

# www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 11 | November 2021

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### Aha! to launch nonstop flights from Fresno to Reno-Tahoe

Experience casino resorts, unique dining, premier skiing and more beginning Nov. 10. **5**

## EVENTS

### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber  
 CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

YPN Monthly Meet-Up

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: TBA on YPN Facebook

### NOVEMBER 6

Jr. CEO Hot Chocolate Day

Time: Varied

Location: Visit [visaliachamber.org/ceo](http://visaliachamber.org/ceo) for a list of locations

## TRAVEL WITH US

### 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

### APRIL 25-MAY 1, 2022

Southern Charm

### MAY 18, 2022

June 7 & 15, 2022

July 5, 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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California Dairies, Inc. broke ground on their soon-to-be facility partially powered by renewable energy.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## California Dairies to build new high tech facility in northern Kern County

Valley Natural Beverages milk processing and bottling will use a method of heat-treating milk to extend its shelf life for grocers and consumers



The Sun-Gazette

By Reggie Ellis

President and Publisher  
 The Sun-Gazette

California Dairies, Inc., the nation's second largest dairy cooperative based in Visalia, is building a facility partially powered by renewable energy where new technologies will be used to extend the shelf life of milk.

Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture Karen Ross and other state and local officials joined California Dairies, Inc. (CDI) on Sept. 29, at a groundbreaking ceremony in northern Kern County at the future site of CDI's new state-of-the-art milk processing and bottling facility. The 220,000-square foot facility will be built on 30 acres of land near Sanger, Calif. The facility is expected to create approximately 100 new jobs when fully operational in 2023.

"This is an exciting day and marks the launch of a transformational investment being made by our farmer-owners," CDI's president and CEO Brad Anderson said as during his opening remarks. "This new facility will process our Kern County-produced milk into innovative fluid milk products that have been seeing growth in demand throughout the U.S. and international markets."

Named Valley Natural Beverages, the facility will use ultra-high temperature (UHT) and extended shelf-life (ESL) milk processing facility. Stacy Heaton, director of communications for CDI, said both technologies refer to a method of heat-treating fluid milk for pasteurization. By pasteurizing the milk at much higher temperatures, we are able to extend the shelf-life of the product, and in some cases, produce a shelf-stable product that can also be stored and transported without refrigeration.

These features create advantages both in storage and transportation logistics as well as preserving product quality and integrity for the consumer.

"While traditional fluid milk will have a shelf-life of three to four weeks, ESL milk can have a shelf life of up to six months, allowing for the product to last longer on the store shelf or in the consumer's refrigerator," Heaton said.

The project is being built in northern Kern County, a region with significant milk production but no local processing facilities. Not only will this investment significantly reduce the transportation distances of milk produced in Kern County, it will also further demonstrate CDI's commitment to sustainable solutions by incorporating renewable energy sources and waste conservation as key priorities in the facility and operational design. Heaton said the facility will



California Dairies Inc.'s new facility will be built in northern Kern County. The partially powered by renewable energy venture will span 220,000 square feet over 30 acres of land.

RENDERING COURTESY OF VALLEY NATURAL BEVERAGES

partially rely on on-site solar but not all of details of the energy sources have been ironed out. Transportation to and from the facility will include milk tankers pulled by compressed natural gas (CNG) tractors.

"As farmers, we aim to be good stewards of the land to leave a lasting legacy for future generations," CDI board chairman Simon Vander Woude said. "CDI's member-farms are leading the way in implementing sustainable on-farm practices, and the construction of this state-of-the-art facility will carry that mission forward."

CDI and its family-owned dairy farms have a long history of prioritizing on-farm sustainability. In 2011, CDI co-founded Dairy Cares, a leading non-profit pursuing research and innovation in the area of sustainable dairy practices in California. More recently,

CDI has received funding from the state to help with the construction of the facility. The funding will be used to help with the construction of the facility. The funding will be used to help with the construction of the facility.

See FACILITY on page 3



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### A Caring Community



Gail Zurek  
 President and CEO  
 Visalia Chamber

I had the fantastic opportunity to hear someone not from Visalia talk about our community in a meeting recently. Part of a large statewide organization, this individual was in Visalia looking to relocate their prominent annual conference to our wonderful community. They proudly shared what they had learned about Visalia during their initial internet research and learned during their current site visit.

During their PowerPoint presentation (which reviewed their organization, the conference, and their needs), two slides were dedicated to impressions of Visalia both before and during their visit.

I was bracing for some hard truths those slides may communicate. There are areas where, in my estimation, we need to develop, grow, and perhaps reform. Some of the hard truths on my mental checklist are things the Visalia Chamber works at every day. Others, frankly, are more profound challenges. One day, I hope my future grandkids can see the small steps we made that led to big jumps for future generations. As our visitor spoke about his organization and I anticipated the Visalia feedback PowerPoint slides, I began thinking about how to answer this feedback. I would share the work the Chamber is doing and the vital work so many others are doing. Mentally, I began preparing for an entire rebuttal campaign to information on a slide our speaker was yet to show.

Then it happened. The slide appeared on the screen.

Our visitor discovered what makes this community the jewel of the central valley. He talked about families, a sense of togetherness, and common purpose. He had attended the Taste of Downtown and couldn't stop talking about the energy and how friendly everyone was. He was utterly in love with our downtown, all there was to do, and how happy everyone was—even citing national surveys that confirmed it. "People here," he remarked, "really care. They actually care about this place, their neighbors—it felt like home as soon as we were here." Everyone in the room nodded in agreement. Proudly, I smiled, knowing they saw how unique and special we were.

November is a month infused with reflection and opportunities to be thankful. With the cooler weather and on the cusp of Thanksgiving, it feels like a perfect time to step back reflect. As my fear led me to worry during the meeting with the out-of-town visitor, we do have significant challenges ahead. But as I reflect, I can't help but be thankful for Visalia, our community, businesses, and, frankly, the people that make this amazing community a place where a visitor instantly feels at home. From my perspective, that gratitude and pride deepen when I think of all we've done, overcoming and fought through. Particularly this past year. We indeed are a community that we all can and should be proud of.

As this year closes and before we make New Year's resolutions, let us first reflect. We ought to be proud of all we have done, all we've overcome, and how really wonderful this little slice of world we call home is.

## CITY UPDATE

### Envisioning what's possible thanks to Clean California workers

An eyesore. A nuisance. A community concern. Trash has plagued California's streets and highways for decades and Visalia has not been spared. While the City continues to seek opportunities to clean-up our roadways, such as programs like our Environmental Cleanup Opportunity (ECO) Program, a helping hand is welcome. The State of California has created a transformative initiative to remove litter, create jobs and beautify the whole of our state by providing funding that goes directly to cities, including Visalia.

