

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 41, No. 24 | December 2020

INSIDE

Figaro's strives for fresh and healthy Mexican dishes

Figaro's strives to bring our communities a fresh, high quality healthy twist to Mexican style foods, while keeping the flavor of each component front and center. **2**

VUSD's staggered approach to reopening school sites

In October, we opened our school sites to stable groups of student cohorts, targeting those students with special needs who were struggling with the distance-learning model. Now, all sites are hosting student cohorts and many have several groups coming to school in person while all students meet with their teachers through videoconferencing. **3**

Visalia YPN Launches new monthly series

Earlier this year Committee Members Amanda Arreola, Marina Rojas, and Lisa Alvarado saw the need and began seeking wisdom around leadership and navigating the workforce in 2020. We came together and launched YP Talks. **4**

EVENTS

DECEMBER 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8:00 a.m.

DECEMBER 15 YPN Monthly Virtual CEO Chats

Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: YPN Facebook Live

TRAVEL WITH US

APRIL 20-MAY 3, 2021

Culinary Italy
13-Day Tour

JULY 16-24, 2021

Colorado Rockies Rail & National Parks

OCTOBER 16-20, 2021

The Magnolia Trail & The Heart of Texas

OCTOBER 19-27, 2021

London and Paris Discovery

NOVEMBER 2-9, 2021

Irish Discovery

MARCH 6-20, 2022

Colors of Morocco

MAY 18, 2022

JUNE 7 & 15, 2022

AUGUST 16, 2022

SEPTEMBER 13 & 21, 2022

Oberammergau Passion Play Germany & Austria



Travel provided by:

Collette Vacations
CST #2006766-20

Mayflower Tours
CST #2044099-20

Chamber Explorations
CST #2048841-40

For more information, go to
www.visaliachamber.org/travel

Economy recovering heading into winter



ADOBE STOCK

Could Visalians be dining inside restaurants again by Valentine's Day? Beacon Economics founding member and economist Chris Thornberg points to several encouraging signs of a rapid economic recovery. Thornberg added that shutting down the economy ultimately proved to marginally curb the spread of COVID-19.



The Sun-Gazette

Reggie Ellis
Publisher
The Sun-Gazette

Now that national and state elections are over, with the exception of the last round of ballot counting, a few legal challenges and runoffs, the country can turn its attention away from the candidates and back to the core issues of the campaigns—the economy and the pandemic that has shaped it.

The Tulare County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) held its Post-Election Economic Summit last week and welcomed back Chris Thornberg, founding partner of Beacon Economics. In his post-election

prognostication, the economist said there are new faces in high places but not much else has changed. He said the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is good news for the country because there is “more of a chance of pulling to the center” from the parties’ extremes and having a vice president from California should improve communication with the state.

“Democrats lost seats in the House and the Senate may remain Republican, so we will have split control over the nation, which means not a lot of changes in public policy,” Thornberg said.

While the top of the ticket went Democratic, California voters pushed back on left wing controls of the economy. Voters denied propositions to increase property taxes, affirmative action and rent control while approving inheritance protections and the rights of independent contractors and their employers.

“The propositions were fascinating,” Thornberg said. “It shows just how out of touch Sacramento is with the population base.”

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Tinsel, garland, rest, reflection



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

I am tired. When I look around, I realize I am not the only one simply just worn out, fatigued by “the whole thing.” 2020 has been an unbelievable year. Business owners have had to reinvent and pivot with a speed like never have before, all in an attempt just to keep their doors open. Business is never easy, but this year makes that a laughable understatement. Our employees face new protocols and procedures at work. Socially all norms have changed. What once was common, hugging a friend, has been replaced by an awkward, distanced masked wave. We all want to be safe; we all want our lives back; we all want a break.

National reports and local indicators show that Christmas decorations are flying off the shelves. While it was once socially taboo to decorate before Thanksgiving, this year, tinsel and garland have hung in many Visalians' homes since the beginning of November. When asking why so many were seeking to decorate so early, a commentator gave what is now my favorite response, “ya know, 2020.”

Usually, this time of year is full of obligations, lists, and an extended social calendar. Typically we create such a busy mess we have to fight for the simple joys. But right now, simple joy is all we want. Frankly, it is what we all need. Taking a break, having a good Christmas, or Hanukkah, sounds like the perfect way to reclaim this year.

What does reclaiming this year look like? How can we do that? First, we need to celebrate all we've overcome. I mean, at one point, we were talking about how to handle murder hornets. Murder Hornets?! From monumental to the minuscule, this year, we overcame. That deserves recognition. Recognize it in yourself and certainly recognize it in our staff, community members, neighbors, and friends. Simply saying, thank you for helping us get through such a tough year goes so far.

We also must see the silver linings. There are certainly challenges that need our attention. However, I am struck at how often those challenges have provided silver linings. It is one of my most favorite new questions. What is the latest newly discovered silver lining in your life, in the life of your business, in the life of your family? Talking about these shows blessings, reliance, and hope that not all was lost. One of my silver linings—I loved watching the Chamber team pour themselves into doing anything and everything to support and promote our local businesses. They came together to work at an innovative breakneck speed and responsive in ways I have never seen. We're a better team and a stronger Chamber because of it. Do I want another 2020? NO WAY! But I'm thankful for the silver linings we've had. I am so thankful for your Visalia Chamber staff—Sue Summers, Jena Rodriguez, Amanda Arreola, and Charlie Saponara.

Tinsel, Garland, and glitter are less about aesthetics and much more about a visual reminder of peace, joy, and being deliberate. I hope these visual cues help you find the much-needed rest and reflection we all crave and deserve. There will be busy Christmas again shortly but in the meantime, find the silver lining, embrace this chance to choose joy and recharge for tomorrow.

ServiceMaster CEO comes up with neat idea



Sometimes you just have to stop and smell the hot chocolate. On Saturday, Nov. 7, that's what a number of Visalians did (well, they drank some of that tasty hot chocolate too).

Amid an unprecedented year in which we've all had to pivot, adjust, then pivot again, your Visalia Chamber has been steadfast about supporting local business and our community. Some of our pivots have led us in a completely new direction, but, that's not always a bad thing. Back in July, Chamber President/CEO, Gail Zurek, struck up a conversation with local business leader, Tony Benevento, President/CEO of ServiceMaster by Benevento. They asked the question of what was next for all the kids that were now distance learning and unable to enjoy the extra-circular activities that they had grown accustomed to. Tony challenged us to think outside the box. The gears started turning. Before long, Jr. CEO, presented by ServiceMaster by Benevento, was born.

