

# www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 42, No. 16 | April 2022

## INSIDE

### Changes could be coming to state background check laws

In 2021, the California Court of Appeal held that an individual's date of birth and driver's license number could not be used as data identifying a criminal defendant in public records. **2**

### What does quality of life mean to you?

This was the first question posed to our Leadership Visalia Class during our day session led by Charlie Saponara, Director of Partnership Development. **3**

## EVENTS

### APRIL 21 2022 IMPACT Leadership Conference

Time: 8:30 a.m.  
Location: Virtual, and Bello Vita/The Woodlands 4211 W. Goshen in Visalia

### APRIL 28 Ambassador Monthly Meeting

Time: 8 a.m.  
Location: Visalia First

### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

### Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

## TRAVEL WITH US

### JUNE 11-17, 2022

Landscapes & Lighthouses of Coastal Maine

### SEPTEMBER 3-11, 2022

Western Canada's Rockies, Lakes & Wine Country

### OCTOBER 5-12, 2022

New England Rails & Trails

### OCTOBER 23-27, 2022

Spotlight on San Antonio

### OCTOBER 29-NOVEMBER 6, 2022

Wonders of the Danube River Cruise

### NOVEMBER 1-8, 2022

Irish Discovery

### DECEMBER 1-5, 2022

Christmas Markets of Montreal & Quebec City

### FEBRUARY 21-28, 2023

Ecuador & Galapagos Islands Cruise

### APRIL 19-28, 2023

Holland Windmills, Waterways & Tulips River Cruise

### MAY 2-10, 2023

Athens & The Greek Islands

### MAY 7-22, 2023

Flavors of Portugal & Spain



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## Leadership conference partially returns to an in-person event

In partnership with Kaweah Health, the Visalia Chamber's Impact Leadership Conference will be held virtually for the morning and in-person in the afternoon



Businesses who survived the pandemic are now finding new issues to overcome such as supply chain disruptions, inflation and labor shortage. Successful businesses going forward will have to be nimble, competitive, sharp and thoughtful in order to make an impact in commerce and community.

In order to find the next generation of businesses and entrepreneurs to lead these two areas the Visalia Chamber of Commerce is again holding its annual Impact leadership conference in cooperation with Kaweah Health.

Held on Thursday, April 21, the Impact Leadership Conference will be held partially in-person for the first time since 2019, with the morning speaker and breakout sessions virtual while lunch, the afternoon speaker and networking event will be in person at the The Woodlands and Bello Vita, 4211 W Goshen Ave. in Visalia. Impact provides a space for learning that focuses on workplace skills, personal growth, and community activism while cultivating business and community leaders. For company leaders and executives, the conference will provide the opportunity to refresh skills and talk about the latest and greatest in leadership trends. For the creators and agents of change within a business, this conference will connect you to other entrepreneurs and changemakers, while providing insights to innovation and creative energy. For the new start-up businesses, this conference will help you spread your brand and provide a valuable networking opportunity to learn about trends and hear from potential customers. For those looking to advance their careers, there will be opportunities to meet employers from all over the Central Valley.

Impact features nationally recognized keynote speakers as well as breakout sessions presented by local industry experts and community leaders.

Beginning at 8:45 a.m., Dr. Rebecca Heiss will deliver the morning pep talk. Heiss is dedicated to helping people deal with evolutionary limitations—the ancient fears that hold us back—by applying her research to solve the practical problems of overcoming the unconscious behaviors that haunt modern life.

She is the founder/CEO of the self-awareness, 360-leadership review app, called Icuetyi (pronounced: i-kyū 'it-ē), which helps every individual reach her/his full potential and author of the acclaimed new book "Instinct: Rewire Your Brain with Science-backed Solutions to Increase Productivity and Achieve Success." She has been honored to speak internationally on her work, including multiple TEDx talks, and has found her calling in helping others recognize the power of unconscious biological limitations in their lives. She is a full-



REBECCA HEISS

time speaker and facilitator of her Fearless Accelerator program and Year of Happy—an experience that delivers programming and physical subscription boxes with challenges and community to move otherwise successful people from a state of status quo to finally finding powerful, productive, and purposeful lives.

The afternoon speaker will be Lee Rubin, beginning at 2:15 p.m.

Rubin specializes in building high performance teams in both corporate America and the competitive sports world, setting the foundational cornerstone for a leadership and culture-building mindset.

As a former student-athlete, he not only emerged as a three-year starter, but was also selected to be a team captain for the Penn State Football team under the leadership of legendary coach, Joe Paterno. His academic and athletic success, combined with 16 years in human resources, has provided a tremendous opportunity to understand and communicate winning strategies and principles.

