

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 1 | January 2021

INSIDE

Tule River Tribe gets green light for gaming

On Monday, Dec. 7, the assistant secretary of Indian affairs approved the fee-to-trust application for the Tule River Indian Tribe of California, allowing the tribe to conduct gaming on 40 acres of the tribe's land in Porterville, Calif. **2**

COS registration is open, 80% of classes to remain distanced

Twenty percent of courses that have labs or hands-on requirements will be held partially in-person with proper social distancing, masks, and deep cleanings before and after facilities are utilized. **2**

SCG allows households to opt into renewable natural gas purchase

Last month the California Public Utilities Commission approved SoCalGas to allow households and businesses to purchase RNG from the utilities. **3**

EVENTS

JANUARY 6, 13, 20 & 27
Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live
Time: 8:00 a.m.

JANUARY 19
YPN Monthly Virtual CEO Chats
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: YPN Facebook Live

JANUARY 28
Ambassador Monthly Meeting (Virtual)
Time: TBD

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

Visalia Chamber welcomes Southwest to Valley air



On Wednesday, Dec. 16, Southwest Airlines Co. announced their intention to bring service to the Santa Barbara Airport and Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) in the second quarter of 2021. In November, FAT invited the Visalia Chamber of Commerce to represent the South Valley (Tulare, Kings, and Kern Counties) in a meeting with Southwest Airlines, to share insights on the region.

"It was exciting and an honor to be the only non-Fresno person in the room," said Gail Zurek, president and CEO for Visalia Chamber of Commerce. "We covered our economic vitality, tourism assets, and the role Southwest Airlines could play in each area. This has been a hard year, but this certainly is a bright spot for the Visalia Chamber, our community, and region."

Southwest Airlines plans to announce routes in January with expected travel to begin in the second quarter of 2021. With the addition of Fresno and Santa Barbara, this positions Southwest Airlines as an option in 13 California airports before summer 2021. "Our arrival in the Heart of California, both on the Central Coast and in the Central Valley, will round out nearly four decades of investment in our California Customers and communities," Southwest Airlines chief commercial officer and executive vice president Andrew Watterson said.

"For years residents and businesses throughout Central California have expressed a desire for Southwest service and connectivity to their vast network of destinations and renowned customer service," said Kevin Meikle, director of aviation for Fresno Yosemite International Airport. "Southwest will expand the Central Valley's air transportation gateway to Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and we look forward to our new partnership with Southwest and their arrival in the spring."

The Visalia Chamber is proud to represent our region along with the work of our partners and members to push our region forward.



Thanks in part from the efforts of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce CEO Gail Zurek, Southwest Airlines made the decision to add Fresno as one of their stops to their list of destinations in January.

Visalia's new city council

A new year has arrived and it holds promise for a healthier and more prosperous time ahead for our community. While we continue to navigate the changes brought by the



COVID-19 pandemic, Visalia remains in good hands with a couple of changes to the City Council.

With the oath of office being administered to returning Council Member Phil Cox and new Council Member Brett Taylor at a Special Meeting in December, the Council formally reorganized and unanimously voted to appoint Vice Mayor Nelsen to the office of Mayor and to appoint Council Member Cox to the office of Vice Mayor.

With his new term as Mayor already underway, Mayor Nelsen has a long history of leadership, having served in the office of Mayor previously from 2013 to 2016. In his time on the City Council, Mayor Nelsen has worked directly on projects like the development and construction/expansion of the Water Reclamation Facility, Fire Station 53 and the Visalia Emergency Communications Center.

Now serving as Vice Mayor, Phil Cox continues his own long tenure of community involvement, which has included serving as Tulare County Supervisor for District 3, and a previous stint as Vice Mayor in 2001, during his prior service on the City Council.

The newest face on the dais, Council Member Brett Taylor, isn't completely new to Visalia leadership. Brett was previously a member of the Visalia Planning Commission for eight years. Council Member Taylor also has served on the city's sign ordinance and housing element technical advisory committees before

See COUNCIL on page 4

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

You're from where?



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

It was an unusual experience, but one I wish more had the opportunity to have.

When you aren't in Visalia, and someone asks you where you're from, what do you say? When the person you are speaking with has never been to Central California before, how do you describe it? Really, think for a minute. How would you describe our region, our community, our home?

Many know, I am not originally from Visalia. I grew up south of here in San Bernardino. I went to school in Thousand Oaks and spent over a decade living in the Chicagoland area. When I am new to a community, I love asking people to describe where they live. I listen as they describe their community's "best" parts, giving subtle hints about how they define their community. People tell me more than they realize about their corner of the world.

