

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 2 | February 2021

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EVENTS

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

FEBRUARY 16

YP Talks

Time: 8 a.m.

Location: YPN Facebook Live

FEBRUARY 25

Ambassador Monthly Meeting (tentative)

Time: 8 a.m.

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

Food truck rules extend to downtown

Mobile food vending ordinance extended from Santa Fe to Stevenson, bringing rules and regs to core downtown area



Ben Irwin
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

The city of Visalia Planning Commission voted unanimously Dec. 14 to extend rules and regulations for mobile food vending into the heart of downtown. Food trucks will now be allowed to operate from Santa Fe Street to Stevenson Street east to west, and Center Avenue and Mineral King Avenue north to south.

If it seems like an odd time to extend mobile food vending into an area where restaurants are already struggling for a year from the coronavirus pandemic, newly minted mayor Steve Nelsen says not to worry, that the intent is to provide rules and regulations for an even playing field downtown.

"Some of these food trucks are very expensive [to operate]," Nelsen said, "but in reality there's a difference in cost factors on brick-and-mortar and what they pay versus food trucks."

Nelsen used an anecdote to explain the reasoning for the mobile food vending rules and regulations being extended to downtown: under the rules and regs handed down by the state, a food vendor, as long as he has a business license is allowed to set up on a downtown sidewalk, as long as it does not impede the flow of traffic or create a safety hazard. Set up right in front of a restaurant that has to sell their burrito for \$8 due to overhead costs, the food truck or cart can sell their burrito for \$5.

Mobile food vendors operating in the overlay district will be required to enroll in the yearly mobile food vending program registration, as well as comply with various performance standards. Nelsen says the updated mobile food vending ordinance and overlay district map help protect brick-and-mortar restaurants, while still allowing a footing for food trucks—500 feet away from the front door of any downtown restaurant.



Food trucks that had been traditional barred from setting up shop in downtown Visalia, were given an opportunity to expand from Santa Fe to Stevenson east to west, and Center Avenue and Mineral King Avenue north to south. City staff suggest this will not be a direct conflict with traditional brick-and-mortar businesses.

PHOTO BY REGGIE ELLIS, THE SUN-GAZETTE

Exemptions to the mobile food vending program include food trucks associated with a business. For example, at Barrelhouse Brewing, mobile food vendors are situated in the on-site open space behind the building, and would be subject to the rules that apply to Barrelhouse Brewing.

Miguel Reyes, CEO of Quesadilla Gorilla, the fast-growing single-dish restaurant—No. 3 on Forbes' 2019 list of fastest Growing Inner City Businesses in the Country—has the perspective of owning both a brick-and-mortar establishment and a pop-up food truck. He said there are trade-offs to each style of serving food.

"The benefit to a pop-up is, you can prep so much, prepare so much to sell, and once you sell it, you sell out—which is good and bad," Reyes said. "Maybe you should have prepped more for that big event that you sold out early, or on the other hand, you over prepped, and you have all this waste that you have to throw away that you can't use, so you lose income."

Reyes said at a brick-and-mortar it's easy to use products you don't sell the next day, but it comes at the cost of keeping the doors open every single day, including labor costs and staffing for unexpected lunch or dinner rushes.

"I wouldn't say one is better over the other," Reyes said. "I would definitely say a pop-up is harder than a brick-and-mortar, just because there's a lot of variables."

Reyes' flagship brick-and-mortar Quesadilla Gorilla is nestled next to the Fox Theatre in downtown Visalia, within the city's newly extended mobile food vending district. He and his wife were actually on the committee to help the City bring food trucks to downtown. Reyes said from a brick-and-mortar standpoint, they welcome more food options downtown.

"The more the merrier, you know, you can't have a quesadilla every day—even though I still do," Reyes said with a laugh. "It's just more reason to bring more people downtown. At the end of the day, you're supporting local businesses."

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

What are you gonna do about it?



