

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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The Visalia Rawhide have officially accepted their invitation to remain an affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks after recently signing Major League Baseball's Professional Development License (PDL). **4**

EVENTS

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

MARCH 16 YP Talks

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

MARCH 25 Ambassador Monthly Meeting

Time: 8 a.m.
Location: Visalia First Courtyard

TRAVEL WITH US

JULY 16-24, 2021

Colorado Rockies Rail & National Parks

OCTOBER 4-11, 2021

Colors of New England

OCTOBER 9-16, 2021

New England Rails & Trails

NOVEMBER 2-9, 2021

Irish Discovery

DECEMBER 3-8, 2021

Music Cities Christmas

DECEMBER 5-9, 2021

Santa Fe Holiday

JANUARY 29-FEBRUARY 6, 2022

Tropical Costa Rica

FEBRUARY 15-24, 2022

Sunny Portugal

MARCH 6-20, 2022

Colors of Morocco

APRIL 19-26, 2022

Highlights of Italy's Amalfi Coast

MAY 18, 2022

JUNE 7 & 15, 2022

AUGUST 16, 2022

SEPTEMBER 13 & 21, 2022

Oberammergau Passion Play Germany & Austria

JUNE 11-17, 2022

Landscapes & Lighthouses of Coastal Maine

OCTOBER 4-12, 2022

Normandy, Paris & the Seine River Cruise



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

Visalia allies take care of biz



PHOTO BY THE SUN-GAZETTE STAFF

The Sun-Gazette

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, Gropetti Automotive Family and Momentum Broadcasting partnered in February to help local businesses disadvantaged by the global pandemic. Chamber President and CEO Gail Zurek said the Gropetti family approached her on the collaborative project. As a result the community can help business by donating to the chamber's "Take Care of Business Fund" and have it matched by the Gropetti family to then be granted to businesses.

Small businesses have been teetering on the brink of ruin since the pandemic started last year. Small stimulus programs have been helpful, but these businesses are in need of something more.

Fortunately, a new group of Visalia stakeholders are attempting to step in so they can "take care of business."

Last week, the Visalia Chamber of Commerce announced their partnership with the Gropetti Automotive Family, and Momentum Broadcasting, to create a funding mechanism to assist small businesses struggling to survive during the pandemic.

"Don and Shelly [Gropetti] approached us to see if we could collaborate on a fundrais-

ing mechanism to assist small businesses and they provided a very generous donation to act as matching seed money," Gail Zurek, president and CEO of the chamber said. "As a result, we've formed the Taking Care of Business Fund to assist small businesses that may be on the verge of having to shut down."

"We know this is not an easy problem to solve," Gropetti, president of the Gropetti Automotive Family said. "But too many of our friends and neighbors are struggling to stay in business at no fault of their own. However, if we can pull together as a community and reach out to help our neighbors, we have the ability to make a significant difference in the community we live

in, every donation, big or small, helps."

Momentum Broadcasting, the four-station radio group (106.7 KJUG, HITZ 104.9, Classic Rock 99.7 and MY 97.5) headquartered in Visalia, will lead the promotional effort; "We want to get the word out that anyone can contribute to this cause and we'll use the radio stations to communicate that message," said Bill Lynch, general manager of Momentum Broadcasting. "We also want to share with those who need help how they can apply for assistance."

An oversight committee has been formed to administer the distribution of the funding. "We know that certain sectors of our local economy have been hurt

more than others, and we want to provide help to as many employers and employees as possible, especially small businesses," Zurek said.

Interested business owners will have the opportunity to submit their requests for assistance via the Visalia Chamber of Commerce web site visaliachamber.org.

"Whether it be the dining sector, travel and entertainment, or personal services, those are the parts of the local economy have been hurt the most," Zurek said.

For anyone interested in contributing or finding out more about the Taking Care Of Business Fund, go to visaliachamber.org or call the Visalia Chamber of Commerce at 559-734-5876.

CITY UPDATE

City of Visalia reaches out to job seekers

Blessed with a strong local economy and a prime location in the heart of the Central Valley, relatively equidistant between the coast, major metropolitan areas, and the national parks of the southern Sierra Nevada, Visalia continues to enjoy growth and diversification.

The City of Visalia is a full-service municipality, providing services to our citizens that run the full gamut, from police and fire protection to recreation programs to solid waste collection and urban transit.

The City's continued growth means opportunity, and it takes a team of committed professionals to keep our organization running. We are looking for interested applicants who are ready to enter the job market or to take the next step on their career journey.

For those entering the job market, we have continuous recruitment opportunities that come with training components, like the position of Assistant Communications Operator (commonly referred to as dispatcher) in our Police Department.

For those advanced in their field, or looking to move to the area and continue their career, there are opportunities in our Information Services Division in the position of Information Security Analyst, or in our Public Works Department in the position of Civil Engineer.

Thanks in part to a competitive total compensation package, Visalia has a long tradition of employees who spend much, or all, of their career in this or-

See **JOB SEEKERS** on page 4



Public safety takes the lead on Visalia Leadership course

Paola Martinez
Universal Services Manager,
Valley Strong Credit Unions

Leadership Visalia spent the day via zoom once again to learn about Visalia's public safety for their February day session. The day session was prepared and organized by fellow Leadership Visalia members, Aubrey Mathis and Cameron Bledsoe. They thoughtfully put together a group of speakers whose expertise fell right into the day's theme of public safety.

They kicked off the day by showing an interview made by Mark Oppenheim of the Executive Director of Family Services of Tulare County, Caitly Meader. During the interview, Meader discussed ways the organization establishes safety and guidance to those directly impacted by domestic violence and trauma. She shared that they offer mental health care services to not only victims, but also to the offenders in efforts to address the issue of domestic violence and other types of family abuse from both sides of the spectrum.

Visalia Police Department's very own, Chief Jason Salazar, was the first speaker of the day. He touched on recent hot topics including the pandemic and

racial divide issues. He also presented the class with crime statistics as well as accomplishments, successes, and changes made in 2020. The class learned that gang related crimes have significantly decreased in the last 13 years demonstrating that their programs in place to reduce such violence have been effective. Chief Salazar also made mention of the decline in police officer recruitment as the required age limit is 21 and older and can no longer promote past police officer without a college degree. He went on to cover the homelessness issue in our community and shared that the encampments along the freeway must be addressed by Caltrans. However, due to Covid-19, Caltrans is not actively addressing this issue.

The public safety discussion continued with Erica Gonzalez, Stanford University Alumni and Supervisor for the Law and Motion Team of Tulare County's District Attorney's office. She found her calling at a young age after witnessing domestic violence abuse and wanting to help the victim when it occurred. At the DA's office, she's in charge of the department that reviews

See **LEADERSHIP** on page 4

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We are well past rebuilding. This is a rebirth.



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

This has been quite a year. Typically we mark years in January, but for me, 2020 really began in March. So here we are, a year after 2020, and it is essential to get a few things straight. I have no desire to recap the mayhem, pain, disaster. Those things have led us here. We know them. Many of us still have very visible scars. But that pain led us here.