To date, the City of Visalia has secured approximately \$550,000 to help clean up State Route 198 and other state routes within the City if needed, SR-63 and SR-140. Visalia's Public Works Department has subcontracted with CSET to perform the clean-up work, and in coordination with Caltrans, crews with traffic control and safety measures in place will pick up the litter. The Clean California funding the City has received is part of a three-



year contract, and Visalia is under the umbrella of fellow cities, counties, tribes, and transit agencies that are pulling together to clean local streets and public spaces.

The programs impact will be seen and felt far beyond the cleaned-up corridors. The positives include our ability to expand on back to work programs that Visalia partners with CSET on, bringing state dollars to our local community and providing jobs for those seeking employment.

The funding Visalia has received so far is from the Litter Abatement portion of the state program. However, the over-

See CITY on page 3

**AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT**



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Name:** Carina Mello  
**Company:** Visalia Unified School District, College & Career Readiness Department  
**Title:** Work-Based Learning Coordinator

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

Being a part of the Chamber and Ambassador Program has helped me connect with industry partners throughout the community who are committed to supporting our career technical education programs by providing our students with opportunities to experience work-based learning which includes industry tours, job shadows, and internships.

**Why is it important to employees to get involved in the Visalia Chamber programs and events?**

By being a part of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce's program, employees are awarded the opportunity to network and be connected to our community.

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

The best part of working for the District's College & Career Readiness Department as a Work-Based Learning Coordinator is leading students towards the direction of employability to help them achieve their career goals. As a result of my own personal experience, I was able to turn a seasonal internship opportunity into a 21-year career as an Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Police of the Visalia Police Department. I realize the value and importance of such experiences, and I have a passion for providing our students with the same opportunities.

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

My family and I enjoy visiting downtown Visalia and dining at our local restaurants.



**ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION**

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**Layout** ..... The Sun-Gazette

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**CONTACT US**

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

**Community Loyal Members** | *A thriving community starts here!*

**NEW**

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

**Small Business Members:**

- California Service Dog Academy
- Edible Arrangements
- Laurel Ag & Water
- Pools Plus

**RENEWING**

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce thanks the following companies for

renewing their commitment to the community of Visalia.

**Regional Leader Members:**

- Kaweah Health

**Keystone Members:**

- Visalia Mall\*

**Community Investor Members:**

- Central Valley Community Bank
- KRC Safety Co., Inc.\*

**Business Builder Members:**

- American Pacific Mortgage
- City of Visalia

**Business Connector Members:**

- Cline's Business Equipment, Inc.

- Valley Pacific Petroleum\*

**Small Business Members:**

- Bello Vita Venue\*
- Boot Barn
- Courtyard Aesthetics
- Historic Seven Sycamores\*
- KFSN - TV Channel 30
- Lyle B Stillwater, M.D. F.A.C.S.\*
- Martin & Martin Properties LLC\*
- Personal Express Insurance\*
- Principal Financial Group
- San Joaquin Valley Homes\*
- Tahiti Pools, Inc.\*
- Trilotech
- United Signs LLC
- Vintage Visalia



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Business Builder Nonprofit Members:**

- Crescent Valley Public Charter\*

**Small Business Nonprofit Members:**

- Access Plus Capital\*
- Family Builders Foster Care, Inc.\*

\* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

**I LOVE MY JOB SPOTLIGHT**



**Name:** Kimberly Stoll  
**Company:** BSK Associates  
**Title:** Marketing Coordinator

BSK Associates provides geotechnical engineering, analytical chemistry, construction observation, ecological services, environmental engineering, water resource management, and construction materials testing for clients with projects ranging in size from small to complex.

BSK strongly believes in giving back to the communities in which we work. We believe the well-being of our communities has a direct bearing on the success of BSK and our employees. Our community involvement goals are to have the most positive impact on the communities which we serve and, have our employees continue to make a difference in their communities through personal, office and firm sponsored activities.

BSK is 100% employee-owned. Profits are shared with employees. We earn cash for bringing more members to the BSK family through our referral program. Among other benefits, we offer 100% coverage on individual employee health insurance, tuition reimbursement, a robust wellness program (with prizes!), the opportunity for bonuses, a length of service program and fun events at each location through our Owner's Club. Looking for professional development? We can grow through our monthly and quarterly trainings and a formal mentoring program. Our culture is the best part

of working at BSK! Our employees have allowed us to earn a Great Place to Work designation three years in a row. Not a good place. Not a nice place. But a great place! Our employees say we are a flexible, family-oriented company with both profit and heart. Employees tell us that the best part of working with our company is our people -- and the commitment to our people. We communicate a lot, and it is not one-sided. You have a voice when you work at BSK. We listen through Town Halls hosted by our President, manager conversations and a Digital Suggestion Box.

BSK has been serving the Central Valley for over 55 years. We are keenly aware that our work influences our community, as well as our families and friends. We live here, too. Our Purpose is to add value to our communities by working to help maintain safe and quality water, safe and efficient infrastructure, cutting edge medical and educational facilities, and do so in a safe and healthy way. We add value through application of our technical expertise, and through creating great jobs for our employees who, in turn, give back to our communities as a show of thanks and support. We also recognize that, if we apply our core values to every decision that we make, we cannot fail in our purpose.

We post our job openings weekly on our social media networks. You can also apply by visiting our website www.bskassociates.com/careers/opportunities. Follow us on Facebook, @BskAssociatesEngineersLaboratories; LinkedIn, and Twitter, @BSKAssociates.

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

**Name:** Kellie Black  
**Company:** Mâche  
**Title:** Owner/Chef

Mâche was inspired over 20 years ago when my daughter was plagued with health issues that changed her diet and our lives indefinitely. After years of personal growth and much education I wrote a business plan for a specialty food service that would serve not only the special needs of the consumer, but give back to the community as well. We are supporting our local farmers by sourcing locally, bringing awareness to dietary needs to our consumers and bringing back life to the dinner table.

We are excited to share that along with our custom catering we now have a new storefront to provide wholesome, organic, farm-to-table meals Monday through Friday. Some of our new products that are a big hit with the community are our tamale bites, turkey croissant sandwiches, zucchini bread and our fresh pressed celery juice. Yes, celery juice. It's amazing and the health benefits are endless. We share these secrets and more as we spend time talking with each

of those that visit us.

We get involved regularly with our community. We have partnered with many non-profits such as Rescue Mission, Visalia Emergency Aid, CASA, Love Inc. and Rotary.