This year's breakout sessions will be held from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on the following topics:

- Changing Workforce in the Face of the Pandemic
- Financial Planning: Making Your Dreams a Reality
- Managing Personalities and Healthy Boundaries for Teams
- How to Prepare for a Psychologically Safe, Inclusive and Accountable Work Environment
- Creating Culture from the Core
- Rebranding: How to Tell Your Story

For company leaders and executives, the conference will provide the opportunity to refresh skills and talk about the latest and greatest in leadership trends. For the creators and agents of change within a business, this conference will connect you to other entrepreneurs and changemakers, while providing insights to innovation and creative energy. For the new start-up businesses, this conference will help you spread your brand and provide a valuable networking opportunity to learn about trends and hear from potential customers. For those looking to advance their careers, there will be opportunities to meet employers from all over the Central Valley.

Tickets are \$75 for chamber members, \$275 for teams of four and \$500 for teams of eight. Tickets are available at [www.visaliachamber.org/impact](http://www.visaliachamber.org/impact).

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### 1964 repeating itself?



Gail Zurek  
President and CEO  
Visalia Chamber

City planning shapes our communities as we know them. But decisions about those plans are not without significant discussion and sometimes present some controversial issues we must wrestle with. At the time, these decisions loom large,

and their unknown implications create fear. However, when we look at past controversial issues, those past concerns now look simple and easy.

For instance, do you know when the Visalia Mall was built, it was both revolutionary and highly controversial? Before the Visalia Mall was built, shopping was located on Main Street. The Visalia Mall was on the outskirts of town, and it was a completely foreign concept to go inside a building that held many different stores. In fact, in 1964, the Visalia Mall was the first indoor mall in the State of California. While I am sure that many were excited about this brand-new shopping experience, many were afraid building the mall would destroy downtown. As a community, we had to wrestle with our collective view of commerce and how we should support or limit business as a community.

If you don't know the rest of the story, the Mall was built. It was a success. People shopped there. Many would say it helped literally pave the way to developing Mooney boulevard as a regional shopping district. But, and this is important, people still shopped downtown. A fantastic by-product of the Mall being built was downtown merchants banded together. They communicated to Visalians the value of shopping on Main Street. They officially formed a business improvement district, and Downtown Visalians was born. I would argue that ultimately the Visalia Mall played an essential role in making what downtown is today.

The 1964 Mall conversation has a 2022 version. The development at Highway 99 and Caldwell Avenue, known as Sequoia Gateway, has caused some the same pause the Mall caused years ago. Sequoia Gateway took shape when it was announced that Valley Children's Hospital would have a south valley location at this site. More excitement grew

when plans of a Great Wolf Lodge at the site were developed. This destination family resort features an indoor water park, 700 hotel rooms, and themed restaurants. Great Wolf Lodge locating here means a large advertising budget convincing travelers to spend their money here in our community. Those travelers spend money at the resort and travel to the national park to discover Visalia in the process. The economic spillover is valuable to other businesses and provides taxes back to our communities.

However, just like when the Mall was being developed, fear has crept into the conversation. Beyond the Children's Hospital site and Great Wolf Lodge is 350,000 square feet, about the size of a community shopping center currently slated for retail development. That retail site, understandably, leads some to wonder what effect its development will have on Mooney Boulevard. History repeats itself.

While I would love certain national brands to be located in Visalia (I know half of you just said Trader Joe's out loud), the reality is these brands have a very prescriptive equation about where to open a store. This equation will pinpoint an intersection, not just a town. And as badly as I might want to say, a Cracker Barrel to open in the old Ryan's location, the reality is, that location doesn't meet Cracker Barrel's location equation. That restaurant knows where it will be the most profitable and goes accordingly.

Retail, as we know it, is also shifting. Retail hubs now have work, live, play models. That model is retail mixed with offices restaurants and also includes recreational and entertainment offerings. Many even include condos and other living options. Mooney has begun to see this diversification happening. It's exciting and challenging.

Change is scary. We can plan, but solutions often look different from what we thought we wanted or even had planned. But just as we did nearly 60 years ago, we need to band together, embrace new ideas and let our market flourish.

The market moves at a rapid pace. Visalia is a fantastic place to raise a family and own a business. To continue, we must move at the pace of the market, accept innovation, and band together as businesses to continue defining and redefining what makes us the gem of the central valley.

I am excited to see Sequoia Gateway strengthen Mooney Boulevard. I am excited about our next chapter.



PHOTOS BY RIGOBERTO MORAN

Giant Threads at COS seeks to help students with professional attire.

## COS, Visalia Leadership clothes students with Giant Threads

Visalia Leadership's 2021-2022 class opens pop-up professional clothing trailer to serve job seeking students



Sam Moore  
Reporter  
The Sun-Gazette

The fashion department at College of the Sequoias has partnered with the Visalia Chamber of Commerce's 2021-2022 Leadership Class to present Giant Threads, a mobile clothing trailer that provides new professional clothing to COS students on the job hunt.

