

Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 41, No. 20 | August 2020

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Visalia Chamber launches virtual youth education program

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce in partnership with ServiceMaster by Benevento is proud to launch Jr. CEO. The Jr. CEO program will provide upper elementary students with five virtual workshops, all based around the concept of them opening their hot chocolate stand. **5**

EVENTS

AUGUST 5 Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8:00 a.m.

AUGUST 19 Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8:00 a.m.

AUGUST 27 Ambassador Monthly Breakfast (tentative)

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Visalia First

TRAVEL WITH US

FEBRUARY 4-12, 2021
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Irish Discovery

APRIL 11-19, 2021
Heritage of America

APRIL 20-MAY 3, 2021
Culinary Italy 13-Day Tour

OCTOBER 19-27, 2021
London and Paris Discovery



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Visalia allows for sidewalk dining

Emergency ordinance allows restaurants to apply for a temporary-use permit to offer outdoor dining on sidewalks, takeout service in on-street parking spaces



The Sun-Gazette

By Reggie Ellis
President and Publisher
The Sun-Gazette

The triple digits have arrived and it's hot enough to cook on the sidewalk in Visalia. The city of Visalia isn't suggesting something that unsanitary, but it is allowing restaurants to offer outdoor dining on the sidewalk.

On July 7, the city told restaurants they could apply for temporary conditional use permits allowing the eateries to use portions of the sidewalk for dining and street parking stalls for takeout service, as long as they continue taking precautions to ensure the health and safety of the public, customers, and employees.

The city is taking this unusual step under the emergency declaration passed by the Visalia City Council earlier this year.

"We want to do our part to help our local restaurants quickly adapt to the changes that have been put in place surrounding the restriction of in-door dining," shares Paul Bernal, city planner, for Visalia. "Since Tulare County is on the list of counties that can only allow takeout, delivery or outdoor dining, this ordinance will better serve our restaurants and our community."

The city order states, "The emergency regulation is intended to allow the same practices used for temporary conditional changes on private property to be applied when a similar temporary conditional use of the public right of way is sought by business."

Processed through the Community Development Department, permits, once granted, will allow the temporary conditional usage of public right of way by restaurants as they modify business in response to COVID-19 related public health orders. These include, but are not limited to:

- Sidewalk dining with a minimum four-foot wide accessible path of travel for pedestrians and a minimum six-foot separation between the chairs associated with different dining tables for social distancing.
- Up to two public parking spaces located only in front of a restaurant / eating establishment may be reserved for pick-up / take-out orders.
- Consumption of alcohol will only be allowed if the business is expressly permitted to offer such sales in the specified area under an existing state license as issued by the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control.
- Compliance with applicable public health laws is required.

"The emergency regulation will take effect immediately; however, it is subject to ratification by the city council," Bernal added.

The Monday, July 20 meeting of the Visalia City Council will include an agenda item on the ratification on the order and direction on fees associated.

Restaurants wanting more information should contact city planner Paul Bernal by calling 559-713-4025 or e-mailing paul.bernal@visalia.city.



Patrons sit outside of Rookies Sports Bar and Grill in downtown Visalia over a mid-July weekend despite highs of 101 and 107 degrees. The City of Visalia is offering temporary permits allowing outdoor dining on the sidewalk in front of eateries.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A time of uncertainty



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

My job is to provide businesses with the most resources and information possible, convene leaders and decision-makers to create profitable paths forward, and champion local businesses as we go.

But if I'm honest there's another role we must play. There's another role I must play. While I will always find the silver lining and push us to be even better, I can not ignore where there is trouble on the horizon. And I fear trouble is coming. Perhaps it is already here.

Business does not like uncertainty. Business doesn't do well when rules change. In a pandemic world, the rules are always changing and uncertainty seems to be the only constant. This makes running a business difficult, at best. It makes managing a staff challenging and it's placed burdens on families, unlike any time I remember.

As our numbers fluctuate, state leaders open and close segments of the economy, and uncertainty creates a challenge for business it has never faced. The rules of the game are unclear and at best change very frequently. One day you can operate, the next you must close and on the third date, you can only operate outside once meeting additional thresholds. Uncertainty abounds.

Opening and closing a business takes planning. It is not something typically one can do with a few hours' notice. There are supplies to be procured and purchased, building considerations (particularly in a COVID clean environment), and staff to be scheduled (or rehired), just to name a very few. Staying on top of the latest regulations isn't easy during "normal" times. Changing operations and procedures take time to interpret, implement, and train staff to carry out. Doing it on a moment's notice is challenging.

This says nothing of the increased challenges on our workforce. In addition to learning new safety procedures and donning new equipment, many face real child care challenges. If schools do not return to in-person classes in the fall, many parents will be left without care for their minor

children. Parents are understandably scared to have the children return and now our having conversations that they never imagined having. "Can I afford to work and how can I afford not to?" A decline in the available workforce will hurt productivity and ultimately hurt our community.

The psychological pressure on everyone—business owners, managers, employees, and children is unbelievable. A local dentist reported a dramatic increase in teeth grinding—due to the amount of stress everyone is feeling.

There are days I want to pretend it doesn't all exist, that I don't see the real challenges mounting on the horizon. I want to pretend being in business is easy and glamorous. I want to pretend that a constantly changing business landscape will only build better businesses without seeing the pure destruction and devastation on businesses who will not withstand this "test." I want to see children at home with the parents as a blessing rather than a complete shift in their young lives that I worry will have long-lasting effects. But pretending has never been my strong suit.

Perhaps the biggest concern is the lack of constructive conversation. Many leaders seem to have lost their voice or are unsure where to best use it. Many are afraid of saying the wrong thing, so they say nothing. We must address these issues. How can we create a safe stable business environment that does not provide a breeding ground for COVID? What personal responsibilities do we have in all of this? What is best for our children? Can we have a conversation where the goal is to listen, understand, and find a common goal?

Your chamber is working on a state level to create some stability for business. There is a way to be responsive to health concerns and have a stable business environment. Locally we must be engaged in conversation not enraged past the point of listening. We have to talk to our employees about the real challenges they face and then ban together to find real solutions. We have to own our role in staying healthy and stopping this thing from taking over our lives.

If you want to find solutions—if you want to listen, learn, and have tough conversations, please email me gail@visaliachamber.org. The only way we can combat the danger on the horizon is if we do it together.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF VISALIA

City seeks homeless to clean up trash

Homeless people get a bad rap for trashing Visalia when many of them are the ones cleaning it up.