Where is here? What now? Even those questions pain me.

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear John Register speak. Mr. Register is a silver medalist in the paralympic games. He shared how to handle finding yourself in a tough new reality. When John Register lost his leg competing to place in the Olympics, he thought everything he knew, everything that defined him as a person, an athlete, a father, and a husband, had changed. I was riveted. He spoke about fighting back from a dark moment to win the silver medal some years later.

Aren't we all fighting back from a dark moment? This past year has been challenging, excruciating at times. JDJDJD encouraged us not to long for what was but to fight for what is in front of us. I am proud of this community. Proud of what we've fought through and frankly all that we're still fighting through. I'm proud that we haven't lost sight of each other, of the type of community we've all worked so hard to build.

The truth is we're past rebuilding. Now is time for a rebirth—a time to take hold of the important and push towards the new. We can do it. Frankly, we always have. It's that entrepreneurial spirit that has made us great. It's that spirit that has

pushed businesses to pivot and adapt at break-neck speed. I see the rebirth happening. It's exciting.

Do you want to adapt? Do you need inspiration? Want to collaborate with other like-minded leaders about how we grow, change and continue to thrive? Well, it just so happens that bringing leaders together to create change is the Visalia Chamber's specialty.

The Chamber provides a virtual opportunity to participate in quality leadership and workforce training for business owners and employees in the Central Valley. The IMPACT Leadership Conference focuses on workplace skills, personal growth, and community activism while cultivating business and community leaders during this rebirth. Breakout sessions target these new realities, share the best that has happened, and give tools to building a strong person, business, and community. Dr. Rebecca Heiss' doctoral research works to solve practical problems in overcoming what she refers to as "biological ghosts" - subconscious behaviors that haunt modern life. Designated as "transformative" by the National Science Foundation, Dr. Heiss helps us become our best selves. Her TEDx Talk highlights her humor and makes this challenging topic fun and approachable. I'm excited to have her as our keynote. And our dear friend Justin Patton will return to give our morning pep talk. For those that attended Impact previously, you'll remember Justin's message was transformative. Many companies have used his books and messages for team developments. I know he'll set the day off right as we all look to make an impact in this new world we find ourselves in.

We are here for you in this rebirth process. As always, your Visalia Chamber has valuable tools and resources to help prepare you. We are stronger together, and this past year our community has proven that. To gain access to Impact, visit visaliachamber.org/impact. Early bird tickets are selling quickly. Be sure to get yours today.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Company: Eagle Mountain Casino

Provide a brief overview of your business. Indian Gaming News to share? List the latest awards you've received, new products your business has launched, etc. (Pictures welcomed!)

Our Fee-to-Trust Application has just been approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and we can now proceed with moving Eagle Mountain Casino from the Tule River Indian Reservation into Porterville California, 16 miles east of our current location near the Porterville Airport on 40 acres of land.

Tell us something interesting about your business or product(s). We provide great local entertainment at a value to guests where revenues are then utilized to maintain, support and grow Tule River Tribes Economic Development, as well as partner with the City and the State to share annual funds not including funds for donations and contributions to local communities.

How does your company get involved in the local community? Eagle Mountain Casino donates on average of \$200,000 to the local community in monetary and in-kind donations each year which assists nonprofits and charity's in need.

The best part of working for your company is...? The Team Members, Guests and Benefits (Medical, Dental, Vision, 401k)

How has the Chamber and/or the Ambassador Program helped you and/or your business? It has been wonderful to partner with the Visalia Chamber. The chamber has been supportive in being able to showcase Eagle Mountain Casino and our special promotions, events, donations etc. to the local community. Eagle Mountain Casino is proud to sponsor and donate to dozens of local non-profits each year in Tulare County, so it's nice having a partner who can return the favor, as we have invested in them as well.

Top thing you wish Visalia knew about your business? That there is a great local Casino in the beautiful Sierra Nevada foothills that offers fun entertainment and dining options while abiding by the CDC Guidelines and offering several forms of safety covid measures (limited capacity, multiple hand sanitizing stations, 6-foot social distancing stickers, fogger disinfectants for large areas, new antimicrobial felt at our table games, plexi glass dividers on the slot machines and table games and constant disinfecting of the machines; the machine will also tell a guest if it has been disinfected or not.)

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.

Solopreneur:

- Pro Wash Solar

Small Business Members:

- Anthem Blue Cross
- California Cannabis Company
- GreenBean
- Urbane Cafe

Business Connector Members:

- Macy's

RENEWING

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

Champion Members:

- Bueno Beverage Company

Keystone Members:

- California Dairies, Inc.
- Kuubix Energy, Inc.*

Cornerstone Members:

- Southern California Edison Company

Business Connector Members:

- BSK Associates*
- Fairfield Inn Visalia Sequoia*
- Fresno Yosemite International Airport
- Giant Chevrolet Cadillac
- Pacific Treasures & Gourmet*
- Sequoia Financial, LLC
- Zeltmacher Structural Design Engineering, Inc

Small Business Members:

- Bourdette & Partners*
- Cellar Door*
- Chicago's Pizza With-A-Twist*
- Elaine Rider/State Farm Insurance Agency*
- Golden State Cardiac & Thoracic Surgery, Inc
- Haulaway Storage Containers*
- Salt + Light Works*



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- Seals Construction*
- Tachi Palace Casino Resort*
- The Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria
- Tulare County Library
- Valhalla Restaurant & Gift Shop*
- Visalia Sales Yard

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Transitions Children's Services

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- American Red Cross of Central California
- Read for Life*
- Visalia Players

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

JR. CEO SPOTLIGHT



Name: Blake Lawson

Company: The Loaded Candy Cane Hot Chocolate Stand

Title: Owner

How did you come up with your business idea?
The idea for my hot choco-

late stand was the suggestion of the Chamber of Commerce. I decided to add extra toppings to my hot chocolate and call it "loaded" because my parents' use that name for items in their business, The Salad Shop.

What's the best thing you learned from the Jr. CEO program?

How to manage money: how you need to make smart investments, the difference between bringing in money and making a profit.

Why would you recommend the Jr. CEO program to other students?

I would recommend it because it teaches kids to learn business from a young age and will be a bigger investment our future businesses.

What's next for your business?

To participate in the future Jr CEO programs and sell my hot chocolate next winter at the Christmas parade and other events.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLAKE LAWSON

What is your favorite local business to visit in Visalia with friends and family?

When I'm not at The Salad Shop, I spend most of my time at Roller Towne. I do my distance learning there in their Day Camp and I love it.

RIBBON CUTTING



New member GreenBean held a ribbon cutting on Jan. 29
515 W. Naranjo Boulevard in Woodlake | 559-564-9073

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Layout The Sun-Gazette

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Visit www.visaliachamber.org

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

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Phishing, not fishing



Phishing is the process of stealing sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details. Attackers do this by pretending to be a trustworthy source like your email provider or an online shopping website. This is a form of "social engineering" like confidence men or con men but in the digital age. Between May 2004 and May 2005 about 1.2 million computer users suffered losses by phishing attacks. This totaled about \$929 million in damages. The most common form of Phishing is through email or spam

messages. The goal is to cast a wide "net" and see how many people you can catch. You might have seen emails from a prince from a far away country that wants to give you millions of dollars if you only send them a little bit of money first. This obviously is a scam, and nothing will come of it.