The idea behind Jr. CEO was to create a program that would help kids learn about what it takes to open and run a business through five virtual learning sessions, each session pre-recorded through Zoom so the students could work at their own pace. We broke the program down into five categories: Business Fundamentals, Cost Models, Safety & Food Prep, Marketing & Customer Service, and Savings & Money Management. We then established that the target audience would be of an upper-elementary age, so the information needed to be put into certain, easy to process terms. What followed was the development of workbooks that would accompany each virtual session. Each virtual session was led by Visalia Chamber President/CEO, Gail Zurek, and included a local business leader as a guest speaker. Tony Benevento was the guest for both Business Fundamentals and Marketing & Customer Service. Annabel Prindle, representing Educational Employees Credit Union, who sponsored tuition for a group of students, was our guest for the Cost Models session. Craig Van Horn, who has locally owned and

See NEAT on page 5

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:

- SS Shirts

Business Connector Members:

- Sign Gypsies

Small Business Members:

- Perfection Pet Foods
- Riverway Medical Care
- Savon Furniture
- Vance Physical Therapy & Wellness

Small Business Members Nonprofit:

- Visalia Gleaning Seniors

RENEWING

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce thanks

the following companies for renewing their commitment to the community of Visalia.

Community Investor Members:

- Naked Nut, LLC

Business Builder Members:

- Geiger Prosthetics and Orthotics, Inc.*
- Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel*

Business Connector Members:

- Valley Pacific Petroleum*

Small Business Members:

- BarrelHouse Visalia
- Beazer Homes*
- Clark Pest Control*
- Comfort Now Air Conditioning & Heating*
- Graham & Associates*
- Gubler & Abbott
- Leavitt United Insurance Services*
- Lux Dermatology*



- Martin & Martin Properties LLC*
- Montecito Apartment Homes*
- Palm Occupational Medicine*
- Partyworks, Inc. dba Party City
- Rauber Johnson & Black*
- Sequoia Cigar Company
- The Painted Table*
- Tulare County Office of Education

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Executives Association of Tulare County*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

American Red Cross & Salvation Army Fundraiser



Now through Dec. 31, 2020 Eagle Mountain Casino will be hosting a Fundraiser benefiting the American Red Cross and Salvation Army. The proceeds will directly benefit those affected by the SQX Complex Fire, in our local community.

All Guests and Team Members making a purchase at retail registers will have the opportunity to make a donation to the American Red Cross Central California (ARCCC). At the time of purchase, the Cashier will ask the guest if he/or she would like to make a donation to the American Red Cross. The guest can donate their change and round the total to next dollar amount, they will also have the option to donate more than their spare change. Guests receipt will show a "Donation" purchase listed.

Lightning caused the SQX Complex fire on Aug. 29 and has burned a total of 171,032 acres and is 80% contained. 228 structures have been lost and 17 structures damaged; Approximately 75 Families were also displaced.

The Casino thanks their guests and team members in advance for any contributions small or large that they contribute for this great cause.

Eagle Mountain Casino is a full service casino and is owned and operated by the Tule River

See FUNDRAISER on page 6

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

Name: Tosha Pequeño
Company: Valley Strong Credit Union
Title: Senior Branch Manager

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

The Chamber and Ambassador Program has been a great partner for Valley Strong Credit Union from the beginning. With their help, we had an amazing turn out for our Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting ceremony in October. Specifically, Charlie has helped me on several occasions by introducing me to key partners in the community. Anything we have asked the Chamber for assistance with, they have been there with a positive and helpful attitude!

Why is it important to employees to get involved in the Visalia Chamber



SUBMITTED PHOTO

programs and events?

It is one thing to live in a community, it is a completely different thing to be involved and rooted in your community. Being involved with the Visalia Chamber and their programs and attending events allows you to make that deeper connection. You meet new people, expose your company and values to community members, and have a chance to develop relationships with wonderful people.

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

I have worked for Valley Strong Credit Union over 15 years, and what continues to keep me here year after year, is the way our organization treats people. From the top down, our team strives to make every Member feel like family. We care about our Members,

what they are going through, and how we can help them through it. We put people over profit and focus on doing what's right versus being right.

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

My daughter and I moved to Visalia in July, so unfortunately the pandemic has put a hold on learning what all this community has to offer. However, we really love walking the Downtown area. Since the restaurants started serving outdoors, the ambiance is fun and energized and I love sitting outdoors with the beautiful trees and eclectic buildings. My absolute favorite place to frequent is Downtown Rookies Sports Bar and Grill on Main Street. The staff there is wonderful, and food is amazing!

Figaro's strives for fresh and healthy Mexican dishes



Name: Yvette Figueroa
Company: Figaro's Mexican Grill
Title: Director of Operations

Figaro's strives to bring our communities a fresh, high quality healthy twist to Mexican style foods, while keeping the flavor of each component front and center. Whether its one of our award winning salads, or our handcrafted chile verde, or something in between, Figaro's will always pride itself in serving handmade, and homegrown rooted dishes. Our menu is versatile in which we include menu items that fit any vegan, gluten free, or vegetarian lifestyles. Through our doors, you will find low in sodium meals, you will see no microwaves, and you might here our cooks safely hand chopping all our products. All of our customer's dishes are made to order, and made from scratch in one of the most cleanest commercial kitchen you can find! Those are some of the things that Figaro's believes are behind the secret of exceptional quality eats!

News to share

Our Chicken Tortilla Soup will be back this month of November!! (drooling now that its FINALLY cooling down!!)

Something interesting about our business and products

Striving to bring healthier Mexican dishes full of flavor!

All menu items are made to be low in sodium.

Customers can purchase our fresh made salsas, dressings, marinades, and sauces to keep at home! Here's a little secret.... Our Chop Chop vinaigrette dressing doubles as an exceptional marinade for meats AND veggies!!

How does our company get involved in the local community?

We support our local schools, various church organizations, police force, athletic organizations, any local organization that has come our way we have helped with food and service donations, gift certificate donations, and funding. Please come our way and we will find a way to help!