When I arrived in Visalia nearly eight years ago (whoa! Where has the time gone?!), I repeated this process. I asked people to tell me about Visalia, the county, the region, and our part of California. The answers surprised me. They painted pictures of a community I didn't recognize. Our bustling community, to them, was a small town, sometimes without the charm, I had found. Most people talked about our challenges, and few people spoke of our successes. I didn't understand it then and certainly don't understand it now. Don't get me wrong, I know we have challenges, but I couldn't understand how so many missed the beauty, wonder, success, and all our brag points.

In early November, I joined a meeting to share with Southwest Airlines all the reasons they should start flying out of Fresno International Airport. The three Southwest Airlines representatives wanted to know about our region - who came to visit us, what businesses are here, and

about our region's future. We certainly talked about our tourism destinations - (access to three national parks in three days!) and our economy. As we went around the table, each of us shared about what makes this place, frankly, so special. I was the only person not from Fresno County in a room full of Fresno folks. It was a tremendous honor to brag about Visalia, Tulare County, and the entire South Valley. The years of collecting brag points and "did you know's" about our region paid off.

I sat in that meeting, utterly proud of our home. I was proud to brag about all the things our industry leaders and this community do to impact our globe. I shared how our region represents, for so many, the hard-working pioneer spirit California once was synonymous with. The beauty found in our valleys and hills is unmatched.

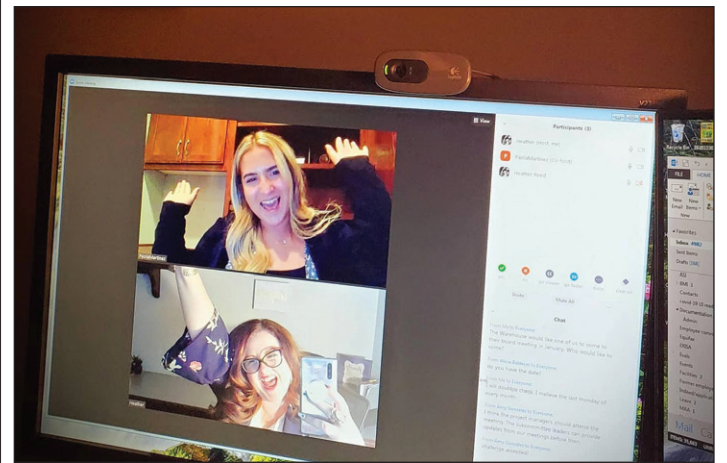
Southwest Airlines announced in December their intent to fly out of Fresno. With their arrival, they bring jobs, travelers, and adds to our economic success. We become attractive not only for those wanting to stay in our hotels and eat in our restaurants before heading to the national parks, but also for businesses looking to relocate to our industrial park or move their company to our community. This will bring real dollars. In a tough year, this was a wonderful win not only for our Chamber but for our entire South Valley.

Beyond the economic influence their arrival brings, I hope it causes a bit of a revival as well. I hope we see our community through the wonder and awe that our visitors see. I challenge us to share our brag points more broadly and be proud of this place we call home. Visitors will arrive looking and excited to experience the very things we sometimes take for granted. Even after a tough year, we have so very much to be proud of. I am excited to welcome so many to our wonderful home and watch our economic success continue to grow.

As we begin a new year, join us in a renewed focus to share our home's strength, innovation, wonder, and beauty. Be proud of this place, our neighbors, and all we are doing. Big things await, and I'm happy Southwest Airlines will help us highlight our corner of the globe.

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

Students take the lead on Zoom learning



The Leadership Visalia class of 2021 were forced to hold their first lesson over Zoom. While the usual class tradition was absent the bonds between classmates were very much present.

Emily Jacobsma
Senior Financial Analyst
California Dairies Inc.



Education was the word of the day on Dec. 11, for Leadership Visalia's Class of 2021. Our class met for our first completely virtual day session and how appropriate to the topic at hand that we were all keeping our distance, just like many of the students of Visalia Unified School District do, and met via Zoom.

We started our morning with Cindy Monroy, principal at Pixley Middle School, discussing curriculum, process development, and how it ties into our students' mental health. Robyn Narahara-Correa, Teacher on Special Assignment, then enlightened the group with details about the types of supportive services that are offered to our teachers and the differences between classroom teaching before the pandemic and now. While we have always been impressed with the dedication and care that our teachers put into their lessons, respect has been expanded tenfold with knowledge of how our teachers have adapted to distance learning.