Other emails may be claiming they caught you doing something bad online and they have evidence. If you don't pay them, they will release your "secrets". This is false and they are looking for a quick buck.

Some more sophisticated attacks involve emails claiming your email password will expire or someone shared a file with you online. Always check with the person who sent it by calling them before taking any action. Once you click on the link in the email, it will ask you to log in to your email. This is a clever way to get your password. Once they have your password, they can pretend to be you and try to Phish your entire address book and the cycle continues if your connections fall to the same attack!

How to stop attacks

The first and best security is yourself. Looking for common red flags in the email can help a lot. The easiest way is to look for bad grammar in the email. Most of the time these emails come from other countries where English is not their first language. Sometimes there are a lot of mistakes. Also look at the email address and make sure it is coming from the person or company you trust. If you are not sure, search on Google for the email (someone has likely already found this email) or consult your favorite tech so they can check out the email with you.

There are also online trainings that teach you more in-depth techniques to look out for. They can also send you simulated and controlled tests at random. If you fall victim, it will tell you how you can detect a real threat in the future.

Conclusion

The single best thing you can do is slow down and think through logically if the email is legitimate. If you think about it, most of the time these emails will come out of the blue and will make little logical sense. It is far easier to call the person or company that sent it, rather than suffering the considerable time and money that you may lose if you fall victim.

THE LAW AT WORK

Avoid trouble with employee references



By Brett T. Abbott
Gubler & Abbott LLP
A natural consequence of severing ties with an employee is having to later provide references to prospective employers. In order to avoid potential liability for defamation or slander, employers should follow certain guidelines in giving references.

First, an employer should give advance notice of the reference. When terminating the employment, the employer should inform the employee in advance of what facts will be given in future references. Avoid simply saying that the reference will be "good" or "favorable."

Second, be careful to avoid conclusions. Calling a former employee "insubordinate" or "incompetent" can create a potential lawsuit for defamation. Instead, state that the employee refused to follow directions, or did not meet specific standards. Remember that not all questions have to be answered, especially those that call for conclusions – such as "Would you rehire this person?"

Third, disclose only truthful information and

make sure that personnel file information is factually correct. Supervisors should be trained to place only accurate, verifiable information in personnel files – a reference is only as truthful as the underlying information on which it is based.

Fourth, it's almost always smart to obtain a signed release from employees regarding specific information that may be disclosed to prospective employers. The release should provide the employee with as much information as possible about information to be disclosed, including dates of employment, job titles held, a statement about the employee's work performance, and the reason for termination of employment.

Fifth, designate only a limited number of people within the organization to give references. It is wise to notify employees, preferably in the Employee Handbook, that references will be provided by only one or two designated people. This practice will minimize the risk of contradictory references on behalf of the company, and ensure that reference standards are kept.

Sixth, avoid responding to oral reference requests. Require all employees asking for references to request the reference in writing, and to provide a signed statement from the employee authorizing the prospective employer to obtain a reference. Also, reply only in writing to reference requests and keep a copy of all documentation.

See LAW on page 4

World Wide Sires celebrates 50 years

World Wide Sires (WWS) is celebrating its 50-year anniversary in 2021! What started as a passion for cows and international people for one California pioneer, soon grew into a global business that has become a household name for farmers around the world.

World Wide Sires was founded by a prominent California dairy producer, Mr. Willard "Bill" Clark of Cal-Clark Holsteins in 1971. An avid traveler with a passion for dairy cattle and international business, Clark identified a need and demand for U.S. genetics around the world and sought to source elite product to meet this market demand. At the time that the company was founded at Clark's home farm in Hanford, California, there were five A.I. cooperatives that served as the original genetic suppliers: Tri-State Breeders Cooperative, East Central Breeders, Eastern A.I. Cooperative, Sire Power and Midwest Breeders Cooperative. Several others, including Select Sires, joined the WWS organization in later years. Export totals grew rapidly, and by the 1980's, World Wide Sires was the global sales organization representing all the A.I. cooperatives in the United States. In 2017, after a series of mergers and acquisitions, World Wide Sires became a subsidiary of Select Sires.



Clark attributed his early success to his focus on people and customer service, which remain the cornerstones of World Wide Sires today.

In the company's 50-year history, World Wide Sires has shipped more than 110 million doses of semen to 108 countries, and has hosted more than 37,000 international visitors.

World Wide Sires Ltd. has built the genetic foundation of the global dairy industry with great sires such as Elevation, Bell, Chairman, Chief Mark, Blackstar, Manfred, Durham, BW Marshall, Potter, Blitz, O Man, Marion, Man-O-Man, Planet, G W Atwood, Mogul, Super-sire and Montross. Recent greats such as Helix, Brewmaster, Rengade and Legacy, all currently available from World Wide Sires, are ensuring a bright future.

Bill Clark based his vision of World Wide Sires on putting people first and providing them

with the best services available to support their businesses. This ideology remains today as the organization offers a variety of value-added services to customers around the globe, including Global Dairy Solutions (GDS) and the World Wide Mating Service (WMS). In addition to these services, WWS has been at the forefront of new technology to ensure our customers' success, being the first major U.S. A.I. organization to offer 90 percent female-separated product, named genderSELEcted semen and partnering with industry leaders like CowManager, Zoetis and Bovisync to help customers better manage multiple aspects of their dairy.

The first 50 years of World Wide Sires have been built on a legacy of superior genetics, excellent customer service and solid, long-lasting relationships with

See 50 YEARS on page 6



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Morales family was one of five special families whose children each received two gifts from

the **Assistance League of Visalia** to help spread some much-needed cheer throughout the Christmas season. In total, 40 gifts, and gift cards for each family, were distributed throughout the Visalia area.

Congratulations to **Pacific Employers** on their new location at 1331 W Center Ave.

Quail Park on Cypress will host a free shredding event for seniors on Friday, March 26, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Each car will be limited to three Banker's boxes. Additional information can be found by calling (559) 624-3503.

Central Valley Community Bank reported earning results for the year and December quarter, including an 16.61% increase in net loans and increase of total deposits of 29.21%.

Walmart provided four



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Congratulations to **Michael's Custom Jewelry** on a well-deserved retirement and thank you for 47 years of helping us create memories!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Health Net joined with CalViva and **Anthem Blue Cross** to provide \$150,000 in grants to Central Valley FQHCs to support e-consult adoption in their clinics. Increasing e-consults, especially during COVID-19, will increase access to specialty care by reducing the need for patient travel for face-to-face visits.

Valley Strong Credit Union has expanded its services throughout Tulare County to four locations by the end of 2021.

grants, totaling \$2,500 to **CSET** in support of its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program.

Sequoia Symphony Orchestra received an \$800,000 anonymous donation that will partly be put in the endowment fund which produces interest for each year's budget and allows new creative opportunities for the Symphony.