How has the chamber helped us?

The Visalia Chamber has helped us by always making sure that we are apart of this community.

Our cities Chamber has always kept us in the loop with all of our cities events and provides different options for us to give back. The Chamber of Visalia has also helped us on social media by helping us spread our news further out to our community and our followers.

Top thing that we wish for Visalia to know about our business

We would like to let our community of Visalia know that we are here to support our community just like the community has supported us. This is aside from being able to serve you our custom, handcrafted dishes. We went to give back to the very same community that has welcomed us with open arms, and we thank you so much for that. We wish for our city to know that they can always reach out to us for any type of help for our community and its organizations. To all our local schools and any type of programs that work with the FUTURE of this city, please reach feel free to reach out to us. We are here to help, and most of all, see our city progress.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Business Update is the official monthly publication of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 222 N. Garden St., Ste. 300, Visalia CA 93291, (559) 734-5876. Periodicals, Postage Paid at Visalia, CA 93277; Publication No. USPS 494-660. Annual Subscription rate \$15. Postmaster: Send address changes to Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 222 N. Garden St., Ste. 300, Visalia, CA 93291. Advertising information, call Jena at (559) 734-5976 or email info@visaliachamber.org.

Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

©2020, Visalia Chamber of Commerce. All rights reserved. Reproduction by any means of the entire contents or any portion of this publication without written permission is prohibited. The appearance of any advertisements in the publication does not constitute support or endorsement for any product, person, cause, business, or organization named therein, unless specifically noted otherwise in the advertisement.

CONTACT US

Send briefs via e-mail to amanda@visaliachamber.org
Call 734-5876. Mail to: Visalia Chamber of Commerce 222 N. Garden St. #300 Visalia, CA 93291
Visit www.visaliachamber.org

Ask Jena

How can I support local businesses?

We appreciate your support! Local businesses need your help, especially for the upcoming holiday season. You can find our Business Directory on our website for a full list of our members.

I have a virtual event to share, what can I do?

Members can post events to the Chamber website through your Member Portal. Bonus: Member events get pulled and posted to the weekly Chamber Member to Member E-news!

Have a questions about the Chamber?

Send me a message: Jena@visaliachamber.org

Thank You!

For sponsoring tuition for our Jr. CEO students!

The **Assistance League of Visalia** recently purchased 220 pairs of shoes at JC Penney and delivered them to elementary schools throughout the Visalia area. Ivanhoe, Goshen, Highland, Conyer and Washington accepted these donated shoes with a grateful heart. A BIG thank you to ALV members Beverly Yoshida, Donna Hofer, Julie Shelburne, Donna Mekeel, Cherie Stevenson, Pam Corliss and Sue Sanders for purchasing, labeling, bagging and delivering the much needed and very appreciated shoes to local kids!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Congratulations **Suncrest Bank and M Green and Company** were ranked among the fastest growing companies in the Central San Joaquin Valley by **The Business Journal**.

Sheriff Mike Boudreaux and the **Tulare County Sheriff's Department** hosted the 19th annual South Valley Battle of the Badges Blood drive.

Congratulations to **Personnel Solutions Unlimited, Inc.** on their new location located at 1326 W. Center Avenue in Visalia. Central Valley Community Bancorp, the parent company of **Central Valley Community Bank**, announced its Third Quarter highlights: Net loans increased 17.23% and deposits increased 26.10%.



Central Valley Business Forms recently announced **Chuck Steinman**, owner of **Midtown Sports** joined the **CVBF** sales force. Chuck brings 39 years of sporting goods and apparel expertise. Like **Midtown Sports**, **CVBF** offers custom embroidery, custom silk screen printing, custom art, and digitizing.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

For its comprehensive efforts to keep employees safe and informed through COVID-19, **California Water Service Company** was named the winner of a Silver Stevie® Award in the fifth annual Stevie Awards for Great Employers' Most Valuable Employer for COVID-19 Response category.

The **Visalia Fox Theatre** recently announced a generous donor agreed to match every dollar donated up to \$10,000 between Nov. 3 and 15.

We love seeing members supporting one another! **Giant Chevrolet Cadillac** recently donated \$15,000 to **Visalia Rescue Mission**.

Congratulations to **Kaweah Delta Health Care District** who was

named the most awarded hospital in the Central Valley for 2021. Recognitions include one of America's 50 Best Hospitals in Cardiac Surgery, America's top 100 hospitals in stroke, pulmonary and critical care.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Eagle Mountain Casino was

blessed last year when guests donated more than \$600,000 to their Veterans Fundraiser. So much that the Casino had money left over to give back to four more local Veteran Organizations this year. \$41,600 was donated to the Veterans Resource Center at Porterville College, Central Valley Veterans serving central California, A Combat Veterans Hope of Visalia, and Our Heroes Dreams of Hanford.

Congratulations to **Voltage Multipliers Inc. (VMI)** who celebrated 40 years in November. VMI was established to design, manufacture, and market high voltage products. Dennis Kemp, president of VMI established the company in November of 1980. VMI started in Farmersville, and quickly out grew that facility, and built a new facility in the Visalia Industrial Park. Over the last four decades VMI has grown to over 200 employees, a total of 45,000 square feet, producing and selling High Voltage diodes, power supplies and related products, to a Global Market that includes Medical, Military, Aerospace, Agriculture and Industrial markets. All products are designed and manufactured in Visalia.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

THE LAW AT WORK

When a 'non-complete' becomes a 'cease-and-desist'



Brett T. Abbott
Attorney, Gubler & Abbott

Employee non-competition agreements in California are generally unenforceable and against public policy per Business and Professions Code section 16600. Nevertheless, employers (especially out-of-state employers) frequently include such provisions in employment contracts. Such employers usually apply the following rationale - "it can't hurt" to have non-compete clauses as a deterrent and a potential source of leverage.



When a previous employer learns that its former employee is seeking employment with a new employer, a strongly-worded "cease and desist" letter from the old employer to the new usually follows. What employers may not know is that such letters can carry certain risks for the employer seeking to enforce the non-compete provision, such as a claim for intentional interference with contract. However, one Court of Appeal decision, *Silguero v. Creteguard*, held that the new employer may be liable if it responds to the threat by terminating the employee.