The absolute best part of my job and being a part of Mâche is the people. I love hearing their stories and concerns for their health and their passions for food. Food is essential for living, but it's so much more. It's cultural, it's what connects us universally; brings us together...and it's healing.

The chamber has been a strong support system which has fueled our growth as a business, but most importantly has brought forth opportunities to build strong relationships with fellow members of our community.

The most valuable thing I wish Visalia knew about Mâche is we aren't just here to make a profit for ourselves, but to profit our community with knowledge regarding "what we eat determines how we feel." We have always stated through our tagline these last seven years and will continue to do so... eat well... live well.





# give the gift of travel this holiday season

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visaliachamber.org/travel

Congratulations to **Chapala Grill** who celebrated their 18th year in business!

**California Dairies, Inc. (CDI)** held a groundbreaking ceremony in Kern County, at the future site of CDI's new ultra-high temperature and extended shelf-life mil processing facility.

**County of Tulare** debuted a new transit operations and maintenance facility in September. The newly built 26,000-square foot facility includes administration spaces as well as a dispatch and operations center for TCAT vehicles.

**Farmer Bob's World's**



SUBMITTED PHOTO

community services, including **Visalia Unified School District, Tulare County Sheriff's Department, and the City of Visalia Police Activities League.**

**Visit Visalia** announced in October, they were the first California destination marketing organization to adopt the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, a program lauded for supporting travelers with various needs to obtain additional support they may require while traveling. The list of committed local partner businesses continues to grow and currently includes: **Comfort Suites Visalia, Hampton Inn Visalia, Lamp Liter Inn, Visalia Marriott Hotel, Wyndham Visalia, Visalia Adventure Park, Farmer Bob's World, ImagineU Children's Museum, and Valley Oaks Golf Course.**

At **City of Visalia** City Council Meeting, Assistant City manager Nick Mascia was sworn in. Previously, Mascia held the role of Public Works Director.

**Soroptimist International of Visalia** is currently accepting nominations from the community for the Ruby Award. Each year, the club honors individual women, and a community organization or business with the award to those who, through their professional or personal efforts,



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

are making extraordinary differences in the lives of women and girls.

**Assistance League of Visalia** were delighted to hold in-person clothing events once again, such as Operation School Bell® at JCPenney. Over six afternoons in September and October, ALV clothed approximately 120 local students, deemed eligible by community liaisons from **Visalia Unified School District.** Students from K-12th grades, along with their parents were invited to shop after school.

Congratulations to Ashley Webster-Rudolph, associate publisher of **The Business Journal**, who was selected as part of the 2021 40 Under 40 class by [businessstreetonline.com](http://businessstreetonline.com).

**Provost & Pritchard** recently announced that Jared Olsen, one of the firm's planning professionals reached a career milestone by passing the American Planning Association's exam for certification. Based out of the Visalia office, Olsen has five years of planning experience.

**Visalia Rawhide's** team, including Tipper presented **Visalia Emergency Aid Council** with the funds raised during their Bail Tipper Out of Jail campaign.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tree to Table Celebration featured Michael Young, multi-sport athlete at Visalia's Mt. Whitney High. The event also included a citrus themed dinner, silent auction, wagon rides through the orchard, and more.

Tulare County Parks & Recreation, in partnership with **CSET** hosted Make A Difference Day event on October 23rd. Community members joined park staff in sprucing exteriors of restrooms and planting of trees at Mooney Grove Park.

At the Walmart on Nobel grand re-opening event, various local organizations were awarded grants to assist with their commu-

**RIBBON CUTTING**



**GateWay Church of Visalia**

at 1100 S. Sowell Street held a grand opening for their new elementary building, playground, and outdoor quad. Their new children's area has large interactive classrooms, gymnasium, special needs classroom, and a brand-new playground. Service times are Thursdays at 6:45 p.m. and Sundays, 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

**Introducing Children's Choice Dental Care**

**Your Choice Partner for Pediatric Dental Care**

Children's Choice Dental Care has proudly served children in California since 2006. Founded by a board-certified pediatric specialist, our child-centric practices are built on a passion for serving children of all ages, especially underserved populations and those with special needs.

**Our Choice Mission**

Our goal is to provide infants, children, and teens everywhere access to the care they need. Our pediatric specialists, associate providers, and care teams



- Face education and social development challenges

**Our Choice Partnerships**

Through our Choice Partnerships, together we can help improve the health of our communities! We partner with healthcare providers all over California to provide full care options to patients and area providers. We can provide treatment for specific care needs or we can assume total care for your patient. Our Choice clinics accept all insurance\*, including Medi-Cal Dental (aka, Denti-Cal).

Simply fill out a Choice Partner referral form or go online [www.MyChildrensChoice.com/referrals](http://www.MyChildrensChoice.com/referrals). We look forward to partnering with you!

are dedicated to providing comprehensive dental care in a fun and engaging environment.

Delay seeking care or get care that doesn't fit their specific needs

- Receive a late diagnosis for dental disease
- Pay much higher costs for care and be in debt

**CITY**

Continued from page 1

all statewide initiative is aimed at transforming unsightly roadsides into spaces of pride for our community, our visitors and for all Californians. With over \$1 billion dollars allocated to the 58 counties across California, Visalia stands to receive additional monies for the beautification, education, and engagement components of the Clean California initiative. Together, we'll continue to work towards a cleaner, more beautiful community.

For the latest updates and news from the City of Visalia, visit [www.visalia.city](http://www.visalia.city) or visit them on social media @CityofVisalia.

**FACILITY**

Continued from page 1

CDI has adopted the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment, which aims to be carbon neutral or better by the year 2050.

Co-owned by more than 300 dairy producers who ship nearly 17 billion pounds of Real California Milk annually, California Dairies, Inc. is a manufacturer of quality butter, fluid milk products, and milk powders. In addition, California Dairies, Inc. is the home of two leading and well-respected brands of butter - Challenge and Danish Creamery. California Dairies' quality dairy products are available in all 50 United States and in more than 50 foreign countries. For additional information on California Dairies, Inc., visit [www.CaliforniaDairies.com](http://www.CaliforniaDairies.com).

**Ask Jena**

I'm looking to fill a position, how can the Chamber help me get the word out?

The Chamber has multiple platforms available to members to assist you with finding the right person for your team. Contact me today!

I would like to host a mixer, how do I do that?

We would love to have you host a Chamber mixer! Contact me today to find the right fit for you and your business.

Have a question about the Chamber?