More than 100 homeless people have worked in the city's Environmental Cleanup Opportunities (ECO) Project cleaning up litter and trash throughout the city in the last three years. ECO is a transitional jobs program that assists individuals experiencing homelessness in Visalia gain job readiness skills and work experience, with the goal of obtaining stable employment and housing. The program is a coordinated effort between the city, the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County, Community Services Employment Training (CSET), the Sequoia Community Corps, and the Visalia Employment Connection. Through the Visalia Employment Connection's virtual pre-employment sessions, participants learn about the job interview process, build a résumé, and develop budgeting techniques to balance personal

The Sun-Gazette

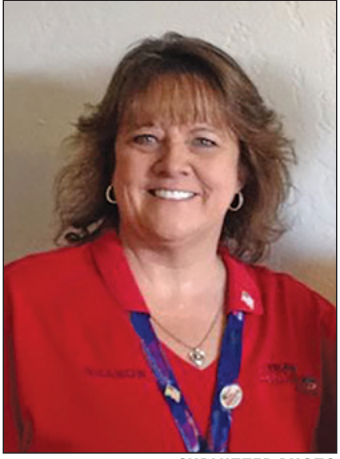
finances. After completing the pre-employment sessions, participants begin their transitional jobs training with CSET's Sequoia Community Corps.

During the program's first three years, 179 homeless individuals attended the program orientation, 109 completed the job readiness portion of the program, and at least 67 of those were ultimately successful in securing employment outside of the program. Those individuals have helped remove more than 600 tons of illegally discarded material from the city's streets and parks.

Unfortunately, even the most successful endeavors have been affected by the pandemic. During the COVID-19 shutdowns referrals from partner agencies have slowed to a trickle. The participants have been split into two crews working al-

See CLEAN UP on page 2

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Name: Sharon Allison-Crook
Company: AMVETS Department of California

Title: Director of Marketing
How has the Chamber and the Ambassador Program helped you and your business to grow?

Being an Ambassador has opened so many doors for me. I have met new business partners as well as people that have become some of my closest friends. I'm able to learn about other businesses and support them and they in turn support my business. The support that the Chamber and the Ambassadors has given me is invaluable. I feel good knowing that they are just a phone call away if I need anything and I have made those calls often. It's like have my own great big marketing team.

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

Working for a nonprofit has it's challenges and attending as many events as I can has given me the opportunity to share with our community all the things that we do at AMVETS. Every event that I attend I meet new people and that's a good thing. I love meeting new people. I try to attend as many events as I can and volunteer as much as I can. I figure the more I put in, the more I'll get back.

The best part of working for your company is?

Helping Veterans ! We have had a lot of success in helping homeless Veterans get housing and our food pantry has been very busy. It's a really great feeling knowing that you might be making a difference in a person's life that has fought for our country !

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

There are so many I wouldn't know where to start. Anywhere I can go with friends and enjoy a good meal or a drink is a good place to me.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

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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 Members:

- Valley Strong Credit Union

Business Builder Members:

- The Darling Hotel

Business Connector Members:

- Train Like A Girl Studio

Small Business Members:

- California Health Collaborative
- California Overland Solutions
- Paynter Realty & Investments, Inc.
- ZenBusiness

UPGRADE

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce thanks the following companies for upgrading their membership and boosting their commitment to the community of Visalia.

Keystone Members:

- Eagle Mountain Casino

RENEWING

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

Regional Leader Members:

- California Water Service Company*

Visionary Members:

- SinglePoint Outsourcing, Inc.

Community Investor Members:

- Joann Stores Visalia Distribution Center*
- Sequoia Gateway LLC
- Vintage Press Restaurante

Business Connector Members:

- Franey's Carpet One Floor & Home Design Center
- Paradise Pools Inc.
- Peninsula Messenger Service*

- Ruddell Stanton Bixler Mauritsen & Evans, LLP

Small Business Members:

- Compac*
- Frazer, LLP*
- Keller & Wegley Consulting Engineers
- Kens Stakes & Supplies, Inc.
- Lockwood Agency
- Newmark Grubb Pearson Commercial
- Nothing Bundt Cakes*
- Pacific Capital Strategies, Inc.
- Perez Law Firm, The*
- Redi-Rooter Plumbing*
- Smokin Barrel Firearms*
- Success Learning Center & Visalia Music School
- Valley Steel Construction*
- VastNetworks - CVIN
- Visalia Citrus Packing Group, Inc*
- Visalia Cyclery



- Visalia Eye Center*
- Business Builder Nonprofit Members:**
- Visalia Unified Teachers Association*
- Business Connector Nonprofit Members:**
- RiverCross Church
- Sequoia Parks Conservancy
- Small Business Nonprofit Members:**
- Central Mother Lode Regional Consortium
- Turning Point of Central California, Inc.*
- Visalia County Center Rotary Club*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Name: Sam Ramirez
Company: The Naxon Group
Title: President/CEO

Why do you serve on the Chamber Board of Directors?

My business is all about connecting people and gathering for celebrations and causes. I felt like the Visalia Chamber was very much the same. Every staff member and board member I've come across has been so supportive and encouraging and that was a group of people I wanted to support and grow further.

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

Being a new business is very intimidating and at times downright scary. But with the Chambers engagement they've helped navigate the landscape and provided great support and communication. Teaching us about resources on how to promote our business and stay engaged in the community has helped us tremendously.

What's your favorite family tradition?

One my favorite family traditions is actually one that happens often by accident. I come from a large family and we all call the valley home. It's incredibly common for us to spontaneously arrive at moms or grandmas or even my house and gather for a meal or just family time. It's often unplanned but always enjoyable. The spirit of hospitality is alive and well in my family which is likely how I found myself in the industry I have.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

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

We don't necessarily have a motto, but my grandpa was an educator for many years and often bestowed his wisdom on us grandkids. One of those was the importance of 4 pillars to life. Faith, family, Love and Service. We are believers in our faith, we treasure our family, show love always and look to serve each other and those around us where we can.

What was your first job?

My first 'real' job was at 14 working in a catering company in Corcoran and later at their family restaurant. My very first day on the job I dropped an entire tray of food, plates and glassware in a parking lot and nearly left to walk home then and there. But I stuck with it and now nearly 25 years later I still find myself enjoying the opportunity to serve others.

CLEAN UP

Continued from page 1

ternating days to minimize exposure. Crew member hours have been reduced from 20 to 16 hours per week and work experience in the program has been paused.

Last week, CSET began recruiting people experiencing homelessness for the program. In order to be eligible for the ECO Project, the person must be homeless or have been homeless within the past 12 months, reside in Visalia, and be referred by a local agency or organization. They must be at least 18 years old, possess right-to-work documents, be registered with Selective Service (Males born on or after January 1, 1960 – Verify at Selective Service System web site www.sss.gov), and interested in the type of work in the Transitional Jobs Program (litter abatement work within City of Visalia).

Referral forms must be submitted through email to either Jonathan Thompson at jthompson@employmentconnect.org or Yulie Camberos at ycamberos@employmentconnect.org.