County Supervisor Eddie Valero was our next speaker. His passion for helping students in our rural schools reach their potential is contagious. We learned of his work with the schools in Orosi

See LEADERSHIP on page 4



Tribe gets greenlight for gaming on 40% of their land

On Monday, Dec. 7, the assistant secretary of Indian affairs approved the fee-to-trust application for the Tule River Indian Tribe of California, allowing the tribe to conduct gaming on 40 acres of the tribe's land in Porterville. The Department of Interior also approved the Tribal State Compact between the State of California and the tribe which took effect on Dec. 11.

Although the tribe submitted its fee-to-trust application in September 2016, it has spent 20 years preparing for the relocation of the Eagle Mountain Casino. With the approval of the fee-to-trust and the Tribal State Compact, the tribe can now break ground on the long-awaited relocation project that will allow the tribe to move the Eagle Mountain Casino from its current location on the Tule River Indian Reservation to the city of Porterville. "We are grateful to the Office of Indian Gaming, the BIA Regional Office and the assistant secretary's office for their service to Indian country and for helping us create much needed jobs and provide opportunities for the local community."

In August, the tribe obtained the final approvals needed from the state to authorize the relocation of the Eagle Mountain Casino, including the governor's concurrence with the BIA's determination to place the 40 acres into trust, the governor's execution of the Tribal-State Compact, and the state legislature's ratification of the compact. "These approvals represent the culmination of decades of hard work and perseverance and we are pleased that the governor recognized the substantial benefits of the project for the community," noted tribal chairman Neil Peyron.

The issuance of these approvals marks the end of the Tribe's decades-long journey to bring the 40 acres into trust, an effort that the community and local governments have strongly supported. "We appreciate all of the support we have received and are proud of our rewarding partnerships with the city of Porterville, Tulare County and the state of California—each of which was critical in making the relocation project a reality," said Peyron.

The issuance of these approvals marks the end of the Tribe's decades-long journey to bring the 40 acres into trust, an effort that the community and local governments have strongly supported. "We appreciate all of the support we have received and are proud of our rewarding partnerships with the

See EAGLE on page 3

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

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.

Small Business Members:

- American Care Hospice
- Great Dane Bail Bonds & Investigative Services
- Kids2Dentist, LLC
- Shanley Farms, Inc

RENEWING

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce

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

Visionary Members:

- Family HealthCare Network

Cornerstone Members:

- CIGNA

Business Builder Members:

- Mission Linen Supply*

Business Connector Members:

- Innovation Commercial Flooring, Inc.
- Karen Gross / State Farm Insurance*
- Pita Kabob - Downtown*

Small Business Members:

- Barsamian and Moody*
- Berkshire Hathaway Home Services California Realty*
- Gowin Green
- J & D Lighting & Alarm
- Main Street Office Suites / Ouzonian Properties*
- Michael's Custom Jewelry*
- Oral E. Micham, Inc.*
- Owens Valley Career Development Center
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT)*
- The UPS Store 6731



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Center for Spiritual Living Visalia

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- The Academics CMO (DBA Sycamore Valley Academy DBA Blue Oak Academy)*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

Thrivent, Habitat for Humanity partner in housing effort during pandemic

Thrivent is awarding Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties a contribution of \$5,000 to help families in Tulare and Kings counties stay in their homes. Thrivent's donation will allow Habitat to provide mortgage relief to Habitat homeowners who need temporary assistance making their mortgage payments during the COVID-19 pandemic. With Thrivent's support, Habitat for Humanity of

Tulare/Kings Counties will help keep homeownership costs affordable for 4-6 families in Tulare/Kings Counties who are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID.

Prior to the spread of the novel coronavirus, more than 18 million households across the U.S. were paying half or more of their income on a place to live. As the pandemic continues to cause job disruption and economic fall-

out, many households are enduring lay-offs, unemployment, and pay cuts. This wage loss has amplified the financial burden on households to maintain essential payments and can result in families having to trade-off between bills, mortgage, or medical care.

"As we deal with the fall-out from COVID, it is crucial to continue to work to provide stable and affordable homes for our neighbors," said Executive Director Dirk Holkeboer. "Our community will recover when everyone has the solid foundation of a secure place to call 'home'."

Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties is one of 100 local Habitat organizations across the nation partnering with Thrivent to help families stay in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, Thrivent is donating \$750,000 to Habitat for Humanity to as-

See HABITAT on page 4

Spring '21 registration is open, 80% of classes will remain distanced learning



College of the Sequoias (COS) is currently finishing the fall semester and spring 2021 registration is open! Like the fall semester, spring will be hosted in a hybrid model. Eighty percent of courses that are lecture-based will be held remotely and online. Twenty percent of courses that have labs or hands-on requirements will be held partially in-person with proper social distancing, masks, and deep cleanings before and after facilities are utilized.

Since March, College of the Sequoias has transitioned not only instruction online, but all student services and student support services to be accessible online/virtually. The Student Success Program, welcome center, counseling services, career and transfer center, library/learning resource center (LRC), tutorial services, and health center have all created online spaces for students to ask questions and receive support virtually or over the phone. Additionally, the library/LRC has established a laptop/internet hotspot program. During the spring 2020 semester, over 900 laptops and over 1,200 internet hotspots have been checked out to students. For the spring 2021 semester there have been over 500 device renewals thus far.

College of the Sequoias is deeply grateful for the faculty and staff

See COS on page 4

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

Ambassador 2021 Outlook

2020 started out with a fresh vision for the Visalia Chamber Ambassador Committee. New ideas were laid out, put into motion, and starting to pay dividends. Then, we're all aware of what came in March. Though the initial stay-at-home days kept our committee from meeting in-person with each other, we eventually started re-igniting those connections virtually, then over time at ribbon-cuttings and socially distanced outdoor meetings. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the function of the Ambassadors Committee just wasn't the same. With 2020 behind us, and a vaccine making its way to the public, we're hoping that 2021 will usher in a new sense of pride and passion for our Ambassadors as we begin what we know will be our greatest comeback as a community.

The Visalia Chamber Ambassadors are volunteers from the community that serve as the welcome committee for new members, help with membership campaigns and act as public relations liaisons related to networking and social events sponsored by the Chamber. As the Chamber's public relations committee, the Ambassadors perform many important tasks for the Chamber. Most importantly, they help recruit and retain members, assisting the Chamber in meeting its membership goals for the year. As the Chamber staff member that helps steer this committee in the right direction, there are some exciting new ideas for the new year.

To make it as easy as possible for our Ambassadors to recruit new Chamber members, we have created a tri-fold brochure and a business cards with information and statistics about the Visalia Chamber. As we begin to get closer to a normal way of life, and our Ambassadors are more frequently visiting local shops, bars, restaurants, barbershops, nail salons, etc., they can simply leave the information with their check, or ask to quickly speak to the owner and hand it off directly. We understand that our Ambassadors are busy, and making the distribution of Chamber information as easy as possible is a priority.

If there is anything 2020 taught me about our Ambassadors is that they thrive on their connection to one another. They are loyal to each other's businesses and love spreading the word to help each other out in any way possible. In this new year, the Chamber will be offering Ambassadors even more incentives to help drive new memberships, including gift cards to local restaurants, and retail stores, and more.

We look forward to a year of making fantastic connections.

For more information about the Chamber Ambassador Committee, contact charlie@visaliachamber.org.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Allan and Melissa Stein
Company: Acute Plumbing
Title: Owners

Provide a brief overview of your business

We provide water heating and plumbing services for Tulare and Kings county residential and commercial customers.

News to share?

We are recommended by SCE, Rinnai, Navien, and Bradford White as your number one source for water heater repairs.

What's interesting about your business?

Tankless water heaters last up to 25 years vs traditional tank water heaters rated to last 10 years.

ACUTE



PLUMBING

How does your company get involved in the local community?

We are proud to support local business. Annually we sponsor MMA fighters, Visalia Turkey Trot, Garza Boxing and Tulare County Foster Kids.

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

Proving sustainable solutions at an affordable price to our community.

How has the chamber helped your business?

The Visalia Chamber has been supportive of our continued success through media exposure, providing resources keeping us informed during these treacherous times.

What is the top thing you'd like Visalia to know about your business?

We are 100% up-front and honest about prices and always work within customers budget. Melissa loves horses and Allan is a UCI-Irvine Alumni!

(559)736-0985

We are committed to providing you, our valued customer, with sustainable plumbing solutions.

ACUTEPLUMBING.COM

PROVIDING GENERAL CONTRACTING, SUB-CONTRACTOR, AND PLUMBING SERVICES FOR OUR GOVERNMENT & PRIVATE SECTOR CLIENTS SINCE 2005.

