

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 4 | April 2021

INSIDE

VUSD expands their learning horizons

When schools closed, the team of instructional and operational leaders immediately collaborated on how VUSD could best provide students with services. **3**

Gyms hurry to open in red tier

Among the additional capacities that restaurants, retail stores and schools can now freely take advantage of, local gyms can reopen at 25%. **5**

EVENTS

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

APRIL 20

YP Talks

Time: 6 p.m.

Location: YPN Facebook Live

APRIL 21

IMPACT Leadership Conference

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Location: Virtual, plus Lunch at The Woodlands

APRIL 22

Ambassador Monthly Meeting

Time: 8 a.m.

Location: Visalia First

TRAVEL WITH US

JULY 16-24, 2021

The Colorado Rockies

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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Chamber Explorations
CST #2048841-40

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www.visaliachamber.org/travel

Salt + Light gets rolling



Adrienne Hillman

Founder and CEO
Salt+Light Works

You may have heard about Salt + Light lately, because of their newest project, the new canteen food truck and relief outreach out on the streets of Tulare and Visalia. Salt + Light is feeding 600 meals a week—300 hot meals paired with 300 cold meals to people who otherwise lack access to food due to COVID and other factors. The truck rolled out in February, and has been a powerful way for citizens to “say yes” to getting to know their neighbors experiencing homelessness.

While founder and CEO Adrienne Hillman and her team believe in the benefits of creating palliative relief for people who are on the streets, Salt + Light’s official mission is to create a community for people experi-

The years long venture to construct a village in Tulare County that can help stem the rate of homelessness is starting with a generous effort to help feed the hungry first. Salt + Light Works recently started up their food truck to help their relief outreach efforts. The organization has managed to hand out as many as 600 meals per week.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SALT+LIGHT WORKS



encing homelessness through dignified homes, jobs and relationships.

“Our vision at Salt + Light is pretty simple—we want to empower people into a lifestyle of service WITH people experiencing homelessness, not FOR people experiencing homelessness. At the end of the day, our real purpose is to change the way the community at large views people experiencing homelessness, so that we can break down the barriers between the two.”

She makes a purposeful distinction between serving with people and for people: Hillman contends that the greatest cause of homelessness is a profound, catastrophic loss of family, and that when we serve with people instead of for them, we are creating a relationship with people that is human-to-human, heart-to-heart. That matters, she says, because it is through that type of relational service that people who

have been extricated to the margins can be seen and heard.

“This crisis isn’t going to be mitigated if we don’t listen to the people we are supposed to be helping.” Hillman says, “Part of the issue I see is that we think we know how to ‘fix people’, and the truth of the matter is that in many cases, those people, their trauma or their needs aren’t being centered in the discussion.”

The food truck outreach program has become a wonderful way to introduce volunteers to people who they would otherwise not engage with, and for neighbors experiencing homelessness to make their needs known. Many times, those needs are quite simple—water, a sandwich and a prayer are the most common requests. According to Hillman, the food truck has helped to remind volunteers who serve that our neighbors on the streets are just people who are trying to get their most basic needs met.

The community has come out to support this effort, as well. In addition to the weekly slate of volunteers, Mike Fligor, owner of Fugazzis, has generously donated 300 hot meals a week from his Tulare, Visalia Downtown and Cypress locations since the truck launched. Several Visalia Rotary Clubs have teamed up to fund the refurbishment of the used canteen truck which Hillman says was retired from a naval base in the Pacific Northwest. Visalia’s Rotary, Breakfast Rotary, Sunset Rotary, County Center Rotary and Latino Rotary Club all pitched in for the refurbishment. Central Valley Business Forms owner Gary Amon supplied the logo work that prepared the truck for its closeup. (pictured)

If you are interested in volunteering for Salt + Light, there are plenty of opportunities. From preparing food for delivery, delivering the food and relief items, to helping out with events like the upcoming Salt + Light Golf Tournament April 16 or gala later in the year, there is a job for everyone. Later in the year, Salt + Light in partnership with Self Help Enterprises, will break ground on a 52 unit, master planned community. At Salt + Light, their motto is “Many Hands Make Light Work”, and Hillman believes that the only way that this movement can be successful is through the support of the community. For more information on ways you can get involved, you can follow Salt + Light on Facebook and Instagram @saltandlight.works, e-mail volunteer@saltandlight-works.org, or call the office at 559.376.0078

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

We’re all a bit of an imposter



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

Conversations with business leaders about how their business ought to grow and develop are some of the best parts of my job. These conversations, though, aren’t limited to company executives. Through Leadership Visalia, the Visalia

Chamber’s Young Professional Network, and the Chamber ambassadors, I am blessed to have conversations with many people about personal and professional growth. But these conversations sound different based on one thing, gender.

It pains me to admit the conversations with women about the growth of their business, leadership skills, or role within their company sounds different than when I speak with men. Imposter syndrome, coined in the late ’70s, highlights high achieving women who doubt their success and feel as if their achievement is actually luck or their ability to convince others they are more intelligent than they believe they actually are. When I point out their success to these high-achieving women, they often argue with me. “I’m not” or “You’re kind to say that but I don’t feel like I really am doing it right.” Or my personal favorite, “if only you knew.”

One of the breakout sessions at Impact Leadership Conference on April 21 looks at this very issue. ‘Female Entrepreneurs: CEOs at Home & the Board Room’ has a panel of successful women sharing how they manage to “do it all.” A spoiler, they don’t. Doing it all perfectly is a myth I worry

keeps us from achieving more, or at the very least, being confident in our current roles. Even when pulling women together for this panel, we had to clarify this isn’t a show and perfect but rather a real conversation about what it means to be a woman in leadership.

The more, as women, we feel leadership is a natural part of our roles within our organizations, the more I hope we can break apart the myth of perfection or feeling like an imposter. Honest conversations with other people in these roles help each of us see the fallacy of perfection. We learn there isn’t one way to be a leader but many ways. We begin to see how we might fit into a leadership role, or more importantly, how our brand of leadership can help those organizations, businesses, and people we love.

While we’re talking about women in leadership and glass ceilings everywhere are cracking, if not breaking, allow me a slight detour to discuss language. The way we discuss people in their roles matter. I know, it seems silly to some but a boss is a boss, not a girl boss and certainly not a lady boss. Both terms irk me. Those modifiers make it seem as if women are somehow less than or different. They reinforce the myths and imposter syndrome I want us all to move beyond. So please, just stick to boss.

As we look to all improve, it’s important we encourage those around us to find ways to use their voice, lead as they are able and own their own space. Not sure how to do that? Impact Leadership Conference is a wonderful opportunity to meet others looking to do that while learning very specific tactics to achieve success. If you, or someone you know, wants to attend Impact, tickets are going quickly but can be found at our website visaliachamber.org/impact.