Upon referral, participants will be screened and contacted by the Visalia Employment Connection to schedule an orientation. For more information about this topic, including information about the referral process and enrollment criteria, contact Raquel Roa at 559-741-4621.

Community Services Employment Training (CSET) inspires youth, families and communities to achieve self-reliance through innovative pathways and collaboration. Since 1976, CSET has been the Community Action Agency for Tulare County in America's war on poverty.

The Visalia City Council reauthorized the program at its June 15 meeting through the 2020-21 fiscal year. The city splits the \$356,837 budget with the Workforce Investment Board, with the city's portion coming out of its Solid Waste fund. Funding for the program is partially offset from recycling revenue (approximately \$30,000) and savings from hourly positions that are held vacant since the work is performed through the ECO program.

THE LAW AT WORK

Face coverings at work



GUBLER & ABBOTT
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

On June 18, 2020, the California Department of Public Health issued guidance requiring individuals in California to wear face coverings in most circumstances. This new state guidance follows face-covering mandates previously issued by many California cities and counties.

The guidance provided by the state also contained requirements regarding face coverings at work. Individuals engaged in work, whether at the workplace or offsite, must wear face coverings when:

- Interacting with any member of the public in-person;
- Working in a space visited by the public, even if no member of the public is present;
- Working in a space where food is prepared or packaged for sale or distribution;
- Working in or walking through common areas of a business; or
- When driving or operating public transportation, including private car service.

There are some exemptions to these requirements, however. Individuals who have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering are exempt or if wearing one would create a risk to the person related to their work. The State recommends that individuals exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job with regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom.

The State has also indicated that surgical masks (manu-

See LAW on page 5

COS goes online this fall

On July 6, the College of the Sequoias announced that fall 2020 course offerings would be primarily offered in an online format. The College operates three sites in Visalia, Tulare, and Hanford and serves over 15,000 students annually.



Specifically, all lecture-only classes will be taught online while some of the lab and hands-on technical classes will be taught in a hybrid format, meaning students will meet face to face for a portion of the class meetings.

Of the roughly 1,600 course sections scheduled for fall, 80% are lecture-only and will be delivered online. The remaining courses include science labs, demonstration courses, and career technical education classes like automotive, construction, and welding.

While the college has traditionally offered as much as 20% of their schedule in an online format, they were forced to go entirely online on March 16 as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Students in need of technology were provided laptops, wireless hotspots, and web cams. In addition, the college food pantry continued to provide groceries for students in need.

Students are supported remotely by counselors, tutors, librarians, and student services specialists. Most employees have been working remotely since mid-March, only accessing offices when necessary. Students and employees are required to wear masks when on campus, a requirement that will continue this fall. The college also purchased 22 fogging machines that allow custodians to mist a classroom or office with a disinfectant solution in minutes.

The pandemic also cut short a promising spring for several of the Giants athletic teams. The baseball team led by head coach, Jody Allen, was 18-4 headed into the second round of league play when the season was cut short. The basketball team, under first-year head coach, Dallas Jensen, had just advanced to the State Tournament Elite 8 Finals with a record of 24-6 when play was halted. And the Lady Giants softball team, under head coach Cori Janelli, was sitting atop the Central Valley Conference stand-

See COS on page 5

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Sheriff Mike Boudreaux partnered with the USDA and Seven Oaks Church to host a community drive-thru food and mask giveaway.

Bank of the Sierra hosted a bank-wide food drive throughout Central and Southern California. Food was donated to local food banks and nonprofit organizations, including the Bethlehem Center.

Kaweah Delta Health Care District recently received a \$2.4 million grant to upgrade equipment at the hospital, rural clinics, walk-in clinic and urgent care. In addition, they hosted their first virtual Starlight Awards, recognizing "star" employees. This year's Employee of the Year went to the entire KHCD staff—"The Heroes Who Work Here."

Since March, CSET Senior Services has distributed a total of 27,000 meals to 1,250 seniors in need.

Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group was ranked first in California in 2020 for "Best Civil Engineering Firm to Work For" by the Zweig Group. This



marks the fifth consecutive year they have been ranked the top five in the nation. In addition, they welcome four new employees to their team: Dena Giacomini, Senior Planner; Mitzi Sequelveda, Assistant Engineer; Sarah Lee, Water Resources Specialist; Stephanie Bar-

tel, Water Treatment Intern. Congratulations!

The Assistance League of Visalia raised \$17,380 through their annual "An Evening at the Derby." This major fundraising event may have been cancelled, but sponsors pledged their donations to programs. Assistance League of Visalia gives thanks to: San Joaquin Valley Homes, Kaweah Delta Hospital, Green Box Rentals, Inc., The Alignment Specialists, Nielsen & Associates Insurance Services Inc., Suncrest Bank, Carpenter Family Children's Foundation, J C Lansdowne, Inc, Rita Crandall & Anna Gomez, Richard & Joanne Houts, and Fred & Clae Nave.

Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties board members and staff surprised their next homeowner partners, Victor and Danielle. They



have joined the more than 70 families who have become homeowners through Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties.

Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation recently announced its "Hope in Motion" campaign to purchase the SafeGait 360 Balance and Mobility Training, a track-and-harness system that assists with balance and fall prevention for patients who are learning to stand or walk again.

Southern California Gas. Co. launched a new program to feed Tulare County's most vulnerable residents while fueling some of its hardest hit businesses. In partnership with the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation, SoCalGas donated \$100,000 to pay local restaurants to feed nursing home residents once per week.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

A reflection on Leadership Visalia

Jason Garcia-LoBue
County of Tulare
Leadership Alumni

I have lived in Visalia for 15 years. Shortly after I moved here, I fell in love with our town. It is the town I now call home. There are so many great pluses about our town. The people. The local businesses. The small town feel. Downtown Visalia. The location. The beautiful Sierras. Where do I even begin? I was blessed to be included as part of the Leadership Class for 2019-2020. Our class shared a unified desire to grow professionally and personally in areas defined as to: lead; learn; experience; mentor; network; business; industry; local; agriculture; downtown Visalia.

The experience

It's challenging to summarize the program in just a few words, as there were so many lessons learned. Leadership Visalia provided me and my classmates some amazing opportunities for professional development, positive self-improvement, and personal growth. I know, I know, I am a pretty positive person, and I speak highly of this experience, but these accomplishments were not easy. The experience was demanding, required hard work, strategizing, and coming together to complete the task. Often an experience can be impacted by the time and effort that you put into it. In the end, and in my opinion, Leadership Visalia was worth every single minute. The program exposed us to great people and taught us life changing lessons.

