

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 12 | December 2021

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EVENTS

DECEMBER 3

40th Annual Christmas Tree Auction

Time: 6 to 11:30 p.m.;
5 p.m. entry for VIP ticketholders
Location: TBA

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

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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www.visaliachamber.org/travel

VUSD trustees unanimously name Blair to Area 4 seat



By Reggie Ellis
President and Publisher
The Sun-Gazette

In a field of nine candidates vying for an appointment to a single seat, Visalia Unified School District's board had the option of selecting the district's former superintendent whom the board dismissed in 2019, a parent who led the effort to recall the last board member to serve in the seat, a man who lost an election for the seat in 2013 and its most vocal opponent of COVID safety protocols.

Instead, it selected a former private school teacher who has taken a leadership role in the PTA at her children's public elementary school.



At a special board meeting on Nov. 2, the school board appointed Catalina Blair to serve as the trustee for Area 4. The vacancy was created by the resignation of former Trustee John L. Crabtree on Oct. 1, 2021. During the special board meeting, the board interviewed nine candidates for the vacant seat in an open meeting. She said she remembered seeing Crabtree visit her children's school and how he would encourage students to speak at board meetings.

"It's really important, and I believe that being a part of the campuses that are in your district are really important," she said.

Blair was born and raised in Visalia, attending Visalia schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. She is the mother of three Oak Grove Elementary School students and is active in the school's PTA. In addition, Blair was a lead preschool teacher for nine years at Christ for Kids Preschool in Visalia.

Blair was one of nine candidates who qualified for the position. Former Superintendent Todd Oto, who was dismissed unceremoniously by the board in 2019, Brittany Christenson, who led the failed recall effort of Crabtree last year, David Alviso, who was narrowly defeated by Crabtree in the 2013 election, and Crystal Reynolds, who has been one of the board's most vocal opponents of mask and vaccine mandates, were the most recognizable names in the group. Other candidates included experienced educator Juan Lopez, realtor Erik Anderson, banker Brent Amos and retired military veteran Clinton Cain.

During the public forum, candidates answered five questions from moderator Gail Zurek submitted by labor groups, board members, the student representative to the board and a parent group. In their answers, nearly all of the candidates prioritized preserving teachers during budget cuts, agreed parents were crucial to student success and having a passion for all students, and not just those in a single district. It was Blair's inclusive language and long history of school involvement which impressed the board.

"Having parents on campuses helps to create culture, life and joy to what would otherwise just be a building," Blair said. "It is so important to have open house, movie nights, and band concerts so families can get together and are meeting each other."

After the questions, each of the board members named their top three finalists who were then added to a board for discussion. Blair was on short list for four of the six trustees. Trustee Megan Casebeer Soleno said she appreciated Blair's comments about being col-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The newly filled Visalia Unified School District board poses for a photo following the appointment of Catalina Blair to fill the vacancy on the board created by John Crabtree's retirement. Below: Blair signs her provisional appointment paperwork as the new representative for Trustee Area 4.

laborative and providing a parent perspective and trustee Joy Naylor liked her direct involvement at a school site, and Trustee Pope said parents like Blair "bring school to life." Trustee Walta Gamoian said her top three, including Blair, were people who could listen to the community and heal the board's relationship with the community.

Noting Blair had two more votes than any other candidate, Gamoian motioned to appoint Blair to the Area 4 seat. Despite calls for further discussion on other candidates, the board unanimously voted to appoint Blair.

Blair then took the stage and assistant superintendent Dedi Somavia issues the oath of office. Her first official meeting was on Nov. 9. Blair will finish out the rest of Crabtree's term ending in December 2022. She will have to run for office in November 2022 if she wants to retain her seat on the school board.

"The board was transparent, fair, and we did our due diligence," board president Juan Guerrero said. "During the selection, it became apparent that one candidate had received a majority vote. On behalf of the VUSD Board of Trustees, I would like to congratulate Catalina Blair on her appointment to Trustee of Area 4."



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Beyond the headline



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

It always happens the same way. When there's an article that makes its way to the national news about our region, our air, our schools or whatever the national news decides is relevant, I start getting text messages.

"Did you see this!?"

Then a Link to a not-so-great article.

The person texting me is just as frustrated as I am. The information used in

the article is from a data set that doesn't fully represent us. Often data used is from the Visalia Porterville Metropolitan Service Area, sometimes referred to as "the Visalia Porterville MSA", but the headline always just says Visalia. In today's quick news, headlines matter. It's frustrating when we know the story and that story isn't reflected in the headline. These stories make their way into google searches. They pop up as job seekers look to relocate and as medical groups look to recruit doctors, these stories paint a narrative that isn't reflective of the experiences we all know to be true. These headlines and data make Visalia look to be something it is not.

More frustrating, perhaps, is when local people read the headline and accept the headline as truth. They never stop to ask if their experience differs or why the headline exists. I wish more people looked at the data, its source or scope. Often the numbers are about a much larger subset of our community. The data used is often only a small part of a larger story. When other data points are utilized, a different story emerges. Add a narrative and a historical perspective and it seems like an entirely different story.

"It takes a million attaboys to cover one negative comment" the saying goes. The reality is these stories have a lasting impact not only on how we recruit those coming to our community but how we begin to see ourselves. That is, perhaps, what scares me the most. I'm scared we'll start believing all the negative we read. We won't fight back and offer something different.

I love playing "did you know". At various Chamber events and programs, I love highlighting the best and brightest things we've done as a community. Did you know that we produce every yearbook this side of the Mississippi? Or that paper cup (or now paper straw) that your drinking from most likely was made here in Visalia? Do you know how many countries our food feeds? Or that a Visalian invented the inflatable lifejacket? Did you know Edmond Wysinger, a Visalian, fought to have schools be desegregated back in 1890? Mr. Wysinger began the fight to desegregate California schools long before it was mainstream. We have Nobel Prize winners, professional athletes and lots of musicians who call our wonderful community home.