LEADERSHIP

Quality of life



Heather Reed

Human Resources Manager
Family Services of Tulare County

Pandemic! Covid-19! Isolation! In today’s environment life can easily become overwhelming. Between trying our hardest to remain productive and positive at our full-time jobs, raising a family, or just keeping up with new social expectations, stress creeps in and has effects on the mind, body, and soul in ways that you often can’t see. The Leadership Visalia March day session was once again, 100% virtual. The day focused on learning about overall health for the mind, body, soul, and bank account. The day touched on many aspects of stress management; from combating miss-information, mental health, nutrition, signs and symptoms of stress, exercise, and mindfulness. Our day session actually started the afternoon prior to our day session when we picked up our Quality of Life, goody bags. We found beneficial information, healthy samples of supplements, Component Coffee, and a homemade key chain from facilitator, Alicia Balderas, Tulare County Board Represent-

tative provided a unique gift reminding us how healthy and necessary having a hobby is.

Carrie Monteiro, Tulare County HHS Public Information Officer kicked off the day discussing our future with covid. Carrie started off by acknowledging as leaders, March 12, 2020 may be a day that we will never forget and that our day session was held on the one year anniversary. After some reflecting, we got started with where we are presently with a Jonson & Johnson quiz. As leaders who have been battling covid this, and covid that for a year, it could be preserved that there would be some high quiz scores, maybe even a couple 100%’s. Surprisingly nobody scored over 85%. This goes to show how much we have left to learn and just how much miss-information is out there. If you are interested in taking the quiz, “How Much Do You Really Know about COVID-19?” you can do so here: <https://www.jnj.com/innovation/covid-19-quiz-how-much-do-you-know-about-coronavirus> Did you know Tulare County

See LEADERSHIP on page 6

SW Airlines service to Denver, Las Vegas offers connectivity to 50+ cities

Southwest Airlines Announces Destinations for Fresno Yosemite International Airport Starting April 25



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.



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. Fresno Yosemite International Airport - Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT) is the largest driver in economic activity in the Central San Joaquin Valley with a \$928 Million pre-pandemic annual economic impact and 10,800 direct, induced and indirect jobs. Domestic and international carriers serving FAT offer Valley travelers daily nonstop flights to Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Guadalajara, León, Mexico City and Morelia, Mexico.

Fresno Yosemite International Airport is a municipally owned entity operating as a self-supporting enterprise. No City of Fresno general funds are used to operate Fresno Yosemite International Airport or Fresno Chandler Executive Airport. Like us on facebook.com/FresnoYosemiteInternational or follow us on Twitter @FresnoAirport and Instagram @iFlyFresno.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

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Community Loyal Members | A thriving community starts here!

NEW

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce would like to welcome our newest members. We encourage individuals and businesses to support chamber member businesses.

Small Business Members:

- New Wave Mind Care
- Shaw's Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc.

RENEWING

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

Regional Members:

- San Joaquin Valley College, Inc.*

Community Investor Members:

- Xfinity Store by Comcast*

Business Connector Members

- Acclaim Credit Technologies
- Elite Medical - RTO Systems Incorporated*
- Quail Park On Cypress*

Small Business Members:

- Bryan Company*
- Bryson Cancer Care, Inc.
- Dani Blain Real Estate
- Carroll's Tire Warehouse
- Four Seasons Handy Market*
- Goodies Cookies & Specialty Cakes
- HNH Nut Co.*
- My Fathers House Visalia, Inc.*
- Pasadena Private Wealth*
- Principal Financial Group



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group
 - Southside Plaza Visalia No.1, ACA Gen. Partnership*
- Small Business Nonprofit Members:
- Helping One Woman - Visalia Chapter
 - Visalia Fox Theatre*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

JR. CEO SPOTLIGHT



Name: Grace Yang
Company: Graced It! Hot Cocoa
Title: Owner

How did you come up with your business idea?

The name "Grace It" was inspired by my nickname from third grade. My classmates liked to say that I Graced It whenever I passed a test or scored the highest points in Accelerated Reader (AR). I'm very proud of the name. I decided to stick with hot chocolate for the product that would be sold at my stand. I didn't want just plain old hot chocolate as the only option so I added other toppings such as whipping cream, marshmallows, of course, sprinkles, and peppermints. I added reindeer cones as a bonus to my stand. They were very cute, so they sold out quickly. I also added

ed autumn cones, since it was November at the time.

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

The best or favorite thing that I learned from the Jr. CEO program would definitely be advertising. I loved creating the flyers. There were a few issues while we were making flyers, but everything turned out great!

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

Yes! I would recommend the Jr. CEO program to other students because it's educational. It teaches you how to run your own business and it's super FUN!

What's next for your business?

In the spring, I'm going to be joining the Jr. CEO program again. Things might be a little easier because I already have my stand, I have gained experience from the past Jr. CEO, and this time, I feel more confident.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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

My favorite place to visit in Visalia is Roller Towne!

I love rollerblading, and I enjoy playing the Roller Towne mini games, so Roller Towne is definitely my favorite place to visit. I haven't been there in awhile, so I'm looking forward to the next time I get to visit.

THE LAW AT WORK

New guidance from the DFEH regarding mandatory vaccination programs

By Brett T. Abbott
Gubler & Abbott LLP

A few weeks ago, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing ("DFEH") released new guidance allowing California employers to proceed with mandatory vaccination programs.

Specifically, on March 4, 2021, the DFEH updated its COVID guidance with the opinion that "[u]nder the [Fair Employment and Housing Act], an employer may require employees to receive an FDA-approved vaccination against COVID-19 infection so long as the employer does not discriminate against or harass employees or job applicants on the basis of a protected characteristic, provides reasonable accommodations related to disability or sincerely-held religious beliefs or practices, and does not retaliate against anyone for engaging in protected activity (such as requesting a reasonable accommodation)."

The DFEH provide some more in-depth treatment of the issues surrounding a mandatory vaccination program. Most notably,



GUBLER & ABBOTT
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

an employer is not required to accommodate an employee who refuses vaccination given a general belief that the "vaccine isn't safe"—the employee must have a sincerely-held religious belief or disability. In other words, an employer may restrict the employee's ability to work if they refuse to get vaccinated, unless one of those two exceptions is in play.

If an employee requests a reasonable accommodation due to a disability or sincerely-held religious belief or practice, the employer cannot retaliate against them. Similarly, if an employee engages in other protected activity, for example, if the employee alleges that the employer's mandatory vaccination policy is discriminatory, the employer cannot retaliate against them. Retaliation is a form of adverse employment action and may include discipline.

According to the DFEH, asking employees for proof of the mandatory vaccination is not a disability-related inquiry, a religious belief or practice-related inquiry, or a medical examination. That said, because the proof of vaccination could include disability-related medical information, employers should instruct employees to omit that information. And again, any record of vaccination must be maintained as a confidential medical record by the employer.

See LAW on page 5

Macy's Visalia hires new store manager



Macy's Visalia welcomes New Store Manager Kristina Kendrick, with over 12 years of Macy's and 20 years of retail experience. Kristina joined the Visalia location last Spring and is very excited for what the team has planned for our local community in 2021.

