of marketing where she will be responsible for sales and marketing in several countries in Europe.

**Visalia Rawhide** partnered with Bitwise Industries Take Care program to deliver grocery essentials to those at greater risk of infection within our communities.

Congratulations **The Painted Table** who was awarded 2nd place in the 2020 People's Choice Awards! During COVID-19, they partnered to feed farm laborers with World Central Kitchen as part of the Chefs For America Initiative.

**Bank of the Sierra** announced they have helped hundreds of its small business customers obtain approval to receive a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan through Thursday, April 30.

We love our #LoyaltoLocal members who have been working hard to support one another!

**Karen Gross/State Farm Insurance** partnered with fellow State Farm Agents, Nate Wingert, **Elaine Rider, Patrick Salazar,** and Brad Board to provide lunches to local healthcare workers at **Kaweah Delta.**

**Visalia Mall's Blaze Pizza** delivered pizza to Kaweah Delta staff.

**United Signs International**



showed their support for local businesses with free signs.

**Bank of America** announced their commitment of \$100 million in support of communities around the world impacted by COVID-19, including the Visalia Market. Bank of America has so far directed \$323,500 in grant funds to 12 local nonprofits, including:

**Visalia Emergency Aid Council, Family Services of Tulare County, FoodLink of Tulare County, Valley Children's Hospital, Visalia Rescue Mission** and Central California Food Bank.

**Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties'** was awarded a \$10,000 grant by **Wells Fargo** to help with COVID-19 relief.

**Assistance League of Visalia** was awarded a \$1,750 grant by **United Way of Tulare County** to assist with the organization's five philanthropies: Operational School Bell, The Kids on the Block, Le Bag, Fifty Sense and Rainbow Reading.

**Patrick L. Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency** matched \$500 in community donations to **Family Services of Tulare County Rape Crisis Center** for Denim Day.

**Total Nutrition** assisted local families with dinner

from **Chapala Grill, El Rosal Restaurant, Quesadilla Gorilla, The Salad Shop,** and more!

**Bank of the Sierra** announced \$33,500 was given to 13 nonprofits in the Central Valley during the first quarter, including **Assistance League of Visalia and Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation.**

**ServiceMaster by Benevento** delivered face shields to Kaiser Permanente nurses.

Congratulations to **College of the Sequoias'** Training Resource Center Director, **Jorge Zegarra!** He was awarded the California Community Colleges Star Performer award for Innovation at the California Community Colleges Contract Education 2020 Summit. This award is presented to the contract education program that is making exceptional contributions to the field of workplace education and training.

**Arts Visalia** will start the Fourth of July weekend with a First Friday exhibition featuring artists **Matthew Rangel** and **Paul Buxman.** In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to view the exhibit virtually.

Central Valley United Way was gifted \$6.6 Million by a generous donor to support COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Programs for Central Valley United Way chapters, including **United Way of Tulare County.**



## DISTRICT ATTORNEY OFFICE

# District Attorney's Office faces tough challenges

By Tim Ward, Tulare County District Attorney

The Office of the District Attorney faces many of the same challenges our Visalia businesses face, navigating a journey in very uncertain waters, with ever changing rules and guidelines. The State Judicial Council issued another emergency order extending the current operating procedures until at least June 9, 2020. While on the surface this may look like a hopeful marker, other State provisions extend 90 days after June 9th, making it difficult for me to update you with 100 percent certainty on where our justice system stands at this moment in time.

One of the most troubling byproducts of these regulations will be the State-led directive to release inmates under some perverse theory of "public safety." Almost as soon as COVID-19 appeared in our communities so did a plan to release inmates. While it started as a review of inmates with little time remaining on their sentences, it quickly ramped up to a dedicated courtroom to hear cases only related to inmate release. Even inmates, who had previously been determined to otherwise be a public safety risk, were now granted release over our prosecutor's objections based upon a perceived threat to their health.

In addition to releasing inmates, was the equally



quick jump to eliminate the requirement of cash required for bail on most crimes. This resulted in numerous inmates being released (at last count the total was well over 100 inmates released over prosecutor's objection) but moving forward it will mean that most arrests by law enforcement in our communities will not result in a suspect remaining in custody.

The State judicial orders represent a blanket response to a situation that has not materialized here in Tulare County. Sheriff Mike Boudreaux has done a stellar job establishing protocols in jails to deal with COVID-19. As of the time of this writing, our jails have not reported a single infection. California's blanket orders simply defy what is actually happening here.