CLIENTS:
CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL
CHP, USARMIY, ARMOY
PLANET FITNESS FRANCHISE
MACKLIN PROPERTIES
LAGUNA BEACH MUNICIPAL POOL

CERTIFICATIONS AND LISTINGS:
BOND NUMBER: 30027634
REGISTERED WITH: SBA, D&B, SAM
CERTIFIED: RINNAI ADVANCED COMFORT EXPERTS
CERTIFIED: NAVIEN DEALERS/INSTALLERS
CALIFORNIA CONTRACTORS LICENSE 872929
CAGE CODE: 8CEH6
TIN/EIN: 52-4594729
D-U-N-S NUMBER: 038582536
CERTIFIED - WOSB

NAICS CODES:
238220 - PLUMBING
238990 - ALL OTHER SPECIALTY TRADE CONTRACTORS
814110 - PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS
236118 - RESIDENTIAL REMODELERS
221310 - WATER SUPPLY AND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

We recognize the importance of using sustainable building methods and materials along with creating a service oriented partnership with our clients for the success of current and future projects.

ACUTE PLUMBING

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



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Visalia Police Department for those in need throughout the community.

Congratulations to **Personnel Solutions Unlimited, Inc.** who is celebrating their 20th anniversary this month!

Provost & Pritchard were honored with a pair of 2021 ACEC-California Awards for their McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture and Recharge project and the Main Canal Reservoir for the Modesto Irrigation District.

Bay Alarm participated in the 2020 Toys for Tots campaign where they were able to fill and donate 30 boxes of toys.

Kaweah Delta Rehabilitation Services donated two truckloads full of items to benefit **Family Services of Tulare County's** domestic violence shelter, Karen's House.



Valley Children's was named a Top Children's Hospital by The Leapfrog Group, for the second year in a row for their achievements in patient safety and quality. Congratulations!

Mission Linen Supply donated hand sanitizers to assist local businesses during COVID-19.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sierra Bancorp, the holding company for **Bank of the Sierra**, named Susan M. Abundis and Julie Castle to its Board of Directors.

The **City of Visalia** recognized outgoing Mayor Bob Link and administer the Oath of Office to appointed Council Members Phil Cox and Bret Taylor during the Dec. 5 City Council meeting.

The Corriea Family Foundation took home the **Assistance League of Visalia (ALV)** Christmas tree on Saturday, Dec. 5. ALV asked people throughout the Visalia area to help with a December donation to clothe and provide school supplies to area children for this next year. ALV raised a total of \$3,978.78 with the community's help! ALV wants to thank Tazz Coffee and **Suncrest Bank** for showcasing their beautiful tree in their window



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

the weeks prior to Christmas and to everyone who donated. So many kids need help and Visalia came through. Thank you, Visalia! In addition, **Visalia Sunset Rotary** gifted ALV a \$2,000 grant for the coming year.

The **Tulare County Library** unveiled a new library literacy vehicle that will act as a mobile library to serve outlying areas in the county where there are no library or literacy services.

Congratulations to **The Pickled Deli** who celebrated their one-year anniversary in December!

Happy Trails Riding Academy announced three riders from their Veterans program, Equine Services for Heroes, placed in the 2020 Veterans Virtual Horse Show. Congratulations!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Gropetti Automotive's G for Kids Foundation made its largest annual contribution ever to Tulare County charities, including **Happy Trails Riding Academy, Arts Visalia, and FoodLink.**

New year, new tech

techcare 2021 is upon us. Just because there is a new calendar year, it does not mean that 2020 won't follow us. Here are some simple tech ideas to keep you up to date in the new year.

Planning for the Year

There is no telling what changes the states will make with lockdowns or anything else. Businesses now more than ever need to be more flexible. Planning for those changes can make or break your business. What changes will you make in 2021 to be more flexible?

Upgrade to Stay Ahead

Upgrading is always a good idea to stay up with technology. The reason we do this is to make sure the technology will work well. The older a computer is, the less likely it will perform as expected. That's why we recommend replacing desktops every three to four years and server every five to six years. That way, you always have the latest technology without breaking the bank.