Giant Threads was founded by COS fashion professor Tiffany Wainwright, who says the mobile closet has been a long-time dream of hers.

"My hope was to develop this program, and we were looking for a space, but just didn't have an actual empty classroom to open it," Wainwright said. "So last April, our provost at Hanford called me and said, 'I have this really crazy idea: I have this old police trailer, it's a 22-foot trailer that's been sitting here, what if you used it for the clothing closet?' And I was like, oh, my gosh, this is the best idea ever."

With the help of a carpenter, Wainwright then turned the trailer into a posh mobile boutique. Clothes were purchased

brand new, some out-of-pocket and some with help from a few sponsors. Their first event was held March 1 and helped roughly 15 students to find new clothes for an upcoming college conference.

"The students were just beyond happy when they put on those outfits and looked professional," Wainwright said. "So it's just it's been a great experience we've had."

Giant Threads has events planned throughout each semester, and hopes to hold open hours in the future.

"I just think it's really beneficial to the students to have a brand new outfit because they're going out into this world," Wainwright said. "It's their first impression, and to have something new that fits them, it's gonna make a world of difference."

Giant Threads is looking for sponsors to help fund future events. Anyone interested can contact Wainwright at [tiffyw@cos.edu](mailto:tiffyw@cos.edu).



## CITY UPDATE

### An economic snapshot of our growing city

Here we grow! Wrapping up strong in 2021, the City of Visalia is looking to keep up the economic momentum through 2022.

When we look at the numbers from last year, Visalia had 636 new single-family units with 204 new multi-family units, the most multi-family units in one year since 2007. There was 1,547,680 new commercial square feet permitted among 66 new commercial permits, the most in one year since 2008.

But it doesn't stop there. There were also 2,757 residential additions and alteration permits issued in 2021, which is the highest number ever issued in the City's history.

Looking at the numbers we have so far for 2022, January had 49 new single-family permits, 82 new multi-family units between two permits, and 1,035,381 square feet of new commercial permits pulled. February had 82 new single-family permits, 30 new multi-family units, and 23,210 square feet of new commercial permits pulled. Compared to the same time last year, we are up 51% in single-family activity, 30% in multi-family units and 34% in total number of all per-

mits.

Notable 2022 Site Plan Review submittals as of the writing of this column include, but are not limited to, a new 101 room Marriott TownePlace Suites adjacent

to the Holiday Inn Express and Adventure Park, nearly 1,000 new single family lots in various proposed subdivisions, the 3rd phase of the CapRock spec industrial development west of Plaza Drive totaling over 2,680,000 SF between 2 buildings, the next phase of the Seefried spec industrial development adjacent to the future Ace Hardware Distribution Center, three 12,225 square foot spec industrial buildings, and a new 24-hour Starbucks proposed between West and Court, south of Caldwell.

As we grow, Visalia will continue to promote economic viability, community spirit and the quality of life that makes our City the gem of the Central Valley. For more information on the City of Visalia Economic Development, visit [www.visalia.city/business](http://www.visalia.city/business).

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.



THE LAW AT WORK

# Changes to state background check laws



**By Brett T. Abbott**  
Gubler & Abbott LLP

GUBLER & ABBOTT  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

In 2021, the California Court of Appeal held that an individual's date of birth and driver's license number could not be used as data identifying a criminal defendant in public records. That case, *All of Us or None v. Hamrick*, involved a challenge to Riverside County Superior Court's Public Access system, which allowed users to filter and search criminal records based on dates of birth and/or driver's license numbers. The plaintiffs challenged the system on the grounds that it violated a California rule which provides that electronic indexes of criminal case records must exclude, among other things, social security numbers, birth dates, drivers' license numbers, financial information, and ethnicity, age, and gender designations.

Based on that decision, many California courts redacted birth dates and driver's license numbers from their indexes and databases, causing routine background checks to be much more difficult to obtain. Consumer reporting agencies have historically relied on these court indexes to complete criminal background checks in California. The inability to verify an individual's criminal record based on personal identifiers such as date of birth and a driver's license number has adversely impacted these agencies' ability to satisfy the accuracy of report requirements under the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the like.

A proposed bill (Senate Bill 1262) may resolve the issue by requiring publicly accessible electronic criminal defendant indexes to permit searching and filtering of results based on a defendant's driver's license number or date of birth, or both. While SB 1262 is pending in the legislature, employers should carefully review background checks and ensure proper notice is given, as required by state, federal, and local ordinances when assessing if an employee or applicant should be disqualified

from a position. 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 (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).