Just as the Judicial Council's broad sweeping orders do not reflect the authentic situation in Tulare County jails, one could compare the Governor's orders relating

to shelter in place, defining essential businesses, and the impact to our local economic picture as lacking the same fundamental pillar; namely the ability for local governance.

In November, voters will go to the polls (or rather their mailboxes after Governor Newsom's recent executive order on mail-in ballots) and vote on a number of offices and propositions. One of those propositions will be to make \$0 bail, similar to what is currently implemented, the law of the land in California. Another proposition deals with increasing punishment for retail theft. Small businesses throughout the state cannot afford either of those now and certainly cannot afford permanently factoring in the cost of crime while trying to survive one of the most disastrous economic events of the last 100 years. Until we have that opportunity, stay strong, stay vigilant, and we will emerge from these challenging times together.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Name: Rob Smith and Tommy Smith  
Company: Smith Promotions  
Title: Owner

We are a family owned and operated apparel decorating business. We specialize in screen printing and embroidery. We (Rob and Tommy, brothers) started in our garage in 2008. In 2009, after a bit of success, we were able to rent half of a shop and hire a couple of employees. In 2012 we moved to our own space off East Main, invested in more equipment, and hired some more help. As we continued to grow, we eventually purchased a small shop on the west side of town to house screen printing, and kept the shop off E. Main for embroidery. In August of 2019 we completed the build of our current location, 10013 W. Legacy, and have everything consolidated under one roof. A dream realized.

### News to Share?

Our new location! We feel like we've worked out the kinks, streamlined the processes, and our hope is that our customer service is better than ever. Tell us something interesting about your business or product(s).

All production is done in house. From graphic design to the final stage of production. This gives us an edge over our competitors that send



their work out. Often, we have a quicker turnaround time and prices you can't beat.

### How does your company get involved in the local community?

This community is our jam. We consistently partner with local schools, churches, and colleges for fundraisers. We work with Visalia and many surrounding cities on events. Rob is a board member on Visalia Emergency Aid Council. Both Rob and Tommy have served their church and children's schools.

In the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, Smith Promotions recently partnered with Cavale Creative on a fundraiser for Kaweah Delta's foundation. Our goal is to help the community anywhere we see a need.

### The best part of working for your company is?

We are firm believers in giving our employees

flexibility. We appreciate their dedication to SP, but also understand when there is a need that pulls them a different direction.

### How has the Chamber and/or the Ambassador Program helped you and/or your business?

The Chamber has been one of our biggest cheerleaders. They helped us with a ribbon cutting at our Grand Opening and have continued to support us along the way, especially during these wild times. The Chamber has helped us market our business, keep us informed about all things COVID, and been a great general support.

### Top thing you wish Visalia knew about your business?

You don't have to turn to the internet for your custom shirt or hat order. We are here, in Visalia, with our door open and ready to help.

*Ask Jena*

WHERE CAN I FIND THE LATEST UPDATES FOR MY BUSINESS DURING COVID-19? We have a COVID-19 Updates webpage that includes updates from the local, state and federal level, in addition to a list of members who are open or temporarily closed. Visit [visaliachamber.org/updates](http://visaliachamber.org/updates).

I MISSED YOUR LATEST WEBINAR. HOW CAN I VIEW IT? As a member, you have access to recorded webinars! Login into your Member Portal to view. Can't remember your login? Don't worry, contact me today!

HOW DO I POST JOB TO THE CHAMBER'S JOB BOARD? Through your Member Portal you can post jobs to our Job Board! Need help, contact me today.

HOW DO I SUBSCRIBE TO THE CHAMBER'S PUBLICATIONS? As a member, you can subscribe to our publications, including our Member to Member E-News, Business E-News, Business Update Newsletter, Business Resources and more! Contact me today to be added.

Have a questions about the Chamber? Send me a message: [Jena@visaliachamber.org](mailto:Jena@visaliachamber.org)

FACEBOOK LIVE

# COFFEE WITH THE CEO

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10TH & 24TH  
8:00-9:00AM

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

# Leadership Visalia Day Session



The Leadership Visalia Cohort day session topic for the month of May was Community Social Services. Due to current stay at home orders, day session facilitators, Jessica Trujillo and Brenda Daddino, decided to take the class through a day of learning via video conferencing.