Kristina brings an exuberance and positive outlook to this gem of a store located in the heart of Visalia with elevation in customer service, social media outreach and community partnerships. "I am so grateful to be working with each colleague at Macy's Visalia and the amazing community we serve every day."

Kristina most recently was the Divisional Merchandise Manager for Macy's working in the Colorado, Utah and Montana markets within the Fragrance and Beauty world. Previous to that, Kristina helped run the Flagship San Francisco Union Square Macy's location as well as previ-

See MACY'S on page 4



LONDON & PARIS DISCOVERY

Free Airfare deadline extended!
If booked by 4.30.21!

Questions: (559) 734-5876; info@visaliachamber.org
visaliachamber.org/travel



San Joaquin Valley Homes (SVJ Homes) hit a new high with the close of 513 new homes in 2020. SVJ Homes was reported to be the most active homebuilder in Tulare and Kings counties last year, with more building permits pulled in the Valley, including some of America's top public homebuilders.

Central Valley Community Bank raised over \$83,000 for the Central Sierra Resiliency Fund to help Central Sierra residents and communities rebuild their lives and properties, restore economic revitalization and reforest after the devastating Creek Fire.

Congratulations to **The Sun-Gazette** who is celebrating their 120th year in print!

Health Net announced that \$1.965 million in new Enhanced Access grants were awarded to Federally Qualified Health Centers, Community Based Organizations, and clinic consortia throughout California to help enroll, educate, and retain eligible members in Medi-Cal.

Innovation Commercial Flooring, Inc donated to the Taking Care of Business Fund.

Tucoemas Federal Credit Union's team volunteered with the County of Tulare for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine to community members.

CASA of Tulare County participat-



ed in **Urbane Cafe's** grand opening week in March where the community of Visalia raised over \$3,000 with a match from Urbane Cafe's owner. In addition, over \$1,000 was raised for the Taking Care of Business Fund.

Congratulations to **Kuubix Energy** who was ranked No. 10 on the list of 250 fastest-growing California companies by Inc. Magazine!

Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group announced that Matt Klinchuch, PE, has been promoted to Vice President in their Visalia Office and that Kevin Johansen, PE, was elected to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the company.

Assistance League of Visalia's Rainbow Reading program delivered 1,400 books to Blue Oak Academy, Washington Elementary and Mineral King Elementary during Assistance League's Action Week in February. Read Across America Day celebrates Dr. Seuss's birthday and took place the very next week. Perfect timing! A big thank you to Nora, the granddaughter of two of our members, for helping to deliver books to these schools.

Bank of the Sierra recently announced their donation of \$16,000 to the Asian Pacific Community Fund to create a college scholarship program. The 2021 scholarship program will award eight \$2,000 scholarships for low to moderate-income high school seniors throughout the Central Valley, Central Coast, and Southern California.

In February, **Salt + Light** served nearly 400 meals in two days to community neighbors experiencing homelessness. Their food truck also supplies treats, healthy dog food, and flea/tick medication for pets in need.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Wynn of **Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation** who was named Woman of the Year by **Assemblymember Devon Mathis**.

The **City of Visalia** Animal Care Center announced they were awarded a Rachel Ray Save Them All grant. The grant provides the opportunity for the center to launch their Operation TNR program in Farmersville, Exeter, and Dinuba to humanely manage the area's community cats.

The president and CEO of **Central Valley Community Bank**, James M. Ford recently announced his intention to retire in 2022.

Patrick L. Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency donated \$250 to this year's Leadership Visalia project "Backpacks without Barriers."

Congratulations to **Kaweah Delta Health Care District's** Skilled Nursing Program for being named a Best Nursing Home by U.S. News & World Report for a second year in a row!



EDUCATION

VUSD expands their learning horizons

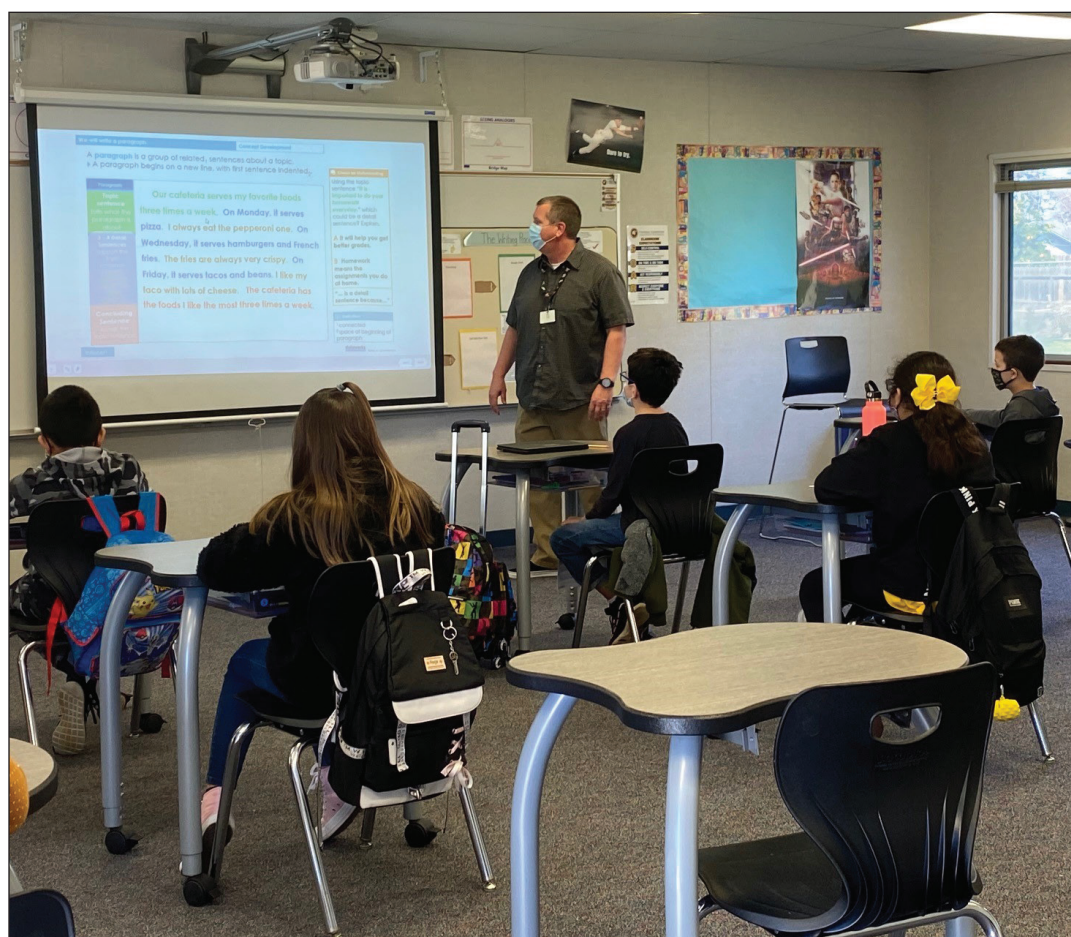


PHOTO COURTESY OF VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Before students were able to return for in person instruction the Visalia Unified School District made strides to help expand their digital capabilities and expand internet access throughout the more rural parts of the district.



