

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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INSIDE

Rawhide welcomes new coaches for 2023 season

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Eagle Mountain touts new food and beverage venues

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BofA grants lift up Tulare, Fresno counties

Throughout 2022, Bank of America (BoFA) donated a total of \$1.85 million to nonprofits throughout the Fresno and Visalia area. **4**

EVENTS

FEBRUARY 23
Ambassador Breakfast
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

APRIL 19-28, 2023
Holland Windmills, Waterways & Tulips River Cruise

MAY 2-10, 2023
Athens & The Greek Islands

JULY 19-28, 2023
Iceland: Land of Fire & Ice

SEPTEMBER 20-OCTOBER 1, 2023
Essence of France: Paris, Provence & French Riviera

OCTOBER 4-12, 2023
Highlights of England, Scotland & Wales

OCTOBER 23-28, 2023
Cuba Discovery

OCTOBER 26-NOVEMBER 9, 2023
Exploring South Africa, Victoria Falls & Botswana

NOVEMBER 1-10, 2023
Rome and the Country Roads of Tuscany

DECEMBER 4-9, 2023
Washington D.C. Holiday



Travel provided by:

Collette Vacations
CST #2006766-20

Chamber Explorations
CST #2048841-40

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



Kaweah Health is named among America's 100 best hospitals by Healthgrades for the first time in its history.

PHOTO BY RIGBERTO MORAN

Kaweah Health named among America's 100 best hospitals

Healthgrades awards Kaweah Health a distinction that launches them into the top 2% of hospitals delivering consistent clinical quality care



Kaweah Health's distinction as a top-tier facility puts it among the top 20 hospitals in the state and only hospital in the San Joaquin Valley to earn top 100 honors in the nation.

Kaweah Health Medical Center (KHMC) made Healthgrades' annual list of America's 100 Best Hospitals for 2023. The distinction launches KHMC into the top 2% of hospitals delivering consistent clinical quality despite financial hurdles over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthgrades determines the nation's best care facilities based on an analysis of patient outcome data from hospitals across the country. According to Gary Herbst, KHMC's chief executive officer, the path

towards perfection is an endless journey to get better as a facility that exists solely to care for the community.

"This is the first time in our history that we've been named one of the best 100," Herbst said in a statement. "I know we're not perfect, but our team of incredible and dedicated people are committed to this community and that is something we are very passionate about."

Kaweah Health's top-tier status going into the new year is welcome news for a facility and industry rocked by unprecedented circumstances stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Three months into the fiscal year 2022, Kaweah Health found themselves needing to increase revenue



and trim expenses—\$85 million by June 2023—as part of national post-pandemic trends for hospitals.

Last November, Herbst wrote a letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom asking for funding to recuperate losses in revenue and avoid service cuts and layoffs. The letter detailed Kaweah Health's financial hurdles that include skyrocketing contract labor expenses, frozen reimbursement rates, rising costs of inflation and low patient intake.

Still, Kaweah Health's distinction by Healthgrade despite financial trouble suggests that the relationship between cost and quality in healthcare is not so black

See **KAWEAH** on page 4

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A conversation with Chat GPT



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

You may have heard or even played with the new A.I. service Chat GPT. At the end of last year, my social media feeds became overwhelmed with posts and videos about what this new technology could provide. I have played with some and am impressed with its quick detailed response. I have used it to write a press release. I planned a menu using specific foods and calorie restrictions, then asked for the recipes and a grocery list. I even had it draft a commercial land lease agreement. It's written tons of limericks for me about all kinds of things. It's novel but also scary. I'm not sold on using this technology, but I thought I'd interview the AI, Chat GPT, so you could get more information. Our interview was my typing questions and then seconds later getting these responses. Additionally, at the end, I had it write a poem for fun.

What is Chat CPT?

ChatGPT is a large language model developed by OpenAI. It is based on the GPT (generative pre-training transformer) architecture and is trained on a massive dataset of text. This allows it to generate human-like text and understand natural language inputs. ChatGPT can be used for a variety of tasks such as text completion, question answering, and text generation. It is particularly useful in areas such as natural language processing, chatbots, and language-based AI applications. It can be fine-tuned on specific tasks and domains, and it is pre-trained with a large amount of internet text data making it capable of providing human-like responses to various questions in multiple languages.

What's the most common requests and ways people use Chat GPT?

The most common requests and ways that people use ChatGPT include:

1. Text completion: ChatGPT can be used to complete a given text prompt, such as a sentence or a paragraph. This can be useful for writing, editing, or generating content.
2. Question answering: ChatGPT can be used to answer questions, such as a question-answering system. This can be useful for customer service, research, or information retrieval.
3. Text generation: ChatGPT can be used to generate text, such as stories, articles, or emails. This can be useful for content creation, marketing, or entertainment.
4. Language Translation: ChatGPT can be fine-tuned for language translation, making it capable of providing translations for various languages.

5. Chatbots: ChatGPT can be used to create chatbots that can understand and respond to natural language inputs. This can be useful for customer service, e-commerce, or entertainment.