As part of the day's agenda and focus on Community Social Services, activities were conducted via video conferencing and included presentations from local leaders representing entities such as the Visalia Police Departments Hope Team, Family Services, Visalia Rescue Mission, as well as a discussion panel that included Turning Point, Tulare Youth Services Bureau, and Able Industries.

To start the day, Sergeant Brent Miller from the HOPE Team provided an overview of services and history of the Hope Team. The Hope team includes 7 individuals and 1 supervisor focused on serving local transient population. Currently, the team is focused on providing services to individuals that live along the St. John's River. Daily routines include ongoing outreach to assess the needs of homeless individuals. Sergeant Miller reported that the current situation with COVID-19 has not necessarily changed their practices in regard to the use of protective equipment amongst the team. The use of protective equipment has been a regular practice as the population that they work with generally present with illness such as Hepatitis, lung diseases, and others. Sergeant Miller highlighted that the team is responding to the current situation with COVID-19 by placing individuals in a hotel in event of an outbreak. In addition, washing stations, dumpsters, and porta-potties have also been deployed to homeless area hot spots.

The second speaker of the day was Caitly Meader, CEO of Family Services. Mrs. Meader provided an overview of services offered by Family Services to Tulare County residents. Services include parenting education programs, supervised visitation, supportive housing, legal services, therapeutic services, including the operation of a domestic violence shelter, a rape crisis center, and a family center located at Goshen Elementary School. The Mission of Family Services is to help children, adults, and families throughout Tulare County heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships.

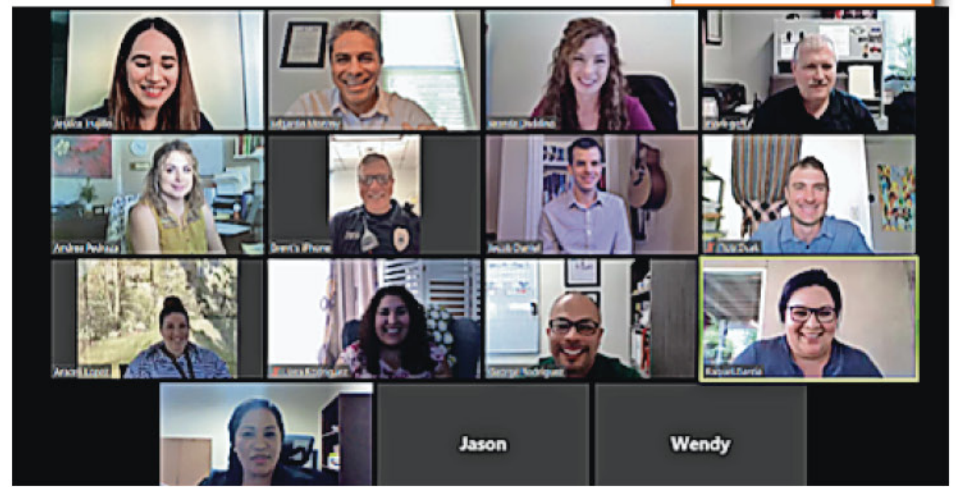
Mrs. Meader was able to provide an overview of her agencies response to COVID-19 and highlight strategic action steps that Family Services has taken to continue to provide quality services to clients throughout Tulare County. A major change for Family Services in their service delivery model includes the addition and use of video conferencing equipment and

platforms such as Zoom Conferencing. Some of the challenges under COVID-19 include the cancellation of fundraising events such as the Guest Chef Series, as well as some reduction in funding. Mrs. Meader shared that future plans for Family Services include the continued to use of platforms such as Zoom as well as in-person services.

The third presenter of the day was Betsy Leon from the Visalia Rescue Mission (VRM). Mrs. Leon provided the class with an overview of services that include 315+ meals served daily, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. VRM volunteers help to serve meals on a daily basis and currently, meals are provided to-go. Due to the current situation with COVID-19 VRM programs have scaled back their requirements in number of hours and they are currently not taking on new clients. In addition, VRM's retail store is operating mainly via online sales through their website and offers curb-side pickup and shipment delivery. Not being able to keep their doors open presents a major financial challenge. Mrs. Leon shared that VRM has been blessed to see an outpouring of support from local community organizations and have received several major donations that help during these financially uncertain times.