On March 13, 2020, Governor Newsom enacted Executive Order N-26-20, which was the catalyst for school districts closing throughout the state. As Visalia Unified learned more about COVID-19 and new state safety mechanisms were established in the ensuing months, the criteria for reopening schools became more defined. As time has progressed and districts remain closed, the focus on reopening, addressing learning loss, and meeting students' social and emotional needs has become Visalia Unified School District's priority.

When schools closed, the dedicated team of instructional and operational leaders immediately collaborated on how VUSD could best provide for its students and families with continued services. Instructional and operational leaders knew that these services would be different in light of the pandemic.

The development of learning packets for all students in grades preschool to twelve was the first step in ensuring that students continued to learn. These packets were developed to focus students' learning on what we call priority standards. These are the learning standards used to measure what students must know to be successful.

VUSD knew that not all students in our district would have access to the internet; therefore, this posed a digital inequity for many of our households. This is why we focused on packets in K-8 and if needed at the 9-12 grades. This digital divide was a ubiquitous issue at the national level.

As packet learning was ensuing, we also were accelerating access to the internet and devices to all students in our district. VUSD acquired and installed WiFi towers, which increased

access to the internet for our students, including in some of our more rural areas of Goshen and Ivanhoe. We were also able to acquire a large number of hotspots, which allowed students to have access to the internet. Finally, we were able to obtain enough Chromebooks to allow students to engage with hybrid learning for the 2020-21 school year.

During the summer of 2020, we provided access to credit recovery and original credit courses for our students in grades 9-12 to which they did not have access during the closure. We also began to plan how instruction would look in a hybrid model for the 2020-21 school year. This planning included the following: which online tools teachers and students would use; what the instructional day would look like in a hybrid format; how parents would connect to teachers and the school; which social and emotional resources would be available to students and families; and more.

Even with all of this planning and additional resource supports from the state and federal governments, we know that the current learning model is not ideal for students. Research indicates that students have regressed in their learning, especially in mathematics in grades 2-6. Research has also demonstrated that there are higher levels of social and emotional issues with students and families as they cope with quarantine and the added financial stresses brought on by the pandemic. Throughout the school closures, we have not lost sight of our students and families, knowing that they are experiencing these types of losses.

Now that we are beginning to see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, we have moved from 100% on-line instruction during the first semester to bringing back students by grade-level. We currently have students

in grades TK-6 grade learning in person on our 26 elementary campuses. Our hope is that we return grades 7-12 back to campus for in-person learning by March 25, 2021. Having students in classrooms with their teachers is the optimal learning and social and emotional model.

While we wait to have all students return, we have not waited to see how we can serve our students and families since March 13, 2020.

We are now planning how we take all of those efforts and align them in a single expanded learning plan. This plan will be developed by internal and external stakeholders to align those same resources to support Visalia Unified students and families. Not one group alone will be able to meet the needs of every one of our students and families; but if we do this together, as one community with one mission and vision, then we will stand a better chance of eradicating learning loss and the social and emotional toll that the pandemic has placed on all of us.

Comcast represents, invests in, strengthens, and empowers small biz

Recently, small businesses have been dealing with the on-going impact of the pandemic, social unrest, and environmental events. Comcast has been working proactively to help all our small business customers.

Independent small businesses are the backbone of our communities, and today, more than ever, small businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are hurting. We know that Comcast alone can't remedy complex, systemic issues. But we are deeply committed to playing a role in driving change. Through Comcast RISE we aim to create sustainable impact and give meaningful support to the small businesses that are shaping our communities. We will be taking our learnings from this new initiative to inform our broader efforts.



If your business qualifies, you'll have the opportunity to receive marketing consultations, media placements, commercial creative production services, or tech makeover from Effectv and Comcast Business.

The Comcast RISE program was initially available for Black business owners. Beginning November 28, 2020, all BIPOC business owners were eligible to apply for Comcast RISE.

Selected businesses will receive one or more of the following business services:

- Consulting: Advertising and marketing consultations with local Effectv marketing, research, and creative teams to gain insights on how to grow your business.
- Media: A linear TV media schedule over a 90-day period.
- Creative Production: Turnkey production of a 30-second TV commercial, plus a media strategy consultation and 90-day media schedule
- Technology Makeover:

Computer equipment and Internet, voice and cybersecurity services for up to a 12-month period to support business recovery (Taxes and other fees may still apply for tech makeover services.)

Eligibility Requirements:

- Owner is at least 18 years of age or older, and is the primary decision maker for, and is actively engaged in the day-to-day operation of the business
- No more than 25 full-time and part-time employees for the Tech Makeover
- No more than 100 full-time and part-time employees for the Consultation, Media and Creative
- Established business operations for at least one calendar year

Please see Official Rules located at ComcastRISE.com/legal. The deadline to apply is May 7, 2021. Additional recipients will be chosen quarterly. Apply today at ComcastRISE.com.

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• VIRTUALLY 6.10.21 •

SUBMIT NOMINATIONS TO
INFO@VISALIACHAMBER.ORG BY APRIL 12, 2021

IMPACT

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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Tucoemas' new building takes the 'leed' among certified credit union

"The Credit Union movement... It is a great movement, worthy of great deeds, deserving of great loyalty." -Edward Filene, Credit Union pioneer

Passion and purpose have been at the heart of the credit union movement from the beginning. Advocates like Edward Filene believed strongly that ordinary people could improve their standard of living by pooling their money together and lending it at reasonable rates to friends and neighbors. In this cooperative spirit, people of "modest means" would be able to create opportunity and security for themselves, and a brighter future for their community.

In recent years, Tucoemas has been striving to return to those roots. We want to be doers of great deeds, or as we like to say, we want to be a "freakin' ray of sunshine." We want to earn the loyalty of future generations, not just because we all wear the same colored shirts, but because we are community-focused, passionate and personal.

Our new branch on Akers is the embodiment of our values. We wanted to build something beautiful that would delight our members, our staff and our community. We wanted to make it a place that attracts people from the outside, and embraces people on the inside. We wanted our team to look forward to

our green building

BETTER BUILDINGS EQUAL BETTER LIVES.

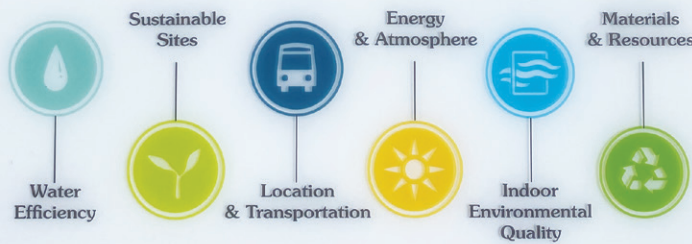
We believe that everything we do should represent our values. More than just a place to work, our building reflects our care for our team, our members, and our planet. In this place, not only do we create a healthy financial environment, but we also create a sustainable, healthy physical environment. In all we do, our focus is on what matters most: people.