Bank of the Sierra awarded \$23,000 to eight nonprofits in the Central Valley during the fourth quarter, including the **Visalia Gleaning Seniors**.

Congratulations to **Personnel Solutions Unlimited** who celebrated their 20th Anniversary on March 1.

Farmer Bob's World will be hosting a grand opening on March 13, featuring a full day of outdoor activities.

Suncrest Bank announced it will pay its first dividend to shareholders starting on March 1. The announcement came after an increase in fourth quarter earnings year-over-year by 12%.



Comcast updates commitment to digital equity, speeds up efforts in '21



Comcast, last month, made several announcements that build on its longstanding commitment to advancing digital equity, closing the digital divide, and addressing both digital literacy and the homework gap. The new and expanded efforts are designed to help connect as many Americans to the Internet as possible and create new opportunities for underrepresented communities through the education, resources, and skills training they need to succeed in today's digital economy.

"We've been on a mission to address digital inequities in under-resourced communities through Internet Essentials for a decade and there's never been a greater need than now," said Dave Watson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Comcast Cable. "As a media and technology company, we have a unique opportunity to provide meaningful connection to the communities we serve – whether that's through access to the Internet, programs to support creativity and digital literacy and skills training for young people, or workforce develop-

ment opportunities for adults. Our commitment has never been stronger, and we are dedicated to leveling the playing field and making a lasting impact for generations to come."

In 2020, Comcast redoubled those efforts, as COVID-19 shined an even brighter light on this important equity issue in our society. And at the onset of 2021 – which coincides with the 10th anniversary of its Internet Essentials program – the company is once again advancing its digital equity commitment.

Accelerating the nation's largest broadband adoption program

For more than a decade, Comcast has focused on connecting millions of low-income families to the Internet through Internet Essentials, the largest and most comprehensive low-cost Internet adoption program for low-income Americans. Since 2011, Comcast has connected millions of people to the Internet at home, donated tens of thousands of free laptops to students and families across the country, and invested \$700 million in digital literacy, skills training and awareness programs that

See COMCAST on page 6



How can I apply for the Taking Care of Business Fund?

If you are a business who was effected by the pandemic or would like to help save your favorite local business, please visit visaliachamber.org/tcb-fund for more information.

What current events does the Chamber offer?

We are proud to provide the opportunity for quality leadership and workforce training for business owners and employees throughout the Central Valley. Our IMPACT Leadership Conference is set to take place on Wednesday, April 21. Learn more at visaliachamber.org/impact.

Have a question about the Chamber?

Send me a message: Jena@visaliachamber.org

NOW ENROLLING

Jr. CEO

SPRING SEMESTER

Jr. CEO, presented by ServiceMaster by Benevento, is a five-week digital business education course that teaches children the basics of starting their own company. The concept revolves around the scenario of opening an orange juice stand. At the end of the program, participants will open their Orange Juice stands (or another concept they have created) at various spots around town.

VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/CEO

IMPACT

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

APRIL 21, 2021

MORNING PEP TALK:
Justin Patton
Executive Coach

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE:
REBECCA HEISS, PhD
CEO/FOUNDER BIOLOGIC BALANCE
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER

visaliachamber.org/impact



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SUN-GAZETTE

The Visalia Rawhide got to enjoy an extra year of being on top of the minor league ranks since their 2020 season was scuttled because of the pandemic. The Rawhide won the 2019 California League Championship as an affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks who offered them an extension at a time when minor league teams are being slashed.

Rawhide accepts Diamondbacks' affiliation



The Visalia Rawhide have officially accepted their invitation to remain an affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks after recently signing Major League Baseball's Professional Development License (PDL). The 10-year agreement will keep the Diamondbacks' Single-A baseball team in Visalia through the 2030 season.

"We could not be more excited to sign the PDL and officially accept the Arizona Diamondbacks invitation to continue our partnership with the organization for years to come," said Sam Sigal, Vice President of First Pitch Entertainment, owners of the Visalia Rawhide. "Continuing our relationship with the D-Backs franchise going forward makes the return to baseball at Recreation Ballpark in the 2021 season even sweeter."

The relationship between Visalia and Arizona dates back to the 2007 season, and has seen stars like Trevor Bauer, Max Scherzer, Paul Goldschmidt, Justin Upton, Archie Bradley and many more make their way from Visalia to the Major Leagues. The relationship also produced the 2019 California League Champions, giving Visalia their first league title since the 1978 season.

"Visalia is the longest-tenured D-Backs' affiliate and we are proud that will continue for many years to come," said Josh Barfield, Director of Player Development for the Arizona Dia-

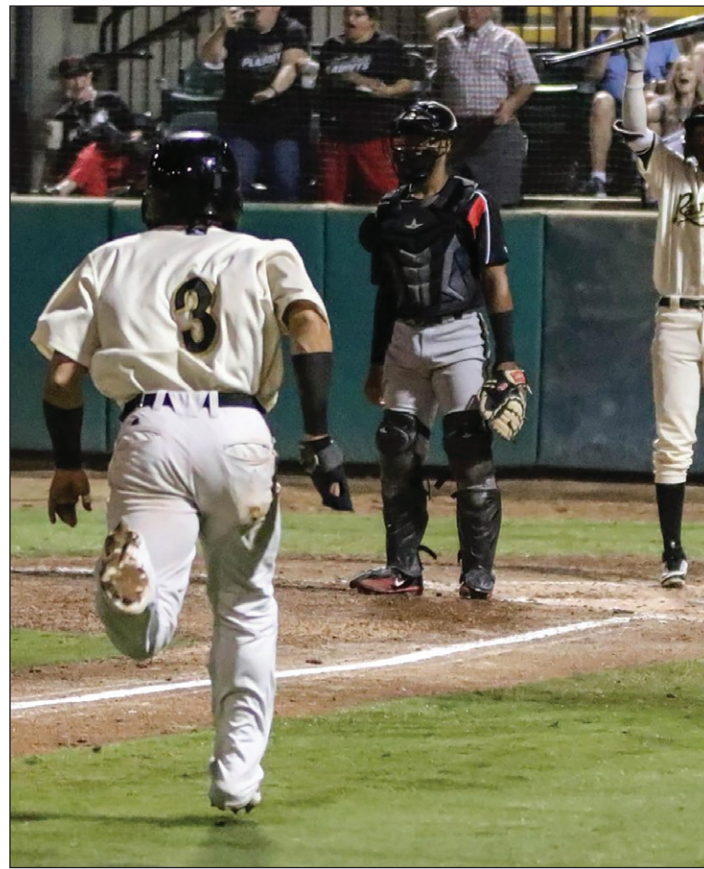


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SUN-GAZETTE

Rawhide put their 2019 championship game away with an RBI. Unfortunately it would be their last game for almost 18 months. The Rawhide plan to return to the local diamond in May with restrictions.

mondbacks. "We know the new ownership group, front office and Rawhide fans are looking forward to this upcoming season, and we are excited for our players and staff to return to

Recreation Ballpark."