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

I love dreamers. They see a world of possibility when the rest of us forget to look. Then there are the problem solvers. You know the ones who can see an issue well before it becomes a problem. They're like a check engine light warning of problems to come; helpful and useful. The doers, with their lists and can-do attitudes, make dreams come true and overcome problems. Most of us fall into one of these categories. Great teams have each of these types of people tackling their goals. But it's rare to find someone willing to be all three things at the same time.

Recently, a Chamber member called and chatted with me about our economy's state, not the U.S. economy but the economy right here in Tulare county. These conversations are not unusual, particularly in a pandemic. The state of our economy is a popular topic when I talk to business and community members. However, this conversation took a different turn quickly. Moving from the status right now, this member began to spot some great big problems on the horizon. Problems many may not see as clearly as this member.

Then it happened. This problem spotter became a dreamer. "Gail, what if we..." and then out came a big, bold, beautiful dream. The type that solved problems and helped us be a better, stronger community. Sadly, I'm a skeptic, so I said what every dreamer hates hearing, "how can we do that?". Then, I got to meet the doer.

This member laid out a rough plan to make this dreamy problem-solving idea work. Not only a plan but a willingness to put their own time, resources, and money on the line to make it happen. I was overwhelmed. I met the trifecta; The person

who sees a problem dreams a solution and has a willingness to throw themselves in and make it happen—a real gem.

So you want details. Who is this person? What was their proposal?

Don Groppetti called me worried many small local businesses aren't going to make it to summer. It's no secret that there are businesses in our community deeply struggling. We chatted about how critical the next period would be for so many and the devastating effects these businesses closing would have on our community. Don asked what I knew, he listened. I could hear Don thinking when he said, I have an idea, and Shelly and I are willing to back it up to make sure this happens.

By now, you've heard of the Taking Care of Business Fund. This fund will help many local businesses through this tough time. And unlike other programs, this is from other businesses and local neighbors; it's from our community to our community. This fund will help the little guys keep their business doors open. It helps these moms and pops to keep employing our neighbors. It means our favorite spots will be here for a long time.

Don is utilizing Momentum broadcasting to get the word out, both for businesses to apply but also for people to give. Knowing that federal programs only do so much, many of us want to do something much more directly for our neighbors, and now we can. Big contributions, small gifts all make a difference. I encourage you to participate. Give and share this information with others. More information can be found on the Visalia Chamber website.

When Don and I spoke, I asked to make his and Shelly's participation and leadership public. I hope others see his genuine concern and care for this community and that it would inspire them to be part of the solution. These are rough times. But the *only* way we're going to come out on the other side is if we work together to accomplish big, bold ideas. You can be a part of saving our local business. We need your help. Please join in!

Tulare County asks residents to stop calling 2-1-1



Tulare County 2-1-1 is Overwhelmed, Residents Urged to Complete COVID Vaccine Interest Form for Future Vaccine Appointments

COVID Vaccine supply remains LIMITED and currently Tulare County does not have enough vaccine supply to fulfill all who are eligible. Tulare County's 2-1-1 Call Center is overwhelmed with calls, and officials are asking residents to refrain from calling 2-1-1 for COVID vaccine information, but rather complete the COVID Vaccine Interest Form if seeking an appointment to get vaccinated in Tulare County. Officials will then make direct communications to residents who complete the interest form to inform them how to obtain an appointment for vaccine when they are eligible.

In addition, County residents can visit the COVID Vaccine webpage for information rath-

er than calling 2-1-1 and refrain from further overwhelming the call center. Individuals are encouraged to use the website whenever possible to sign up for appointment information through the COVID Vaccine Interest Form to avoid long wait times on the phone. Tulare County vaccine information is available online at: <https://covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>.

Tulare County COVID-19 Vaccine Interest Form

Tulare County residents can inform County health officials of their intent to get vaccinated for COVID-19 by completing the Tulare County COVID-19 Vaccine Interest Form. Residents can sign up for vaccine notifications of when they are eligible and where they can go to get vaccinated by completing the Tulare County COVID-19 Vaccine Interest Form online at: <https://arcg.is/0KKez4>.