Don't get me wrong, I know we have challenges. I don't dispute

See HEADLINE on page 3

THE LAW AT WORK

Are employees who were terminated for insubordination eligible for unemployment?



By Brett T. Abbott
Gubler & Abbott LLP

A frequent reason given by employers for terminating an employee is "insubordination." Employers sometimes treat this word as a catch-all - if the employment relationship is not working out, employers will often simply allege that an employee has been "insubordinate". California is an at-will state, meaning that absent an employment contract, employees can be fired with or without cause at any time. Yet terminating an employee usually makes him or her eligible for unemployment benefits. Are employees terminated for "insubordination" eligible for unemployment?

It depends. The Employment Development Department of California (EDD) holds that insubordination generally falls into four categories: (1) disobeying an employer's order or instruction; (2) disputing or ridiculing authority; (3) exceeding authority; or (4) using vulgar or profane language towards a supervisor. A brief discussion of each factor follows below.

In relation to the first factor, according to the California Labor Code: "An employee shall substantially comply with all the directions of his employer concerning the service on which he is engaged, except where such obedience is impossible or unlawful, or would impose new and unreasonable burdens upon the employee." The following conditions must be established for a discharge for disobeying an employer's order or instruction to constitute misconduct under the EDD: (1) the employer's order was reasonable and lawful; (2) the claimant's refusal was intentional; and (3) the claimant's refusal was unjustified.

As to the second factor, an employee is insubordinate under California law if he or she "makes a statement or remark, which is not the result of an error in judgment, under the circumstances which damage or tend to damage the employer's interest." Of course, not all disputes between

an employer and an employee result in discharge of the employee for misconduct. According to the EDD, differences of opinion, disagreements, and misunderstandings arise, and participation in such discussions is not misconduct. Moreover, an isolated instance of an error in judgment is not misconduct.

As to the third factor, when termination results from an employee exceeding authority, there are multiple elements to consider. First, the job's inherent authority must be taken into account - if the parameters of authority are outlined clearly and are violated knowingly by the claimant, the discharge would be for misconduct. Second, authority to take action may also be created by the failure of the employer to limit or to object to unauthorized or undesirable conduct. Third, emergency situations may arise which require the employee to take immediate action for the employer's protection or best interests.

Finally, according to California law, an employee is insubordinate if he or she addresses vulgar, profane, insulting, obscene, derogatory, or offensive language of a vile nature toward the employer when such remarks are unjustified under the circumstances, and not within the normal exchange and customary good-natured banter between the employer or the employer's representative and the employee. According to the EDD's website, "In determining if vulgar or profane language constitutes misconduct, one must examine the normal practices in the establishment where the employee is employed and the circumstances under which the remarks were made. Language used in a machine shop or a warehouse may not be appropriate language in a bank, department store, or government office...Generally, a single remark or outburst uttered in a situation of stress or provocation does not constitute misconduct."

These examples are by no means exhaustive. The determination of whether an employee terminated for "insubordination" rises to the level of "misconduct" for purposes of unemployment benefits really is a case-by-case determination. But the above factors are instructive nonetheless. So next time you consider terminating an employee for "insubordination," take a minute and apply these factors to your particular situation.

See UNEMPLOYMENT on page 3

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Andrea Vieira
Company: Edible Arrangements
Title: Owner

Edible Arrangements in Visalia is under new ownership. Andrea and Brian Vieira had their ribbon cutting ceremony on Oct. 26, 2021. At Edible Arrangements we help the local community celebrate all kinds of occasions - big and small! Our fresh fruit arrangements are made fresh each day! We use only the finest ingredients, especially our chocolate! Edible Arrangements isn't only fruit anymore! Our Bakeshop products just celebrated their one-year anniversary. We have brownies, cupcakes, fresh fruit topped cheesecakes and fresh baked cookies! You can order them individually as a treat for yourself or you can send a bake shop platter to someone you love as well! We can also make up gift boxes to delivery to loved ones. We have coffee, tea, popcorn, Rocky Mountain Chocolates and a variety of candied nuts.

Our Christmas Line just launched. We introduced a new plush called Tux the penguin, which has adorable ear muffs

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:

- FedEx
- Sequoia Painting LLC

Business Connector Members:

- Rent-A-Toilet
- Scotland Concerts/JazzConcerts.com

RENEWING

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce

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

Business Builder Members:

- Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel*

Business Connector Members:

- Delta Nursing & Rehabilitation Center*
- Innovation Commercial Flooring, Inc.
- Fairfield Inn Visalia Sequoia*
- Karen Gross/State Farm Insurance*
- Orthopaedic Associates Medical Clinic, Inc.*

Small Business Members:

- Dignity Health Management Ser-

- vices
- Goodies Cookies & Specialty Cakes
- Graham & Associates*
- GreenBean*
- Lagomarsino Group
- Lux Dermatology*
- Montecito Apartment Homes*
- Rauber Johnson & Black*
- Summit Homebuilders, Inc.
- Tulare County Office of Education

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Fresno Pacific University Visalia Center
- Jon Stemkoski's Celebrant Singers*



VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Building Industry Association of Tulare & Kings Counties
- Executives Association of Tulare County*
- Visalia Gleaning Seniors*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT



Name: Meria Rivera
Company: Wyndham Hotel
Title: Senior Sales Manager (LOL)

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

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce has helped me network with a diverse number of businesses as well as build connections within the community. It has helped also get a better understanding of how vital the Chambers of Commerce is to our community.

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

It is very important for employees to get involved to not only participate but assist and give back to the community.

The best part of working for your company is?