Additional information regarding the Rawhide's 2021 schedule, league structure, and ticketing procedures will be announced in the near future.



Tulare company shakes things up at ag expo



Reggie Ellis
President and
Publisher
The Sun-Gazette

A Tulare company specializing in the design and manufacturing of pruning and harvesting equipment is shaking things up in the almond industry.

The Sun-Gazette

TOL Incorporated has been designing, manufacturing and operating machines of all sizes to prune residential to commercial trees. Much of that time was spent in orange groves hedging and topping trees to the right width and height to make them easier to harvest for farmworkers. Now the company has created a shaker that allows almond farmers to do less pruning and harvest more crop without replanting their orchards for mechanical harvesting and while reducing dust.

"We are able to reduce the dust significantly, and anyone who drives through the Valley has seen the amount of dust created during almond harvesting," TOL CEO and general manager Scott Hermann said.

Typically, almonds are harvested by shaking the trees and letting the nuts hit the ground where they dry inside the hull for 7-10 days. They are then swept into windrows using a "sweeper" machine, a process that creates an enormous amount of dust and adds another step and a significant cost to harvesting. The almonds are then vacuumed up into a cart that brings them to the edge of the orchard for transport.

Hermann said the unique design of TOL's Twin D T4 shakers allows them to shake, catch, and windrow the nuts without the need to sweep. This process reduces dust by 75 to 90% and has already caught the atten-

tion of the California Air Resources Board, the state agency overseeing air pollution, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the regional agency responsible for reducing the valley's air pollution, which is among the worst in the state. Hermann said legislation is already being proposed for the almond industry to reduce dust and the best way for the industry to adjust is to voluntarily take steps to do it before legislators pass burdensome regulations to ensure they do it.

Eliminating use of the sweepers also cuts down on the amount of dirt and dust swept into the nuts during mechanical harvesting and it never lets the crop hit the ground, something the Almond Board of California is pushing for. With increased concerns and attention being drawn to food safety and how our food is harvested, Hermann said the Almond Board has taken an interest in his machine.

"The Almond Board is excited about our equipment. Their goal is to have off-ground harvest in the future," Hermann said. "Our machine is the solution to making those future goals happen now."

Off-ground harvest is already required for pistachios because the hulls are split before being harvested. The Twin D T4 can be used for both pistachios and almonds as well as walnuts, pecans and even prunes, which also are also shaken from plum trees and dried before being packed and shipped.

Hermann said farmers have to cut off water to almond trees as much as a week and half before and after harvest to prevent mold in the nuts. Almond harvest is also at the height of summer heat in August, when almond trees need water the most.

In addition to harvesting a diversity of crops, Hermann said the Twin D T4 Shaker is more nimble than its current counterparts in the industry. While many shakers require orchard rows to be 24 feet wide, the Twin D T4 can fit in rows as narrow as 18 feet. Hermann said replanting an almond orchard for

mechanical harvesting is prohibitively expensive for well established orchards who are already giving up a significant amount of trees by having fewer rows per acre. Existing machines also require as much as three feet of clearance from the ground to grab the trunk of the tree for shaking. This means farmers must prune low hanging branches, often giving up a portion of each tree's yield throughout the entire orchard. TOL's shaker only needs a foot and half of clearance.

"The younger generation of farmers are looking to new technology for more efficient ways of producing the crop," Hermann said.

TOL's shakers were initially born out of the need for off-ground harvest in Israel. In 2014, Hermann said Israeli farmers began asking for machines to harvest almonds without letting the nuts hit the ground. Hermann said it was difficult to sweep the nuts into rows in Israel's gravelly ground and the dry, clay soil would crack and a portion of the nuts would fall through the cracks and lost to the vacuums that followed the sweepers. Israel's steep terrain also served as an excellent training ground to ensure the innovative shakers could drive along the slopes of the foothills back home in Valley without tipping over. The shaker was adapted for the California market in 2019, tested in the fields last summer and is now available for purchase for this summer's harvest.

"The initial reception has been really good," Hermann said of Valley almond growers.

For more information on the Twin D T4 Shaker, contact TOL by calling 559-686-2844, toll free at 800-732-2142 or emailing contact@tol-inc.com.

Top 10

The Twin D T4 Shaker is just one of the agricultural innovations features on the Top 10 Products list for the all virtual, 2021 World Ag Expo in Tulare sponsored by Bank of America. Another local company, Cainthus in Visalia, is using computer vision and artificial intelligence to monitor behavioral patterns

of dairy herds to maximum milk production but also improve animal welfare in its ALUS Behavior system.

The proprietary technology relies on a smart camera system that monitors animal behavior as well as operations on the farm, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and automatically turns visual inputs from cameras into real-time insights. The system passively monitors events like feed deliveries, push-ups and cleanouts and tracks those movements relative to the desired schedule. It enables producers to improve the consistency of their operations, address over or underfeeding post digestive upsets, adapt to weather changes and overall maximize intakes and reduce feed waste.

Cainthus has now installed its technology on several major farms in the U.S., tracking tens of thousands of cows.

Other products on the list are:

- 125 & 155 water pumps: Ace Pump Corporation introduced new 125 and 155 models of its Pro 5 Series pumps with advanced features to improve reliability and prevent costly downtime.
- AgCode Passive GPS tool: AgCode's new Passive GPS-powered data collection tool provides growers detailed insights and unrivaled accuracy on task and equipment activity in the field in real time, all seamlessly integrated into the AgCode farm management software system. Track equipment and labor activities with GPS devices

See TOP 10 on page 5

JOB SEEKERS

Continued from page 1

ganization. Each year we celebrate our employees with service awards, and each year we recognize employees who have served this organization and the Visalia community for 20, 30, even 40 years.

At the City of Visalia, we feel like a family, we act like a team, and we strive to provide our employees with a comfortable and enjoyable place to live and work. If you're new to the job market or looking for career advancement, consider the City of Visalia.

Find the City's full list of current recruitments, or fill out a Job Interest Card, online at www.governmentjobs.com/careers/visalia.

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

LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 1

in-custody police reports where they have 48 hours to decide to file and charge an individual or not. She shared that there has unfortunately been a rise in thefts and domestic violence abuse in recent times.

Next up was Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools. Hire serves over 100,000 students in 48 Tulare County school districts and Charter schools in California's Central Valley. His main goal is to impact the lives of young people in a positive way. He identified how Tulare County of Education has prioritized school safety and brought together the resources necessary to make an impact. He stressed that the collaboration of district leadership, law enforcement, students, first responders, and the community is essential to maintain our schools safe.

Tulare County Sheriff, Mike Boudreaux stated he was "hungry for a better 2021" and went on to speak on the human trafficking issue our community is actively facing. He shared the "upsetting truth" that human trafficking in our area has been increasing and most sex trafficking victims are girls ranging in ages of 10-17. "It's not always the troubled youth," he said "all children are susceptible to being trafficked." He encouraged parents to be proactive and go through their children's social media accounts friends list and ensure they know every single friend. He transitioned to the mental health issues amongst the inmate population. He strongly believes that post-care for these individuals is critical and is working towards a jail facility that specializes in mental health issues as 63% of the inmate population is receiving mental health counseling and medication. He concluded by reminding the class to remain alert and aware of their surroundings.