By completing the interest form and alerting county officials of your interest for the COVID vaccine, Tulare County Public Health will contact you directly to make an appointment when more vaccine supply becomes available. Tulare County is offering vaccinations for COVID-19 to those eligible in Phase 1A and elderly resi-

See 2-1-1 on page 4

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name:
Tanya Pennington-Miller

Company:
Total Nutrition Visalia
Title: Owner

We are a supplement and nutrition store focused on the health of our community. Owner, Tanya Pennington-Miller is a Functional Nutritional Therapy Practitioner who focused on whole health. We provide free nutrition seminars to our community as well as free meal plans and customized meal plans. In addition to that, we also offer monthly unlimited tanning.

We recently added our In-Body 570 machine and customers leave with a full print out about body fat %, visceral fat number, inflammation markers as well as a cardiac risk assessment. This is a great way to track how our health is improving, rather than putting focus on the scale.

We are much more than just a supplement store with products on our shelves. We are a team of caring and knowledgeable individuals who have a heart to help our community feel their best. We want every person who walks in our store to walk away feeling better than they did when they walked in.

When COVID hit, we recognized there were families who would be hit hard financially, and so we decided to start a campaign where we would feed a family each week. Every week we would post on social media for people to vote for a deserving family. We even had other companies jump in and do the same thing with us! We loved this as we were also supporting local small business restaurants who were also affected by this pandemic.

Our company is so much more than just a business. Our store was built on passion and it shows through every staff member we have. It is so fulfilling to have the opportunity to make such a positive impact on our community.

The Chamber really showed up for small businesses in Visalia when the pandemic began. They not only brought attention to and supported small business, but they also made sure we were all aware of grants and financial support available to us.

My wish is for Visalia to truly see our hearts, to really see our mission of making Visalia happier and healthier than we found it eight years ago.

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:

- Bragg Law Firm
- Dignity Health Management Services
- Total Nutrition
- YK America Group, Inc.

Business Connector Members:

- Costco Visalia

- Health Net, LLC

Business Builder Members:

- Advanced Body and Laser Center

RENEWING

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

Keystone Members:

- TechCare360 Inc.

Community Investor Members:

- Bank of the Sierra - Main St.

Business Connector Members:

- Carl Nelson Insurance Agency*
- Doctors Occupational Testing Solutions*
- The Sorensen Agency - American National Insurance Company*
- Tri-Anim Health Service, Inc

Small Business Members:

- InSite Construction, Inc.
- Nielsen & Associates Insurance Services Inc.*
- Patrick L. Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency*
- Personal Express Insurance*
- Summit Homebuilders, Inc.
- Valley Expetec*



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Jon Stemkoski's Celebrant Singers*

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Hospital Council*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOTAL NUTRITION VISALIA

Left to right: Sales associate Kyle Cantrell, sales associate Austin Molezzo, owners Brett Miller and Tanya Pennington-Miller, sales associate Jordan McClatchey, and assistant manager Michele Gutierrez.



Moderna COVID-19 vaccine made available to casino team members



On Jan. 11, Eagle Mountain Casino began offering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to their Team Members. Each team member has the option to receive or decline the vaccine.

The Moderna vaccine was allotted by priority to Healthcare workers, First Responders, Elders and Essential Workers on the Tule River Indian Reservation. Eagle Mountain Casino is fortunate to have essential workers that qualify to receive the vaccine which was provided through Indian Health Services; an allocation by the U.S. Federal Government.

The Tule River Tribe has received 200 doses as part of the initial vaccinations. Moving forward the Tribe will request doses through Indian Health Services and receive them as they become available. The vaccines are shipped in boxes of 100 which is the shipping limit each time they are requested. The Tribe was told that they are guaranteed the second doses for everyone who received the first dose. In addition to the 200 they already have, 100 more doses arrived this week and the Tribe is expected to receive another 100 doses next week.

Those who have already received the vaccine are 29 Tule River Healthcare workers, 12 First Responders, 101 Tribal Elders and 28 Essential Workers. The vaccinations are on a first come first serve basis and a second booster dose will be made available to all who received a first dose.