Leadership Visalia taught us more about our community (and how unique it is) and ways in which we could succeed. We learned about ways in which and how to be effective leaders. I enjoyed learning about the diverse array of businesses Visalia has. The program is built upon day and afternoon sessions, which introduce different community topics and issues for discussion. Through these sessions, we had the opportunity to hear from local business leaders and visit businesses and programs throughout the city. Our class was able to better connect with the community by learning more about Visalia, the businesses within it, and our people. This is part of the reasons, why I stand behind being "loyal to local." As someone that has worked in government for the last 15 years, I highly appreciated the opportunity to meet and learn from our elected representatives (federal, state, and local). But also, I appreciated learning about other areas outside of my professional realm, such as education, public safety, social services, and nonprofits.

Making an impact

One of the most rewarding parts of the program was helping to improve our quality of life by doing good in our community. Our group project really represented our team and the meaningful change we wanted for our community. Our project was the installation of Buddy Benches at 11 school sites within Visalia Unified School



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Back Row Left to Right: Mark Goff, Jessica Trujillo, Andrea Pedraza, Brenda Daddino, Suzanne Tomasiello, Edgardo Monroy, Jacob Daniel, Jason Garcia-LoBue, Araceli Delatorres, Rob Osak, George Rodriguez, Leadership Visalia Facilitator Raquel Garcia.

Row 2 Left to Right: Lola Balandran, Wendy Hewes, Jena Rodriguez, Maria Montes.

District. We collectively came together to bring community improvements, while dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even among challenges, our group succeeded by working together to accomplish our task.

A huge thank you to our Leadership Visalia facilitator Raquel Garcia and chamber president and CEO Gail Zurek for their guidance in this process. As well, we thank our community sponsors, supporters, and all local businesses.

And to those considering Leadership Visalia, you should apply. Take the step. This is a great program that helps train and prepare future leaders by exposing them to all the amazing programs and opportunities in our community. Always loyal to local. I highly recommend the Leadership Visalia program for those in the community who want to learn about positive ways to lead, to bring change, and to do good. Please join me in this task.

Ask Jena

I'm expanding my business. How do I get the word out?

We love to champion good news from our members through social media and our Business Update Newsletter. Add me to your media listserv or send me updates directly!

I would like to participate in the Visalia Chamber's Lunch Bunch, how do I do that?

If you are interested in hosting a Lunch Bunch, you can sign up on our website: visaliachamber.org/lunch-bunch.

Have questions about the chamber? Send me a message: Jena@visaliachamber.org

CITY UPDATE

What was old is new again

Visalia's future remains bright as we see economic development projects throughout the city move forward. With revitalization efforts ramping up throughout the community, we're seeing exciting change as what was old becomes new again.

With the tagline, "Inspired by the past. Reimagined for you," The Darling Hotel is situated in the heart of downtown and calls the former Tulare County courthouse annex home. The much anticipated project is now open for business and is part of the continued development downtown, including the expansion of business on East Main.

A bit to the northwest, the Sons of Italy Hall is now the new Bello Vita Venue space, open for business and soon to include an office/mixed-use element at the corner of Goshen and Chinowth.

High profile projects continue to give old sites new life, as the 85,500-square foot former Big Kmart has been leased by the Tulare County Probation Department, with interior improvements underway.

As facilities flip, so do parking lots find new life as retail. On Mooney Boulevard, the College of the Sequoias parking lot at Myrtle and Mooney will be converted to retail uses, as will excess parking at the old Cigna (now County of Tulare offices) building on Akers, and a portion of parking at the Sequoia Mall Sears will welcome a Raising Canes.

While projects continue moving through site plan review, staff remains busy on economic development projects throughout the city. High profile projects include the old Copeland Lumber Yard, sold to Self-Help Enterprises for a future housing development,

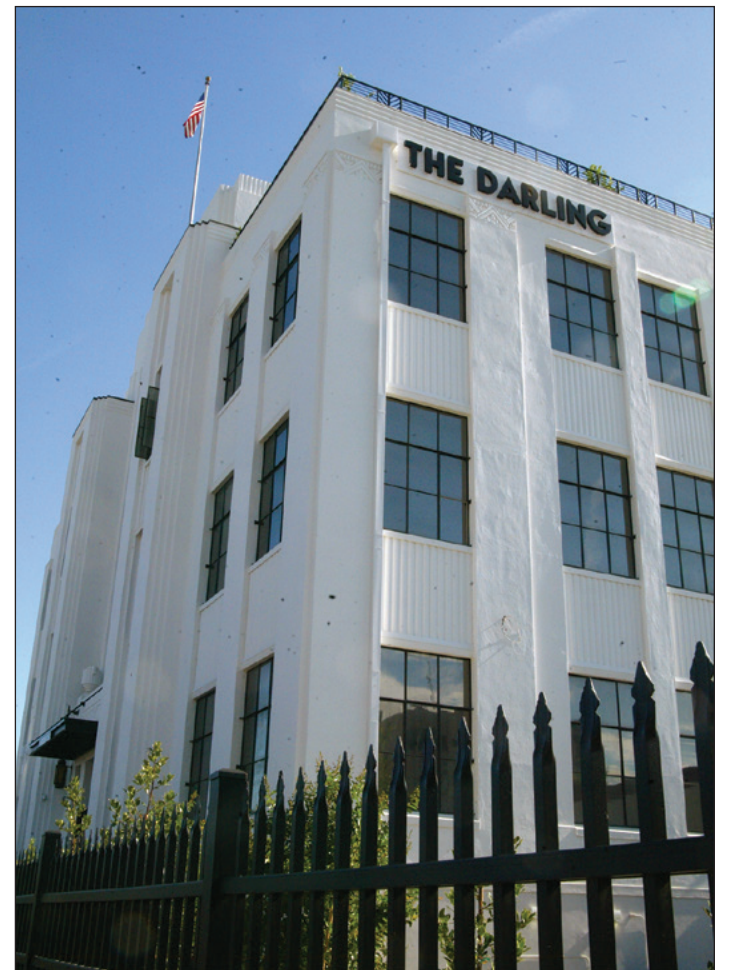


PHOTO BY REGGIE ELLIS, THE SUN-GAZETTE

After a two year renovation affair The Darling has revamped Tulare County's former courthouse and turned it into a crowning jewel for Visalia.



From full refurbishments to facelifts, these projects (and many more) help keep Visalia moving. For business updates, follow the City of Visalia and the Visalia Economic Development Corporation on social media @CityofVisalia and @VisaliaEDC.

For the latest updates and news from the City of Visalia, visit www.visalia.city or visit them on social media @CityofVisalia.

expansion in the industrial park, and new retail on the Mooney corridor.