## 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.

#### Business Connector Members:

- Guarantee Real Estate
- Legacy Real Estate

#### Small Business Members:

- Schrank's Clubhouse
- Porterville Storage

#### Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- The American Legion Department of California

### RENEWING

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

#### Regional Leader Members:

- SJVC / San Joaquin Valley College, Inc.\*

#### Community Investor Members:

- Save Mart Supermarkets
- Xfinity Store by Comcast\*

#### Business Connector Members:

- Elite Medical - RTO Systems Inc.\*
- Roller Towne
- Sequoia Financial, LLC
- Tri-Anim Health Service, Inc.
- Urbane Cafe

#### Small Business Members:

- Carroll's Tire Warehouse
- Elaine Rider/State Farm Insurance Agency\*
- Four Seasons Handy Market\*
- Haulaway Storage Containers\*
- HNH Nut Co.\*
- Holiday Inn Express & Suites\*
- My Fathers House Visalia, Inc.\*

#### Business Builder Nonprofit Members:

- Farmer Bob's World
- Visalia Fox Theatre

#### Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Visalia Feral Cat Coalition

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

## AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

**Name:** Deanna Saldana  
**Company:** Farmer Bob's World  
**Title:** Director of Development

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

I have worked in Visalia for more than 14 years and have developed lasting relationships with individuals and businesses alike. I must say that most have come from my connection to the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. Being a member of the ambassador program has given me 'behind the scenes' access to business leaders in the community, helped me learn more about businesses in our neighborhoods and allowed me the opportunity to share my story and the mission of the organization I work for.

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

We are community. There are times when I'm reminded that in many ways, we are a small town instead of a big city. Being able to enter business establishments and know who owns it, running into people you know at the grocery store, having people ask for recommendations and knowing exactly where to send them is all part of building community in Visalia. People like working with people, and the chamber gives you an opportunity to develop a relationship with



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

businesses that could last for years.

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

I recently made a career change and now work with a local non-profit called Farmer Bob's World. We give people a chance to visit us on a 100-acre citrus farm and take a tour to learn more about one of the biggest industries in the state of California. The non-profit was designed to help educate children, primarily through schools, but we know that consumers are disconnected from where their food comes from and what it takes to get an orange to your dinner table. We encourage anyone to join us at



Farmer Bob's World and get some fresh air, pick an orange, and go home knowing just a little bit more about agriculture in the Central Valley.

I'm really enjoying working with Bob McKellar, and sharing his mission with people in our schools, our community, our country and around the world. Bob's family started the farm in 1927, and even at 90 years of age, he's still giving tours of his family's farm.

Farmer Bob's world is unique to the Central Valley, California and I don't think there is anything else like it anywhere.

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

I love downtown. It's uniquely Visalia and the Fox is one of the most beautiful buildings in our area...and beyond.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Name:** Caprice Kindgren  
**Company:** Urbane Cafe  
**Title:** Director of Marketing

Known for its fresh fire-baked focaccia breads, house-roasted meats and hearty salads, Urbane Cafe is a consistent favorite on Yelp, Google, TripAdvisor and other restaurant review websites. Popular with health-and-budget-conscious customers for 19 years, Urbane Cafe is a lunch and dinner destination for families and business people who want a fast, fresh, affordable meal. The lunch and dinner menu at each Urbane Cafe restaurant features fresh, healthy sandwiches and salads served in a warm, inviting setting. Catering and Take-Out are also popular. Though the restaurants span from Southern California to the Central Coast, owner Tom Holt retains a close, hands-on role in every aspect of the business, ensuring that standards of quality are consistent throughout the chain.

**News to share? List the latest awards you've received, new products your business has launched, etc.**

Urbane Cafe launches many new items including their new bowls this month! They just launched the Salmon Bowl, Mediterranean bowl, and the Baja Bowl! Check them out today!

**Tell us something interesting about your business or product(s).**

Urbane Cafe makes all their bread from scratch in the hearth oven! It is the best bread in town!



**How does your company get involved in the local community?**

Urbane Cafe hosts many community events including fundraisers for the schools, givebacks to local charities, and Share the Love Days where we honor certain groups with a complimentary meal. Urbane Cafe is hosted a Share the Love event in March, for Teachers and Healthcare Heroes.

**The best part of working for**

**your company is...**

The delicious food and the great opportunities for our team members. We have many programs for the teams including competitive salary, tuition reimbursement, UC cares program, and much more!

**Top thing you wish Visalia knew about your business?**

Urbane Cafe is a family-owned business that deeply cares about our food and our team!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## RIBBON CUTTINGS



Valley Strong Credit Union held a ribbon cutting on Feb. 23 to celebrate the grand opening of their new Central Visalia Branch. The branch is located at 1501 S. Mooney Blvd Visalia, CA 93277.



Porterville Storage hosted a grand opening on March 25 at their new facility located at 167 W. Poplar Ave. in Porterville. Their facility includes climate control indoor units, fully enclosed RV/Boat storage in a variety of sizes, 24-hour live monitoring, and more. Open seven days a week, you can reach the office at (559) 784-7874.