Homeless Outreach Proactive Enforcement Sargent, Brent Miller, concluded the day by discussing the strategy in place to address the homeless population. The HOPE team is dedicated to decreasing the impact of homelessness issues by utilizing a strategy of enforcement, prevention, and intervention. Their strategy includes wearing a more relaxed uniform to be more approachable, making arrests when necessary, storing confiscated property, and providing helpful resources. Overall, the Leadership Visalia Cohort of 2021 had a very informative day of how our city strives to ensure our safety on a day-to-day basis.

LAW

Continued from page 3

While most references given to prospective employers will not result in problems down the road, taking some minimal precautions, as outlined above, can save companies substantial amounts of time, money, and stress. Termination of employees is an unfortunate part of doing business, and so is giving references. Make sure you do it right.

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 LLP (bta@thecalifornialawyers.com). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott LLP, (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinoweth St., Visalia, CA 93291 (www.thecalifornialawyers.com).

CSET offers free drop off tax preparation services in Tulare County



Community Services Employment Training (CSET) is providing free tax preparation services to residents of Tulare County. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program prepares federal and state tax returns at no cost to

households with less than \$54,000 in annual income. Eligible residents may qualify for Federal and California Earned Income Tax Credits (CalEITC), a tax credit that puts money into the pockets of working families and individuals. Taxpayers who file their tax returns with an ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number), including undocumented immigrants, are eligible for the CalEITC and the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) when filing their 2020 taxes. Tax documents may now be dropped off at one of our VITA locations and a certified tax preparer will prepare their tax return.

Through the VITA drop-off service, an appointment is not required. Tax preparers will connect with customers within 72 hours except for weekends and holidays. Customers will be informed about the filing process and contacted over the phone to review, schedule a pickup, and authorization to e-file. Customers may download the checklist and intake form from our web page www.cset.org/vita or stop by one of our five offices to pick up a packet.

The following drop-off sites will be available to accept documents Monday – Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm (NO SATURDAYS AT THIS TIME):

- Visalia CSET Main Office: 312 NW 3RD Ave, Visalia, CA 93291
- Tulare Family Resource Center: 304 E. Tulare Ave, Tulare, CA 93274
- Cutler CSET Office: 12691 Ave 408 Cutler, CA 93615
- Porterville Employment Connection: 1063 W. Henderson Ave, Porterville, CA 93257
- Pixley CSET Office: 927 S. Center St., Pixley, CA 93256

For more information on site locations and required documents please visit www.cset.org/vita, call (559) 741-4640, or email vitatrainingshelp@cset.org.

FREE TAX RETURN PREP

CSET offers no-cost tax preparation by certified tax preparers for families with income under \$54,000.

FREE DROP-OFF SERVICE
Monday - Friday
FEBRUARY - APRIL 2021
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

DROP-OFF SITES

Tax documents can be dropped off at one of our five main locations.

VISALIA CSET Main Office 312 NW 3rd Ave, 93291	TULARE Family Resource Center 304 E. Tulare Ave, 93274
CUTLER CSET Office 12691 Ave 408, 93615	PORTERVILLE Employment Connection 1063 W. Henderson Ave, 93257
PIXLEY Pixley CSET Office 927 Center St, Pixley, CA 93256	

Customers will be notified of when to pick-up their tax documents.

You may qualify for the CA Earned Income Tax Credit! Learn how at: www.cset.org/caleitc

MORE INFO
Visit us online for a detailed list of required forms.
www.cset.org/vita

FILE FROM HOME
MYFREETAXES.COM

Taxes will be prepared on a first come, first served basis; no appointments available. Due to high call volumes, CSET will not answer questions about individual tax issues in person at tax site

Seen and unseen



Arts Visalia is excited to host the inspiring Seen and Unseen art exhibition. The exhibition will honor the life's work of Chicano Artist Ricardo Favela, and other Central Valley artists to bring awareness to the region's rich cultural diversity. Favela's commitment to the community and education guided him to engagement with the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF). This led to his engagement with the United Farm Workers Union (UFW), the Chicano cultural arts movement and statewide and local civil rights and community empowerment. This exhibition will celebrate how Favela used his artistic voice to reflect the Chicano experience. Seen and Unseen will be featured in the gallery from March 3rd-26th, 2021.

Arts Visalia is anticipating having our doors open Wednesday-Saturday from noon-5:30 p.m. to allow our visitors to experience the artworks in person. However, we will continue to have a virtual gallery tour available on our website at www.artsvisalia.org/virtual-tours to allow everyone an opportunity to see these engaging exhibitions. If Arts Visalia is unable to have our doors open we will be offering the opportunity to schedule your viewing experience Wednesday through Saturday from 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM.

In April Arts Visalia will be hosting the works of sculptor Peggee Davis and painter Jana

Botkin. Peggee Davis creates ceramic works depicting the female form. According to Davis "They have a life of their own as they express my feelings about the political time, the state of a friendship, the love I feel for my daughters, the challenge of the body itself." As a life-long resident Jana Botkin's goal is to find the things that make Tulare County unique. She continually searches out the beauty of our county, and the parts that make rural living so appealing.

Arts Visalia is celebrating 25 years as the area's premiere center for the visual arts.

With the support of many throughout the years, we have fervently carried on the founders' vision to create a permanent place to view the visual arts and provide art education in Visalia. As we commemorate this milestone, we acknowledge and thank the original building partners and all whose faithful support has sustained us over the years and continues to keep Arts Visalia a community center for the visual arts. We hope you'll join us throughout 2021 as we recognize our founders and benefactors, recount our history, and celebrate our vision of educating, engaging, and enhancing our community through the visual arts.

For questions or to schedule a visit, please call us at 559-739-0905 or email artsvisalia@sbcglobal.net. You can also follow us on facebook and instagram or visit our website at www.artsvisalia.org for more information, and updates.

*Open Hours subject to change. Visit www.artsvisalia.org for updates and changes.

Rural tourism expected to rebound in Tulare County for outdoor recreation



Ben Irwin
News Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

Tourism has taken a back seat during the coronavirus pandemic, but that hasn't stopped the Tulare County Economic Development Office from finding ways to promote Tulare County's hidden treasures.

Michael Washam, associate director of the Tulare County Economic Development Office, broke the harsh reality of the state of tourism in California. He said in 2019, California tourism surpassed \$145 billion in travel spending, supporting 1.2 million jobs and driving over \$12 billion in state and local tax revenue.

"For Tulare County, that breaks down to \$540 million in annual travel spending supporting over 5,500 jobs here locally," Washam said, "and \$49.5 million in local and state tax revenue."

COVID-19 has devastated the tourism economy both locally and statewide, Washam said, estimating that 2020 total travel spending statewide will be down over 55% compared to 2019.

"That equates to erasing over a decade of growth to the industry," Washam said. "It goes back to 2010 numbers, around 66 billion statewide. And it's not expected to rebound to pre-coronavirus levels until 2024."