FACEBOOK LIVE

COFFEE WITH THE CEO

WEDNESDAYS, AUGUST 5TH & 19TH FROM 8:00-9:00AM

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Fellow Chamber Members:

Dana Fabbri
Vice President
Valley Strong Credit Union Northern Division

Valley Strong Credit Union is so excited about being a new sponsor and member of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. We have been in the Valley for over 80 years, and proud to be bring Valley Strong to Visalia with three new branches and two ATM locations. We will also be expanding into Tulare. We pride ourselves in being part of the community and being able to help both consumer and business grow their financial possibilities. Here is a little about who we are:



Grow Your Possibilities

Our mission is to turn people's financial possibilities into financial realities. We work every day to create a better tomorrow for our children and families. We are here to stay and grow together. And, here to discover the best financial possibilities for the best possible outcomes.

Our Mission

We help people and communities prosper. And, as we see it, there are three components to this – People, Businesses, and Communities.

People

The loyalty of individuals who bank with us allows our organization to spread service to more people. Without them we wouldn't be able to bring about the change and growth we wish to see in the Valley. Those who bank with Valley Strong are everything to us because without them, we have nothing.

Businesses

Helping small businesses succeed is a big part of how we grow and support the communities we serve. Valley Strong is here to provide the products, tools, and support to help businesses grow and thrive.

During these trying times, the government has extended the deadline for the SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to August 8, 2020. We will be accepting new applications for the program through the deadline date. If you need more information or want to apply for a PPP loan, please contact Tosha Pequeño, Branch Manager of Visalia at 559-396-6012 or Dana Fabbri, Vice President at 559-396-5252.

Communities

The communities we serve in the Valley have supported us from the very beginning. As we grow, Valley Strong promises to give back to all communities we serve through exceptional service along with community and civic engagement. One way we better the communities we serve is through financial literacy and guidance. We know a better-informed consumer is a better consumer, and we want people to make the best decisions to positively impact their lives.

New scam steals from the unemployed

The Sun-Gazette

A new scam offering flexible schedules and work from home opportunities is affecting those hardest hit by the pandemic.

A new study released by the Better Business Bureau (BBB) last month finds that nearly three-quarters of those who lost money to employment scams are already in financial crisis, and do not have enough income to cover their monthly bills. In addition, more than half of people targeted by employment scams (53%) reported being unemployed at the time of the encounter.

Employment scams were the No. 1 riskiest scam in 2018 and 2019, according to the BBB Risk Index, which measures exposure, susceptibility, and monetary loss based on reports to BBB Scam Tracker. Only weeks after the release of the latest BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report in early March, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shut-down of businesses across North America. Hundreds of thousands who lost their jobs began seeking new jobs via online platforms and other means. In response, BBB launched a new research project to better understand how

employment scams are being perpetrated, who is being targeted, the overall impact of these scams, and how to help people avoid losing money to them.

"This research was timely as we found that more than half of scam targets were seeking work-from-home opportunities," said Melisa Lanning Trumpower, executive director of the BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust, which produced the report. "As more people search for flexible employment opportunities following the coronavirus outbreak, they need to know that scammers are out there in force and targeting those most in need."

The Employment Scams Report examines findings from an April 2020 survey of 10,670 U.S. and Canadian consumers reporting employment scams to BBB Scam Tracker. One surprising finding is that 65% of consumers reported that their "job offer" was related to becoming a "warehouse redistribution coordinator" or some similar titles involving the reshipment of packages (which often involve stolen goods). In many cases, these scammers impersonated well-known retailers like Amazon and Walmart to seem legitimate, posting jobs on major online employment platforms with few prerequi-

See SCAM on page 5

Visalia Chamber launches virtual youth education program

Tomorrow's business leaders are born today. Investing in their education must start now.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce in partnership with ServiceMaster by Benevento is proud to launch Jr. CEO. The Jr. CEO program will provide upper elementary students with five virtual workshops, all based around the concept of them opening their hot chocolate stand. Sessions will include business fundamentals, marketing, customer service, money management, and safe food handling procedures, all in preparation for participants launching their hot chocolate stands on Saturday, November 7th.

"It's never too early to learn basic business fundamentals," said Visalia Chamber CEO, Gail Zurek. "Jr. CEO gives our youth those tools during a particularly poignant moment in history. Teaching our youth to start their own business will pay dividends long into the future."

Each workshop will be led by an area business leader and provide participants with relevant, real-world knowledge. Along with the virtual presentation, participants will be provided with an interactive workbook for each session.



While most students will use the virtual workshops to help launch their hot chocolate stands, some may choose to apply these lessons to other business concepts beyond selling hot chocolate one day. Lessons learned in this program will provide basic business education that families can utilize to augment other learning opportunities.

"I want to thank ServiceMaster by Benevento for stepping up early to partner with the Chamber in this important work," said Crystal Jordan, Board of Directors

Chair for Visalia Chamber of Commerce. "Having a business invest in our youth speaks volumes about the type of business they run. We're proud to have Tony Benevento and the entire ServiceMaster by Benevento team partner with us to make this program a reality."

Tuition is \$25 per student. For more information about the Visalia Chamber of Commerce Jr. CEO program, go to visaliachamber.org/CEO. For sponsorship opportunities, email charlie@visaliachamber.org, or call 559-734-5876.



Wyndham Visalia was one of 45 Wyndham hotels and resorts around the world that was honored with the 2019 Best of Wyndham Award.

Wyndham Visalia wins award

Wyndham earns 2019 Best of Wyndham Award for exceptional quality scores and outstanding guest reviews

Last month the Wyndham in Visalia announced they had been awarded a prestigious inhouse honor for their work in 2019.

According to a press release from the Visalia Wyndham at 9000 W. Airport Drive, the award recognizes an elite group worldwide that has been evaluated on specific criteria – including exceptional quality scores, outstanding guest reviews, and an unwavering commitment to the Wyndham Rewards® loyalty program and members.

"Receiving a 'Best of' award is a tremendous testament to Wyndham Visalia's exceptional level of service, quality and commitment to excellence" Wyndham Hotels and Resorts stated.

"This is a great honor for our hotel and a direct result of the hard work of our wonderful staff. To be recognized among properties in locations from historic cities to beautiful beaches all over the world is a compliment to Visalia and our beautiful Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks," said Samantha Rummage-Mathias, the hotel's general manager.



Wyndham Visalia was one of 45 Wyndham hotels and resorts around the world that was honored with the award. Of the 45 worldwide, 17 were in the U.S. and three in California, one being Wyndham Visalia.

The Wyndham Visalia is a 256 room hotel offering guests single, double and suite accommodations. The property won Large Business of the Year 2019 presented by Visalia Chamber of Commerce and recently completed a multi-million dollar renovation over 18 months. Property features include Café California restaurant with a new all weather outdoor patio, Mahogany Lounge with entertainment, two pools—one indoor heated pool and spa,

one outdoor pool with sun deck, state of the art fitness center, complimentary high speed wifi and ample complimentary parking.