Send me a message: [Jena@visaliachamber.org](mailto:Jena@visaliachamber.org)

**LEADERSHIP VISALIA**  
VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Community overview**

By Karissa Padron VSCU

October 8th was an exciting and eventful day for the 2021-2022 Leadership Visalia class, thanks to our facilitator, Raquel Garcia.

Our day session topic was "Community Overview & Government" that led us to a bright and early morning at our local Suncrest Bank in downtown

Visalia. Airica De Oliveira, from the Tulare County EDC was kind enough to provide a continental breakfast to kick off the morning.

We had the pleasure of meeting Terry Ommen who conducted a tour of downtown Visalia. Although the weather was not on our side the tour went on and became a class favorite. Talk about a wealth of

knowledge, Ommen provided detailed information and historic pictures of what our downtown streets looked like in the 1800's. Next time you are walking downtown Main St. Visalia see how many horse rings you can find on the original and still maintained granite curbs.

Lunch was provided by our **See LEADERSHIP on page 6**

**THE LAW AT WORK**

**Laws on severance, settlement agreements are changing**



By Brett T. Abbott  
Gubler & Abbott LLP

Severance agreements are an effective tool for reducing exposure for employers. In exchange for additional compensation, an employee agrees to refrain from suing or bringing any claims against their employer. In sum, severance agreements buy peace between employer and employee. New legislation from Governor Newsom, however, has changed the landscape with respect to severance agreements.

On October 7, 2021, the Governor enacted SB 331, which creates restrictions on employers offering severance agreements and settling claims alleging harassment, discrimination or retaliation based on supposed violations of the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA). The new law, which takes effect on January 1, 2022, expands California's current legal restrictions against settlement agreements that prevent disclosure of information regarding sexual assault, sexual harassment, workplace harassment or discrimination based on sex, or retaliation against a person for reporting such acts.

The new law also makes it illegal for a severance agreement to prevent an employee's disclosure of information about unlawful acts of harassment, discrimination or retaliation in the workplace. The new law renders such agreements unenforce-

able and against California's public policy.

In addition, starting next year, non-disparagement agreements in any settlement agreement must include language relating to the employee's right to disclose information about unlawful acts in the workplace - some sample language proposed by the Legislature is: "Nothing in this agreement prevents you from discussing or disclosing information about unlawful acts in the workplace, such as harassment or discrimination or any other conduct that you have reason to believe is unlawful."

While confidentiality provisions relating to the settlement amount remain enforceable, an amendment to Government Code section 12964.5 requires employers offering severance agreements with general releases to advise employees to consult with counsel and to provide a reasonable amount of time, i.e. not less than five days, to do so.

In light of the above, employers should re-examine the use of any current form severance agreements, agreements with non-disparagement clauses, or other settlement agreements to ensure that they are in compliance with these new legal requirements.

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 ([btat@thecalifornialawyers.com](mailto:btat@thecalifornialawyers.com)). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinowth St., Visalia, CA 93291 ([www.thecalifornialawyers.com](http://www.thecalifornialawyers.com)).



**HOT CHOCOLATE DAY**  
**NOVEMBER 6TH**



**COME SUPPORT**  
**OUR YOUNG**  
**ENTREPRENEURS!**

[visaliachamber.org/jrceo](http://visaliachamber.org/jrceo)



Above: Sequoia Commons in Goshen was ceremoniously opened on Friday, Oct. 8. Below: Self-Help CEO Tom Collishaw describes the importance of advocate Graciela Martinez.

## Self-Help Enterprises housing honors longtime Goshen advocate

Nonprofit developer dedicates community center in honor of former Self-Help board member, labor organizer and community advocate Graciela Martinez



By Reggie Ellis  
President and Publisher  
The Sun-Gazette

The community of Goshen wouldn't be what it is today without Self-Help Enterprises but the nonprofit developer wouldn't be what it is today without Goshen's Graciela Martinez.

The late leading lady for Goshen was honored on Friday, Oct. 8 during the grand opening of the second and final phase of Self-Help's Sequoia Commons affordable rental community. The event also served to commemorate the legacy of long-time community advocate Graciela Martinez by naming the community center in her honor. In addition to serving many years as a Self-Help Enterprise board member, Graciela spent a lifetime advocating on behalf of farmworkers and low-income people of the San Joaquin Valley. She died on Aug. 1, 2020, at age 75.

"Today marks the completion of another essential affordable rental housing project and honoring the legacy of our beloved friend and former board member Graciela Martinez," Self-Help CEO Tom Collishaw said. "She was widely recognized for her leadership in the Goshen community, and we are proud to name the Graciela Martinez Community Center at Sequoia Commons after her. She was not only a valued and trusted leader on our board of directors, but she was literally in 'the room where it happened' when Self-Help Enterprises was born."

Francisca Graciela Martinez Cavazos was born the daughter of a farmworker and mason along the border in Harlingen, Texas on Jan. 29, 1945. The family moved to Visalia where she graduated from Redwood High School. As a youth, Graciela worked as a farmworker alongside her mom on weekends and school breaks. She recalled seeing women sexually harassed and abused in the fields. Correcting injustices like these became her life's work.

Right after high school, Graciela started working at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Quaker roots of Self-Help Enterprises. Collishaw said Graciela liked to say she was "in the delivery room" when Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) was born building three homes in 1962 not far from its latest housing project in Sequoia Commons.

"She was there and typed up the original corporate documents," Collishaw said. Since then, SHE has helped more than 6,300 families to build their own homes, rehabilitated over 6,700 unsafe homes, developed over 1,900 units of affordable rental housing, and has provided technical assistance for reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitary sewer infrastructures to more than 327 small communities. Since that first self help housing project nearly 60 years ago, Graciela's work to put Goshen on the map helped facilitate the community getting its first health clinic, national retailer, fast food chain and coffee shop.

"Mom whole-heartedly embraced the community of Goshen, and cared deeply about the town, its residents and their wellbeing," Graciela's son Richard Herron said. "She knew that community activation was necessary to make positive changes. My Mom brought the community together and championed positive change for the community of Goshen."

Supervisor Eddie Valero, who represents Goshen and northern Visalia as part of District 4, delivered a poetic speech about Graciela's contributions to farmworkers and farmworking communities like her home of Goshen. The supervisor called her a "guardian of justice," "a true visionary," and an "authentic trailblazer in leadership." Valero went on to say she carried herself with strength and kindness and was driven by love for her family, her community and others in general.

"The works we see locally are visions born from her tenacity craving for betterment of people and places and opportunity to see more for communities like Goshen," Valero said. "And we know there is so much more to do still."