Washam said the rural areas have fared a bit better due to more domestic travel and much of the local tourism related to

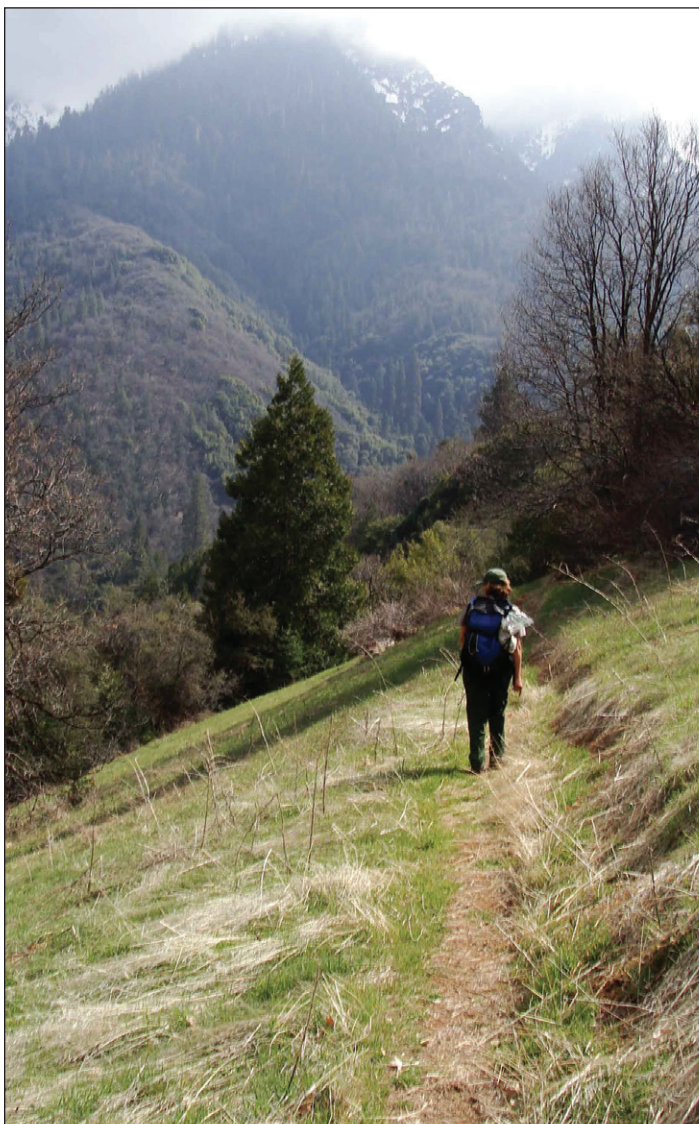


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Tulare County Economic Development Department believes that while tourism has taken a massive plunge in light of the pandemic it will rebound quickly because of the number of outdoor activities available in the area.

outdoor recreation.

"Because we have outdoor recreation, I think we will rebound

a little quicker than the state

overall because of those factors," Washam said "hopefully, if we

can get these vaccines completely out, we will probably rebound maybe close to a year before the overall state."

Washam said Tulare County's greatest tourism marketing strength is through collaboration with local partners: Mighty 190—which got a website update with the help of the county Economic Development Office—highlights recreation opportunities along highway 190. Discover Sequoias, a tourism council that covers tourism for the entire county and the Museum Alliance of Tulare County.

Washam highlighted a new addition to the tourism marketing efforts was running "Discover Tulare County" and "Discover The Sequoias" billboards on Highway 99—one of each in Traver and Tulare—with the hashtag #RecreateResponsibly to capture the holiday crowd from Thanksgiving to New Years Day.

"This is the first time we've really pushed that marketing," Washam said, "in an effort to be able to draw attention to the activities that are available to people currently to be able to get outside and exercise."

Although most of their trade shows were canceled this year due to COVID-19, Washam said it created the opportunity to do the first virtual trade show in December, with attendees able to live chat and ask questions about amenities in Tulare County.

"It was a little awkward the first time doing something like that," Washam said, "but we always have to keep looking forward and looking for new opportunities."

See **REBOUND** on page 6

TOP 10 Continued from page 4

while they happen. Monitor block completion on a daily basis. Gain a clear view of productivity levels and efficiency.

- **ORBIS 900 forage harvester header:** International company CLAAS has developed a row-independent forage harvester header that is 30 feet wide, the largest header in the company's ORBIS line, but can be folded in unfolded in just 22 seconds. A new tilting frame also enables the ORBIS 900 to follow contours of uneven ground for optimal performance.
- **RotaryMATE EXPSplus:** Green Source Automation, LLC presents the first rotary dairy robot that automates multiple tasks in the milking parlor including cleaning, sanitizing, stimulating, and teat wiping at speeds up to 4.2 seconds per stall. The increased consistency dairy robots provide in these positions makes for happier, healthier, and more productive cows.
- **LOIS manure treatment:** Livestock Water Recycling, one of Canada's fastest growing technology companies, introduces its first ever machine learning module to optimize manure treatment.
- **Certa-Set CLIC Irrigation**
- **System:** Houston-based NAPCO Pipe & Fittings offers a leak-free pipe system using a PVC blend that is impact resistant, non corrosive and has UV protection offering increased efficiency, reduced water waste, and reduced labor to reposition your irrigation pipe.
- **RS10 soil sensors:** Ranch Systems' solar powered RS10 uses Bluetooth 5.0 which is capable of reading the sensors at four times the range of legacy Bluetooth devices, enabling deployment of more sensors in fields over a wider area. The real-time soil moisture data to the Ranch Cloud™ field monitoring and control platform.
- **Permanent Crop Analyzer:** Indianapolis-based Smart Guided Systems, LLC has developed a utility vehicle add-on kit that uses laser imaging to scan high value permanent crops, giving growers data for analysis. When used with Smart Guided's Smart Apply Intelligent Spray Control System, growers can identify canopy and foliage density and adapt each sprayer's nozzle to achieve accurate density-based spraying.

World Ag Expo's virtual farm show was held Feb. 9 to 11 – the original show dates. For more information, visit www.worldagexpo.org.

Business meals are now 100% tax deductible



Ginilu VanderWall & Nicole A. Centofanti, CPAs

Since the 2018 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act's disallowance of entertainment expenses, there has been little guidance on the deductibility of food and beverage expenses that have a business benefit. Recently, the IRS finally released some final regulations to provide some insight on the deductibility of food and beverages (i.e. meal, snack and other types of food and beverages, including delivery fees, tips and sales tax). When deducting expenses for food and beverages for business purposes, the minimum standards include the following:

- There was a business purpose for the food or beverage
- A substantial business discussion took place before, during, or after the meal
- The food or beverage is not lavish or extravagant
- The owner, or employee, attended the meal
- The food or beverage was provided to a business associate
- The cost of the food or beverage was not included in an entertainment-type ticket
- The cost of the food or beverages needs to be stated separately from the cost of the en-

tertainment on the bill, invoice or receipt, no allocation can be made to the total to split the costs between food and beverages and entertainment

The following are some examples that businesses can deduct, either by 50 or 100 percent:

- Business meals with clients (50%)
- Office snacks and other food and beverage items (50%)
- The cost of food and beverages while traveling for work (50%)
- Food and beverages at a conference that go above the ticket price (50%)
- Lunch out with less than half of company employees (50%)
- Food for company holiday parties, annual picnics or summer outings (100%)
- Food and beverages given out free to the public (100%)
- Dinner for employees working late at the office (100%)

When deducting food and beverage costs for your business be sure to retain documentation as to the business purpose of these expenses and retain your receipts. Also, remember to consult with your tax preparer as there may be more ways for you to benefit from food and beverage deductions that are specific to your trade or business.