The same goes for cell phones as well. After three years, the manufacturers typically stop supporting the devices and that

See NEW YEAR on page 4

THE LAW AT WORK

Cal/OSHA issues new requirements in COVID-19 prevention plans



GUBLER & ABBOTT
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

On Nov. 19, the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board unanimously adopted emergency temporary standards on COVID-19 prevention in the workplace. An important part of these standards is that employers must implement a COVID-19 Prevention Program. While employers may have already implemented such a plan, the following requirements may be new to employers:

- Employers must offer COVID-19 testing at no cost to employees, during their working hours, to all employees who had a potential COVID-19 exposure in the workplace.
- Employers must exclude from the workplace any employees with COVID-19 cases and those who were exposed to COVID-19 until they satisfy certain return-to-work criteria.
- Employers must continue and maintain the excluded

employee's earnings, seniority and benefits while they are off work. As such, this requirement essentially constitutes a new form of paid leave that is available unless: (1) the employee is unable to work for reasons other than protecting persons at the workplace from COVID-19 transmission, or (2) the employer can demonstrate the exposure was not work-related. Additionally, there is no limit on the "leave" in the requirement, meaning an employee could receive it multiple times.

Employers cannot require a negative COVID-19 test for an employee to return to work. Employers must implement certain protocols if there is an outbreak in the workplace, including the following:

- Providing testing (immediately and 1 week later) to all employees in the exposed workplace during the outbreak period;
- Excluding all COVID-19 cases and employees with a COVID-19 exposure;
- Investigating the exposure, reviewing the employer's

policies and controls in place and taking corrective action as necessary;

- Documenting the investigation, review, and corrective action taken; and
- Notifying the local health department within 48 hours after knowledge of the outbreak.
- Employers must implement additional protocols if there is an outbreak of 20 or more COVID-19 cases within a 30-day period until there are no new cases for a 14-day period, including conducting twice-weekly testing and evaluating whether respiratory protection should be required and whether the employer's operations should cease.

There is of course some ambiguity in some of the requirements; thus, Cal/OSHA has stated that it will publish guidance and FAQs soon. However, with the short timeline for implementation, employers should begin immediately creating and implementing a compliant COVID-19 Prevention Program.

This article is for education and information purposes only; it should not be construed as legal

See CAL/OSHA on page 4

SCG allows households to opt into renewable natural gas purchase

Last month the California Public Utilities Commission approved SoCalGas and SDG&E's request to offer a voluntary Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) Tariff.

The program will allow households and businesses to purchase RNG from the utilities. SoCalGas issued the following statement in support of the decision:

"The approval of the Renewable Natural Gas Tariff is an important step in achieving California's climate goals. SoCalGas supports those goals. With this new program, natural gas customers will soon have the ability to purchase renewable natural gas (RNG) to fuel their homes and businesses, similar to renewable energy programs available to electric customers.

"RNG is made from organic waste from dairies, landfills and with the passage of AB 3163 can now be sourced from dead trees, agricultural waste and vegetation removed for wildfire mitigation. It is the only renewable energy source that can be carbon negative. Experts at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories say California will need to remove 125 million tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere per year to achieve carbon neutrality. And they found that converting organic waste to clean fuels like RNG holds the greatest potential for negative emissions at the lowest cost.

"SoCalGas is helping to build California's 21st century energy system with investments in RNG, hydrogen, fuel cells and carbon capture and storage. The voluntary Renewable Natural Gas Tariff is one of those building blocks and part of SoCalGas' commitment to deliver 20 percent RNG to its core customers by 2030.

"The gas system complements and is a necessary facilitator of decarbonization. California's success in achieving its climate change goals depends in large measure on SoCalGas's success in decarbonizing the fuels flowing through our grid, a goal to which SoCalGas is fully committed."

EAGLE

Continued from page 2

city of Porterville, Tulare County and the state of California—each of which was critical in making the relocation project a reality," said Peyron.

The Tribe and the Eagle Mountain Casino are excited to proceed with obtaining financing to construct the casino resort, which is expected to create approximately 400 construction jobs and 300 or more full-time and part-time casino operation jobs, and which will result in additional funding to the City of Porterville and County of Tulare. In addition to creating jobs, the Tribe

entered into inter-governmental agreements with the city of Porterville and Tulare County to address any impacts of the relocation project and provide funding for various governmental services. "We look forward to what the future holds for our Tribe and the surrounding community," shared Peyron.

Eagle Mountain Casino is a full-service casino and is owned and operated by the Tule River Indian Tribe of California. Eagle Mountain Casino is centrally located adjacent to Porterville, California and is a short drive from Bakersfield and Visalia. Guests must be age 18 and over to visit.

Looking forward with great expectations to a fresh start in 2021!

Give us a call. Let us help you usher in success and prosperity for your business this new year and beyond.