In reaching its decision, the court began with the theory that in California, "the interests of the employee in his own mobility and betterment are deemed paramount to the competitive business interests of the employers." Based on this strong public policy the Court determined that any explicit no-hire agreement between the two companies would have been illegal and unenforceable. The Court further concluded that terminating *Silguero* "out of respect for" the non-compete agreement with his prior employer was merely achieving the same result in an indirect manner. As a result, the Court found that if *Silguero* could prove his allegations, his new employer would be liable for the tort of Wrongful Termination in Violation of Public Policy.

So, what should you do if you receive an aggressive cease-and-desist letter from a prior employer seeking to enforce a non-competition agreement? Do not automatically terminate the new employee in such situations. First, the underlying agreement is almost certainly unenforceable anyway. Second, you could face a wrongful termination claim if you do.

This article is for education and information purposes only; it should not be construed as legal advice. If you have an employment law question for inclusion in a future article, contact Brett T. Abbott at Gubler & Abbott (brett@thecalifornialawyers.com). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott, (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinoweth St., Visalia, CA 93291 (www.thecalifornialawyers.com).

CITY UPDATE

"Loyal to Local" for the Holidays

The holiday season has arrived, and as the temperature drops and the twinkling lights go up they are reminders that it is the most wonderful time of the year to shop and eat local.



The weeks ahead provide an opportunity to show our appreciation and support for our business community and all they do for our local economy. By patronizing local businesses and keeping dollars in the community, it can help them close out a tough year on a brighter note, and give them a jump start on the year ahead.

We join the Visalia Chamber of Commerce and voices throughout our city in asking Visalians to support our local business community as best you can, by being loyal to local.

For those looking for ideas, outdoor dining is still a great way to enjoy a delicious meal out, and the resilience of our eateries across the City is evident in the many outside, pick-up and delivery options that are available.

With outdoor shopping opportunities, curbside pick-up options, in-person shopping available at some store locations, and virtual activities available, the diverse businesses that call Visalia home make it easy to find a gift that fits everyone on your list.

This pandemic's scope has been far reaching, and commit-

ting to keeping our dollars in Visalia means choosing local and patronizing all businesses - not just restaurants and retail - but everything from auto shops to salons and everything in between.

When your shopping and errands are complete, leave a review on platforms like Facebook or Yelp. These positive reviews help businesses attract new patrons and can be particularly helpful for potential customers who are here on business, recreation, or are new residents to the area.

As we've noted before, local is where folks build their lives and create the sense of community we are all committed to. Consider doing what you can to support our business community. Choose local, choose Visalia.

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

VUSD's staggered approach to reopening school sites



Tamara Ravalin, Ed.D.
Superintendent VUSD

In September, we successfully opened our school sites for one-to-one assessments and services for our students. We started with several pilot sites to make sure that we had all safety protocols in place to keep our students and staff healthy. In October, we opened our school sites to stable groups of student cohorts, targeting those students with special needs who were struggling with the distance-learning model. Now, all sites are hosting student cohorts and many have several groups coming to school in person while all students meet with their teachers through videoconferencing.



On Oct. 30, we were excited to learn that the Tulare County Health Department and the California Department of Public Health had approved our Elementary School Waiver. The approved waiver allows us to bring back our preschool through sixth grade students to school for in-person learning. Due to the re-



PHOTO COURTESY OF VUSD

Visalia Unified school sites are letting students and teachers close the gap of distanced learning after reopening with safety measures.

quirement for social distancing, our elementary students will attend school half-day for in-person instruction. Preschool through second grade students are scheduled to return to school on Monday, Nov. 30.

Our athletic teams have been conditioning for a couple of months now, and we have slowly layered in the use of equipment so our student athletes will be ready for competition, should it resume in Janu-

ary. We have also approved other extracurricular activities in the performing arts and journalism areas, all with strict protocols to keep everyone safe.

The need to return students to in-person instruction is great for a variety of reasons. We have recognized an increase in the number of our students who need support with social and emotional issues and the difficulty some of our students experience in distance learning. We also know that there is an economic impact when families need to stay at home to support their children and that some of our students are missing out on valuable career and technical experience. A key to returning all of our students to school is moving our county into the red tier.

We continue to work closely with Tulare County Public Health officials to ensure that we are doing what we can to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Their guidance and support is instrumental to our operational support and we value the partnership we have with them. Our commitment remains to return to school in a safe and responsible manner.

OPEN A NEW CHECKING ACCOUNT GET \$250*

visit one of our conveniently located branches for details

<p>North Visalia Branch 3030 N. Dinuba Boulevard, Suite A Visalia, CA 93291</p>	<p>Tulare Branch 1989 E. Prosperity Avenue Tulare, CA 93274</p>
--	--

*Program Requirements:
• Postcard must be presented at time of account opening.
• Open a new share (minimum opening deposit of \$5) and checking account (minimum opening deposit of \$25).
• Direct Deposit into your Valley Strong account OR an average of 12 transactions per month for 90 days to receive the \$250 incentive on the 91st day.
• A Valley Strong Debit Card.
• New account(s) must be open and in good standing for 90 calendar days.
• Payout will be made automatically to qualifying account by direct deposit on, or around the 91st day after new account has been opened.
• Taxes due are the sole responsibility of the recipient. Valley Strong Credit Union will report to the state and federal agencies as required by applicable law.
• This offer cannot be used in conjunction with other offers.
For full disclosure visit www.valleystrong.com/specialoffer250. Offer valid through 12/31/2020.

NCUA Federally Insured by NCUA | Equal Opportunity Lender

VALLEY STRONG CREDIT UNION
(800) 221-3311 • valleystrong.com

JULY 16 — JULY 24, 2021
COLORADO ROCKIES RAIL & NATIONAL PARKS

Denver, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado National Monument, Grand Junction, Canyonlands National Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, Arches National Park, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Mesa Verde National Park (UNESCO), Choice on Tour, Royal Gorge Route Railroad, Garden of the Gods

PRICING STARTS AT \$2,999 PER PERSON FOR DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IF BOOKED BY JANUARY 16, 2021
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 16, 2021
PROVIDED BY: COLLETTE VACATIONS. CST#: 2005766-20

OCTOBER 16 - 20, 2021
THE MAGNOLIA TRAIL & THE HEART OF TEXAS

Dallas City Tour, AT&T Stadium, Historic JFK Sites, Dealey Plaza, George W. Bush Presidential Library, Waco City Tour & HGTV Series Sites, Magnolia Markets at The Silos, Dr. Pepper Museum.