The best part of working for the Wyndham apart from all the great and hard working employees we have; is to be a part of a company that has so many different moving parts and experience how they come together every single day to provide the best experience to our guests.

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

My favorite place in Visalia is downtown. It has such an array of businesses geared for any person or family to have a good time.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Business Update is the official monthly publication of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 222 N. Garden St., Ste. 300, Visalia CA 93291, (559) 734-5876. Periodicals, Postage Paid at Visalia, CA 93277; Publication No. USPS 494-660. Annual Subscription rate \$15. Postmaster: Send address changes to Visalia Chamber of Commerce, 222 N. Garden St., Ste. 300, Visalia, CA 93291. Advertising information, call Jena at (559) 734-5976 or email info@visaliachamber.org.

Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

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Visit www.visaliachamber.org

and is holding a snowflake. You can see him in the attached picture. We also introduced a new Maddy and Maize popcorn flavor, Fudge Drizzled Peppermint Stick and a new cupcake flavor, Red Velvet, both are fantastic! We are also offering our new fruit and cheese boxes, which our great for hostess gifts for your next Holiday gathering!

The most interesting thing about Edible Arrangements is the variety. With so many products and combinations to choose from, you can always deliver a unique gifting experience with a WOW factor each time!

We are just starting out but the thing that excites me the most about being a small business owner is getting involved in my local community and being able to give back. So far I have joined the Visalia Chamber of Commerce and signed up to be a food vendor at the Christmas Tree event on Dec 3rd. Super excited about that event and getting to meet more members of the community. I have also donated to Kaweah Health for their nurses to receive a raffle prize.

The Edible Franchise has been amazing to work with. I have a Franchise Business Consult that came to assist



me when I took over. Having someone with 20+ years in the business to consult with was invaluable.

The Chamber and its Ambassadors have been so welcoming to Brian and I. They attended our ribbon cutting and grand re-opening events. Many have stopped by the store to check in on me to make sure business was going well. I appreciate

the support from them more than they will ever know!

The top thing I wish Visalia knew about my business is that we are open and deliver 7 days a week. We are a phone call away and will take those last-minute same day delivery orders! 559-734-8800. We deliver to Ivanhoe, Armona, Hanford, Goshen, Farmersville, Tulare, Exeter and Visalia.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

JR. CEO SPOTLIGHT

Company: ProYouth

ProYouth's mission is to help youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally by providing a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment during out-of-school time. ProYouth creates and delivers programs throughout Central California that positively impact the lives of youth and equip them to make good life-long choices.

The Jr. CEO program has helped our organization by giving our students a purpose beyond our normal programs. It also gives them a chance to put their efforts on display with the business project.

The Jr. CEO program helped our organization by giving students an opportunity to understand the fundamentals of business management. The kids had a phenomenal time reviewing the workshop videos provided and had tons of questions about business opportunities. Once everything was done, the kids were imagining what business they'd like to try and run in the future! Overall, it was a rewarding experience seeing how happy they were with the outcome of our stand. It helped giving these kiddos a taste of the working world, and how jobs work!

I knew a lot of students would have been interested when we first introduced the program to the 5th/6th class.

To make it easier on choosing the 5-6 candidates I had the students "apply" by giving me a paragraph as to why they felt like the perfect candidate. Once the students were chosen, they were "interviewed" and it felt like a mini job experience.

We then reviewed the videos listed. Any questions they had I was able to answer to give them accurate answers. We looked up recipes, made menus, looked up other sources of income other than just selling hot cocoa. We talked a lot about profit margins and how we should price our items. We tied the experience to normal day to day stores and practiced role playing with "customers."

I would recommend it because it is a fun experience that provides the students with some sense of what working and running a business is like. Also, the kids loved it! Yes! Super fun and rewarding experience.



I LOVE MY JOB SPOTLIGHT



Name: Lisa Walsh
Company: Hydrite Chemical Co
Title: Regional Buyer & Inventory Management

At Hydrite, it's our mission to provide creative solutions to our customers. We assess specific needs to create solutions that work effectively while aiming to help lower costs and improve quality in applications. Through dedication and an emphasis on customer service and collaboration, we have become a trusted industry leader in many different areas.

Hydrite has decades of experience in Human Food Grade Ingredients and Food Sanitation Solutions, in the past few years we have expanded that experience into our HydiPet™ to help ensure food and treats for our furry family members are just as safe as we expect for our own.

I work for Hydrite Chemical

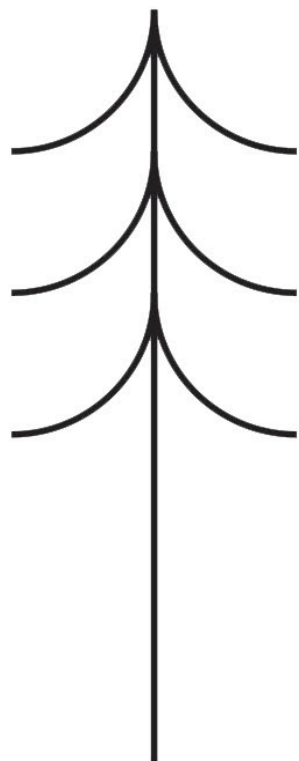
Co, because they truly support a family-like work atmosphere while providing creative solutions that help grow their customer's businesses. They are committed to help protect the environment by providing the support and knowledge needed to ensure their products are used properly. Beyond that are passionate about improving the communities they operate in. They support and encouraging my participation volunteer work and offer grants that bring outside funds into our communities. Working with friends and making new friends each time we add a new customer.

We are passionate about sustainability and helping others achieve their environmental goals. Please visit our website (<https://www.hydrite.com/About-Hydrite-chemical/Sustainability/Sustainable-Growth.htm>) to learn more.