WHAT IS LEED?

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is the most widely used green building rating system in the world. Available for virtually all building types, LEED provides a framework for healthy, highly efficient, and cost-saving green buildings. LEED certification is a globally recognized symbol of sustainability achievement and leadership.

We achieved LEED Gold Certification through innovation in the following areas:



For more information, ask for one of our LEED brochures.



PHOTO BY JERMAINE JOHNSON II, THE SUN-GAZETTE

coming to work, and our members to have a little thrill every time they entered. We wanted it to welcome the community, and provide a place for education and growth. We wanted it to make the world better, or at least Visalia.

Our new branch on Akers will be one of only three LEED Gold Certified credit unions in California, and one of only 12 in the country. It uses less water, creates its own electricity, and was built using reclaimed and recycled materials. The landscaping is native, we have bike racks for cyclists and plug-ins for electric vehicles. We have two state-of-the-art training rooms that are available to the community, trees and a living wall in the entry for improved air and ambience, and a full-service Espresso bar for quick transactions and a delicious caramel latte (yes... we know how to spell espresso).

We realize that we could've built a standard building. It would have been quicker and easier. But that's what everyone else is doing... it's safe. We wanted to build something better, because this is our home, or to coin a phrase: "we're local locals." We care about our purpose, our people and our planet. We wanted to build something that this community could be proud of. After nearly a year of some pretty dark days, we wanted to be a freakin' ray of sunshine. Stop by and let us know how we did... after all, we did it for you.

Leadership Lessons from 2020

Writer and philosopher George Santayana once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."



This sentiment has resonated with leaders around the world for years, and it is well known that we should reflect on what lessons we can learn from our past struggles to take wisdom with us into the future. Here are some lessons we can look back on as the business landscape changed in 2020 and are continuing to change as you read this.

1. You Are the Problem and the Solution

In times of struggle, we must focus more on leadership to stay proactive against failure. However, we shoulder most of the stress alone. That sounds scary but having control of "steering the ship" also means you can make change quickly and efficiently. As leaders, we are the problem, but we are also the solution! Surround yourself with mentors, likeminded business owners, and mentees. Do not be afraid to bounce ideas off each other and ask for encouragement if you are feeling burnt out. That is the core of building a community of peers. We are always more powerful in a team. That's the beauty of organizations like the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. You are not alone!

2. All Bets Are Off

Everything we thought about our competition, marketing, customer needs, roles, procedures, and strategies are gone. It is time to challenge the status quo if you haven't already. Take "This is how we have always done it" out of your team

lingo. Look at the environment around business and really think about what opportunities have now become available that were not before. We should take this time to reevaluate what services we offer or how we can better serve our clients? There is a solution out there. Replace the phrase above with, "If we don't pivot or grow, we are dying."

3. Time to Plan Is Key

If you are stuck in the day to day operations as a team, you are letting circumstances guide your team instead of taking control. Take time to go on all company retreat and really dig into the plan for the next 8-10 months. This will help with making the future opportunities less fuzzy. Ask, "What does 'winning' look like for our business by the end of the year?" and "What needs to happen each quarter, month, week, and day to achieve the desired change?"

4. Team, Team and Also Team

The people you entrust to be in your team are wonderful, hardworking, dedicated people. Be honest about your struggles as a company and ask for input on how they would proceed if it were their choice. Ownership mindset is a game changer for both parties. Your team wants your business to succeed and thrive. Make sure you are communicating regularly about how their needs can be met by leadership, what tools they need to help you succeed, and most of all what they see that could be better. Your team will ultimately create the culture that your customers experience, let them be a part of the company planning and vision.

My team challenges your team....Take the time to create the change you want to see as a team

MACY'S

Continued from page 2



ous experience in the San Jose and Santa Cruz markets. This wealth of experience has aligned Kristina to bring new ideas to the central valley and inspire her team to make local and meaningful connections with their customers and community.

Last Fall was bright for Macy's Visalia as they were heavily involved in many local nonprofits including clothing donations, writing letters to seniors and their various round-up campaigns. They partnered with the Habitat for Humanity for their annual bird house auction, donated 100 prom dresses to the Dinuba High school and had monthly round up campaigns just to name a few.

In 2021 already the store is in their annual Bag Hunger Cam-



aign and have been working closely with the Visalia Emergency Aid Council on volunteer opportunities, colleague donations and a round-up campaign which has already raised over \$3,700. Last Month the Stores round-up campaign raised \$7,100 and benefited the Black Girls Code organization and the Negro College fund. A few other exciting partnerships the team is excited about this Spring is

with the Central Valley Vietnam Veterans, The Prestige Living Care facility, the United Way and the Habitat for Humanity. The Store is always looking for local organizations to partner with in the community they serve and live in.

Kristina and her team is excited to continue to elevate the customer experience and community involvement at her location with service and kindness at the center of every decision she makes. Kristina grew up in San Luis Obispo, California where she was very involved in the local SPCA, Blood bank, Food bank and many other non-profits.

The environment and community are passions for Kristina and she has enjoyed the many parks and natural beauty that Visalia and the surrounding community have to offer. Kristina

is always looking to make new networking and community connections for the store and is looking forward to being involved in the area she is living in. "Giving back and being integrated within my community is my passion and I am beyond thankful to work for a company that works so hard to positively impact the local areas they are in. Our colleagues are the sons and daughters of this community and I am proud to be leading them to success in 2021."

For more information about Macy's Visalia, Kristina Kendrick or the stores community partnerships please reach out to Kristina via email or check out the stores Instagram Page @ macysvisalia.

Contact: Macy's Visalia, Kristina Kendrick Store Manager Kristina.kendrick@macys.com

CITY UPDATE

2021 Public Opinion Survey Out Now

Each year since the 1970's, the City of Visalia has conducted a survey to gauge the sentiments and opinions of citizens.

This year, with the approval of the City Council, the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) is again conducting the annual Public Opinion Survey to determine the public's satisfaction with City services, programs and projects. The Survey includes questions on service contact with Visalia Fire and Police Departments and asks respondents to rate a variety of other City services ranging from road maintenance to recycling collection.

For 2021, the CAC chose to include a question on COVID-19 for question #8 and if residents would be in favor of a low barrier homeless shelter using new, local tax dollars for question #9. The bulk of the survey may seem familiar to those who have completed past City of Visalia public opinion surveys. By design, much of the survey remains unchanged from year to year to better measure trends and changes in public opinion.

As the City organization continues to practice COVID-19 safety measures, this year's sur-

vey will be available digitally via the City website at www.visalia.city/survey.

Open to all Visalia residents, the survey is an opportunity to provide feedback and help shape the future of our community. By sharing these details and the survey link to those in your network and with family, friends and neighbors, you can help us ensure that we receive responses from a cross section of the public.