PRICING STARTS AT \$2,099 PER PERSON FOR DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IF BOOKED BY DECEMBER 31, 2020
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2020
PROVIDED BY: CHAMBER EXPLORATIONS. CST#: 2048541-40

For Reservations or more information:
Visalia Chamber of Commerce
(559) 734-5876 sue@visaliachamber.org

Visalia YPN launches new monthly series



Lisa Alvarado
Steering Committee Member
Young Professionals Network

Visalia's Young Professional Network is thrilled at the support we've been receiving from our YP Talks. Earlier this year Committee Members Amanda Arreola, Marina Rojas, and Lisa Alvarado saw the need and began seeking wisdom around leadership and navigating the workforce in 2020. We came together and launched YP Talks - a new segment that sources local brilliance and places it on display through our social channels to encourage young professionals. We convene every third Tuesday of the month from 6 to 6:30 p.m. on Facebook Live. We center our narrative specifically for young professionals and you can find us here - <https://www.facebook.com/VisaliaYPN/>

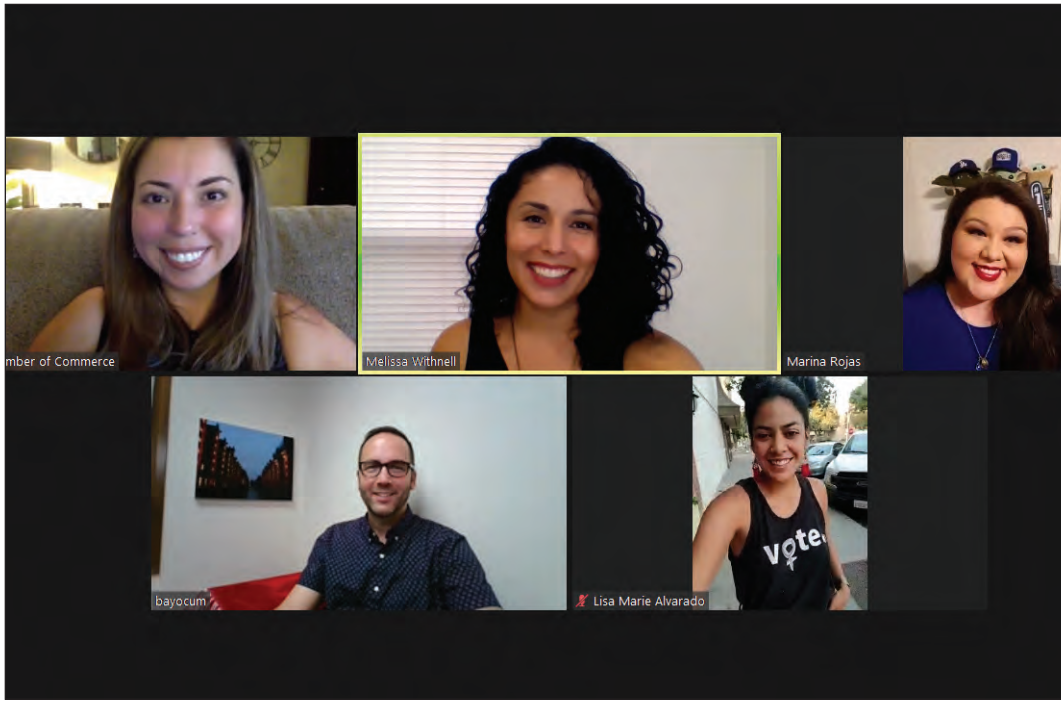


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
The Young Professionals Networks hosts their once a month YP-Talks allowing influential professionals in Tulare County to tell the community about their organization. Above chamber events and marking coordinator, Amanda Arreola, YP-Talks interviewer Melissa Withnell, YP-Talks host Marina Rojas, October YP-Talks guest Brice Yocum - Tucoemas Federal Credit Union CEO, and YPN steering committee member Lisa Alvarado introduce themselves prior to the third YP-Talks online event. Each interview is streamed from Zoom and over YPN's Facebook page.

We launched our series August 18th featuring Caity Meader Executive Director of Family Services of Tulare County. The content alone inspired us to continue to meet monthly. Following Caity, we heard from Director of Development Liz Wynn with Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation, and CEO Tucoemas Federal Credit Union Brice Yocum. We find value in hearing knowledge firsthand from Executives rooted in Tulare County. We're finding the narrative is not only refreshing as a Valley perspective, but the access to local opportunities coming straight from the source has proven invaluable! Caity Meader shared the correlation of our times and the increase in domestic violence cases. She helped us navigate access to becoming more aware and informed on how to support our community from within. Liz Wynn gave us insight into the incredible work the Foundation is doing

See YPN on page 5

CASA can change a child's future



As a valuable member of our community, we are reaching out to you to share more about our endeavors and invite you to participate in changing a child's story. CASA of Tulare County is a non-profit organization that advocates for our community's children who've been abused or neglected and placed in the foster care system. We organize, train, and appoint volunteer advocates to be the eyes, ears, and voice of the children in foster care with the toughest cases. As a result, our kids have a better chance of beating the odds.

Statistics have proven that children placed in foster care are more likely to later face homelessness, substance abuse, pursue criminal activity, or become abusers themselves. A child with a CASA volunteer, however, is more likely to do better in school, have fewer placements, and find a resolution quicker, and as a result, will be more likely to make better decisions as they grow up into adults.

We currently have a waiting list of almost 250 children still hoping to have a volunteer placed with them to advocate for their best interests. For this reason, it is imperative that we continue to RAISE awareness and support to ensure we have the resources necessary to assist our kids in the most trying times of their lives, which they are in by no fault of their own.

RAISE 2020 is a season that encourages our community to RAISE their hand, intentionally making the choice to RAISE their voice and speak up for our children in foster care. By doing these two things, our community then begins to RAISE awareness. When a community comes together to raise awareness, we also raise support. Support can be a variety of things from

See CASA on page 5

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

City planning 101



Class was in session again for Leadership Visalia, this time we learned about Planning and Land Use. We started our day at 324 S. Santa Fe in downtown Visalia, which I remember it once as the site of Premier Color Graphics but is now the home of 4Creeks, Inc. Matt Ainley, President of 4Creeks and Visalia native was gracious enough to allow our class to use his conference room for the day. Not only is Matt the property owner but he also designed the office space using an open floor plan industrial style layout which is very appealing to the eye if I do say so myself.