The day session concluded with a panel of representatives from Turning Point (TP), Tulare Youth Service Bureau (TYSB), and Able Industries Inc. Representatives from each organization were able to provide an overview of services offered through their organization as well as provide insight into their organizations response to COVID-19 and the impact on service delivery. Ivan Rodriguez (TP) and April Dodd (TYSB) shared that their organizations have both transitioned to offering mental health services primarily via zoom and other video conferencing platforms during this time. Both organizations are also working to ensure that their staff is supported during these challenging time. Some concerns shared during panel discussion included impact on local communities due to COVID-19. For example, a possible increase in anxiety amongst school aged children as routines have suddenly shifted and families face uncertainties with employment, housing, and food security.

Seth Benevento, Executive Director for Able Industries Inc., reported that they are closely monitoring developments with COVID-19. They have been in contact with state and local health agencies as well as Central Valley Regional Center and the Department of Developmental service and are following the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization and are taking proactive steps to mitigate the transmission of the disease. Mr. Benevento reported that



temporary suspension of operations for their Life Skills Learning Center facility through April 30, 2020. All other programs including the Work Activity Program, Community Work Crews and Competitive Integrated Employment Department will continue to operate as normal.

The May Day session was a success and will go down in history as the first ever day session exclusively hosted online via zoom. The Leadership Visalia class had the opportunity to learn about services that some of the most vulnerable communities

within Tulare County depend on for daily services. Representatives from each organization touched on some of the challenges and opportunities that their respective organizations are facing as a result of the current situation with COVID-19. Now more than ever, it is important for our communities to support one another so that those individuals and families with limited resources have access to services provided by each of the organizations represented during this day session.

CITY UPDATE

## Thanking the Front Line Workers



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, and as each day brings new opportunity, it also can bring challenges. Ultimately, it's important that we all continue to work together to flatten the curve and abide by the Governor's Executive Order and the County of Tulare Public Health Officer's Order.

While many things still may be uncertain in these times, one abiding truth is that we are stronger together. At the foundation of our community are our front line workers, those in essential roles who have worked diligently and selflessly to serve our city. Many times these essential workers remain behind the scenes, but we'd like to take a moment to thank those who

serve day in and day out. The food service workers, from those planting and tending all the way to those preparing and delivering, who are keeping our mind and bodies fueled. The transportation team, our Visalia Transit drivers and all those who make it possible for citizens to get to their essential appointments and trips. The janitorial staff of businesses, health care centers, and our hospital, many times working around the clock to help keeps things running smoothly. Our own Public Works staff members, many of whom work to keep our sewer lines clear and functioning and keep our Waste Water Reclamation Facility running.

This is only a small snapshot of those who are working on the front lines of this pandemic. But we celebrate the hard work and commitment of all of the individuals who hold these jobs, and many more, that keep our community running, often behind the scenes.

In the face of COVID-19 they have remained an integral part of our city and we are grateful to each and every one of them.

For the latest updates and news from the City of Visalia, visit [www.visalia.city](http://www.visalia.city) or visit them on social media @CityofVisalia.

THE LAW AT WORK

## Cover-19 prevention plans



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

As each day under quarantine passes, Californians wonder when life will get back to normal? When will businesses open? When can people get back to work? One of the challenges associated with this pandemic is that no one really knows how to answer these questions. However, hope remains that some restrictions will soon ease, and businesses will get back to work. Yet when work does resume, many things will have to be done differently. As such, federal, state and local governments have stressed the importance of a COVID-19 prevention plan. Key elements of such a plan are outlined below.

Employers should establish a written, worksite-specific COVID-19 prevention plan at every office location. Such a plan should include a comprehensive risk assessment of all work areas. The plan should also designate a person at each office workspace to implement the plan. Employers must take seriously the need to train employees and employee representatives about the plan. The office workspace should be regularly evaluated for compliance with the plan and deficiencies should be promptly corrected.

Further, employers must identify contact information for the local health department where the facility is located for communicating information about COVID-19 outbreaks among employees.

If employees contract the virus, employers

should investigate the illness and determine if any work-related factors could have contributed to risk of infection, updating the plan as needed to prevent further cases. Employers should also identify close contacts (within six feet for 10 minutes or more) of an infected employee and take steps to isolate COVID-19 positive employee(s) and close contacts.

Finally, employers should provide training to employees about the following:

- Self-screening at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks;
- The importance of staying home from work if employees have exhibited certain symptoms (frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat) or if they or someone they live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Seeking medical attention if symptoms become severe;
- The importance of frequent handwashing;
- The importance of physical distancing;
- The proper use of face coverings.

While implementing these plans and enforcing these guidelines is not easy, they are a necessary part of "opening up" our economy.

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](mailto: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](http://www.thecalifornialawyers.com)).