559.739.1747 • DMIAGENCY.COM

STRATEGIC MARKETING CORPORATE ID ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS WEBSITES SOCIAL MEDIA

RIBBON CUTTINGS



Central Valley Vein and Wound Center
1610 S. Court Street | Appointments: (559) 721-4910



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SAVON FURNITURE

Savon Furniture
4236 S. Mooney Boulevard



Kids 2 Dentist
1814 N. Dinuba Boulevard | Appointments: (877) 783-4951

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

SINCE 1887

loyal to local



Thank you

TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

CHAMPION:



VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:



KEYSTONE:



CORNERSTONE:

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

MEDIA PARTNERS:



HEALTH CARE NOTE

Responding to COVID-19



Kerry Hydash
President and CEO
Family HealthCare Network

This year Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) has been at the forefront of keeping our local community members healthy through the expansion of services, an expansion of telehealth visits, and robust COVID-19 testing. Our primary goal continues to be ensuring everyone gets the care they need.



However, as we all know, one aspect of a healthy community is a thriving economy, so part of our efforts have been focused on the health of our workforce.

In response to the pandemic, FHCN implemented both phone and video visits, allowing individuals to access care remotely from any location. Family HealthCare Network's expanded telehealth services have had tremendous success in responding to patient needs quickly. Since March, FHCN has conducted more than 96,000 telehealth visits either by phone or video. The ability to be assessed from the comfort of our patients' home

allows for extra precaution that ultimately keeps the rest of our community healthy.

In addition to telehealth services, in Tulare County alone, FHCN has conducted more than 12,000 COVID-19 tests since March 2020, focusing on connecting patients to the care they need and ultimately helping them to return to their normal daily lives, including getting back to work. To further assist businesses greatly affected by COVID-19 exposure, FHCN's Mobile Health Center has taken testing to a new level. Family HealthCare Network works with Tulare County Health and Human Services to create drive-thru testing sites where a provider conducts on-site assessments allowing the business' staff to be cleared for works or recommended for testing immediately. This quick response allows businesses to reopen much quicker than they would without such intervention. We understand the vital role that business plays in our economy, and understand that anytime workers unable to be at work it has a profound impact on the individual and also has a ripple effect through our community.

Family HealthCare Network's success is rooted in the health of our community. Our commitment to testing is one of the many ways FHCN contributes to the daily efforts of that goal. We will continue to be a powerful force for promoting new ways of supporting the health and wellness for all individuals.

NEW YEAR

Continued from page 3

can be a huge security risk.

If you have a cloud desktop, you can replace computers as soon as they stop working because everything is stored in the cloud securely.

Do you need to go remote?

Stay at home. Don't stay at home. Stay at home halfway while standing on one foot. It seems to change every day. Does your business need to go remote? If that's the case, there are a lot of technologies out there that allow you to go remote and work from anywhere. That includes a VPN, remote desktop, or even cloud desktop where

your entire desktop is stored in the cloud for easy access. We would recommend thinking through what changes might come and planning for those changes.

More Security

You can never have too much security. Layers of security are important. It is the top concern when it comes to technology. Think about adding more layers to your business in 2021 so that you can feel safer. This can include multiple layers of security on your email and computers. Or it could be more security on your network with better firewalls. Whatever the case may be, it is a lot cheaper and easier to upgrade now than after it happens.

LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 1

and how he is partnering with communications companies to bring technology to all the students so that they may have access to their education during this pandemic. Mark Thompson, VUSD area administrator, also spoke to the class about the supportive services that VUSD offers the teachers to help them instruct their classes smoothly and effectively. In the afternoon, we heard from Jamon Peariso, director of college and career readiness. He spoke to our group about the work based learning experiences available to students at VUSD and how those programs help prepare students for a career after graduation. Later we had a stimulating blood pumping virtual physical education session with P.E. teacher Brent Hall. He talked to us about how physical education has changed through the pandemic and what he and his colleagues are doing to keep kids interested and active. The whole class was breaking a sweat and learned a few new things about healthy habits, too.

Our final education speakers of the day were Andrea McCellen, P.E. TOSA; Jake Kiser, EL

Diamante athletic director; and Destiney Nutt, visual and performing arts coordinator. They spoke on some of the successes of virtual electives and sports. While things are still a little uncertain with the future of our high school sports, Jake talked about the powerful impact that allowing the students to start conditioning and weight training outdoors has had on the students' mental health and drive to press on with distance learning. Destiney shared some

of the district's musical success stories, and our whole class was blown away by the talent in our local schools. After listening to all of our speakers and having meaningful conversations around education, the education resources available to our students and teachers, and the education systems in place, the Leadership Visalia class felt very informed and ready to help contribute to the continued success of our students and faculty in the district.