We started our day with guest speaker Paul Bernal, City Planner for City of Visalia. He gave us an overview of what all goes into the thought of city planning. The City of Visalia Planning Division oversees the environmental review and establishment of land use policies for future growth. The Planning Division enforces the zoning and development code that gives specific standards for which development occurs. These standards include allowed uses, building square footage limits, heights, setbacks and landscaping needs. Furthermore, the development code also establishes when projects

are subject to advanced review and must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and/or the City Council. The Division also ensures compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to identify and mitigate impacts of the project.

Zone districts for the City include multiple residential districts that allow a range of housing including single family detached to apartment style housing. Similarly, there are multiple commercial districts that allow various intensities of development ranging from neighborhood to regional style development. Other districts also include open space and parks, institutional uses such as school, churches or government centers, and industrial or manufacturing uses. The zones specifically identify specific development standards that match these uses which are allowed or conditionally allowed within the zone. Paul provided a very detailed PowerPoint which included color coded zoning areas - a personal favorite of mine, which identified commercial, specialty shops, open farmland etc.

Projects which are subject to review before the Planning Commission (enter another guest speaker Brett Taylor who has served on the Planning Commission since 2012)

See PLANNING on page 5

Fresno announces Alaska Airlines' direct flight to LAX



Fresno Yosemite International Airport announces a new addition to our Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) route carried by Alaska Airlines. The airline, committed to our passenger's needs, offers twice daily, non-stop flights further expanding direct air service from the Central Valley to southern California and major hub connections to national and international destinations. Getting you closer to your next dream getaway. <https://www.alaskaair.com/> <https://flyfresno.com/> #flysmartlandhappy



Backup, backup, backup again

techcare 360 Data is a huge recourse today. We have it at the touch of our fingertips, and we can find all sorts of information from it. You can even change it to show you a lot about a company or one person. Companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft use it as their primary source of income. It is very important in 2020.

For a small business, this means your financial data or your client data. It could also be a database of information about products or processes. This data is priceless. If something were to happen, you need to have excellent backups in place. 50% of companies that lose all their data, close after the first year. That is huge! Here are the 3 types of backups that you need in your business to avoid disaster.

Cloud backup

There is a lot of cloud backup services out there. You can even have file syncing built in as well. We recommend OneDrive, Google Drive, or Dropbox to name a few. These services allow you to sync your data from one device to another for easy access. It has the added benefit of being a backup as well. You can also use services like Carbonite or Backblaze. These services just backup the data on your computer or server in case something happens.

Local storage

If you don't trust the cloud/internet, we get it. There are tons of options built right into your computer like Windows Backup for Windows or Time Machine for Mac. These software's keep everything local on a flash drive or an external hard drive you can get from the store. However, if you lose your backup and your computer in the same place, there is no other copy. A step further you could even share backup with the whole house with something like Synology or QNAP. These devices allow you to backup and share to all your devices just like cloud storage. Only you have the data safe and sound in your possession.

Disaster recovery

For more corporate environments, you go to disaster recovery. This means that you can have entire servers or computers as backup to your data in case something happens. This makes getting the data backup much faster for more critical data. These can be complicated to setup and maintain so we recommend following up with your IT provider. These can be custom made for your needs.

If you are not backing up your data on a regular basis, we highly recommend it. Even if you just have pictures and memories, you will hate to lose that to breaking or stolen technology. There are many other reasons to backup that we will talk about next month when we talk about security.

Wishing all a joyful holiday season as we look forward with great expectations to a fresh start in 2021!

Call us. 559.739.1747 • DmiAgency.com



STRATEGIC MARKETING CORPORATE ID ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS WEBSITES SOCIAL MEDIA

Thank you

WE'VE PROVEN THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY IS LOCAL.





PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEVR

CleVR swooped in on a Visalia downtown space only weeks after Brides 'n Maidens decided to close their doors. Late last month Visalia approved the necessary permits for CleVR to move right in as downtown's newest business. Soon Visalia residents and visitors alike will have the opportunity to engage in a puzzling escape room or escape real reality and navigate an entirely virtual world with their virtual reality game space.

Escape room and virtual reality arcade coming to Visalia

The Sun-Gazette

As one business closes in downtown Visalia, another one opens. CleVR Escape

plans to relocate from their building in downtown Tulare to the former location of Brides 'n Maidens in downtown Visalia.

On Nov. 16, the city approved the building permits for CleVR Escape to open shop downtown. They decided to move from Tulare to take advantage of increased foot traffic at their new location.

"We're very excited to be coming to Visalia, I think being a part of that vibrant Visalia area would be a good fit and give people something cool to do while they're out," CleVR Escape co-owner David McAllister said. "There's nothing like it anywhere in the area."

The business offers two forms of entertainment in one place: escape rooms and a virtual reality (VR) arcade. The idea of an escape room is for groups of two to 10 people to come in and solve a series of puzzles throughout the room to find a way to escape. Groups are usually given one hour to solve the puzzle and the focus is on team building. The recommended age is 12 years old and above.

The VR arcade consists of two stations where people play VR video games in groups of one to four using HTC Vive pro headsets and controllers. Customers can rent out a station for 30 minutes or one hour with over 50 games to choose from such as sports, shooter, racing, etc.

CleVR Escape first opened in Tulare in April 2018. They initially wanted to open in Visalia but could not find an ideal location at the time. Now that the new space is secured, they are focused on making major renovations to the building. That will likely take several months but they are hoping to open by mid-February or early March 2021. By that point, they are also hoping that Tulare County is out of the purple tier on the state's COVID-19 monitoring list.

McAllister co-owns the business with his wife Katie. The couple grew up in Tulare and attended Tulare Western High School. David is now a math teacher at the high school while Katie is a dental hygienist in Visalia.

YPN Continued from page 4

and how it's helping us meet the need for healthcare in one of the most pressing times of our lives. We're aiming to inform and build funnels for direct access to incoming drivers to the workforce. Brice Yocum blew us out of the water with his perspective on leadership. He inspired us around social businesses and using your influence for good.