Eagle Mountain Casino and the Tule River Tribe continue their strong efforts to combat COVID-19 and keep their community and work environments as safe and clean as possible. The Casino still sanitizes and cleans the casino floor and high trafficked areas continuously and thoroughly, as to provide and maintain the safety measures given by the CDC.

For more information on the Moderna vaccine please visit the following shortened URL:
tinyurl.com/moderna2021

tinyurl.com/NEJMvaccine

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 a short drive from Bakersfield and Visalia. Guests must be 18 and over to visit.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Health center staff administer the first COVID-19 vaccines on the Tule River Reservation.

Valley Strong commits to local biz with SBA paycheck program



Valley Strong Credit Union is proud to announce it will once again participate as a lender for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and offer support to businesses throughout the Central Valley.

Valley Strong will begin accepting applications in the coming days and adhere to all program guidelines as outlined by the SBA. Continuing our ongoing commitment to local business, we have created an online resource at valleystrong.com/ppp. The page will include a link to the application, information about program requirements, and up-to-date information as it becomes available from the SBA.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Valley Strong helped fund \$16.8 million in PPP loans, and served as one of only four institutions chosen to administer the Kern Recovers Small Business Relief Program, connecting local businesses with \$15 million in funding. In addition, Valley Strong bestowed \$125,000 in grants to non-profits in Kern and Tu-

See STRONG on page 4

Ask Jena



How can I sign up my child for Jr CEO?

We are super excited for our Jr. CEO spring program! You can sign-up at visaliachamber.org/ceo or by calling our office at (559) 734-5876.

What's the latest information on assistance for me and my business?

Visit the Chamber's web page, visaliachamber.org/updates, where you can find the latest updates from federal, state, and local levels. We are here for our members and business community, please contact our office for more information on how we may be able to assist you.

Have a question about the Chamber?

Send me a message:
Jena@visaliachamber.org

THE LAW AT WORK

Can employers require employees to receive the COVID vaccine?



By Brett T. Abbott
Gubler & Abbott LLP

As the coronavirus pandemic rages on, many in California eagerly await the opportunity to receive a vaccine. Others worry about side-effects or that the vaccine was produced too quickly. Employers want to safeguard their employees as they perform their job duties, but also understand some employees' hesitation. The logical question that arises from such a scenario is this—Can employers require employees to get vaccinated?

In short, the answer is yes. Employers may require vaccines before employees return to the worksite if the failure to be vaccinated constitutes a direct threat to other employees in the workplace because the virus is rampant and easily transmitted in the workplace. However, exceptions must be made for employees who cannot be vaccinated because of disabilities or due to sincerely held religious beliefs. Yet, employers do not have to accommodate secular or medical beliefs about vaccines.

Many California employers are already requiring vaccination. For example, the University of California has enacted a mandatory vaccination policy for the flu vaccine for everybody who will be accessing any of its campuses.

See VACCINE on page 4

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

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Call 734-5876. Mail to: Visalia Chamber of Commerce 222 N. Garden St. #300 Visalia, CA 93291
Visit www.visaliachamber.org

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.

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STRATEGIC MARKETING CORPORATE ID ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS WEBSITES SOCIAL MEDIA



Self-Help Enterprises and Salt + Light Works.

Precision Prep launched their New Year's Kindness Campaign "Get A Little OR Give A Little" to support Visalia's local community. Throughout the month of January, customers had the opportunity to save 15% off their purchase or donate 15% of their purchase to FoodLink Tulare County and Visalia Emergency Aid. 100% of the proceeds will be split between both organizations.

Congratulations to **Central Valley Business Forms** who is celebrating their 40th year in business!



Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group announced a pair of their engineering professionals reached a career milestone by passing the Professional Traffic Engineer Exam for the State of California. Congratulations to Jeff Dorn and Soo Ho Park.

The Citizens Advisory Committee awarded \$6,500 to ten nonprofits each serving youth in Visalia, including **Assistance League of Visalia** to provide shoes, socks, books and hygiene kits; **Bethlehem Center** to distribute new coats to kids; **Turning Point of Central California** for parent-child trainings; and **Arts Visalia** for youth art classes and scholarships.