Visalia Rotary Community Foundation hosted a grand re-opening of Rotary Theatre on March 21. The refurbished theatre was made possible by donations from Visalia's five rotary clubs, foundation, members, and generous community sponsors.

## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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**Editor** ..... Gail Zurek  
**Layout** ..... The Sun-Gazette

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



EAGLE MOUNTAIN CASINO

**Eagle Mountain Casino** closed out February, paying over \$3.5 million in jackpots to over 1,400 guests. The casino will play host to The Price is Right Live stage show on April 30 and May 1 at 2 p.m. Eagle Mountain Casino also announced a \$200,000 donation to Central Valley Honor Flight.

Vincent Arbizo, sales associate of **Century 21 Jordan-Link & Company** was awarded the 2021 Century 21 President's Producer Award and Eevoy Saese was awarded the Century 21 2021 Quality Service Pinnacle Producer Award. Congratulations!

**Bank of America** donated \$25,000 to Central California Food Bank to help with the ongoing demand for its services as part of a unique new program encouraging bank employees to get their COVID-19 booster shots. For each bank employee in Fresno/Visalia who received a booster shot by the end of January, Bank of America would donate \$100 to the Food Bank.

**The Darling** recently announce a new meeting and conference



May 7.

**Citizen Business Bank** was ranked as No. 4 on the 2022 list of "America's Best Banks" from Forbes.

Congratulations to **Save Mart Supermarkets** who is celebrating their 70th anniversary this year. To mark this milestone, the company will be donating \$70,000 to partner food banks in California and Northern Nevada, as well as offering weekly shopper and team member giveaways of in-store gift cards.

**Cellar Door** announced in March their new morning menu of espresso drinks, coffee, and fresh baked goods.

center. What was once home to the Tulare County vault has now been converted into a meeting and event room. Contact (559) 713-2113 for more information, including available meeting packages.

**Arts Visalia** will host the 5th "Baskets and Gourds: Containers of our Culture" exhibit to April 29. The 21st Annual Orchid Sale is back from April 30 through



THE DARLING

**County Health & Human Services Agency's** 275 social workers who work to improve the lives of others and enhance their basic needs, no matter the circumstance.

As part of their commitment to provide essential care to communities they serve, **Family HealthCare Network** partnered with **Self-Help Enterprises** to provide at-home COVID test kits and N95 masks for distribution at their low-income housing complexes.

Congratulations to Leslie Gardner of **Happy Trails Riding Academy** who is one of this year's California Ag Leadership Foundation 2022 Common Thread Honorees. The Common Thread Award recognizes individuals whose exemplary and extraordinary contribution of time, energy, and resources has enhanced those around them.



TULARE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

## Vista's Dual Language Immersion

Visalia Unified School District is enrolling for the Vista Dual Immersion program at Mountain View Elementary. A dual immersion program is a way to learn academic content while acquiring another language at the same time. In other words, a dual immersion program is a form of education where students are taught literacy and content in two languages. In addition, students receive instruction in math, science, and social studies in their first language of Spanish or English.

Curriculum for the program focuses on the core curriculum from the California state standards. 90% of the day is taught in Spanish, 10% of the day is taught in English. Due to the teaching strategies used, students learn the concepts and skills for the subject area and develop the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in another language. Vista students will be bilingual in English and Spanish by 4th and



5th grade. Students will be on a path to receive the California State Seal of Bi-literacy. The Vista program prepares students for 21st-century learning and college and career opportunities that will lead to success in a global economy. VUSD has highly qualified bi-literate teachers to ensure success in the program.

Any incoming kindergarten student living within the Visalia Unified School District may apply to the dual immersion program. Each class will be filled with students who are native Spanish speakers and those who are native English speakers. A lottery drawing shall be held if more applications are received than space available for the program.



The 2021-2022 school was the first year for the Vista Dual Immersion program. Mt. View elementary school currently houses the Vista program on its campus. This year the program began with two kindergarten classes and three teachers. One of the teachers is permanently placed in each classroom, and the third teacher pushes in between classes to provide instruction in English. There are 40 students currently enrolled

See VISTA on page 4



## What does quality of life mean to you?

By Kirk Kindy, CIC  
NSE Insurance Agencies, Inc.