Visit our Careers page at www.hydrite.com/careers.htm



SUBMITTED PHOTO



A Strategic Marketing & Design Company in Visalia, California.

Learn more at tpgrph.com

Topograph

The Board of Directors of Central Valley Community Bancorp, the parent company of **Central Valley Community Bank**, reported unaudited consolidated net income of \$21,563,000 and full diluted earnings per common share of \$1.74 for the nine months.

Quesadilla Gorilla partnered with Central California Food Bank to host a Holiday Food Drive at each of their locations. Non-perishable food items and direct donations online to Central California Food Bank were accepted until the end of November.

Congratulations to **Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County's** Monica Andrade who was recognized as this year's Outstanding Workforce Professional at the 2021 Innovators by Design event. In addition, at the Tulare-Kings College and Career Collaborative Director Adam Peck was recognized as a Leader of Impact and WIB Deputy Directory, Jennie Bautista was recognized as a Foundational Leader of Impact.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Visalia Cyclery will host a Holiday Family Ride on Dec. 11, featuring a 10-mile ride with hot chocolate, cookies, Christmas sweaters and decorations.

Tachi Palace Casino & Resort completed the first phase of its hotel room renovation project. When completed, all 255 guest rooms will be remodeled and upgraded.

Tri Counties Bank in partnership



with the Salvation Army launched a food drive in November with the goal to collect 100,000 pounds of non-perishable food items to help families in need throughout California. Donations can be dropped off at the Main Street branch until Dec. 24.

Ashoori & Co. Jewelers hosted a customer appreciate party designer trunk show in November.

Congratulations to **Gong Cha** who held a grand opening in October for their new location at 3314 S Mooney Blvd. You can find their full menu at gong-cha-usa.com.

Jon Stemkoski's Celebrant Singers presented a citywide praise and wor-

ship concert free of charge in Porterville on Nov. 14.

Fresno Yosemite International Airport announced Aha Airlines' nonstop service to Reno-Tahoe International Airport.

Sierra Bancorp, parent of **Bank of the Sierra** reported consolidated net income of \$10.6 million, or \$0.69 per diluted share, for the third quarter of 2021.

Farmer Bob's World will be an official drop-off location for Toys for Tots this year. Please reach out directly with more information at (559) 798-0557 Ext 3.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Congratulations to **The Darling** who was presented with a prestigious Preservation Design Award for Rehabilitation at the 38th Annual California Preservation Awards.

Pipeline Church will host Christmas at The Grove on Dec. 4. Visit their website for more details: pipeline.church.

Bank of America awarded a \$12,500 grant supporting Habit for Humanity of Tulare/Kings Counties to support the production, preservation, and protection of affordable housing.

Tacos Lucha hosted a Turkey Drive in November, distributing donations on Nov. 19.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust hosted the first ever Kids vs. Climate Chaos event at Kaweah Oaks Preserve in November. Students learned hands-on about environmental issues and discussed solutions and individual actions to combat climate change.

Congratulations to **Rusty Roots Show** who is celebrating 10 years. The traveling marketplace held an event at the **International Ag Center** on Nov. 20 and 21, featuring goods ranging from new to antique, vintage, junk, re-purposed, cleverly up cycled, and more.

Macy's is hosting their annual Letters to Santa campaign. For every letter sent online or dropped off to the Mooney store, Macy's will donate \$1 to Make-A-Wish, up to \$1 million. The campaign will run through Dec. 24.

Bank of the Sierra announced in November Tim McAvenia as Mortgage Warehouse Market President. He will be responsible for leading and developing the Bank's mortgage warehouse team.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

RIBBON CUTTINGS



Edible Arrangements, located at 4016 S. Mooney Blvd., held a grand re-opening in celebration of new owners Andrea and Brian Vieira.



Agusta Communities held a ribbon cutting in celebration of their newly remodeled mobilehome community, **Rancho Robles** located at 26814 S. Mooney Blvd.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEQUOIA RIVERLANDS TRUST

Sequoia Riverlands Trust is a regional nonprofit land trust dedicated to strengthening California's heartland and the natural and agricultural legacy of the southern Sierra Nevada and San Joaquin Valley.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust finds experience in new leader

Sequoia Riverlands Trust hires Logan Huecker, PhD. as their new executive director, board chair says her nonprofit experience will help SRT through "challenging times"



Good leadership is hard to find, but the Sequoia Riverlands Trust thinks they found a leader in Logan Huecker, PhD.

The Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) announced that they hired Huecker as their new executive director earlier this month. Her effective start date was Oct. 1, and the organization has been putting her skills to use.

"We [want to leverage] Logan's broader nonprofit experience and demonstrated skills in fundraising and community involvement and collaboration, strategic thinking and team building as SRT moves forward into exciting and challenging times," board chair Rod Meade, of San Diego, said.

Challenging times have not just been the burdens brought on by COVID-19. According to SRT their mission is to "inspire love and lasting protection for important lands" and that has been dramatically hindered by

the state's newest drought. Their close relationship with farmers and ranches in the regions has suffered as land and water uses have been severely affected. All while the state works toward a more sustainable way to manage ground water.

Huecker has worked for more than two decades in the nonprofit and education sectors in California, Guatemala and Honduras. Her work at SRT taps her professional experience and expands upon her deep commitment to the natural and agricultural legacy of the Sierra foothills and Central Valley. She has experience leading nonprofit organizations and publicly funded programs; managing staff teams, spearheading collaborative initiatives, and implementing federal, state, and local policies.

Huecker's experience as an independent consultant allowed her to work with some of the same agencies she will be working with now including: Tulare County Public Health Department, the Tulare County Sheriff's Office, the Tulare County Office of Education and the Cal-

ifornia Teaching Fellows Foundation.