The hotel just celebrated its 45th birthday and is known for accommodating events for the community over many years, from weddings to corporate meetings from 5 to 500 guests. Many locals have enjoyed family traditions starting with an engagement party onto a wedding and followed by baby showers. The hotel is also well know for hosting large conventions from all over the nation with 22,000 sq. ft of meeting space, 14 breakout rooms with professional catering staff and award winning chefs.

Stay safe online while working from home

With the rise in cases with COVID-19, a lot of businesses are going back to primarily working from home. Hackers are taking advantage of people working in an environment that is less protected than the office. These tips should help you to better secure your work environment at home.

Password management

Keeping your password secure and safe is extremely im-



portant to the safety of your data and your business. However, when you use the same password across multiple services, it opens many possibilities for hackers to get into your

information.

There is a risk when databases from other companies are compromised since they sometimes can get a hold of your password. This could be something you don't have information that is compromising like a subscription to an online paper or a social media account that you don't have any information on. However, if you use the same password on multiple accounts, they could try your

password in places like your bank or shopping account.

With password management, you can easily set unique complex passwords for each website. That way, if they get your password, it only will get them into one place. It is compartmentalized and secure. Of course, having many different passwords is a problem since there are so many web sites. Password managers like LastPass are easy to use and will

even ask to generate a new password and store it without you having to know what it is. All you need is one "master" password and you are good to go for every site you have an account on.

Multifactor authentication

To take it a step further with password management, you can also enable multifactor authentication (MFA) on all your accounts. It simply means that no one can log in to your account unless it is you. It does this by combining something

you know (like your password) and something you have (like your cell phone) and then it will let you into your account. This makes sure that even if your password is compromised, the hackers would have to have either your phone or your phone number to login to your account. It is not a perfect solution, but it sure adds extra barriers for your safety. You can enable this on any account by looking in the settings for "multifactor authentication" or "two-factor authentication."

Quail Park at Shannon Ranch is open, offering in-person and virtual tours



ANDREA PIACQUADIO/PEXELS.COM

Northwest Visalia Senior Housing, LLC and Living Care Lifestyles proudly announce the opening of Quail Park at Shannon Ranch. This new community closes a gap in the Visalia seniors housing continuum, offering luxury apartments for active adults as well as dignified memory care services for those with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. The philosophy behind Quail Park at Shannon Ranch is – Live Healthy! Live Passionately! Live Brilliantly!

Live Healthy! Located at 3440 W. Flagstaff Avenue, our three-story, one hundred-twenty apartment community will focus on promoting better health outcomes for our residents. Featuring a fully loaded fitness center, a therapy pool with submerged treadmill and resistance

jets, and one-on-one fitness training plus group exercise classes, our residents will be empowered to improve their health and well being without having to leave the comfort of their own home.

Live Passionately! We are looking for people with passion – a passion to uncover hidden talents, a passion to travel and explore, and a passion to continue to make a difference in the lives of others! Our residents will be afforded regular opportunities for regional and international travel, to participate in local philanthro-

py and community service, and to benefit from community partnerships focused on the creative and performing arts.

Live Brilliantly! To delight the senses, our community boasts three restaurant-style dining options, including a full-service pub and a coffee shop – all offering delicious and nutritious chef-prepared cuisine made fresh with locally sourced ingredients. Other amenities include an in-house beauty salon, on-site spa, concierge services, as well as an in-house movie theater. "We are extreme-

ly excited to bring this new style of senior living to the Central Valley!" says Living Care Lifestyles CEO, Denis Bryant. "People have changed the way they look at getting older, so we have created a Quail Park community specifically designed for a more active and dynamic lifestyle." Anyone interested in a safe, social distanced personal tour may contact us at (559) 527-8245. We also offer virtual tour options for those unable to travel to the community.

About Living Care Lifestyles Living Care Lifestyles, since 1991 has been the leader in Brilliant Senior Living, providing living options for "Modern Agers" to thrive. The organization has Quail Park communities located in California, Arizona, Texas and Washington. Lifestyle options include Independent Living, Assisted Living, Enhanced Assisted Living and Memory Care which includes the proprietary Tribute Program™. The unique program focuses on the needs of persons living with Alzheimer's and dementia by paying tribute to each individual's previous accomplishments while focusing on the persons remaining strengths and present relationships. For more information: Contact traceyh@livingcarelifestyles.com

LAW

Continued from page 2

factured paper masks) should be reserved for medical personnel, as well as workers in manufacturing, food processing, community/social services, social work, in-home daycare, law enforcement/public safety, and schools. N95 masks, i.e. masks that have a respirator that blocks particles, are also reserved for medical personnel and other industries where they are required.

Finally, the State encourages employers to review industry-specific guidance regarding the wearing of face coverings and masks. That information can be found at covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance.

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. Chinowth St., Visalia, CA 93291 (www.thecalifornialawyers.com).

A community thanks its heroes

As protests and calls for police reform continue to flare up around the country, a group of local business owners have paused to look more closely at how this anger and outrage are affecting our own family members, neighbors and friends who are on the frontlines of our own public safety departments. What they've seen are tired, exhausted, worn down individuals who are cherished members of our community.

We can see that they are worn down from not only the stress of their high-pressure work, but from the public scorn that is manifesting across the nation. The truth is, that ultimately, we rely on these individuals to keep our families, streets and society safe and it is often a thankless task.

As a way of showing their gratitude, a group of community members have started the "Thank a Hero" Fund. The goal of this fund is to raise \$150 per Visalia Police Department officer, Tulare County Sheriff's Deputy and Visalia CHP officer. That donation will be used to purchase a gift certificate from a Visalia business who supplies law enforcement equipment. The fundraiser will give our officers a uniform (or some other equipment if a uniform is not needed) paid for by the community.



The project not only gives the people of Visalia the opportunity to show their appreciation for our law enforcement officers, it also allows the community to bring a much-needed economic boost to a locally owned business in this difficult economic slump.

The Thank A Hero Fund started as an idea amongst a small group of business owners who wanted to get involved. In true Visalia fashion, as soon as others caught wind of this mission, a multitude of other business owners have jumped in to participate.

The group has set their total overall goal for the fund at \$153,450. This will supply \$23,250 to the Visalia Police Department; \$7,200 to the California Highway Patrol of Visalia; and \$123,000 to the Tulare County Sheriff's Office.

A Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/forvisalia) and a go-



Vintage Visalia Apartment Homes
6714 W. Oriole Avenue | (559) 372-7384

fund me account (gf.me/u/x9tpvc) have been set up and donations are now being accepted. The project has even qualified as a 501c3, so all donations are tax deductible.