This was the first question posed to our Leadership Visalia Class during our day session led by Charlie Saponara, Director of Partnership Development with the Visalia Chamber of Commerce and Dustin Cole, Catering Manager with The Vintage Press and Addiction and Substance Abuse Counselor with Pine Recovery Center. Our class gave a multitude of answers including: a safe place to live, quality healthcare, places to shop and eat, and entertainment venues. Charlie and Dustin set up an informative and fun session, which touched on different aspects of Visalia

that offer residents a great quality of life. We started the day by meeting in the Hall of Fame Club at Valley Strong Ballpark. There was a panel of speakers who represented organizations focused on the youth within our community. The panel included: Marie Pinto, Executive Director with ProYouth Heart; Frank and Mary Durazo, presidents of the Visalia Cal Ripken Youth Baseball Organization; Katy Young, Executive Director with Imagine U; and Officer Arturo Villarreal, with the Police Activities League (PAL). It was amazing to see how each panel member had such a heart for children, which was apparent in the time and effort they put into making a true impact on the youth they reach within their positions. As an example, the Durazo's volunteer and devote so much time into making the Cal Ripken Baseball program a success. Through their selfless contributions, Visalia has been able to host two Cal Ripken World Series Tournaments. Marie Pinto shared about ProYouth Heart and the free after-school program that they provide for students. They serve nearly 18,000 students at 50 different schools! Katy Young with Imagine U explained how, when they were forced to close during the pandemic, they used that time to install new exhibits and make changes to existing ones to provide children with new experiences once they were able to open again. Katy let us know that you won't find any screens at Imagine U, and this is purposeful, as they want the children to use their imaginations within the exhibits and learn through experience. Officer Villarreal provided a summary of the impact that the

PAL program makes on some of the most "at-risk" youth in our community and the successes he has seen in kids who went through the program and now have graduated college.

Our class then shifted focus from quality of life for children to quality of life for those in the young adult and family life stage. We heard from a panel that included: Steve Nelson, Executive Director with the Downtown Visalians, and Nellie Freeborn, Executive Director with Visit Visalia. Steve Nelson talked about how our downtown is the heart of Visalia and the ways the city wants to continue keeping its focus on that area. He also shared about some of the great events that the Downtown Visalians put on, such as: the Wine Walk, Home-town Heroes, The Candy Cane Lane Parade, and, my personal favorite, the Taste of Downtown. Nellie Freeborn revealed to us that Visit Visalia earned its certification as a Certified Autism Center, the first Destination Marketing Organization in California to do so. She shared that this bold initiative is a proud expression of the openness that is inherent to Visalia and demonstrates the powerful impact of an entire community coming together to make all travelers feel welcome. This led to a discussion with Steve and Nellie about the inclusive park that will soon break ground in Visalia. It will be located near Imagine U and have play areas set up for children and families with autism and other special needs. We were all thrilled to hear that Visalia is getting such a great park.

Our class enjoyed a wonderful catered lunch from the Vin-

See QUALITY on page 4

# IMPACT

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

PRESENTED BY

LEE RUBIN, PUBLIC SPEAKER  
AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Kaweah Health  
MORE THAN MEDICINE. LIFE.

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

DR. REBECCA HEISS  
MORNING PEP-TALK

Elite MEDICAL

WIB  
Wellness Investment Board

EECU  
Smarter Banking

**ARE YOU READY TO MAKE YOURS?**  
JOIN US APRIL 21, 2022  
[VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/IMPACT](http://VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/IMPACT)

## Visalia Chamber announces board slate for 2022

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

In order to nominate an alternative candidate for the board, a petition signed by fifteen members of the Chamber must be received by the Chamber within 10 days of this notification (Wednesday, April 6, 2022). If no additional nominees are submitted, the proposed slate listed above will be elected to serve on the Board starting July 1, 2022. If one or more names are submitted by petition, then a ballot will be sent to all Chamber members to elect the new directors for this term. If you have questions about this notice, or the process for selecting board members, please contact Gail Zurek at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce at 559-734-5876.

## Ask Jena

**Does the Chamber offer workshops and webinars?**

The Chamber provides multiple programs for the continued growth of our local businesses and employees. Check out our Events Calendar for future dates on events and workshops.

**How do I become an Ambassador?**

Chamber Ambassadors can participate in high-visibility networking opportunities, are the first to hear breaking news, can attend monthly Breakfast mixers, and more. Please contact Charlie Saponara, [charlie@visaliachamber.org](mailto:charlie@visaliachamber.org), to learn how to become an Ambassador!

**Have a question about the Chamber?**

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

VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESENTS

# ANNUAL AWARDS

## JUNE 9, 2022

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT [VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/AWARDS](http://VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/AWARDS)

# Thank you TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

## CHAMPION:



## VISIONARY:



## REGIONAL LEADERS:



## KEYSTONE:



## CORNERSTONE:

CIGNA, CSET, E.D.I.S., LAMP LITER INN, M. GREEN & COMPANY, MILLIPORESIGMA, SOCCER CITY 1852 VISALIA, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON

## MEDIA PARTNERS:



## HEALTH CARE NOTE

# Could spring mark the beginning of our COVID recovery?



**By Gary K. Herbst**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kaweah Health

Some call spring a time of rebirth or renewal, but it's my hope that spring will mark a beginning of recovery for our entire community. After two years of twists and turns, this season has been easier to enjoy. We have consistently seen fewer COVID-19 hospitalizations, a dropping positivity rate, and while we still remain a very busy hospital at 90-95 percent occupancy, we've had some breathing room from our consistent 110-120 percent days. We hope everything continues moving in this direction.