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## VISALIA SCHOOL DISTRICT Planning for August 2020



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

On March 13, 2020, we closed our schools to help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff during the coronavirus pandemic.

Although we remained physically closed until the end of the school year, learning at home continued. Our dedicated staff continued to provide instruction, “grab-n-go” meals, a CARE line for social and emotional health, and a call center, while developing alternative high school commencement and eighth grade promotion ceremonies.

Since we do not know what the spread of COVID-19 will look like over the course of the next few months, we are planning for various scenarios for the 2020-2021 school year. Governor Newsom and



experts have indicated that we need to be flexible in our planning and be prepared to “toggle” back and forth between “at-home” learning and traditional classroom learning.

In April, the VUSD Board of Trustees approved a plan for the District to install antennas throughout the city, so we can become an Internet service provider for our families. Our plan is to ensure that all students have internet access in their homes, so we can provide more robust distance learning for all of our students.

As we do this, we will transition to more on-line programming.

Although VUSD owns enough Chromebooks for all students, the devices were not equipped to checkout. We are in the process of cataloging all of our computers so they can be checked out to students using a barcode scanner, similar to the way library books are checked out. We plan to have Chromebooks ready for student check out by the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

To facilitate distance learning, District



staff used Google Classroom, Class Dojo, and other approved software platforms. Teachers posted video lessons, used emails, and checked in with students by phone. The District utilized course specific software platforms for some of our high school courses and expanded the use of this platform for our summer program. This will provide us with an opportunity to gauge the viability of these programs for broader use in the months to come. For the 2020-2021 school year, the District is exploring software platforms for K-8 students for English language arts curriculum and mathematics curriculum.

We continue to encourage our staff and families to take the stay at home orders seriously and use physical distancing when it is necessary to leave their homes. Supporting our community through safe health practices is a gift we can easily give one another.

### LEADERSHIP VISALIA

## Leadership Visalia assists local elementary students



Each year, Leadership Visalia chooses a community project that fosters civic responsibility and will leave a lasting positive impact on the community of Visalia. This year's class recognized the importance of assisting the social-emotional well-being of local elementary students. Through their community project, Buddy Benches, the class set out a goal to make real differences in the lives of local students and aimed to provide as many benches as possible within the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD).

The class hosted an open application period for all VUSD elementary schools, and 11 schools were selected to receive a bench to improve school climates: Annie R. Mitchell Elementary, Crowley Elementary, Denton Elementary, Highland Elementary, Elbow Creek Elementary, Four Creeks Elementary, Global Learning Charter School, Goshen Elementary, Oak Grove Elementary, Ivanhoe Elementary, and Veva Blunt Elementary. Through the curriculum developed by the class, Buddy Benches will engage students to foster friendships and encourage an environment of



kindness, fellowship, leadership and inclusion on the playground.

This year's Leadership Visalia class recognizes that their community project could not have been successful without the support of the community of Visalia, including the following sponsors and donors:

Thank you to:

- Allen Law Firm
- California Water Service
- Central Valley Martial Arts

- City of Visalia City Council
- County Center Rotary
- County of Tulare
- CrossFit Visalia
- CSET
- Downtown Visalians
- Educational Employees Credit Union (EECU)
- Family Services of Tulare County
- Kaweah Delta Health Care District
- M. Green & Company LLP
- Pro Citrus Network
- Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group
- QK
- Rosa's
- Rotary Club of Visalia
- Stan & Wendy Simpson
- The Robert N. Line Family
- Tulare County Association of Realtors
- Visalia County Center Rotary Club
- Visalia Convention Center
- Visalia Rawhide
- West Visalia Kiwanis Club

## Gallagher, Buckman-Mitchell join to help Visalia, surrounding communities



Insurance | Risk Management | Consi

In November 2018, global insurance broker Gallagher acquired local insurance broker Buckman-Mitchell. As the transition completes this year, there is no question about the positive impact of the merger, which brings together nearly two centuries of combined service and dedication to Visalia and the surrounding area. And, it's quite clear that as proud as they are of the growth, the new team is more proud that it has been able to merge and share a similar culture based on values and ethics.

This culture is based on Gallagher's commitment to ethics. This commitment has led to the Ethisphere Institute recognizing Gallagher as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for nine consecutive years, and as the only honoree in the insurance brokerage industry. The Institute is a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices that fuel corporate character, marketplace trust and business success. The recognition honors those companies that take the long view with a purpose-based strategy and strive to create positive change throughout their global communities.