Bank of the Sierra announced that \$105,000 was given to 10 Central Valley nonprofits in an extra round of funding from its Sierra Grant Program. Nonprofit organizations that received Sierra Grants included

Congratulations to the **City of Visalia's** Communications Manager Allison Mackey who was selected as the PRSA Central California Chapter 2020



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Professional of the Year. **Eagle Mountain Casino** donated \$137,000 in sponsorships, charitable contributions, and in-kind gifts to local charities, businesses, and non-profits within Kern and Tulare Counties in 2020.

Health Net, LLC has invested \$14.5 million in COVID-19 emergency response funds statewide, including disbursement to 10 Central Valley nonprofits through **United Way of Tulare County** to help support organizations financially impacted by the pandemic.

Congratulations to **Fresno Yosemite International Airport** who announced Southwest Airlines will launch daily nonstop service to Denver and Las Vegas, offering connectivity to more than 50 cities.



Visalia relies on groundwater for its water supply, and with new state regulations being implemented that mandate sustainable groundwater levels (through groups like our own Mid Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency), we need to significantly adapt our water usage.

Visalia has been diligent in implementing progressive measures (increasing ground-

water recharge through water exchanges, water reuse from the upgraded water treatment plant, constructing more recharge basins), but outdoor water usage has continued to climb.

We are in our ninth year of below average rainfall in the last 11 years. In fact, groundwater levels in the Visalia area dropped seven feet between April and June 2020, and are now 30 feet lower than they were in 2010.

To help save our water, the Visalia City Council has authorized Stage 2 Water Use Restrictions starting March 1st. Visalians will be able to irrigate exclusively with low-volume drip irrigation any day of the week, and high-volume sprinkler irrigation will be allowed two days a week. Odd addresses can irrigate on Tuesdays and Sat-

urdays and even addresses can irrigate on Wednesdays and Sundays, but only before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

The water conservation measures the Council has adopted are an effort to maintain a cost effective and environmentally sound water supply for Visalia. We're currently in Stage 1 of the Water Conservation ordinance, but with March just weeks away, now is the time to begin transitioning to Stage 2 and considering long-term changes to your yard that will help you conserve more water in the future.

Find the City's Water Conservation Ordinance, tips and more at www.visalia.city.

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

CITY UPDATE

Stage 2 water conservation comes March 1

LEADERSHIP VISALIA

Visalia's an attractive place for business



Jim Sullivan
Administrator of Family and Community Services
Visalia Unified School District

On Jan. 8 Leadership Visalia met on zoom for a day of learning and networking. The focus of the day was Economic Development emphasizing how Visalia attracts and supports businesses. We heard from agencies that support businesses while learning from others how recruitment of businesses happen in our area. The day started with Nancy Lockwood & Devon Jones. The discussion focused on the Industrial Park. We learned the current number of employees that worked in the area and the projected number of employees that will work in the area in the future. Later in the day we heard from Rick Feder who over sees the development of the Visalia Mall and Steve Nelson the CEO for

Downtown Visalia. Their discussion helped us all understand the different rolls each area of town played in Visalia's Economic Development. In addition to supporting and recruiting businesses, the group learned about the recruitment of doctors from Kaweah Delta's Director of Physician Recruitment and Relations Brittany Taylor. To connect our service project "Backpacks without Barriers" we asked Parenting Network to speak on how they support Visalia's families in transition. Christina Osorio, their program manager shared the different services families can access through their program as well as how Visalia's Foster Children are supported.

One of the lessons from the day was recruitment strategies for the Visalia area for businesses and employees are very much the same. Visalia's location is a valuable asset for businesses and the recruitment of employees. Being located in the middle of the state allows businesses to ship their products throughout the western states in one day. As businesses want to expand, land is inexpensive and because of our city's plan there are few hidden roadblocks. Those same qualities of location and cost of living are the same reasons Visalia's businesses use to recruit employees. New employees find our location attractive. Employee prospects find being two hours from both the mountains and the beach interesting.