Graciela went on to serve as a tireless advocate for farmworker housing in Tulare County and the surrounding area during her 21 years on Self-Help's board of directors. The position afforded her the opportunity to march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Ala., went on strike with United Farmworker leader Dolores Huerta, and worked in the legal department for UFW under labor champion Cesar Chavez. After getting married and moving to Washington, D.C., Graciela went to work at NASA in the Telemetry Division and as a secretary at Georgetown University where she learned to do legal research before returning to Visalia to start a family in 1966.

"Graciela was a pivotal partner in Goshen's progress," Valero said. "She cared deeply about justice for the community and loved people abundantly. Gra-



ciela's vision and mission continue because she trained up people who pour out love for Goshen!"

In 1997, Graciela returned to AFSC where she started a low-power FM radio station. Several years later, she became first female director of AFSC's Proyecto Campesino where she led local efforts to push for comprehensive immigration reform.

"She was a champion of Latinx, a voice for the dignity of farmworkers, an ambassador for our organization, and an inspiration for those who worked in the fields," Collishaw said. "In short, she was our hero."

Herron said his mother was strict but fair. He told a story of when he was 8 years old and his mom had bought him a brand new pair of brand name sneakers. One morning when he couldn't find his shoes, his mother the labor organizer scolded him and sent him to school with no shoes at all.

"She taught me a hard lesson in organizing," Herron said. The event concluded with a ribbon cutting and photos in front of the Graciela Martinez Community Center. Herron was joined at the dedication ceremony by a host of family members including his sister Hannah, who did the honors at the ribbon cutting, sister Rosita Campos and the family of sister Jennifer Angel. Graciela died of cancer on Aug. 1, 2020 in Goshen, Calif. Graciela is survived by her four children: Hannah, Jennifer, Richard, and Rosita. She is survived by four children, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

## Proposed development could bring 3,000 jobs to Visalia

Larry Ritchie, family propose development that could build out to 4.4 million square feet



The logistics boom continues in the Visalia Industrial Park with the addition of the Ritchie family proposing to build on the northern edge of Visalia, adjacent to the Visalia Industrial Park at the north-west corner of Shirk and Riggan.

Larry Ritchie, one of the members proposing the development is president of Shannon and Ritchie, an old-time farming and development group. Larry is the son of legendary Visalia farmer, cowboy and land owner Clarence Ritchie whose holdings also cover the Westside of the Valley, now full of solar farms.

Larry is also a partner with John Vidovich on a number of projects including some land holdings in the industrial park being sold off now, totaling around 100 acres. The land for the new 120,000-square foot Millipore building was purchased from this partnership as well as the YS Industries land.

The project will require annexation into the city limits putting it a way off until development can happen.

The scale of the project, as described in a preliminary profile dated Sept. 15 is huge with a site-plan filed by the develop-

er saying it could employ nearly 3,000 and build out to 4.4 million square feet. That is the size of four Amazons.

In their filing, the developer suggests they want to also have some smaller size developments, such as 150,657 square feet of light industrial uses, to be part of the project also including a retail or restaurant area at the corner of Shirk and Riggan.

Altogether, the plan calls for about 4,400 parking places at what will be a busy corner in the future.

The Ritchie family along with the Doe family have had longstanding land holdings on relatively low-value field crop land in this part of Tulare County—now the subject of a logistics frenzy of new development luckily located on the outskirts of town adjacent Highway 99.

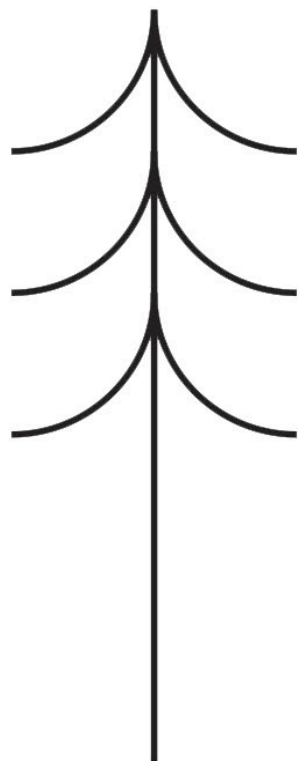
The Visalia Industrial Park is booming after adding 2.3 million square feet last year, bringing the total under roof to about 15 million square feet. Before 2021 is over, the park is likely to permit another 2 million plus square feet including the new 1.2 million-square foot Ace complex and another 1.3 million-square foot logistics complex just behind Amazon along Avenue 320—the north most frontage for the new Ritchie Park as well—just to the east.

The community center is just one part of the Sequoia Commons II project. Located at 31161 Florence Ave. in Goshen, the project will provide affordable housing to 60 families in one, two, and three-bedroom units, each complete with an energy-efficient dishwasher, gas stove, refrigerator, and washer and dryer hookups. Residents will share project amenities including a basketball half court, open space, playground area, and a 3,072 square foot community center with kitchen and computer lab. The community center will be the epicenter for SHE's robust program of on-site resident services, including exercise, nutrition and health education, financial planning and literacy, ESL, computer classes, and other services based on the needs of the residents.

The project is funded by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, a Multifamily Housing Program (MHP) Loan from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and Infill Infrastructure Grant funds also from HCD. Monthly net rents, ranging from \$364 to \$842, are based on unit size and resident incomes. The project was made possible by equity from Red Stone Equity Partners and a construction loan from Pacific Western Bank.

In the first phase of Sequoia Commons, SHE allocated 6 units as permanent supportive housing (PSH) for households experiencing homelessness. SHE is committing an

See SELF-HELP on page 6



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**Topograph**



## SoCalGas takes another step toward zero emissions goal

SoCalGas has successfully blended up to 20% hydrogen through a closed loop natural gas system complete with natural gas residential appliances

Southern California Gas Co. (SoCalGas) today announced that it is blending hydrogen to fuel a household system and appliances at its Engineering Analysis Center and Centralized Training Facility. As part of the testing, technicians are measuring the performance of common household appliances like stoves, wall heaters and forced-air furnaces when they are fueled with a blend of hydrogen and natural gas. This is the next step moving out of the lab and toward future blending into the natural gas grid, with an emphasis on safety and training. SoCalGas is among the first utilities in the nation to test the effects of a hydrogen blend on natural gas infrastructure and equipment in a controlled field environment. This effort utilizes the same engineering and technology that will be used to blend into the natural gas grid in the future. The use of hydrogen, either blended with natural gas, or delivered via a dedicated pipeline, is one important component of SoCalGas' strategy to achieve net zero emissions in its operations and the energy it delivers by 2045.