Throughout this pandemic, one constant for us has been trying to make our visitor guidelines as inviting and supportive as possible. We are one of the few hospitals locally and statewide that allow visitors for COVID patients in Critical Care (ICU) and Intermediate Critical Care. We also generally allow most patients to have two visitors a day. We would very much appreciate your cooperation, support, and kindness as our team, and all other California hospitals, enforces a new State mandate. It requires that all visitors either show proof of full vaccination (booster not included) or show proof of a negative COVID test within 24 or 48 hours of your visit depending on the type of COVID test used (i.e., at-home antigen test performed in front of Kaweah Health personnel, antigen test performed by authorized third-party, or PCR test); visitors of a patient with a critical or emergency condition are exempt from proof of a negative COVID test for up to 72 hours. Again, we very much appreciate your support; if we do not comply, we risk losing our license and our ability to provide healthcare services to our community.

Our work to provide healthcare services in Tulare County continues, and recently, in a very unique way for COVID patients. Kaweah Health and the Cleveland Clinic have joined together in a national research study looking at brain health related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the help of Neurologist Dr. Richard Pantera and Neurosurgeon Dr. Charles Liu, this two-year study seeks participants who have experienced "brain fog" or confusion since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, have not been diagnosed with COVID but have feelings of anxiety or stress related to it, or were diagnosed with COVID and recovered. For more information or to see if you qualify, e-mail [jesteves@kaweahhealth.org](mailto:jesteves@kaweahhealth.org).

We just celebrated Doctor's Day on March 30, a day to celebrate the work of not only Drs. Pantera and Liu, but of all the other physicians we partner with to provide care to our local community. In fact, the number of physicians at Kaweah Health continues to grow in part due to our six residency programs in Anesthesiology, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, Surgery and Transitional Year. This summer, 48 new residents in our six residency programs will join 80 resident physicians at Kaweah Health. They will be joined by three fellows of our new Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship, whose mission is to train child and adolescent psychiatrists that will positively impact the health of youth and their families in the Central Valley. Since our residency programs began in 2013, we've graduated 118 resident physicians, 45 percent of whom have remained in the Central Valley to practice medicine.

While working to grow physicians is never-ending work, so is rebuilding our healthcare workforce. Our workforce has been decimated by this pandemic – tens of thousands of healthcare workers have left the industry. We have almost 600 open positions, 250 of those require an RN license and close to 200 of them are bedside nurses, so rebuilding our workforce really needs our focus. One of the ways we will do this is by entering into an agreement with a private nursing college called Unitek to support the training of 40 Registered Nurses each year, who would earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing over a three-year period. These would be students who are employed part-time at Kaweah Health, but who would go to school at night and on weekends, graduating in three years with a contractual obligation to continue working at Kaweah Health for tuition support. We've also worked with College of the Sequoias to stand up a new nursing cohort of 20 slots designed for employees of Kaweah Health and Sierra View Medical Center employees who will work part-time, but attend night and weekend classes to complete their associate degree in nursing. These are very promising efforts to support the workforce.

This spring, we'll also continue our work, as I know you will in your respective industries, to restore financial health. At Kaweah Health, it will take financial strength to be able to move forward with master planning and modernization efforts. Despite all of the challenges we've experienced over the last two years, I am happy to report that Moody's Investor Services, a national credit rating agency, has reaffirmed our A3 credit rating after a deep analysis of our financial credit worthiness. While this rating can be negative, neutral or strong, ours has a negative outlook, but that is currently shared by the healthcare industry as a whole.

I hope that this truly is the year of recovery for our entire community. At Kaweah Health, our team of incredibly-talented and dedicated people remain focused on protecting the health and safety of this community. Pandemic or not, health is our passion, excellence is our focus, and compassion is our promise.

## QUALITY

Continued from page 3

tage Press, what a nice treat that was! We were also provided a tour of Valley Strong Ballpark, home of the Visalia Rawhide, by Sam Sigal, Co-Owner of the Rawhide, and Marina Rojas, Director of Marketing and Promotions for the Rawhide. Marina explained that they are planning some great things for the upcoming season and that each night families will have a little different experience at the ballpark. After the ballpark tour our class reconvened at Quail Park at Shannon Ranch, where we were greeted by Leslie Hayes, Director of Business Development. Leslie gave us a tour of the Quail Park facility, which opened in 2020. Our class was amazed by all of the amenities that they had to offer, including: a movie theater, indoor