We with Visalia's Young Professional Network want to officially invite you in for a talk with us. Come alongside and learn with other local professionals on how we move forward. We hope to provide a place for young professionals to learn, build, and thrive here in Visalia. Find us on Facebook and Instagram, feel encouraged to submit suggestions for speakers!

PLANNING Continued from page 4

or City Council will have public hearings where the public is invited to provide feedback and concerns for proposals. CEQA specifically requires public notification and review availability of any documentation for public and affected agencies to ensure that project considers alternatives or unforeseen impacts as well.

All in all, it was a beautiful day in downtown Visalia and our class learned valuable insight on how exactly our city is planned for economic growth. City Council meetings are open to the public, you can find the meeting and agendas located on the City of Visalia website or click here for direct access https://www.visalia.city/government/city_council/sire_iframe.asp.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

50% of Tulare court COVID releases re-offend

By Tim Ward
Tulare County District Attorney



Half of the inmates released from custody earlier this year have re-offended according to research conducted by staff of the Office of the District Attorney. In April and July of this year, TCDA prosecutors opposed hundreds of motions requesting inmates housed in Tulare County jail facilities be released due to possible COVID dangers. As a result of those motions, over 100 inmates were ordered by the Tulare County Superior Court to be released back into our communities.

"I recognize that there is a technical distinction between incarcerated defendants who were released as a result of COVID orders and those potential inmates released

immediately due to zero-dollar bail, but there is no distinction in the impact on our community. History shows us that repeat offenders will, and have, re-offended. While it is a sad fact that half of these inmates released are facing new charges, the real travesty is that about one-third of these repeat offenders are now facing felony charges involving crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, and domestic violence. These victims, these families, and these members of our community are why my Office stridently opposed these motions and their voice deserves to be heard," said District Attorney Tim Ward.

"In an effort to protect public safety, I have repeatedly advocated for the elimination of zero-dollar bail. In June, the Judicial Council of California voted to stop the mandatory policy and leave its further practice to the discretion of the county Presiding Judge. Unfortunately, the Court notified us yesterday that other emergency provisions will continue, and that no order was given to rescind zero-dollar bail. I do support some modification to court operations which allow parties to appear in court via remote technology, but I have been very vocal about opposing these early release schemes," continued Ward.

"In light of the voters of this County (and State) declaring that cash bail should remain, I am disappointed that our law enforcement partners and residents are left unprotected. One cannot remain committed to a theoretical social experiment without due regard for the people who shoulder the burden of crime," Ward stated.

"Please know that the dedicated Prosecutors who carry the Torch for victims and their families will continue striving to seek justice every day and we will continue to oppose the unwarranted release of inmates."

OFFICE SUITE AVAILABLE



Ideal Location For A Satellite Office or Small Business Start.

\$610 PER MONTH RENT INCLUDES:
103 sq. ft. Executive Suite located in the Visalia Chamber of Commerce building. Utilities, taxes, wireless internet, mail reception, building maintenance, secure 24-hour access, use of bathrooms and kitchenette. The Visalia Chamber provides receptionist for walk-in customers, directory listing on entry area, use of shared conference room for 8 - 12 people when available, use of copier/fax/email on a per copy charge.

INTERESTED? CONTACT US TO SCHEDULE A TOUR!

222 N. GARDEN ST STE 300 VISALIA CA 93291
(559) 734-5876 | INFO@VISALIACHAMBER.ORG

RIBBON CUTTING



ItsFree2You.com held a ribbon cutting for their new location on Oct. 29, 2020. They are located at 2405 W. Caldwell Avenue and can be contacted at (559) 309-4880.

Kaweah Delta Hospice

Holiday Giving


DONATE TODAY
Our Hospice Christmas Elves may show up at your door with this beautiful tree!

WHY GIVE
Our Hospice Services allow pediatric and adult patients to remain comfortably at home surrounded by loved ones.

HOW
Donate at least \$100 to the Kaweah Delta Hospice Foundation before November 19th.

Donate by visiting us at KaweahDelta.org/Christmas or call 624-2359.



 Kaweah Delta Hospice Foundation

NEAT Continued from page 1

operated A & W Restaurants in the Central Valley for many years, presented during the Safety and Food Prep session. The final session of Savings and Money Management was co-hosted by Brice Yocum, the President/CEO of Tucoemas Federal Credit Union.

By the time the program was up and running, 40 students had signed up, each with their eyes on the prize of opening their hot chocolate stands and selling their product to the public on Nov. 7. Along the way, students were provided with bonus material as well. Before the Safety and Food Prep session, we partnered with Precision Prep, a local meal prep business, to create a video demonstrating how to create a delicious pot of hot chocolate. About mid-way through the program, students were given an opportunity to participate in a virtual roundtable discussion. During the roundtable, students were able to talk about how their businesses were coming together, ask questions, and provide feedback about the program.

As the first semester of Jr. CEO wound down, all the attention turned to what we labeled as Hot Chocolate Day. Several of our young entrepre-

neurs opted to market their business through the media channels provided by the Visalia Chamber. The word was out; the anticipation and excitement growing. The results of the program, and the hard work of the students and their families, was abundantly clear on Saturday, Nov. 7. Each hot chocolate stand that participated that day did extremely well. Lines of people from start to finish filled with individuals eagerly awaiting to try the goodies that our young business owners had created. Most students went with the hot chocolate theme, but also added secondary items like cookies, popcorn, Italian sodas, cinnamon rolls, organic dog treats, and more. Some had created their own concepts like breakfast burritos and book-marks.

Jr. CEO started as a challenge, became an opportunity, and ended up as a tremendous success for all involved. So much so that the program will launch again in the spring, with the theme of opening a juice stand, and become a staple of the Visalia Chamber's community initiatives going forward. For more information on spring registration or sponsorship opportunities, contact the Visalia Chamber at 559-734-5876 or info@visaliachamber.org.

CASA Continued from page 4

sharing our social media posts, spreading the word, becoming a volunteer, donating goods/services, or becoming a financial donor.

We are inviting you to participate in this season of RAISE from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31 by advocating for CASA of Tulare County.

As part of the RAISE season, we will host a LIVE Virtual Online Auction and Raffle on Dec. 16 at 6 p.m. We are encouraging all those who already participate in CASA of Tulare County to help spread the word and help us find more volunteers and financial donors throughout our entire county!