From 2006 to 2021 Huecker worked as the assistant director of community services. She managed various programs with a total annual budget of \$1.5 million, with programs at seven sites, 35+ staff members, and multiple state and federal grants. And she created grant proposals for existing and new programs, including collaborative proposals with community partners

Throughout her career, Logan has worked to identify and secure government and foundation funding sources, cultivate new donor relationships, and foster connections with current supporters. She holds a PhD in Education from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has served on the faculty of the Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching Program, as well as nonprofit boards. She has also been a trainer and mentor for the California School Age Consortium (CalSAC). Logan lives on a ranch with her family, which includes a dog, a cat, a horse, and a dozen or so cattle.

HEADLINE

Continued from page 1

that. Heck as a Chamber we've pushed to change, address and tackle those challenges. But those challenges aren't what defines us as a community. We need the great news, good news, and brag points to be more top of mind than the last bad headline. We must embrace those things that make us great and not five words at the top of a news article. Be Proud Visalia. Be proud of who we are and share that great news.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Continued from page 1

This article is for education and information purposes only; it should not be construed as legal advice. If you have an employment law question for inclusion in a future article, contact Brett T. Abbott at Gubler & Abbott LLP (bta@thecalifornialawyers.com). For specific employment law advice or other legal assistance, contact Gubler & Abbott, (559) 625-9600, 1110 N. Chinowth St., Visalia, CA 93291 (www.thecalifornialawyers.com).

Ask Jena

How can I support our local businesses and organizations this holiday season?

We appreciate our community's support! Local businesses and organizations need your help, especially for the upcoming holiday season. You can find our Business Directory on our website for a full list of members.

What trips does the Chamber have planned for the new year?

There are multiple trips planned for 2022, 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

Valley PBS adds five board members, looking for more

Ten of 16 board members are seated on the Valley PBS board lending greater diversity to the organization



of directors, Valley PBS added five new members and are looking for six more.

According to a press release about the board, the five new members are architect Ralph Goldberg AIA; Clint Olivier, chief executive officer of BizFed Central Valley; Andy Souza, chief administrative officer with Immanuel Schools; Marcelino Valdez, commodity broker with Olam Food Ingredients; and Jill Poulsen, teacher and researcher.

"One of our goals in this process is to search for people who are involved and connected to their communities," new board president Jody Graves explained. "Per our bylaws, we can have up to 16 board members. We now have 10, and we are continuing our recruiting efforts."

Having diverse backgrounds is a focus, along with seeking out new board members who bring expertise in education, the arts, veterans affairs and agriculture.

"Our goal is to tell the stories of this valley," Graves said. "We have people with long histories here and these new members bring energy and purpose to the station."

The full board meets five times a year at noon at the station, located at 1544 Van Ness in Fresno.

To learn more, and to apply to join the board of directors, contact Nancy Borjas, chief operating officer, at 559-266-1800 for an application.

Since 1977, Valley PBS has been committed to enriching the lives of Valley residents through a combination of educational and entertaining programming and solid community outreach and service. Valley PBS is the primary PBS station for thousands of people across the Central Valley.

Shop & Support #loyaltolocal

this Holiday Season!

APPLIANCE SALES & SERVICE

- Frank's Appliance Sales & Service

ARTS, CULTURE & HUMANITIES

- Arts Consortium
- Arts Visalia
- Enchanted Playhouse Theatre Company
- Visalia Fox Theatre

AUTOMOBILE DEALERS

- Gropetti Automotive
- Giant Chevrolet Cadillac

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE, REPAIR & PARTS

- Alex's Paint & Body
- Carroll's Tire Warehouse
- Central Valley Collision Repair
- Quality Paint & Body, Inc
- Sequoia Tint Company
- Visalia Auto Body

BAKERY & DESERTS

- Goodies Cookies & Specialty Cakes
- Nothing Bundt Cakes

BARBERS, BEAUTY SALONS & SPAS

- Courtyard Aesthetics

BREWERIES, WINERIES & BARS

- BarrelHouse Visalia
- Brewbakers
- Cellar Door
- Kaweah Brewing Co.
- Lake Bottom Brewery & Distillery

CARDS & GIFTS

- Edible Arrangements
- Pacific Treasures & Gourmet
- The Naked Nut Growers of California

CASINOS

- Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino
- Eagle Mountain Casino
- Tachi Palace Casino Resort

CHILDREN

- CASA / Court Appointed Special Advocates of Tulare County
- Family Services of Tulare County
- ImagineU Children's Museum
- ProYouth
- Read for Life

CLEANING SERVICES

- ServiceMaster by Benevento

CLEANING SERVICES CONT.

- ServiceMaster by Hellstern

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

- Boot Barn
- Jim's Formal Wear
- Just Between Friends Visalia/Fresno

COFFEE & TEA

- Component Coffee Lab, LLC
- Gong Cha
- Le Boulevard
- Mavericks Coffee Company, Inc.

DEPARTMENT STORES, SPORTING GOODS

- Macy's
- Smokin Barrel Firearms
- Tulare Outlets
- Visalia Cyclery
- Visalia Mall

ENTERTAINMENT

- Rusty Roots Show, LLC
- Scotland Concerts / JazzConcerts.com

ENVIRONMENT & ANIMALS

- Sequoia Parks Conservancy
- Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT)
- Valley Oak S.P.C.A.