Preliminary results of testing that began earlier this summer show the household natural gas appliances are compatible with up to a 20% hydrogen blend. These initial findings are consistent with previous international research and lab testing. This effort provides key operational and safety experience, including testing for pipeline leaks, that will enable SoCalGas to implement larger scale hydrogen blending demonstrations. SoCalGas continues to test the impacts of blending hydrogen with natural gas on pipelines and appliances.

Furthermore, separate National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) analysis and several in-

ternational industry studies have indicated the potential to blend hydrogen into existing distribution pipelines serving end use customers.

"In a net zero emissions California, clean fuels like hydrogen will play an essential role in supporting a reliable electric grid, in eliminating emissions from hard to electrify sectors of the economy like transportation and industry, and in making the transition to a clean energy economy affordable," said Neil Navin, vice president of clean energy innovations for SoCalGas. "The European Hydrogen Backbone Initiative is a great example on nations are working to repurpose 70 percent of their existing natural gas infrastructure to carry clean hydrogen to a cluster of demand centers across the European Union."

"Investing in tests that aim to demonstrate the potential of hydrogen is key to identifying solutions that can help us address our current climate crisis," said Assemblymember Bill Quirk. "SoCalGas' commitment to decarbonization innovations help advance the energy transition."

Several analyses, including the Los Angeles Renewable Energy Study (LA100) by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and NREL, highlight the need, in 2045, for renewably produced and storable fuels to maintain reliability in the power sector. In addition, many experts agree that clean fuels like hydrogen will be essential for decarbonizing hard to electrify sectors of the economy like industry and heavy-duty trucking, how cooperation can accelerate these goals. There, some 23 nations are working to repurpose 70 percent of their existing natural gas infrastructure to carry

See SOCALGAS on page 6

# Rawhide charitable fund supports work with local families



To commemorate the end of a wonderful 2021 season of Rawhide Baseball under new ownership, the Sigal Family Rawhide Charitable Fund is pleased to announce their 2021 Community Grants. In partnership with the Central Valley Community Foundation, three grants of \$10,000 each will be awarded to Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias, Family Services of Tulare County, and United Way of Tulare County.

"We fully support the good work of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias, Family Services of Tulare County, and the United Way of Tulare County," said Sam Sigal, President and Co-owner of the Visalia Rawhide. "The work that these three organizations do could not be more vital to our community."

The Boys and Girls Clubs will receive \$10,000 to provide needed maintenance on their facilities. This grant will help Boys & Girls Clubs provide safe, quality spaces for kids to attend during after school hours, school holidays and summer vacation. "We are very thankful to the Sigal Family for their concern and investment in our community's children," said CEO Galen Quenzer. Tulare County currently has 15 clubs located throughout the South Valley and sees an average of 910 kids a day.

Family Services of Tulare County will receive \$10,000 to continue providing emergency shelter, counseling, and legal services for survivors of domestic violence and their children, as well as other programs that help strengthen families and prevent future violence. "During the COVID-19 Pandemic the need for our services increased, while survivors of violence faced new barriers to seeking safety," said Caity Meader, CEO. "The Sigal family's donation allows Family Services to continue its work to help local children and families heal from violence and thrive in healthy relationships." Family Services works with more than 5,000 people each year.

United Way has been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response in Tulare County. They will receive \$10,000 to con-

tinue connecting community members with resources and services through their non-emergency hotline and comprehensive app. United Way directly serves families that have been impacted by COVID-19 by connecting them with available resources. This grant will provide critical mortgage and utility assistance for 20 families. The need in Tulare County is great. In the past year and a half, over 2700 families have requested support for mortgage and utility bills totaling over \$3,000,000.

Thank you to Rawhide season ticket holders and fans for your support this season," said Sigal. "In honor of you, the Rawhide invests in critical re-

sources to support our community."

### About Visalia Rawhide

The Visalia Rawhide are the Single-A Affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks and are the only professional sports team in Tulare and Kings counties. The team has been an affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks since 2007 and celebrated the 75th Anniversary of Minor League Baseball in Visalia in 2021. The Rawhide proudly hosts competitive baseball in Valley Strong Stadium while providing affordable entertainment. For information on the upcoming 2022 Visalia Rawhide season, contact the Visalia Rawhide Ticket Office at 559.732.4433, visit

online at rawhidebaseball.com, or follow on Facebook (TheRawhide), Instagram (@VisaliaRawhide), and Twitter (@VisaliaRawhide).

### About Central Valley Community Foundation

The Central Valley Community Foundation has been a trusted partner in philanthropy in the Central Valley for more than 50 years. Its mission is to cultivate smart philanthropy, lead, and invest in solutions that build stronger communities. As the only nationally-accredited community foundation serving the six-county Central San Joaquin Valley, CVCF attracts investment and deploys resources to solve persistent economic, environmental, and social challenges in the Central Valley. For more details visit www.CentralValleyCF.org or connect at @CentralValleyCF.



FLIGHTSIM.TO

## Aha! to launch nonstop service from Fresno to Reno-Tahoe International Airport

Nonstop flights to world-renowned Reno and Lake Tahoe. Experience casino resorts, unique dining, premier skiing and more beginning Nov. 10, 2021

ExpressJet Airlines announced the launch of short, nonstop flights between Central Valley/Fresno and Reno-Tahoe International Airport, starting Nov. 10, 2021.

### Convenient Nonstop Flights = More Vacations and Trips

Flights will operate each Monday, Wednesday and Friday departing Fresno Yosemite International Airport at 4:15 p.m. PT arriving in Reno-Tahoe at 5:18 p.m. PT. The quick 1 hour and 3 minute nonstop flight eliminates the need for time consuming connections at crowded hubs or a long drive. Nonstop flights give travelers more time for adventure and less time traveling making short, spontaneous vacations possible. Return flights will operate on the same days, departing Reno-Tahoe at 2:30 p.m. PT and arriving in Fresno at 3:33 p.m. PT.

"We look forward to welcoming Aha! to Fresno Yosemite International Airport and are excited to be a part of their new airline program with service to Reno-Tahoe," said Director of Aviation Kevin Meikle. "Aha!'s nonstop flights will connect Central Valley travelers to a variety of year-round recreational activities and iconic events. Reno-Tahoe expands our air travel gateway within the Western Pacific Region with more flights, more choices."