For additional information, or to join the promotion of this effort, e-mail thankaherofund@gmail.com

Let's show our officers some love!



Friday, August 14th
11:00AM-1:00PM
531 E. Main St.

* CARRYOUT EDITION

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

SCAM

Continued from page 4

sites or requirements.

The report also highlights those who are most at risk for employment scams. Students and individuals ages 25-34 were more susceptible and likely to be victimized, while those ages 45-54 and 65+ reported higher median dollar losses. In addition, military spouses and veterans were more likely to fall victim than non-military

consumers, and reported losing significantly more money to employment scams.

"These critical findings can help guide our scam prevention outreach to those most vulnerable to these scam types," Trumpower said. "Employment scams don't just affect those who lose money. For every victim who lost money, at least one other worked without pay, and yet another lost personal information that could lead to identity theft."

Survey results reinforced that

consumer education is a critical component of fighting back against these scammers. Those who avoided losing money were much more likely to report previous knowledge of employment scams and tactics (20% versus 7%).

For tips on how to avoid employment scams, visit BBB.org/EmploymentScams. To report a scam, go to BBB.org/ScamTracker. To learn more about other risky scams, go to BBB.org/ScamTips.

COS

Continued from page 2

ings and looking for their third straight league crown when the season came to an abrupt end.

While the Giants athletic teams will all field rosters this fall, their opportunities for competition may be difficult to come by. Their nine traditional league rivals including Fresno City College, Reedley College, and West Hills College have all announced that they will not be competing during the 2020-21 school year. The California Community College Athletic Association will announce in mid-July which of three scenarios it will follow for competition, ranging from a simple late start to the fall season to the possibility of shifting the majority of sports to the spring.

Despite the uncertainty, the College of the Sequoias is poised to have one of its largest enrollments on record and looks forward to the opportunity to help this region through these unprecedented times.

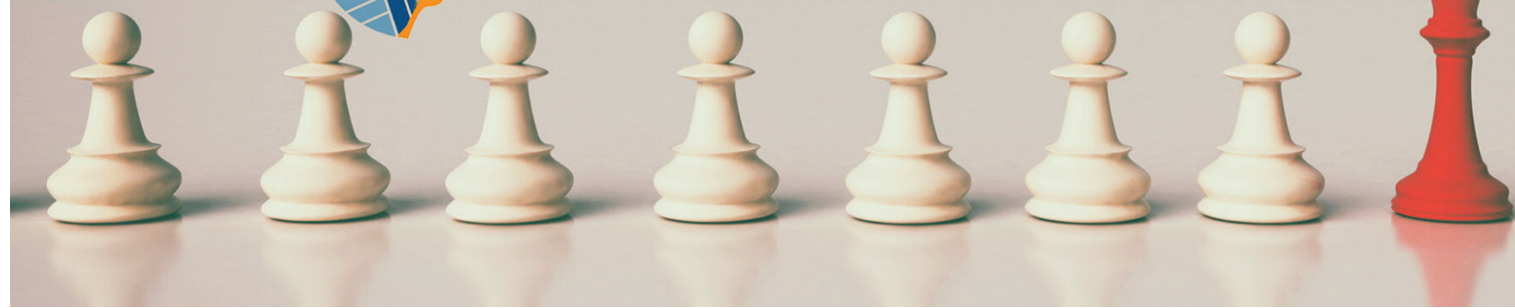
NOW MORE THAN EVER OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS LEADERS TO BE CATALYSTS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE!

MORE INFORMATION: (559) 734-5876 | INFO@VISALIACHAMBER.ORG

APPLICATION DEADLINE JULY 31, 2020



LEADERSHIP VISALIA
VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Thank you

TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

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VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:



KEYSTONE:



CORNERSTONE:

CIGNA, CSET, E.D.I.S., LAMP LITER INN, M. GREEN & COMPANY, NAKED NUT, MILLIPORE SIGMA, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON

MEDIA PARTNERS:



HEALTH CARE NOTE

The cavalry has arrived



Gary Herbst
Chief Executive Officer
Kaweah Delta Health Care District

The COVID-19 surge, the one that was supposed to be here on the West Coast in March and April, has finally arrived. California is a hot spot for the nation and State officials are closely monitoring our County's positivity rate, as it continues to climb. We understand very well that this has been a hard time for the business community.



Kaweah Delta

As many of you have experienced, COVID has greatly affected staffing. To date, nearly 200 Kaweah Delta staff members have contracted COVID-19. While the majority of those staff members have recovered and returned to work, more than 70 staff members, primarily registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, and certified nurse assistants, remain quarantined. We also have a number of staff members that have taken leaves of absence for a variety of reasons; some are staying home to protect immunocompromised family members. This loss of staffing has had the biggest impact on Kaweah Delta from a patient care standpoint and we are anxious for those individuals to come back to work.

Through at least early August, we will have help caring for COVID-19 patients thanks to a team of 21 military health care workers deployed to us by the U.S. Department of Defense. We greatly appreciate their support and their service to our country. In the meantime, we are hard at work developing solutions to meet staffing challenges which include in-