FOOD & DINING

- A & W Restaurant
- Black Bear Diner
- Chapala Grill
- Chicago's Pizza With-A-Twist
- Colima Mexican Restaurant
- Corner Bakery Cafe
- Del Taco
- El Rosal Restaurant
- Figaro's Mexican Grill
- Kentucky Fried Chicken
- Left of Center
- Little Italy Restaurant
- Mache
- McDonald's
- Quesadilla Gorilla
- Pita Kabob
- Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers
- Rookies Sports Bar of Visalia
- Round Table Pizza
- Tacos Lucha
- The Painted Table
- The Pickled Deli
- The Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria
- The Salad Shop
- Urbane Cafe
- Valhalla Restaurant & Gift Shop
- Vintage Press Restaurant

FLORISTS

- Creative Flowers

FURNITURE STORES

- Savon Furniture

GENERAL RETAIL

- GreenBean
- Visalia Sales Yard

GOLF COURSES

- Valley Oaks Golf Course

GROCERY, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO

- Best Buy Market By SAVECO #13
- Costco Visalia
- R-N Market
- Save Mart Supermarkets
- Sequoia Cigar Company

HEALTH

- Central California Blood Center
- Happy Trails Riding Academy
- Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Central Valley, Inc

HEALTH & NUTRITION

- FoodLink for Tulare County, Inc.
- Katie's Custom Fit
- New Wave Mind Care
- Precision Prep
- Rise Fitness & Performance
- The Lifestyle Center
- Total Nutrition

HOME IMPROVEMENTS, REPAIRS & SERVICES

- Clark Pest Control
- Comfort Now Air Conditioning & Heating
- Shaw's Air Conditioning & Heating, INC.
- Tropics by Design

HUMAN SERVICES

- Able
- American Red Cross of Central California
- Assistance League of Visalia
- Bethlehem Center
- Central Valley Regional Center
- Family Builders Foster Care, Inc.
- Helping One Woman - Visalia Chapter
- Housing Authority of Tulare County
- My Fathers House Visalia Inc
- Salt + Light Works
- Self-Help Enterprises
- The Creative Center
- Transitions Children's Services

HUMAN SERVICES CONT.

- Tulare-Kings Right To Life
- Turning Point of Central California, Inc.
- United Way of Tulare County
- Veterans Memorial District
- Visalia Emergency Aid Council (VEAC)
- Visalia Fire Assoc. Local 3719
- Visalia Cleaning Seniors
- Visalia Rescue Mission

JEWELRY

- Ashoori & Co. Jewelers

LAWNCARE & MAINTENANCE

- Gowin Green
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- Pioneer Nursery

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- Roller Towne
- Sequoia Symphony Orchestra
- Soccer City 1852 Visalia
- Tulare County Library
- Visalia Adventure Park, Inc.
- Visalia Players
- Visalia Rawhide Baseball Club
- Vossler Farms

RELIGIOUS

- GateWay Church
- Jon Stemkoski's Celebrant Singers
- Pipeline.Church Visalia
- Seven Oaks Church
- Students International
- Visalia First Assembly

TRAVEL & TOURISM

- Collette Vacations
- Farmer Bob's World
- Mayflower Tours
- Visit Visalia

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Macy's Visalia Holiday Highlights



This Season marks the 13th Holiday Season Macy's is open for our Visalia and Tulare County customer. Macy's first opened its doors in New York City in 1858 and has continued to be America's Department store for the past 163 years. This year marks the 95th year Macy's will be hosting the iconic Thanksgiving Day Parade and one of Macy's Visalia's colleagues Francis, will be participating and signing on this year's company float! Help root Francis and the rest of the Macy's employees on by watching the Parade that starts at 6:00am PST, and follows the traditional 2.5-mile route ending in front of

the iconic Macy's Herald Square location on 34th Street.

Macy's will be closed for in-store shopping this Thanksgiving but is still available for our curbside customers that are looking for that last minute Holiday item or hostess gift! The store will open Black Friday at 6:00am and close at midnight. Saturday hours are 9:00am to 11:00pm and Sunday 11:00am

to 8:00pm. The store will be set with specials and bringing the holiday spirit! That's not all though because the team also would love to be your personal stylists. Call the store at 622-1100, Ext 2552 or visit our Instagram and DM the team to inquire about this fabulous service. From holiday outfits, present ideas or just updating your wardrobe; the team specializes

in all of these and more!

Macy's Visalia has rooted itself in this local community and continues its continuous give back campaign in a variety of ways this holiday season. The store has kicked off its annual National Believe Campaign which supports the Make a Wish Foundation. The goal this year is to raise \$1 million dollars as an organization. During this Campaign, children of all ages can fill out a letter to Santa and turn it into our North Pole Mailbox. Every Letter written between November 1 and December 24th in all our locations equals \$1 donated to Make a Wish. Macy's and Make-A-Wish have been granting life-changing wishes together since 2003. Over the past 18 years, Macy's has granted more than 16,200 wishes, donated \$137+ million and transformed the lives of 3.2 million people! Our store this year has already generated almost 700 individual letters!

Outside the Believe Campaign; the store is involved in many other local charities this holiday season including the Valley Oak SPCA and the Central Valley Vietnam Veterans or-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MACY'S
Classic Christmas imagery, a traditional palette of red and green and a touch of whimsy give new life to timeless seasonal icons in this Christmas Cheer Décor Collection from Holiday Lane.

CITY UPDATE

City of Visalia and the Redistricting Process

With Census data released, the City of Visalia Decennial Redistricting process is underway. We want to know, what do you consider the boundaries of your neighborhood?

Every 10 years, local governments use new data from the U.S. Census Bureau to redraw their district lines to reflect how local populations have changed. While local agencies work under different timelines, redistricting determines which neighborhoods and communities are grouped together into a district.

For the City of Visalia, the finalized maps that residents help us create will define Council district borders, and these new districts will impact how Council members are elected for the next 10 years. All district lines must be reviewed to meet strict requirements for population equality, voting rights protections, and in accordance with the California FAIR MAPS Act.

The City Council is seeking input in selecting the next district map and our public outreach process is underway. Our community's input is extremely important in this process, and we're asking you to join us at one of our upcoming Public

Hearings and/or mapping workshops.