If you're interested in supporting CASA of Tulare County by donating a good or service to our auction or raffle, or making a financial contribution, please respond to this letter or give us a call at 559-625-4007. We thank you for considering participating in RAISE 2020 where you have the power to RAISE your hand and voice, and in turn, RAISE awareness and support for the abused and neglected children in Tulare County.

Thank you

TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

CHAMPION:



VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:



KEYSTONE:



CORNERSTONE:

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

MEDIA PARTNERS:



HEALTH CARE NOTE

Give the gift of health and safety



Gary Herbst
Chief Executive Officer
Kaweah Delta Health Care District



Kaweah Delta

that this is the “calm before the storm.” The County has consistently told us that the biggest source of these new COVID cases are associated with churches, restaurants allowing in-house dining, and gatherings. With the holidays ahead of us, a time when we normally see cold and flu activity increase as people stay indoors, the best gift we can give each other is that of health and safety.

We can make the holidays truly about others by focusing on protecting those who are closest to us. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention says even small household gatherings are an important contributor to the rise in COVID-19, but that celebrating virtually or with members of our own households (who consistently take measures to reduce the spread of COVID), poses the lowest risk for spread. The State recently put out guidance for gatherings, which include:

- That it is safest to gather with people who already live with you, but if you do invite others, only invite a maximum of two other households.

- People in purple or red counties (Tulare County is currently in California’s most restrictive purple tier) shouldn’t gather indoors with other households in purple or red counties.
- If gathering is permitted, people should keep windows and doors open, wear a mask, and distance.
- High-risk individuals should avoid gatherings, but if they attend a gathering, they should wear a surgical mask or N95 mask that fits snugly.
- Staying home if sick.

By focusing on others, you are making a commitment to prevent the spread of infection in our community so that we can re-open Tulare County in accordance with the Governor’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy. We still have work to do; our average number of daily new cases is still too high. In order to re-open things such as indoor dining, gymnasiums, schools, etc., the County must report fewer than seven daily cases per 100,000 residents. In Tulare County, where our population is 484,000, we need to see fewer than 33 total new COVID cases each day. Recently, the County has reported as many as 266 new cases daily.

On a positive note, we are doing a lot of testing in Tulare County. Our partnership with the County has expanded testing for those with and without symptoms and made results available within 24 hours. It’s offered at our two Urgent Care centers in Visalia (wait times are posted at www.kaweahdelta.org), at our Exeter, Lindsay, and Dinuba health clinics, at Sequoia Prompt Care and at Visalia Medical Clinic’s QuickCare (not all insurance is accepted at Sequoia Prompt Care and Visalia Medical Clinic, so check to see if your insurance covers testing prior to receiving services). We are experiencing a high number of requests, so please be patient. We are hiring more staff and looking to expand hours for testing.

While this is not a normal holiday season, we hope you will take comfort in helping others by doing your part to prevent the spread of COVID. Here’s to good health, happiness, and a very happy and much anticipated new year.



STOCK PHOTO

RECOVERING

Continued from page 1

ing those people will probably close those businesses but reopen others. There is already evidence of that in Tulare County where fictitious business name filings have increased dramatically in the last year, possibly fueled by a need to replace lost income, to fill a need created in the pandemic or simply to start a new venture once the economy reopens.

“It’s still a time of turmoil but you can see the roots of recovery,” Thornberg said.

The biggest threat to full economic recovery, he said, is inflation. He called the \$3 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act a “policy overreaction.” For every dollar lost in earned income the government put back \$2. That resulted in \$2.5 trillion

in excess deposits and \$1.3 trillion in excess savings when total economic output for a normal economic activity is \$5 trillion. Thornberg said the \$3 trillion is more than the U.S. borrowed during World War II.

“When you give a lot of people money and can’t spend, you aren’t creating a surge in stimulus,” Thornberg said. “Instead, it goes right into the banking system.”

Thornberg said total spending was only down 3.2% yet the federal government dropped interest rates to near 0%, is giving out more unemployment checks than there are unemployed people, and has flooded the market with a 20% increase in printing money. That’s 6% higher than the money supply growth that happened before the 1973 recession.

“We are running down a path to inflation at breakneck speed,” Thornberg said. “This is kind of

scary.”

Instead of pushing more money to consumers, Thornberg advocated for more money to help cities and counties who have either paid the price for the pandemic up front or will soon with a possible dip in local sales tax revenue.

“It’s time to empower local governments to fix their particular problems,” he said.

There is hope for local governments who have seen property values not only hold but increase during the pandemic. Tulare County has seen a downturn in the number of home sales but prices have increased due to tight inventory. Developers are moving as quickly as they can to provide more homes as evidenced by a large increase in single family housing permits so far this year.

“A lot of folks are looking at homes with low interest rates and a bunch of money in the

bank,” he said.

Non residential permitting is also better than last year and commercial rents continue to go up. The pandemic also revealed companies don’t need as much office space as they used to. Allowing employees to work remotely reduced overhead, and in some cases increased efficiency. Companies increased their digital presence, improved e-commerce functions and introduced their products to new markets that may not have discovered them otherwise. Conversely, it also reinforced the need to work in the office more times than not for collaborative efforts, printing and training.

“After two weeks of working from home, I think a lot of people realized ‘this isn’t quite as much fun as I thought,’” Thornberg said. “No one wants to be stuck in their home all the time.”

During a brief question and answer session, Thornberg was asked if young adults concerned about the post-pandemic economy should still place a premium on education. He said getting a good degree is still the best investment anyone can make as long as it’s in a field that promotes problem solving. “Math, chemistry, engineering,” Thornberg said. “In those fields you learn to solve problems.”

FUNDRAISER

Continued from page 2

Tribe. Guests must be 18 years of age to enter and the Casino is open 24/7 with a limited capacity. The Grizzly Food court is open 24/7 and the River Steakhouse is open Friday to Sunday from 5 to 10 p.m. Eagle Mountain Casino is a short drive from Bakersfield or Visalia. Bus service from Bakersfield is suspended until further notice due to COVID.

Acute Plumbing

Proudly Serving Central California

(559) 736-0985

Visaliaplumber.com

Tankless Water Heater Experts