pool, workout room, and several game and activity rooms. We also got to sample food prepared by their chef, which was wonderful. We all agreed that it is so nice to have such a beautiful facility available to our senior community in Visalia. Our day session had its final panel session in the Quail Park conference room, where the focus shifted to quality of life in the form of the health and wellness of our community, including mental health. The panel included; Marissa Stanley, Director of Health and Wellness at Quail Park; Gwen Schrank, founder of Schrank's Clubhouse; Darcy Massey, Tulare County Suicide Prevention Task Force; Adrienne Hillman, Founder & CEO of Salt + Light; and Nelson Kay, Recovery Specialist with Pine Recovery Center. Each panelist discussed their organization, what they provide to the community and shared a bit about

their story. Gwen Schrank discussed how she herself is a suicide survivor and she started Schrank's Clubhouse to provide love and support and resources to those who suffer from mental illness or substance abuse. Adrienne Hillman provided insight into Salt + Light's exciting new neighborhood village, scheduled to break ground soon in Visalia. Their mission is to provide the homeless with small modular homes to rent and allow them to finally settle, rest and heal while working and being a part of a community. It was encouraging to see mental health awareness and the programs available for those who need help and support.

The day session that Charlie and Dustin coordinated really demonstrated the great quality of life in Visalia and how it's a wonderful place to live, work and play.

## VISTA

Continued from page 3

in the Vista program. Students wishing to participate in the Vista program must already be registered at the school within their home boundary.

Important enrollment dates:  
**April 29**—All interest forms must be turned in by 5 p.m.

**May 3**—Lottery drawing  
**May 5**—Families informed by email of acceptance into the Vista program

**May 12**—Last day for families to confirm placement into the Vista program

To enroll your incoming kindergarten student into the Vista Dual Immersion program at Mountain View Elementary, go to [www.vusd.org/domain/4205](http://www.vusd.org/domain/4205). For more information about the program, call 559-730-7783 or email Principal Amy Jones [ajones@vusd.org](mailto:ajones@vusd.org).

## VUSD selects Shrum for superintendent

On March 8, the Visalia Unified School District Board of Trustees unanimously voted to appoint Kirk Shrum to the position of superintendent. Mr. Shrum will officially begin working alongside Interim Superintendent Doug Cardoza on May 16, 2022, and then he will assume the full responsibility of leading VUSD on July 1, 2022.

The recruitment for VUSD's new superintendent began in August of 2021 with assistance from the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) and the office of County Superintendent Tim Hire. TCOE and Superintendent Hire held numerous listening meetings to gather input from the community to identify characteristics they wanted to see in the next superintendent. Following a rigorous nationwide search, Superintendent Hire brought forth the top candidates for the Board of Trustees to consider. Kirk Shrum was selected by the Board as the top choice for Visalia Unified.

Mr. Shrum brings over 25 years of educational and administrative leadership experience



KIRK SHRUM

to the role of superintendent for VUSD. Since 2019, he has served as the chief school leader-ship officer

with Henry County Schools, McDonough, Georgia. Before his position as the chief school leadership officer, Mr. Shrum served as area executive director from 2013-2019 and school principal from 2011-2013 for Fulton County Schools in Atlanta, Georgia. He began his career as a teacher with Hamilton County School District at Thrasher Elementary School in 1997. Next, he moved up to the assistant principal role at Bess T. Shepherd Elementary School and eventually principal of Daisy Elementary School in 2006.

Mr. Shrum earned a Master of Arts degree in Instructional Leadership from Tennessee Technological University Cookeville, Tennessee,



and a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Board President Juan Guerrero states, "On behalf of the VUSD Board of Trustees, we want to thank our staff, students, parents, and community for their input during the superintendent recruitment process. We strongly feel that Mr. Shrum reflects the qualities and characteristics identified by the community. We look forward to working with him to continue to move the district in a positive direction. Lastly, I'd like to personally thank Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire for overseeing the superintendent search."



## Youth STEAM Summit is April 13

Community Services Employment Training (CSET) is pleased to announce its 7th Annual Regional Education Youth Summit. Local high schools and young people in Tulare County are encouraged to tune in via Zoom on Wednesday, April 13, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. This year's theme, Achieving Resilience, celebrates our adaptability, collaboration, and strength throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are extremely excited to expand the STEAM summit this year to all local young people throughout Tulare County," shared Kylie Gonzales, #LEAD facilitator. "If you are a local professional working with young people in our region, we also encourage you to tune in," added Matthew Glasgow, #LEAD facilitator.

CSET's Regional Education Youth Summit is an annual event that informs local young people about careers available in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). Guest speakers working in each of the STEAM careers will describe their personal education and career journeys. CSET is honored to provide this annual STEAM event to young people in our region with the support of our partners. Thank you to the Belay Foundation, Bank of the Sierra, Tulare County Board of Supervisors, and Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency for supporting this year's event.

To register and learn more about this year's event, visit [www.cset.org/reysummit2022](http://www.cset.org/reysummit2022).

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