At these meetings, share your story with us, define your neighborhood or community of interest, explain why redistricting is relevant to your community and we'll provide details on the tools available to draw maps. Once maps are drafted, we'll be asking residents to share their opinions of the draft maps and continue with us through the Public Hearing process.

The full list and updated schedule of our redistricting process is online now at www.visalia.city/drawvisalia. Simultaneous Spanish language interpretation will be available at each Public Hearing and mapping workshop. Please call (559) 713-4900 (TTY) 48-hours in advance of the scheduled meeting time to request signing services.

For questions, comments or map suggestions, contact Allison Mackey, Communications Manager at (559) 713-4535 or allison.mackey@visalia.city or email communityfeedback@visalia.city.

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



Second day session held at Fire Station 55

By Charlie Saponara
Visalia Chamber

Leadership Visalia's second day session was held at Fire station 55 on Friday, Nov. 12, and covered the topic of Planning and Land Use. We were welcomed with breakfast sponsored

by our very own Leadership participant Kirk Kindy of NSE Insurance. After a few minutes of networking, the session was introduced to the class and we welcomed a panel of speakers that included City Councilman Greg Collins, who is part of a 35-year-old public sector planning firm, Matt Ainley, who co-founded the engineering design and project management company, 4Creeks, Paul Bernal, the Community Development Director for the City of Visalia, and Ted Smalley, the Executive Director for Tulare County Association of Governments. Through this panel discussion, the Leadership Visalia cohort learned a great deal about all of the background work that goes into city planning, how long it takes for a project to go from start to finish—sometimes as long as 10 years—and the incredible cost of doing major projects. Did you know that to add a third lane to HWY 198, it would cost \$14 million per mile? This discussion brought to light just how much time, effort, forward-thinking, and money that has been invested to make Visalia what it is today. For example, over \$100 million dollars was invested to make improvements to Plaza Dr. and create the Bety Dr. overpass in order to improve access to the industrial park and create 1,000s of jobs. We also discussed some debated issues such as whether

er or not expanding growth outward is better than expanding upward and keeping homes, retail, etc. closer together. There were certainly pros and cons for both, and even the panel of experts had some disagreements.

After our morning discussion, we hopped on a City of Visalia Transit trolley and headed to Chapala Grill for a delicious lunch and some team bonding. Chapala Grill has been a longtime member of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, and we were delighted to support this business.

After a trolley ride back to Firestation 55, we viewed a quick video on current city planning strategies with a focus on urban development. We then welcomed guest speaker Mary Beatie. Mary, who has a degree in City and Regional Planning, is currently serving on the Visalia City Planning Commission and, though recently retired, had a 45-year career working for private sector consulting firms. We talked a lot about zoning and discussed the work that goes in behind the scenes to get projects approved or not approved. It was interesting to look back on some of the zoning decisions that did not come to fruition in the past and how we see that impact on our community today. Examples such as the proposed "green belt" between Visalia and Tulare, as well as the proposed development of a Kaweah Health facility (then known as Kaweah Delta) outside of the downtown location, which it currently resides.

With the guest speakers portion of the day complete, we then broke into three teams of four to work on our own city planning projects. Each team was given a scenario with which to plan their city. For example, one team had a population size of 200,000, a military airbase, and was surrounded by agriculture. Another group had a beachside town of 400,000. As the groups dug into their planning, which included zoning decisions, transportation, roadways, major industries, etc., time was called and each team was thrown a curveball which they had to navigate. For instance, the city with the airbase learned the government spending had been cut, so their airbase had to close. For the seaside town, it was a bacteria outbreak in the waters of their beach, among other things. Each group had to adjust on the fly and make the best of the situation for its citizens.

The day concluded with a reflective discussion on the day as a whole and some work on our class project, the build-out and funding of Giant Threads, a mobile trailer that will provide free professional attire for College of the Sequoias students that cannot afford their own. For more information on how you can help fund the project, please email charlie@visalia-chamber.org.

CHRISTMAS TREE AT THE SPEAKEASY

DECEMBER 3, 2021 5:00PM-11:30PM

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HEALTH CARE NOTE

Give thanks, be safe this holiday season



By Gary K. Herbst
Chief Executive Officer
Kaweah Health

The holidays are upon us and while we continue to be impacted by COVID-19 in our community and at Kaweah Health, we have many things to be thankful for this season.



We are thankful that we have survived this fourth COVID-19 surge. The Delta variant was mighty and fast-spreading, but we recently breathed a sigh of relief as the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 dipped below triple digits for the first time since early August. We do not know what lies ahead, but we continue to be thankful for the 47.5 percent of our population who have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

We know vaccines do not prevent people from getting COVID-19, but we have seen how effective they are in keeping people out of the hospital - 90 to 95 percent of our inpatients with COVID are unvaccinated. COVID-19 hospitalizations are very different in other areas of the State, particularly in counties with higher vaccination rates. Tulare County still has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the State (44th out of 58 counties).

In areas where there are high vaccination rates, hospitalizations are much lower. For example, on November 3rd when Kaweah Health called its second internal disaster related to hospital census and capacity in less than three months, it was caring for 111 COVID patients - the greatest number of COVID patients in the State. On that same day, there were only 20 patients with COVID at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), in a county whose vaccination rate was 76 percent. In Santa Clara County, where 73.3 percent of the population was vaccinated, there were only 29 COVID hospitalizations at Stanford Medical Center. And in Los Angeles County, where the vaccination rate was 72 percent, UCLA had nine COVID patients and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center had 13 patients with COVID.

As we move ahead in cold and flu season, we encourage you to get vaccinated for COVID-19 and the flu. COVID-19 vaccinations are now available to children ages 5-11 at a number of locations throughout Tulare County, including

Kaweah Health locations. Appointments can be scheduled by visiting myturn.ca.gov. If you have been vaccinated for COVID-19 and are in need of your booster shot, we highly encourage you to get it as soon as you can. Your family, friends, and this community will thank you as well.