In total, the survey takes approximately five minutes to complete. It will be open until Monday, April 21.

For those who would like request a paper survey be sent to them, they can call City of Visalia Administration at 713-4535 or 713-4900 (TTY) or email communityfeedback@visalia.city.

For more information on the 2021 Public Opinion Survey, contact CAC staff representatives Jason Serpa, Public Works Manager, at 713-4533 or jason.serpa@visalia.city or Lt. Luma Fahoum, Police Department, at 713-4103 or luma.fahoum@visalia.city.

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

Tulare County EDC names new CEO

The Tulare County Economic Development Corporation began its search for a new CEO five months ago with the idea of finding someone rooted in local business but experienced in regional promotion. Last week, it found both when it hired Nathan Ahle.

The Tulare County Economic Development Corporation's (TCEDC) board of directors announced Ahle as the new president and CEO after selecting him at its Feb. 24 meeting. Ahle spent four years as president and CEO of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce where he was responsible for executing the strategic vision and managing the staff of one of California's largest metro chambers of commerce.

"We have to tell the story of this organization," Ahle said. "We need to work collaboratively with our cities and counties and private partners to accomplish bigger things than we can do on our own."

Prior to assuming this role, Ahle served as manager of government affairs at the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, where he was responsible for implementing the organization's advocacy and political action efforts. He began his career in chamber work as President/CEO of the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce in eastern Kern County, where he worked to bring the area out of the shadow of Bakersfield. Prior to moving into paid executive work, Nathan was the Chairman of the Board of the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce.

"I think having a chamber background makes us a more well-rounded organization," Ahle said.

As president/CEO of the EDC, Ahle's role is to provide leadership and assistance in business development and job creation by attracting, supporting, and retaining business and industry throughout Tulare County, its cities, and communities. The TCEDC provides nationwide marketing, technical resources, project assistance, and support programs to companies and local governments in facilitating business and industry attraction, expansion, and retention. Ahle's first official day on the job was yesterday, March 2.

See CEO on page 6



SAVE THE DATE

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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ORANGE JUICE DAY

Visalia Chamber Announces Board Slate for 2021

Pursuant to the bylaws of the Chamber, a nominating committee was appointed by the board to solicit candidates for the board. The opportunity to apply was also promoted through the Chamber newsletter earlier this year. The nominating committee has recommended, and the board has accepted, the following to be candidates for the board: Kevin McCusker. The bylaws require that we notify the members of this slate of candidates, as well as the opportunity for members to nominate other candidates by petition.

In order to nominate an alternative candidate for the board, a petition signed by fifteen members of the Chamber must be received by the Chamber within 10 days of this notification (Wednesday, April 7, 2021). If no additional nominees are submitted, the proposed slate listed above will be elected to serve on the Board starting July 1, 2021. If one or more names are submitted by petition, then a ballot will be sent to all Chamber members to elect the new directors for this term. If you have questions about this notice, or the process for selecting board members, please contact Gail Zurek at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce at 559-734-5876.

Gyms hurry to open in red tier

The Sun-Gazette

Moving into the red tier has done more than just get the economy moving, it has allowed people to get mov-

ing, too.

Among the additional capacities that restaurants, retail stores and schools can now freely take advantage of, local gyms can reopen at 25%. And they wasted no time throwing open their doors last week.

Just as soon as the Tulare County Public Health Department announced the county qualified for the red tier last Tuesday, Planet Fitness in Visalia reopened immediately. Receptionist for the location, Stevie Gaytan, said the gym reopened at 3 p.m. that day.

"I think we only got about 15 people the whole day from like three to 10," Gaytan said. "And then the day after we weren't packed throughout the day, it was mostly like moderate, like maybe 10 to 15 people in the club at a time."

Gaytan said the gym's computer network alerts them when they are at 25% capacity, which in terms of people is 115 at a time. To also help limit the potential for COVID-19, the gym requires people wear masks in common concourse areas like the reception station, locker rooms and while they move between machines. But they don't require people to wear masks while working out. The gym also provides masks at the front desk if someone forgot theirs, Gaytan said.

Staff at Visalia's Planet Fitness aren't taking peoples' temperatures when they arrive, but Gaytan said they may ask someone to leave if it is obvious someone is coughing a lot or "under the weather."

Planet Fitness locations in Tulare County were forced to close early last year in light of the pandemic. They sent their first notice of closure on March 17 last year, and said the gym would be closed for two weeks.

"Given the increased threat that COVID-19 poses to our global community, and out of an abundance of caution, the Visalia, CA club will temporarily close on Tuesday, March 17 at 10 p.m. for two weeks through March 31. This was a difficult decision to make but we believe it is the right one," the notice stated.

The gym reopened briefly in June after the initial



SUBMITTED PHOTO

surge of COVID lingered through last year's spring season. Within a month the gym closed once again on July 13 as the summer surge of the virus began ramping up. They were not allowed to reopen again until last week.

LIFESTYLES CENTER

Other popular gyms in the area like the LifeStyles Center were also closed last July, but also reopened last week. They announced they were allowing for 25% capacity on March 17. It is a major move for the gym that's owned by the Kaweah Delta Healthcare District.

"We feel confident that we're in a position now where we can safely reopen The Lifestyle Center," said Gary Herbst, Chief Executive Officer of Kaweah Delta Health Care District, which operates the medical-based fitness and rehabilitation facility in Visalia. "It appears by

all accounts that we're moving out of the crisis of battling the sickness of this virus and we're transitioning back into focusing on the health and well-being of our community."

LifeStyles noted in a press release that they were maintaining a strict standard of precaution for all of their patrons. The release stated that anyone entering the facility will undergo temperature checks, answer screening questions and wear a face mask.

Patrick Tazio, director of TLC—a division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District and a medically-based fitness and rehabilitation facility that offers equipment, exercise rooms and activities—said member will be required to wear facemasks throughout the duration of their visit.

"Our hope is that it won't be long until we can safely support a full re-opening of our facility," Tazio said.

Initially, the center will reopen with cardio and strength equipment (spaced six feet apart throughout the

See GYMS on page 6

RIBBON CUTTINGS



New member Urbane Cafe held a ribbon cutting on Feb. 26
2257 S. Mooney Boulevard in Visalia | 559-405-9060



In celebration of their 20th anniversary, Personnel Solutions Unlimited, Inc. hosted a ribbon cutting on March 16
1326 W. Center Avenue in Visalia | 559-734-0570



How can I nominate a business for the Loyal to Local Awards?

You can nominate a local business on the Chamber's web site: visaliachamber.org/loyaltolocal. Don't wait too long. The deadline to nominate is April 12!

Does the Chamber have any travel trips planned?

Yes! The Chamber has trips planned for 2021 and 2022. Please visit our website: visaliachamber.org/travel or contact our office with any questions.

Have a question about the Chamber?