### Exciting and Vibrant Reno-Tahoe

Aha! is ExpressJet Airlines' "air-hotel-adventure" leisure brand designed for travelers to enjoy Reno-Tahoe's regional bounty — including exciting casino resorts and live entertainment, a diverse art and dining scene, and the world-class ski-golf-outdoor activities around Lake Tahoe, North America's largest alpine lake. Thrill seekers can also take in exciting shows and annual events including Burning Man, Hot August Nights, Reno Rodeo, Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival, Barracuda Championship-PGA TOUR event, Great Reno Bal-



### FRESNO YOSEMITE International Airport

loon Races, National Championship Air Races, Lake Tahoe Snowfest, and more.

"The Reno-Tahoe region offers travelers a wide range of fun and unique experiences," said Head of ExpressJet's Aha! business unit Tim Sieber. "With the time savings of nonstop flights and packages with great deals at a curated collection of the best hotels and casino resorts in the region coming soon, we're giving travelers everything they need to customize their own great, short vacation."

### Special Introductory \$49 Fares

Aha! is offering an introductory, limited-time launch fare of \$49 each way\*. Vacation-seekers can book at www.flyaha.com.

Coming Soon, Aha! will offer value-priced vacation packages on www.flyaha.com that will offer travelers great savings on short two to five-night vacation getaways.

### Experience and Reliability

Aha! is powered by ExpressJet Airlines, which has operated reliable air services to hundreds of smaller cities in the United States for 35 years. All flights will be operated with 50 seat Embraer ERJ-145 jets, with comfortable cabins and no middle seats. "ExpressJet developed Aha! after hearing from travelers in smaller communities who were tired of wasting two days of each vacation traveling on air-

planes and through crowded hub-airports," said ExpressJet's CEO Subodh Karnik.

To book your flight, visit www.flyaha.com or call the Aha! Call Center at 775-439-0888..

### About Aha!

Aha! is a leisure brand of ExpressJet Airlines. Aha! seeks to provide travelers in smaller communities, many who have seen air service reduced over the past decade through airline mergers, with convenient, short, nonstop flights to high-quality destinations like the Reno-Lake Tahoe region. In addition to offering value-priced, nonstop flights, Aha! will soon partner with resorts, casinos and attractions to "bundle" value-priced vacation packages.

### About ExpressJet Airlines

ExpressJet Airlines is the amalgamation of Atlantic Southeast Airlines and Continental Express and operates Embraer ERJ145 regional jet aircraft. Over its 35-year history, ExpressJet has flown most Embraer, Bombardier, and ATR aircraft from bases across the continental United States into airports in the USA, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. ExpressJet is majority owned by KAir Enterprises with United Airlines holding a minority interest.

# New state employment laws to take effect Jan. 1



By James Ward  
Cal Chamber Advocacy

This year's legislative session officially ended with Governor Newsom signing the last batch of bills over the weekend. The COVID-19 pandemic was still challenging for the California Legislature, but that didn't stop it from sending several hundred bills

to the Governor, many of which impact California employers. Here's a quick look at some of the new employment laws that employers should be aware of. Unless otherwise stated, they're effective starting January 1, 2022.

### California Family Rights Act

AB 1033 cleans up and builds upon last year's SB 1383, which dramatically expanded the California Family Rights Act (CFRA) to cover small employers and expanded the definition of family member for whom leave could be taken. This new bill clarifies that employees can take family and medical leave to care for a parent-in-law with a serious health condition.

AB 1033 also revises and adds more detailed provisions to the small employer (five to 19 employees) mediation program originally created in 2020 by AB 1867, including making participation in the mediation program a prerequisite to the employee filing a civil action. The revisions to the program should help more small businesses become aware of their ability to resolve CFRA disputes through mediation rather than costly civil litigation.

### Safety and Wage Enforcement and Penalties

SB 606 expands the enforcement authority of the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) by creating two new violations categories for which Cal/OSHA can issue citations — "enterprise-wide" violations and "egregious" violations.

This bill creates a rebuttable presumption that a violation committed by an employer with multiple worksites is "enterprise-wide" if the employer has a written policy or procedure that violates certain safety rules or Cal/OSHA has evidence of a pattern or practice. Cal/OSHA may issue an enterprise-wide citation requiring abatement if employer fails to rebut presumption. Enterprise-wide citations will carry the same penalties as repeated or willful citations, up to \$134,334 per violation.



Cal/OSHA also must issue a citation for an "egregious violation" if the division believes that an employer has willfully and egregiously violated an occupational safety or health standard, order, special order or regulation based on several factors listed in the statute. The bill requires each instance of an employee exposed to that violation to be considered a separate violation for the issuance of fines and penalties.

AB 1003 makes the intentional theft of wages, benefits or compensation in the amount greater than \$950 for one employee or more than \$2,350 for two or more employees in a consecutive 12-month period punishable as grand theft under the California Penal Code, which prosecutors may charge as a misdemeanor or felony.

SB 572 deals with enforcement of wage liens against employers by adding a provision to the Labor Code allowing the California Labor Commissioner to create, as an alternative to a judgment lien, a lien on real property to secure amounts due to the Commissioner under any final citation, findings or decision.

### Settlement Agreements

SB 331 significantly expands on laws passed over the past few of years limiting the ability to use confidentiality clauses in severance and settlement agreements. Prior to SB 331, any settlement agreement in a case where sexual harassment, sexual assault or discrimination based on sex has been alleged couldn't include a confidentiality provision prohibiting disclosure of information regarding the claim.

SB 331 expands the prohibition to include acts of workplace harassment or discrimination based on any characteristic protected under the Fair Employment and Housing Act, not just those based on sex. While employees cannot be prohibited from discussing underlying facts of the case, employers can still use clauses that prevent the disclosure of the amount paid to settle the claim. SB 331 will apply to agreements entered on or after January 1, 2022.

### Industry-Specific Measures

AB 701 specifically targets warehouse distribution centers. The new law applies to certain larger employers meeting industry definitions for General Warehousing and Storage, Merchant Wholesalers (Durable and Non-Durable Goods), and Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses. The

See LAWS on page 6

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**HEALTH CARE NOTE**

## An Engine of Economic Activity



**Kerry Hydash**  
President and CEO  
Family HealthCare Network

Health centers like Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) provide tremendous value and impact to the communities it serves. A newly released report from Capital Link measures both the community and economic impact that FHCN made in our local communities during 2020. This report highlights the fact that FHCN not only provides our community with expanded access to health care, but also serves as a valuable economic stimulus in the communities served – saving costs on care, providing

jobs, and generating revenue in our local economy. As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Family HealthCare Network improves the quality of life in communities including underserved and vulnerable populations. That is why we remain committed to our mission to provide quality health care to all. We're entrenched in our communities and are invested in their overall wellbeing. In 2020, we provided over one million patient visits, which represents a nearly 50% patient growth rate over a 4-year period. As a result, in 2020, Family HealthCare Network contributed \$436 million in cost savings to the health care system, \$333 million in savings to the Medicaid program, and a 24% reduction of costs for health center Medicaid patients. We also had a \$400 million economic stimulus impact in the communities we serve.