From the start there were strong synergies across the now combined, family-owned companies – both culturally and professionally. Gallagher and Buckman-Mitchell found a highly regarded partner in each other with a reputation for professionalism, knowledge and similar shared values.

In the Central Valley, the teams have come together to support the communities in which

they serve by providing scholarships to high schools throughout Tulare County and by donating to many charitable organizations including the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias, FoodLink, Pro Youth HEART, Visalia Emergency Aid Council, Visalia YMCA, Family Services of Tulare County and Visalia Rescue Mission to name a few.

This year Gallagher continued the tradition started by Buckman-Mitchell to support the future leaders of our agricultural community by investing in the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation and partnering with the insurance industry to donate over \$100,000 to this worthwhile program. Along with raising more than \$1.2 Million Dollars

over the past twenty years, Buckman-Mitchell, together with their insurance partners, has also donated over \$100,000 to the AgVentures Learning Center and Ag Museum at the Heritage Complex. Additionally, Gallagher has partnerships on the national and global levels including the Special Olympics and the San Diego Padres, and is specifically involved with the Holiday Giving Tour, an annual San Diego community outreach event.

The merger has meant that Gallagher will be better positioned than ever to serve the expanding dynamic of regional businesses. Clients and employees new to Gallagher will benefit from the scale only an organization like Gallagher can provide, including greater

market reach, a wealth of global expertise and access to new and evolving technologies dedicated to improving risk management strategies and solutions – all while maintaining its ties to the local community.

Gallagher has always focused on treating each client with respect and responsiveness, leading with integrity and serving clients and communities with expertise, ethics and excellence. It has grown its business by working with people and organizations who share these common values and vision. Organizations like Buckman-Mitchell. As they continue to grow, the community will continue to see how they hold fast to this heritage.



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**HEALTHCARE NOTE**

## Stay safe as you get back to business



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a trying time for all of us, especially for those of us in business. The financial impact of COVID-19 on businesses, Kaweah Delta included, has been tremendous. While the idea of reopening Tulare County is exciting, we as business leaders must exercise and encourage the safest behaviors we can for the safety of our community. Remember, with COVID-19, things can change on a dime, and there is speculation that we may have a second wave of resurgence as we start to open up across the County.

We have kept the idea of a second wave in mind as we bring services back online. While we never stopped providing care or performing life-saving, emergency surgeries throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic, in mid-May we opened up for non-emergent elective surgeries. They are primarily outpatient surgeries and procedures, or those that do not require more than a 1-2 night stay, because our focus remains on keeping patient beds available in the event of a surge. If we see a surge coming, we can slow down, but if we see COVID-19 numbers fall, we can accelerate. With

safety in mind, we test our patients prior to surgery for the COVID-19 virus (we will continue with this as long as possible) and we pre-screen them the night before and when they arrive for surgery. We also continue to enforce a no-visitor policy with limited exceptions.

As you open up, we encourage you to enforce safe and responsible behaviors for your customers and your employees. We are doing the same. These are practices we learned to help prevent the spread of COVID-19-wearing face masks, washing your hands frequently, practicing social distancing, avoiding gathering unnecessarily, etc. Many of the essential businesses that stayed open in the last two months have already adopted these measures-sneeze guards, markings on the floors to help with social distancing, and facemask requirements for patrons.

While many do not enjoy wearing a face mask, please consider wearing one and encouraging others to do the same. I will continue to wear mine and we will continue with universal masking at Kaweah Delta. We will also continue with our no-visitor policy. Studies show that as many as 50 percent of people who



**Gary K. Herbst**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Kaweah Delta

have COVID-19 are not aware that they have it, mostly because they do not have symptoms.

There are individuals out there who are contagious and unintentionally spread it to others. After every holiday during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., Easter and Mother's Day), we have seen spikes in COVID-19 patients, and we expect that will also be the case after Memorial Day weekend.

Along the same lines, we have also commenced voluntary antibody testing for our 5,000 employees and the physicians who care for our patients. The plan is to offer the test to first responders in the area, and then ultimately our hope is to offer it to others in the community. The test, which screens for antibodies in the blood, not the COVID-19 virus, will show who had the virus, even if they had no symptoms. It is uncertain at this time if the antibodies will impart immunity against repeat infection or if there is immunity, how long it will last.

While we know this has been a difficult time, we would sincerely appreciate everything you can do to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Let's work together to protect our community and keep them safe.



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