HOW TO HELP

Help your neighbors and community by donating to support local businesses.

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MEDIA PARTNERS:



HEALTH CARE NOTE

Light visible at the end of the pandemic



By Kerry Hydash
President and Chief Executive Officer
Family HealthCare Network

A year ago we found ourselves at the beginning of a pandemic that we are still battling to this day, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel now that a vaccine is available. At the beginning of the pandemic, FHCN quickly mobilized its resources and became part of the COVID-19 testing efforts in the communities we serve, offering testing at multiple Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) locations and at external events throughout Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties. Thanks to FHCN's extensive mobile health program, our dedicated workforce, and valued county and community partners,

our COVID-19 testing services have provided over 40,000 tests to date. Now that the COVID-19 vaccine is available, we intend to continue our commitment to the communities we serve by being an active part of the vaccination effort.

FHCN began providing services in 1976 and has since expanded in both service area and services provided. We continuously evolve to meet the needs of the communities we serve. As such, we are committed to supporting COVID-19 vaccine availability to our communities. In addition to hosting vaccine clinics for our employees, FHCN is conducting vaccine clinics for community members. Currently, the vaccine supply remains lower than demand; however, we are prepared to increase vaccine clinics as supplies increase. Additionally, we continue to work at the state and federal level to try and secure more vaccine doses for our local area. In fact, we are working with Blue Shield, the state's third party administrator, to receive vaccines through them and we were notified that FHCN will be in the first wave of FQHCs in Tulare County to receive direct allocation of vaccine from the federal government. With over 41 locations spanning three counties, FHCN is well-prepared for and committed to helping our communities open again.



a california health center
Your Health. Our Mission.

COMCAST

Continued from page 3

have reached 11 million people. Comcast is now doubling the program's Internet download speed to 50 Mbps and increasing the upstream speed to 5 Mbps for all new and existing customers at no additional cost. To receive the increased Internet speeds, existing customers will not need to do anything. The new speeds will be rolled out nationally beginning March 1. This is the sixth time in 10 years that Comcast has increased broadband speeds for Internet Essentials customers while keeping the cost of the service at \$9.95 a month. In addition, Comcast rolled out its xFi and xFi Advanced Security product features to Internet Essentials customers for free and the company continues to offer 60 days of free service to any new Internet Essentials customer who signs up before June 30, 2021.

Launching 1,000 lift zones by December 2021

Comcast recently announced a multiyear program to launch more than 1,000 Lift Zones in community centers across the country by working with its network of thousands of nonprofit partners and city leaders. So far, Comcast has installed several hundred Lift Zones to further address the homework gap. Lift Zones provide safe spaces for students to access free WiFi so they

can participate in distance learning and do their schoolwork. Comcast is now accelerating that timeline to connect 1,000 Lift Zones by the end of this year – more than a year ahead of its original plan.

"Transforming our Boys & Girls Clubs into Lift Zones has made a huge difference in the lives of the students we serve in Philadelphia," said Lisabeth Marziello, President & CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Philadelphia. "Many of the kids who come to our clubs either don't have the Internet at home or they have it, but they can't study at home for a variety of reasons and they need somewhere to go. We're so happy to be able to work with Comcast to give our students a safe, clean space where they can stay in school even when schools are closed."

Investing in education and equity-focused organizations

Comcast is also expanding its targeted philanthropic investments in organizations working to increase digital equity and contributing to the collective action needed to drive sustained change. These new organizations and investments are focused on creating greater pathways to opportunities for communities of color, particularly in media, technology, arts, and entrepreneurship.

Since last year, Comcast has committed more than \$40 million in cash to education and equity-focused partners that share the company's goals of advancing social justice and equality.

A selection of these partners include Per Scholas, Coded by Kids, Center for Black Innovation, Inner-City Arts, and BUILD.org. As part of the \$40 million, Comcast today announced \$3.5 million in commitments to partners including CodePath, Genesys Works, Jobs for the Future, NPower, i.c. stars, Opportunity at Work, Goodwill Industries International, YWCA, and Philadelphia Youth Network. Together, Comcast and its partners are helping more people of color gain the education and critical workforce development skills needed to access career opportunities in media and technology.

"Comcast's investment in CodePath will help us double our impact to reach nearly 5,000 students and over 60 university partners in 2021. As disadvantaged communities struggle with mass job losses in the wake of the pandemic, our courses are one of the few holistic programs placing thousands of underrepresented minorities into our nation's most competitive technical roles," said Michael Ellison, Co-Founder and CEO of CodePath. "Through partnerships with CodePath and many other dedicated organizations, Comcast continues to demonstrate its commitment to creating tangible and systemic change, while providing new opportunities for people of color in the tech sector and beyond."

For more information about Internet Essentials and Comcast's commitment to education and digital equity, visit corporate.comcast.com/education.

50 YEARS

Continued from page 3

the good people in the dairy and beef industries. As World Wide Sires moves forward, the focus will not change: People first and the genetics and services to support those good people. Thank you for your support...we are Here For You!

Based in Plain City, Ohio, Select Sires Inc., is the largest global A.I. cooperative and is comprised of six farmer-owned and controlled local organizations in the United States. As the industry leader, it provides highly fertile semen, as well as excellence in service and programs to supply dairy and beef producers with the world's best genetics.

World Wide Sires, Ltd. remains at the forefront in providing exceptional genetics for outstanding type and phenomenal production. A leading exporter of U.S. livestock semen, World Wide Sires represents the Select Sires, Accelerated Genetics, and GenerVations brands throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Oceania, and the Americas, with the exception of Mexico and the USA.

REBOUND

Continued from page 5

Washam said the county Economic Development Office was able to create short virtual tours and highlights of local museums, some which have been hit hard by the prolonged pandemic, including the Tulare County Museum, the Springville Historical Museum and the Three Rivers Museum.

Included in the latest tourism marketing efforts was a social media campaign reminding people to wear a mask when they leave home, and to visit outdoor tourism locations responsibly with social distancing and other public health protocols.

"These were all COVID messaging that we wanted to get out," Washam said, "but we also want to get out the message of activities and opportunities directly in Tulare County."

CONTACT US

Send briefs via e-mail to amanda@visaliachamber.org
Call 734-5876. Mail to:
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- Oberammergau Passion Play
- Normandy, Paris & the Seine River Cruise
- New England Rails & Trails
- Music Cities Christmas
- Santa Fe Holiday
- Italy's Amalfi Coast



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