Send me a message:
Jena@visaliachamber.org

Symphony puts music to dance in latest 'Uplink'

The Sun-Gazette

The Sequoia Symphony again displayed its artistic array and creative clout with its latest online video, a local adaptation of famed Broadway composer Leonard Bernstein.

Last week, the Sequoia Symphony Orchestra released its ninth installment of Musical Uplink, a musical dance film of Bernstein's "Fancy Free."—Originally composed as a ballet choreographed by Jerome Robbins, the symphony's version is choreographed by Tulare County native son Angelo Soriano and his wife Angelica Stiskin. Soriano is a performer in Broadway's Aladdin and Stiskin is an artistic director at the famed Joffrey Ballet School in New York City. Co-starring in the feature is Carly Caviglia of Visalia, a Broadway-bound rising star and a recent graduate of Syracuse University's Musical Theater program. The number also stars some familiar scenes, including the bar at Vintage Press, the front of The Darling hotel and the Visalia Fox Theatre.

"As someone who loves musical stories, I knew the films presented a unique opportunity for a more narrative approach," said Bruce Kiesling, music director of the Sequoia Symphony. "A dance film could be the perfect way to combine music and story, and to showcase some of our community's treasures—not only brick and mortar treasures: restaurants, theaters, hotels, but also community members whose talent and achievements inspire us all."

The latest Musical Uplink is based on a condensed version of Fancy Free. The plot follows three sailors set loose in New York City for 24 hours. The ballet's success inspired Bernstein to adapt it into a Broadway musical called On The Town. It was again adapted into MGM's 1949 cinematic musical starring Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra. Tulare County's version features a bar tender and a patron who change things up by dancing the night away.

"It was an honor to return to Visalia, where I gathered most of my artistic training, to bring home a piece of Broadway magic," Soriano said. "The combination of working with old friends and amazing local talent, diving into the beautiful score of Bernstein's Fancy Free and shooting in the most magnificent locations Visalia offers made for a spectacular creative experience with my new friends at Sequoia Symphony and Go Creative Group!"

Kiesling, the symphony's executive director Joshua Banda and Go Creative Group developed a bold and unprecedented program of short concert films for the digital season, "Musical Uplink." Six months and nine films later the Sequoia Symphony Orchestra has tens of thousands of views, reached new audiences, and secured the highest single charitable contribution in the orchestra's 61-year history.

"With the wonderful success of the first view videos, I knew we had the opportunity to do something really special for the final episodes," Kiesling said. "Angelo and Carly were an ideal fit. Their skill, combined with the genius of our filmmakers and our wonderful orchestra resulted in a unique presentation that will stand as one of the most special of our digital offerings this season. It was thrilling to be a part of the process and the result speaks for itself."

"Fancy Free" can be viewed at www.sequoiasyphonyorchestra.com, the Symphony's YouTube channel, as well as Instagram and Facebook. The web series is part of a digital season planned to replace the symphony's in-person concerts at the Visalia Fox Theatre, which have been canceled for the rest of the season and will resume this fall. The final installment of Musical Uplink is set to release next month.

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LAW

Continued from page 2

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).

CONTACT US

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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

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HEALTH CARE NOTE

A new beginning for emergency care



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

Spring is a season of hope and new beginnings. This spring, we see hope in the decline of COVID-19 hospitalizations and in every vaccination given, but we also see new beginnings. By May, that new beginning for Tulare County will come with the unveiling of a newly-expanded, more-modern Emergency Department at Kaweah Delta Medical Center. This expansion will provide our community with access to the largest ED in Tulare County, at the only trauma center between Fresno and Bakersfield.



Our new ED is more modern and nearly double its previous size—it's grown from 41 to 73 beds—and it will allow us to attract more doctors and nurses to provide more-timely and efficient care to our community. The new ED will also house three "kid-friendly" pediatric care spaces, made possible by a grant from the Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation, that will make children feel more comfortable when they need our care. In addition to twenty-two new, comfortable, and individual patient rooms, our ED will also offer improved security for patients and visitors with every person required to pass through a metal detector for entry.

We initially built our ED to serve 72,000 patients a year but today we care for more than 90,000 patients a year. Throughout this multi-phased project, we have unveiled several new and expanded improvements in emergency care. In 2019, we opened eight new beds in an area we call Zone 6, or "Fast Track", where we take care of patients needing a lower level of care who can get in and out of the ED in a faster amount of time. In 2020, we completed construction of and opened nine

new beds in the north end of the ED in space that had been shelved in when the Acequia Wing opened in 2009 (referred to by us as Zone 4).

By now, many of you have seen the final phase of the ED expansion project transform the look of our Medical Center at the corner of Locust and Mineral King. When the ED opens in April, it will have a separate entrance for those seeking emergency care. With the decline in COVID hospitalizations, once ED patients are in a room, they will be able to have one symptom-free visitor. In the new waiting area, which has more than doubled in size and can now accommodate 100-plus people, we will have more room to space out patients and visitors for their safety. Along the walls of the expansive waiting area, patients or visitors (when visitors are able to be in the waiting room) will be able to get updates on the course of their care on a number of flat screen TVs. For example, by looking at the board, a patient would know if lab results were being processed or a visitor would know if their loved one was in the process of getting an MRI.

Throughout the ED expansion, we've made it a point to work with our community, specifically members of a group we formed in 2019, to enhance the experiences of ED patients and visitors. Kaweah Delta's Emergency Department Advisory Council helped test out the eight-bed area prior to its opening and ran a series of mock trials, testing everything from care to processes to the patient experience. This council continues to meet monthly to improve programs and policies or to address challenges patients and visitors may face in the ED.

We are beyond excited to open this newly-expanded ED for you. It is greatly needed to meet the growing needs of this community. While there will be a number of opportunities for members of our community to see inside the new ED before it opens, our sincere hope is that you will never have to be there. Instead, we hope that you can take comfort in the fact that if you or a loved one ever need life-saving care, you will receive it in our new ED.

LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 1

was one of the first labs in the valley to perform testing? Tulare County Public Health and HHSA has been working hard for us throughout this pandemic keeping us informed, alert, and aware of the ever-changing environment. Battling miss-information is just one other takes they find important. The problem with misinformation is that once people have heard it, they tend to believe and act on it, even after it's been corrected. Each of us play a role in remedying misinformation. As leaders we do not always have all of the answers, however we are trusted to have the right resources to get the answers. One trusted resource is <https://covid19.ca.gov/> If you haven't already bookmark this page as well as our local resource for covid-19 information: <https://covid19.tularecounty.ca.gov/>.

Nutrition plays a key role in reducing chronic inflammation which ultimately leads to chronic diseases and pain. Tanya Pennington-Miller owner of Total Nutrition Visalia, talked with us about her therapeutic approach to nutrition. She said, "When there is a fire in a building, we want to put the fire out not turn the fire alarm off" A pill or remedy may be turning the fire alarm off verses actually putting the fire out. Food can be healing for the body if we are paying close attention to labels and exactly what we are eating. Total Nutrition takes some of the stress away by providing free meal plans for everybody. Weather your goal is to lose weight, gain weight, or prevent diabetes. Cholesterol, glucagon, and triglycerides are our friends as long as we learn their "interests" and how they play off of our body and organ's "interests." The five week Virtual RESTART program offered by Total Nutrition covers this extensively along with much more. Benefits of the five week program are weight management, sleep quality, boosted immunity, and increased mental health. You are welcome to drop by and ask questions, pick up

samples at Total Nutrition Visalia.