We're incredibly thankful to our patients and partner organizations who continuously choose Family HealthCare Network as their partner in health and are proud to in turn invest back into our communities.



**SELF-HELP**

Continued from page 4

additional 12 units and is working with Mental Health Systems and the Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance to receive referrals to fill the additional PSH units. Some families or individuals will come from Eden House, SHE's transitional/bridge housing community in Visalia.

Sequoia Commons II is the fourth affordable rental community built by Self-Help Enterprises in Goshen and is among the 42 affordable apartment rental communities serving over 1,900 families throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The design team consists of Mogavero Architects and 4Creeks Civil Engineering, Ashwood



**Graciela Martinez Cavazos**  
1945-2020

Construction as the General Contractor and solar PV installation by Spectrum Energy Development Inc.

**LAWS**

Continued from page 5

law requires covered employers to provide each nonexempt employee working at a warehouse distribution center a written description of each quota to which they are subject, including tasks to be performed, materials produced or handled, time periods and any potential adverse employment actions that may result from failure to meet quotas.

Under AB 701, employees cannot be required to meet quotas that prevent compliance with meal or rest periods, use of bathroom facilities, or health and safety laws. If employees feel that quotas are interfering with these things, they can request a copy of applicable quotas and the last 90 days of their personal work speed performance, which the employer must produce within three weeks. The law also creates a rebuttable presumption of retaliation if the employer takes adverse action against an employee within 90 days of the employees request for their quota and personal work speed performance or an employee's complaint about a quota.

SB 62 requires garment manufacturers and "brand guarantors" who contract with another person for the performance of garment manufacturing to be jointly and severally liable with manufacturers or contractors for wage violations of employees in the supply chain. For purposes of expanding the shared liability under this law, the bill expands the definition of garment manufacturing.

SB 62 also prohibits the practice of piece-rate compensation for garment manufacturing, except in cases of worksites covered by a valid collective bargaining agreement. The bill imposes statutory damages of \$200 per employee against a garment manufacturer or contractor, payable to the employee, for each pay period in which each employee is paid by piece rate.

AB 73 expands on one of last year's personal protective equipment (PPE) bills, SB 275, which established a state stockpile of PPE in the event of a pandemic. AB 73 broadens the scope of the law to include wildfire smoke events as a health emergency under the law and includes agricultural workers in the definition of essential workers. The bill also requires Cal/OSHA to review and update wildfire smoke training, which employers must follow.

**COVID-19**

The Governor signed AB 654, which clarifies and cleans up last year's COVID-19 notice and reporting bill, AB 685. As previously reported, the bill revises the language 685 used to describe COVID-19 notice requirements to make it more consistent throughout. This was an urgency measure that

took effect immediately upon signing.

Under SB 336, when the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) or a local health officer issues an order or mandatory COVID-19-related guidance, they must publish the order or guidance on their website along with the date that the order or guidance takes effect. The CDPH or local health officer must also create an opportunity to sign up for an email distribution list to receive updates on the order or guidance. This measure will hopefully make it easier for businesses to track and implement the most current COVID-19 orders and guidance. SB 336 also went into effect immediately upon signing.

In addition to the new laws, employers should continue to monitor additional COVID-19 regulatory developments. As previously reported, the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard may be re-adopted with amendments this winter. Additionally, a federal emergency regulation related to vaccines is on its way, after which Cal/OSHA will be required to adopt an equivalent or more stringent standard within 30 days.

**LEADERSHIP**

Continued from page 3

very own classmate Nick Huerta, after a long morning of walking The Pickled Deli was just what we needed. It is a must have if you have not already spoiled your taste buds. We are all very thankful for your generosity Nick.

As we made our way over to the Visalia City Council Chambers where we began our second part of the day. We had the great pleasure of meeting with Tulare County Supervisor, Amy Shuklian and Visalia City Councilman, Brett Taylor who spent some time going over the differences in City vs. County issues and resources. The floor was opened for any questions and concerns we had, and we were very appreciative of the detailed responses and detailed effort that goes into each decision. City Manager, Leslie Cavaglia and Communications Manager, Allison Mackey came in and gave the class a virtual tour of the live stream of the City Council Meetings and did a mock questioning with the class. The time taken out of each of their busy days gave the class resources that we may have not been familiar with if we had not been presented the opportunity to sit in and engage.

We ended our day with a drive over to Woodcraft to get an in person look at the COS Project Trailer. Rick who is the man behind the scenes making the vision for the trailer come to life gave us a walk through on what to look forward to once the exterior and interior are completed. Tiffany Wainwright and Michelle Gilbert met us at BJ Perch Construction to go over the details of what we can provide. With that we were able to break out into groups and begin brainstorming. We are at the start of something great for our community.

Here is to Leadership Visalia class of 2021-2022's COS Project!!

**SOCALGAS**

Continued from page 5

clean hydrogen to a cluster of demand centers across the European Union."

"Investing in tests that aim to demonstrate the potential of hydrogen is key to identifying solutions that can help us address our current climate crisis," said Assemblymember Bill Quirk. "SoCalGas' commitment to decarbonization innovations help advance the energy transition."

Several analyses, including the Los Angeles Renewable Energy Study (LA100) by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and NREL, highlight the need, in 2045, for renewably produced and storable fuels to maintain reliability in the power sector. In addition, many experts agree that clean fuels like hydrogen will be essential for decarbonizing hard to electrify sectors of the economy like industry and heavy-duty trucking.

SoCalGas is actively engaged in more than 10 pilot projects related to hydrogen, including a partnership with Netherlands-based HyET Hydrogen on technology that could transform hydrogen distribution and enable the rapid expansion of hydrogen fueling stations for fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs). The technology would allow hydrogen to be easily and affordably transported via the natural gas pipeline system, then extracted and compressed at fueling stations that provide hydrogen FCEVs.

Earlier this year, in support of California's climate goals, SoCalGas became the largest gas distribution utility in North America to set a net zero emissions target that includes scopes 1, 2, and 3 GHG emissions. SoCalGas' Aspire 2045 strategy aligns with the recommendations of the Paris Climate Agreement and reflects the company's focus on supporting California with a resilient gas grid through the energy transition to support a carbon neutral economy.

## GUYS AND DOLLS

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for more information and to purchase tickets

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