See LEADERSHIP on page 4

Southwest Airlines' daily service offers Denver, Las Vegas from Fresno



Southwest Airlines today announced their initial launch for Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) with nonstop service from California's Central Valley to Denver International Airport (DEN) and Las Vegas McCarran International Airport (LAS) offering substantial connectivity to more than 50 airports. Starting April 25, 2021, Southwest will operate three daily flights between Fresno and Las Vegas and one daily Denver flight. FAT's addition to Southwest's extensive service map also serves as a major air transportation gateway to Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and to the number of year-round activities found in the region.

Travelers have the opportunity to experience flying with the airline for the first time and Southwest loyal customers now have easy access to their airline of choice through FAT.

In celebration of the newly revealed schedule, Southwest is offering special introductory fares for a limited time at Southwest.com.

"We are beyond thrilled that Southwest Airlines will serve the Fresno Airport and look forward to growing our partnership with the airline as they become a part of Central Valley's diverse and dynamic communities," said Director of Aviation

Kevin Meikle. "Bringing Southwest to Fresno has been our priority for a number of years. We have maintained ongoing dialogue and marketing efforts keeping Southwest up to date on the airport and our region's growth, and all it has to offer to ensure their long-term success."

"The schedule released today by Southwest Airlines gives passengers far more flexibility and convenience for both business and leisure travel. Southwest's arrival is a game changer in terms of the economic development opportunities. More importantly, their competitive fares will increase air travel to and from Fresno. As a rapidly growing metropolitan city, residents and visitors can now enjoy more destination options and fewer layovers when they fly Fresno," Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer.

In December, Southwest announced plans to serve Fresno beginning in the second quarter of 2021, stirring much excitement in the community and anticipation of the destinations to be revealed. Initial discussions with area community leaders and stakeholders provided Southwest executives with a first-hand understanding of the Central Valley's passion and commitment through grassroots support from across the region, which aligns with Southwest's community-based culture.

Book Southwest Airlines online at Southwest.com or by phone at 800-I-FLY-SWA.

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Jr. CEO
DEVELOPED BY VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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INTERESTED? CONTACT US TO SCHEDULE A TOUR!

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

FACEBOOK LIVE

COFFEE WITH THE CEO

WEDNESDAYS
8:00-9:00 AM

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

COMING VIRTUALLY

IMPACT
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

APRIL 21, 2021

VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/IMPACT

Thank you

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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

Hope is on the horizon



By Gary K. Herbst
Chief Executive Officer
Kaweah Delta Health Care District



Kaweah Delta

We're a month into 2021 and while we're not out of the woods yet, we are beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel. While we continue to care for many COVID-positive hospitalized patients, offer comprehensive telehealth services, and expand our rapid testing options, we're also working to roll out the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in partnership with the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency. We hope that this is the "beginning of the end" of this coronavirus pandemic. Our community and our businesses have suffered immensely and we are all looking forward to a return to some normalcy. It's been an honor to have cared for our community for the past 11 months and, now, to see the joy on the faces of our community as they receive the vaccine. While I respect everybody's own individual decision on vaccination, I truly believe this vaccine, coupled with continued practices of handwashing and social distancing, is what is going to help us emerge from this pandemic.

As I write this, it's been three weeks from the New Year's holiday, and we are seeing our numbers begin to stabilize, and even decline, from the highs we saw in December. Our "high watermark" in mid-December was 169 hospitalized COVID-positive patients, while in that month alone we had almost 600 COVID patients hospitalized—nearly double that of our previous high of 300 patients in July. Just this week, we have started to see that daily patient number dip as low as 109, which is good. However, the COVID patients we are caring for are severely ill, which has impacted our ICU capacity. When needed, we have opened additional ICU-level bed capacity in our intermediate critical care unit. ICU beds have been scarce not just because of COVID, but because of conditions we normally see in winter—respira-

tory conditions, like pneumonia, congestive heart failure, and asthma. Surprisingly, we have seen very few cases of the flu; up to this point, we have had only four patients hospitalized with it. We remain a very busy hospital and despite having stopped non-emergent surgeries, we are consistently running close to 95 percent occupancy in our Medical Center.