Speaking of mental health, Monique Hall, Mental Health Wellness Coach & Owner of Sankofa 2020 was invited to share the importance of looking at mental health. I believe mental health should be approached with the same level of concern as you would seeking treatment after a hard fall or auto collision. Our brains take impact of trauma and traumatic events, we simply can't see it. One silver lining of the pandemic is that the topic of mental health comes up in conversation more often and this is a huge step in addressing the lack of concern and importance on mental health. Trauma can occur from a single event or repeated exposure to situations that activate the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Trauma can manifest in many forms, but if untreated, can quickly turn into a silent killer called chronic stress. The stress of trauma can be mitigated through traditional counseling sessions and healthy lifestyle choices. Monique Hall finds beauty in this vulnerability, recognized a need and decided to start a business in the mist of the pandemic serving individuals and families by focusing on overall wellness starting with mental health. Monique is doing exactly what she was intended to do, even while presenting she clearly demonstrated active listening and put out such a kind and compassionate energy it could be felt through the computer screen as seen in this moment captured.

A major component in combating stress and quality of life is adding an exercise routine into your daily life. Nikki Scholl, Owner of Train like a Girl Fitness Studio demonstrated how this can be achieved from even our office chair. Fitness for stress relief starts with mindfulness and breathing before getting into the stretching. Our class practiced mindfully breathing and holding breath as great way to reconnect with our self and our body. By starting with this technique, some of our class realized an area that should be focused during the stretching exercise. Nikki spent

time taking inventory of our class's individual needs and incorporated them into her instruction. Wellness popped up a third time in the day, Nikki reminded us how we spend so many hours in one position and we need to set wellness or stretching alarms to incorporate fitness into the workday. Most of us should be taking or are required to take two ten-minute breaks every day and stretching or using therabands is an excellent use of a ten min break. Nikki pointed out the fact she concentrates her time on women and girls nutrition and health from her body-positive gym. When you have a passion in an area, it shows. Pelvic floor health is A THING! We all have a pelvic floor and there are exercises designed to strengthen and improve bladder, bowel, and sexual organ function. Train like a Girl Fitness Studio does not shy away from discussing any and all women's health topics. Nikki brought out 'Betty' her pelvic model to provide an inside visual on this topic. The quote of the day ended her presentation. "As women in leadership, it's not your job to show up to work or an event really small"

Keeping with the theme of fitness, the Leadership Visalia class ended the day discussing financial fitness with Lela Dancil, Financial Empowerment Director at Tucoemas. Finances! Money! Loans! This subject can be a stressor and truly weigh heavy on our quality of life. Like our bodies need fitness so dose our wallet. Day session facilitator, Sonia Smalley, VP of Lending at Tucoemas Federal Credit Union did an excellent job by adding this element to our day. After being up out of our chair and active with Nikki, it was time to set back and focus on financial wellness, goals, and a get an overall pulse on financial wellness. Our local credit unions have programs and people who work specially with members who are low income, young adults opening their first bank account, and others who simply need guidance on how to best manage their income.

Lastly, our soul! Our quality of life day session ended with the

poem by Linda Ellis called 'The Dash'

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.

To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

Appropriately we had a break to ponder more about our 'dash' and quality of life before going into a discussion on 'Backpacks Without Barriers' our class passion project of the year. We discussed how close we are to our next goal and some of the exciting donations and partnerships. The marketing & outreach committee shared about the video that is being created for donors to share via social media. Overall each committee is excited and made so much progress! Backpacks without Barriers will make a real difference in the lives of those struggling within Visalia. Interested in partnering with Leadership Visalia's passion project? Please email, leadershipvisalia2021@gmail.com. Thank you!

CEO

Continued from page 4

"The Board of Directors of the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation has chosen well in appointing Nathan Ahle to be our next President/CEO," TCEDC Board Chair Scott Harness said. "With significant executive experience, Nathan will have an immediate and positive impact as a business and regional leader in advancing the economy of Tulare County and the Southern San Joaquin Valley."

Ahle succeeds Paul Saldana as the leader of the EDC. Saldana retired from the organization on Oct. 31 after 20 years as president and CEO. Hired just before the 9/11 economic downturn, Saldana has shepherded the EDC through the recession that followed, the Great Recession following the housing market collapse in 2008, the historic Central Valley drought from 2012-2016 and the current coronavirus pandemic. The transition was guided by interim CEO Mike Olmos, former city manager for the city of Visalia.

Nathan holds a degree in business management and is a graduate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Organization Management and Western Association of Chamber Executives (WACE) Academy, where he now serves on the faculty and the steering committee. He has also been recognized with Accredited Chamber Executive (ACE) status with W.A.C.E. and was named one of Fresno's "40 Under 40" by Business Street Online in 2018. In addition, Nathan also serves on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100, board of the Economic Development Corporation of Fresno County, the Downtown Fresno Partnership, and the Western Association of Chamber Executives.

Ahle's wife, Aimee, is a professor at the College of the Sequoias in Visalia. The couple live in Fresno with their two children, daughter Lucy and son Jake.

"My wife and children are Valley natives and we have chosen to make the Valley our home," the Missouri native said. "I believe in the Missouri and will work to show those outside what we have to offer."

GYMS

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facility and in the gymnasium area), along with the track, the lap pool, the warm water pool and locker rooms.

LifeStyles' press release stated that the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents in Tulare County, will determine the timeline of the center's phase II and phase III rollout.

The second hospital-district gym in Tulare County, Evolutions, can also reopen under the red tier. According to the Tulare Local Healthcare District Board agenda. They will be hearing update on the gym's status from the gym's management company.

IN-SHAPE

While people might be healthier now that gyms are open, the financial health of the gyms themselves are suspect. The operator of 10 health clubs in Central California, In-Shape Health Clubs filed for bankruptcy reorganization last

December.

Because of shrinking revenues, the chain of health clubs were forced to permanently close 20 locations during the pandemic. In a Dec. 16 statement the Stockton-based company said, "As you know, California's mandated shutdown of gyms has kept us closed for the better part of 2020," noting that the statewide shutdowns have "dramatically impaired [In-Shape] revenue."

In-Shape said the filing will not impact memberships or rates. The popular gym has two locations in Visalia, one in Porterville as well as six in Bakersfield. In-Shape Health Clubs operates more than 64 full-service health clubs throughout California.

"In-Shape and our extraordinary team members are not going anywhere," the company said on its web site after filing for bankruptcy. "We'll continue to support our communities in their fitness journeys as we work through this restructuring process."