COS

Continued from page 2

who have worked diligently to transfer most of instruction, student services and student support services to a virtual and online format within a three-day period during March and April 2020. COS is also sincerely impressed by the persistence,

motivation, and grit of their students. This transition has not been easy for them and they have persevered and have accomplished Giant things during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spring 2021 enrollment is open to all new, continuing and returning students. Join the Giant family today by visiting cos.edu. Go Giants!

CAL/OSHA

Continued from page 3

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.

TRAVEL WITH THE CHAMBER



through
Collette, Mayflower & Premier World Discovery

DATES		PRICE	DEADLINE*	SLIDE SHOW
2021				
April 20 - May 3	Culinary Italy/13 Day Tour Through Mayflower CST#2044099-20	\$4,924	1/20/2021	TBD
July 16 - 24	Colorado Rockies Rail & National Parks Through Collette CST#2006766-10	\$2,999	1/16/2021	TBD
October 3 - 10	Rivers and Rails of Texas Through Mayflower CST#2044099-20	\$3,074	7/3/2021	TBD
October 19-27	London and Paris Discovery Through Mayflower CST#2044099-20	\$2,999	12/31/2020 Deadline Free Air Call for Price after	TBD
November 2 - 9	Irish Discovery/ 8 Day Tour Through Chamber Explorations CST #2048841-40	\$3,295	12/31/2020	TBD
2022				
March 6 - 20	Colors of Morocco Through Collette CST#2006766-10	\$4,599	8/7/2021	TBD
July 5 - 14	Oberammergau Passion Play, Germany & Austria Through Mayflower CST#2044099-20	\$5,334	12/31/2021	TBD

All prices are per person, based on double occupancy

*Trips can be booked after the deadline but are based on availability and prices are subject to

For detailed info on each trip, contact Sue Summers (559) 734-5876, email sue@visaliachamber.org, or visit our website at www.visaliachamber.org/travel.

HABITAT

Continued from page 2

sist with mortgage-related relief and prevent foreclosures across the U.S.

"This year has been incredibly difficult for many people as financial hardship has added stress and anxiety to daily lives," said Nikki Sorum, senior vice president of Thrivent Advisors at Thrivent. "This pandemic has underscored how important it is for people to have safe, affordable homes. Given all we have endured in 2020, we are especially honored to provide financial support to Habitat for Humanity to help people stay in their homes so they can continue to build toward financial stability."

Habitat for Humanity and Thrivent began their partnership in 2005. Over the past 15 years, Thrivent and their clients have contributed more than \$275 million to Habitat and have partnered with families to build safe, affordable homes across the U.S. and around the world. Locally, Thrivent members participated in several home-building projects in Visalia.

About Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties

Habitat for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties has been working with local families since 1994. With more than 40% of the area's population considered cost burdened when it comes to housing (i.e., spending more than 30% of household income on housing costs), the need for affordable housing is great. Because of the continued support of the businesses, congregations, the local community, service organizations and individuals, Habitat for Humanity has been able to make homeownership a reality for 68 families in Tulare and Kings counties while helping hundreds of other lower income homeowners with needed home repairs.

About Thrivent

Thrivent is a diversified financial services organization that helps people achieve financial clarity, enabling lives full of meaning and gratitude. As a mission-driven, membership-owned organization, it offers its more than 2 million members and customers a broad range of financial products, services and guidance. Thrivent and its subsidiary and affiliate companies offer insurance, investments, banking and advice over the phone, online as well as through financial professionals and independent agents nationwide. Thrivent is a Fortune 500 company with \$152 billion in assets under management/advisement (as of 12/31/19). Thrivent carries an A++ (Superior) rating from AM Best, a credit rating agency; this is the highest of the agency's 16 ratings categories and was affirmed in May of 2019. For more information, visit Thrivent.com.

COUNCIL

Continued from page 1

being appointed to the council.

Councilmember Taylor joins Mayor Nelsen, Vice Mayor Cox, and councilmembers Greg Collins and Brian Poochigian as Visalia's elected legislative body. The council will all take part in the annual Strategic Planning Workshop coming later this month. For information on how to attend and participate, visit www.visalia.city or contact chief deputy city clerk Michelle Nicholson at 713-4512 or michelle.nicholson@visalia.city.

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