Apart from the decline we are starting to see in COVID patient numbers, this year there will be a number of things to celebrate. This spring, we will celebrate the completion of our newly-expanded Emergency Department (ED). It will nearly double the number of patient beds, more than double the size of the waiting area, and bring more doctors and nurses to help provide more timely and efficient care to this community. Our hope is that by May, we will receive approval from the State to begin seeing patients in our "bright and shiny new" ED.

Also early this spring, we will open our multi-specialty care center in Tulare at the corner of Prosperity Avenue and Mooney Boulevard. It will increase access to primary, walk-in services, specialty care, and behavioral health in one of the most clinically-underserved counties in California. We also believe that it will be effective in helping reduce overcrowding in our ED. The nearly 11,000-square-foot clinic will expand upon Kaweah Delta's existing partnership with the physicians of Key Medical Associates and Visalia Medical Clinic to bring new services to the people of Tulare. The new clinic will also add new jobs in Tulare. Through the Kaweah Delta Medical Foundation, the now five-year partnership between Kaweah Delta and Visalia Medical Clinic, Kaweah Delta has operated a primary care and cardiology office for the past three years at 938 North Cherry Street in Tulare.

There are so many great things ahead. Our hope is that our COVID numbers will continue to decline. We know that some of this decline is because you heeded our pleas not to gather during the holidays. Thank you for your personal sacrifice of time away from your friends and family. It means the world to us. Please continue to keep up the good work and know that it will not be long before we can hug and high five again. Just hang in there. I hope that we'll be able to celebrate all spring and summer long as we safely reopen businesses and return to some semblance of normal life.

VACCINE

Continued from page 2

Context matters when deciding whether to require vaccines. Health care, travel, retail, or other businesses whose employees are at risk or who present a risk to others will have more business reasons to require vaccines. On the other hand, office-based businesses or businesses that can rely on remote workers may find it easier to take a "person-

al-choice" stance.

Can employers be liable for failing to require their employees to be vaccinated? Some legal scholars have theorized that if a mandatory vaccination policy is not imposed, employees may allege that the employer has failed to provide a safe and healthy work environment (which is required by the Occupational Safety and Health Act). Thus, employers must carefully consider the pros and cons of policies requiring vaccination.

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).

STRONG

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Valley Strong Credit Union operates 13 branches, serving more than 150,000 individuals, with approximately \$2.2 billion in assets. It remains one of the largest financial institutions headquartered in the San Joaquin Valley.

2-1-1

Continued from page 1

For complete information on eligibility and vaccine phases, visit: <https://covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>.

Vaccine Second Dose Appointments

Already received your first dose of the COVID vaccine and need to make your second dose appointment? Please DO NOT call 2-1-1. Tulare County Public Health will contact you directly by phone or email to schedule your second dose appointment. The second dose of vaccine must be the same vaccine manufacturer as your first dose. For Pfizer, the second dose is to be given 21 days following the first dose. For Moderna, the second dose is to be given 28 days following the first dose. In most instances, Tulare County Public Health is organizing second dose vaccinations to occur at the same locations as the first dose.

It is extremely important that residents who are vaccinated for COVID continue to maintain safety precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including masking and social distancing, until vaccinations are widely available. It is imperative to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Tulare County by practicing both social and physical distancing of six feet or more between persons and not participating in social gatherings of any kind. Residents must always wear a face mask or covering while in environments where physical distancing is not possible and while in public settings. In addition, everyone is encouraged to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer, regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces, and stay home if you are sick or instructed to isolate/quarantine by a medical or public health professional.

For more information about COVID-19, visit www.tchhsa.org/ncov and www.covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov.

LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 3

In addition to the location many are able to purchase a house as compared to other areas in California. As Visalia continues to grow, higher end businesses and new employee prospects will move into our area which in turn will help our cities economic development both in businesses and personnel.

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TRAVEL WITH THE CHAMBER



through
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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.