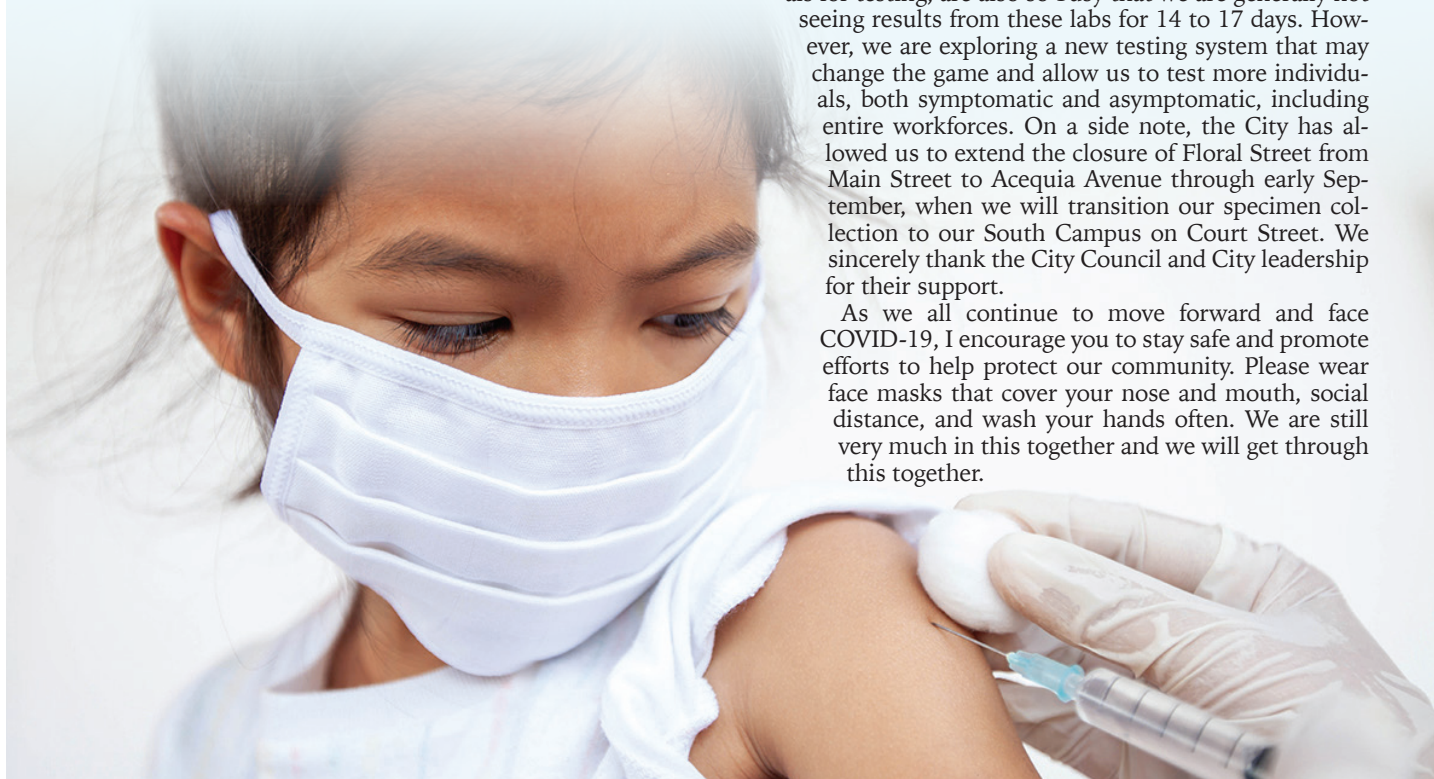
centivizing clinical staff to work additional shifts, hiring additional clinical staff, training all registered nurses on staff with a license so, that in the event they are needed, they are prepared to serve at the bedside, and hiring more student nurse interns.

In order to return to work, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend that we, as employers, require an employee who has tested positive for COVID-19 to submit evidence of a negative test before returning to work. The reason for this is that the dead virus cells can live in a person's blood stream for weeks, if not months. We use a highly sensitive laboratory platform made by BDMax to test for the presence of the COVID-19 antigen. It literally searches a patient's nasopharyngeal specimen over and over, looking for the virus, even detecting trace amounts of dead virus cells. We have had patients test positive for months after their initial diagnosis when in fact, they are not contagious at all, but dead virus cells still test as positive.

At Kaweah Delta, if we have an employee that develops symptoms, we test them and if they test positive, we send them home to quarantine for 14 days. After that time, they can come back to work if they feel well, as long as they have been symptom free for seven days and no longer need medication to control a fever. We let them return to work without testing them; they are required to wear a mask and follow all of our protocols. That is what we are doing and we are a very informed health care provider, following CDC recommendations carefully.

In recent weeks, we have heard from a number of employers seeking COVID-19 testing for employees, many of whom are asymptomatic. Unfortunately, due to the number of people seeking testing at this time, our focus has primarily been on those who have symptoms. In fact, commercial labs, which are sent specimens from asymptomatic individuals for testing, are also so busy that we are generally not seeing results from these labs for 14 to 17 days. However, we are exploring a new testing system that may change the game and allow us to test more individuals, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, including entire workforces. On a side note, the City has allowed us to extend the closure of Floral Street from Main Street to Acequia Avenue through early September, when we will transition our specimen collection to our South Campus on Court Street. We sincerely thank the City Council and City leadership for their support.

As we all continue to move forward and face COVID-19, I encourage you to stay safe and promote efforts to help protect our community. Please wear face masks that cover your nose and mouth, social distance, and wash your hands often. We are still very much in this together and we will get through this together.



STOCK PHOTO

Local health care organizations form coalition to keep residents safe amid COVID-19

A new coalition made up of leaders from health care organizations throughout Tulare and Kings Counties are working together to protect area residents and as more businesses reopen, it is recommending the community to adopt safe practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Tulare-Kings COVID-19 Coalition was formed in partnership with the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Kings County Department of Public Health, area hospitals including Kaweah Delta Medical Center, Sierra View Medical Center and Adventist Health in the Central Valley, along with health care clinics and partners. The newly formed coalition coordinates area COVID-19 response, services, and resources. This includes: sharing of best practices; unification of data and reporting information; advocating for rural communities; and implementing the latest Public Health recommendations. "During these unprecedented times, we felt that it was extremely important for our health care community to come together to protect and inform the citizens of Tulare County," said Annette Burgos, Tulare County public health emergency manager, who co-chairs the Tulare-Kings COVID-19 Coalition, along with Dr. Ryan Gates, vice president of population health management at Kaweah Delta. "We would like to continue to urge the public to continue practicing social distancing, and we strongly encourage you to wear a face mask while in public."

Dr. Gates agrees. "Hospitals are getting busier and we expect that will continue as people begin to re-engage in normal activities. This is a great time to encourage everyone to put into place those practices that we know are effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19," he said.

The coalition advises that by following the public health guidance and safety recommendations, Tulare and Kings County residents can all help prevent further spread of COVID-19, and help our local hospitals maintain capacity to care for the

community. To do this, the Coalition urges everyone to practice the following precautions:

- **Social distancing:** Continue to maintain space of at least six feet or greater between persons; avoid gatherings of any kind; practice physical distancing.
- **Cloth face coverings:** When outside the home, wearing cloth face coverings (masks) is strongly encouraged to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 if someone is asymptomatic or presymptomatic. Avoid touching your face and eyes.
- **Hand washing:** Frequently wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often.
- **Disinfecting surfaces:** Regularly disinfect high-traffic surfaces to prevent transmission from droplets that may have settled on surfaces or have transferred to commonly used surfaces through touch.
- **Stay home if sick or you are instructed to isolate/quarantine by a medical or public health professional:** If you are sick or have been instructed to stay home by a medical professional, stay home. If possible, ask others to deliver needed supplies instead of going to the store. If you live with others, follow centers for disease control guidance for caring for someone who is sick at home.

The Tulare-Kings COVID-19 Health Care Coalition was formed in partnership with the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Kings County Department of Public Health, area Hospitals—Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Sierra View Local Healthcare District and Adventist Health in the Central Valley—along with health care clinics and partners to work together during the COVID-19 pandemic for a healthier Tulare and Kings County. The newly formed coalition coordinates area COVID-19 response, services, and resources. This includes: sharing of best practices; unification of data and reporting information; advocating for rural communities; and implementing the latest Public Health recommendations.

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