Already this flu season we have seen some steady activity and we expect that will continue as we are in a very different place than we were last year. We heard very little about the flu last year, but conditions then were much different than they are now - people were still limiting gatherings, masking was more prevalent than it is now, and schools were largely still online. Please get vaccinated and remember that cold and flu symptoms are very similar to COVID-19 symptoms.

We are also seeing a large number of Respiratory Syncytial Virus or RSV early on this cold and flu season. RSV is a virus with mild cold-like symptoms which primarily affects infants and the elderly. Last year, we had just one case, but already we have seen almost 50 cases. If you have little ones or elderly loved ones with weaker immune symptoms, keep an eye out for symptoms, which include sneezing, wheezing, fever and coughing. Stay in close contact with your primary care physician and if they are unavailable, do not hesitate to visit an urgent care facility. You can schedule appointments online at ours at www.kaweahhealth.org. We are also thankful for partnerships, such as our partnership with Valley Children's, which allows parents to bring their children to Kaweah Health in Visalia to receive care from many of the same doctors who provide care to patients at Valley Children's Hospital in Madera.

But most importantly this season, we are thankful for the recognition this very community has provided to our healthcare workers, namely being named as grand marshals of Visalia's annual Candy Cane Lane Parade. This has been an incredibly difficult 20 months for our team, but throughout this pandemic, they have remained committed and persevered through their struggles. They do not do what they do to be recognized, but it is always nice to be appreciated. These are people who have served on the frontlines caring for others despite the risks. They have shown us what the human spirit is all about and blown us away by their dedication and their personal calling to help others. We are extremely thankful to them for their sacrifice, their dedication and the commitment that led them to answer the call to work in healthcare. Thank you, Visalia, for recognizing their hard work. We hope you all the very best of health this holiday season.



LEV DOLGACHOV / ADOBE STOCK

All cities rejoin Tulare County EDC

Exeter is among four more cities to rejoin the economic development corporation citing a new direction and marked improvements in the organization



By Paul Myers
Editor
The Sun-Gazette

Exeter was among the last cities to rejoin the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation. And with every incorporated city now on board, momentum is building.

President and CEO of the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Nathan Ahle, said having the support of the local public sector is key to the organization's success.

"We've been very fortunate...in Tulare County in the past six months, with plenty of economic activity and interest in what our area has to offer," Ahle said.

"This will only ensure we can deliver the best service possible to companies seeking to relocate here or existing firms looking to expand."

The Exeter City Council made the jump back in at their Sept. 28 meeting. City manager Adam Ennis said there were myriad reasons why they left in the first place a couple of years ago. A lot of issues were about communications; equitable cost of membership between private and public membership; board positions where one member would represent all the small cities; some analysis that was delayed - but Ennis said that Ahle has brought a new direction.

"In a relatively short period of time, they have done quite a few things to try to address some of the issues back when the cities were looking at not being in the EDC," Ennis said. "So with that being considered, I thought we should bring it back to the council to see if the council wanted to reinstate membership."

Council member Frankie Alves, who was on the council when they decided to leave the EDC, said it may have been a "kick in the pants" to the EDC when small cities began leaving all at once.

Exeter mayor Barbara Sally asked whether reinstituting payments to the EDC would have a negative impact on the budget. The city pays only \$2,500 a year for their membership, but Ennis thinks the benefits could outweigh the costs.

In recent year the city has been trying to find ways to improve their industrial economic development.

"You know, we've talked about them trying to get more industrial and things like that here in the city. And this could be a thing that could help us in that endeavor as we're trying to put more time and effort toward development," Ennis said.

That was enough for the city council to make the leap. They voted in a unanimous 5-0 decision to rejoin, and then appointed council-

man Justin Mills to represent the city on the EDC board.

Lindsay, Farmersville and Porterville are also rejoining the EDC after taking a relatively brief hiatus. They experienced some of the same treatment that drove Exeter away. And for the same improvements, the cities decided to come back.

According to the EDC adding all four cities back into the fold is significant as it marks the first time in over a year that all eight incorporated cities in Tulare County are investing in the organization. Along with the county of Tulare, every public-sector jurisdiction is now participating in the EDC.

"We're thrilled to welcome Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, and Porterville back to the EDC," said EDC board chair Scott Harness. "Our board of directors and our staff are committed to refocusing the EDC's efforts on the core of our mission of bringing jobs to Tulare County, and we appreciate the elected bodies in these communities for recognizing our new focus. The support of our public-sector partners is not something we take for granted, and we're doing everything we can to prove ourselves as a worthwhile investment in the economic future of our area."

HOLIDAY

Continued from page 5

ganization. We also have our round up campaigns that go on all year long. Currently the Make a Wish Round Up (Nov. 1st through Nov. 19th) has accumulated a Total of \$5806 in just over 2 weeks!

Not ready or available to shop in store? That's okay because the team has options for you! The curbside option is perfect for those who like to shop online but want it right away! All items that are available in store have pick-up capabilities and are ready in 2 hours from the time the order was received! Talk about fast service! All Macy's have the Myclient feature

which allows for personal shopping and communication based on each customer's preference and allows each colleague to build a client file and reach out when there are new items or great sales and can all be done over the phone or text message.

Want to see what they have in store on events going on in the store? Visit the Stores Instagram page at [instagram.com/macysvisalia/](https://www.instagram.com/macysvisalia/) for the latest looks, new brands or events going on inside the store or virtually. Want to make an online order or see the store hours? Visit our website at <https://1.macys.com/visalia-ca>. No matter how you shop; the Macy's Visalia team is here to welcome you and find all your Holiday and everyday wants and needs!