These are some of the most common ways that people use ChatGPT, but the possibilities are endless as it continues to evolve and improve. With its capability to understand natural language and generate human-like text, ChatGPT can be used in a wide range of industries and applications

What are some fun and unusual ways people are using Chat GPT?

While ChatGPT is primarily used for serious and professional applications, some people have found creative and unusual ways to use the model for fun and entertainment. Here are a few examples:

1. Generating jokes: Some people have trained ChatGPT to generate jokes by fine-tuning it on a dataset of jokes. The model can then generate new and unique jokes on demand.
2. Writing poetry: Some people have used ChatGPT to generate poetry by fine-tuning it on a dataset of poems. The model can then create new and unique poems based on a given prompt.
3. Generating music: Some people have used ChatGPT to generate music by fine-tuning it on a dataset of music. The model can then create new and unique music tracks based on a given prompt.
4. Writing fan fiction: Some people have used ChatGPT to generate fan fiction by fine-tuning it on a dataset of fan fiction stories. The model can then create new and unique stories based on a given prompt.
5. Generating cooking recipe: Some people have used ChatGPT to generate cooking recipes by fine-tuning it on a dataset of cooking recipes. The model can then create new and unique recipes based on a given prompt.

These examples show that while ChatGPT is primarily used for professional and serious applications, it can also be used in creative and fun ways. The model's ability to understand natural language and generate human-like text makes it a versatile tool that can be used in a wide range of industries and applications.

Do you think this will replace jobs?

ChatGPT and other similar Artificial Intelligence (AI) models have the potential to automate certain tasks and make them more efficient, which could lead to some job displacement. However, it's important to note that AI models like ChatGPT are not designed to replace jobs but rather to augment human capabilities and help with the repetitive and mundane tasks, allowing people to focus on higher-level tasks such as decision making, creativity, and problem-solving, which are difficult or impossible for AI to perform.

Moreover, the implementation of AI in businesses is also likely to create new jobs, particularly in the areas of data analysis, software development, and IT support. It's also important to note that the

See **CHAT GPD** on page 2

CITY UPDATE



2023 is an exciting year for Visalia, as our rich history once again is on display in our 100th anniversary as a charter city. It was 100 years ago on February 26, 1923 that the State of California ratified the new charter of the City of Visalia.

1852 is the year commonly known as the founding of Visalia, and Visalia is the oldest San Joaquin Valley town between Los Angeles and French Camp. Once a creekside settlement, by the 1920s Visalia had begun taking shape to look much more like the Visalia we know today.

After months of work by the freeholders, those elected to draft the new charter, Visalia voters approved the charter in January 1923 before it was ratified by the state. In April of that year, Visalia voters selected their first City Council and another foundational layer of our city was built.

100 years later, we honor our roots while looking towards the future. 2023 kicked off with a new sitting Council on the dais and the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Visalia Fire Department Station 56. As the year quickly picks up steam, more milestones are ahead.

The City Council's work on the new Civic Center planning continues, which will house a new Council Chambers, offices and new, additional public spaces. Visalia's Industrial Park is expected to grow by at least two million, permitted square feet, while Mooney Boulevard will see a reimagining of the old Sequoia Mall. Road improvements include the work underway at Caldwell, from Akers to Shady, while new streetlights dot our bustling Main Street and downtown area.

As 2023 rolls on, we'll be sharing ways Visalia is celebrating 100 years as a Charter City. To stay connected, follow the City of Visalia on social media @cityofvisalia and sign up for Inside City Hall at www.visalia.city to be the first to learn how you can be a part of the celebration.

For more information on City of Visalia, visit www.visalia.city or visit them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @CityofVisalia.



Gas company offers relief from bill increases

Encourages customers to take advantage of various assistance programs, energy-saving tips to lower the burden of high winter gas bills

As Tulare County residents see the highest spike in natural gas prices in over 20 years, there may be relief in sight after SoCalGas announced a \$1 million contribution to a program helping income qualified customers.

Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) contrib-

See **SOCALGAS** on page 4

CHAT GPT

Continued from page 1

implementation of AI should be done thoughtfully and with consideration for the potential impact on jobs and the workforce.

It is important to note that the use of AI in businesses should be an opportunity for the workforce to upskill and re-skill to adapt to the new technologies, rather than a threat to the job market. Companies should invest in training and development programs to help workers adapt to the new technologies, and to develop new skills that will be in demand in the future.

In conclusion, while ChatGPT and other AI models may automate certain tasks and lead to some job displacement, they are not designed to replace jobs but rather to augment human capabilities and help with repetitive tasks. The implementation of AI should be done thoughtfully with consideration for the potential impact on jobs and the workforce and should be an opportunity for the workforce to upskill and re-skill.

Can you write a short poem about how the Visalia Chamber CEO Gail Zurek introduces Chat GPT to businesses?

With a smile and a spark in her eye,
Gail Zurek, the CEO, walked in
and said "Hi,"
She brought with her an AI,
A tool that will help businesses thrive.

ChatGPT is its name,
A model that's smart and game,
It will help with tasks that are mundane,
Leaving more time for business to gain.

With its power to understand,
ChatGPT will be of great demand,
It will help businesses to expand,
And make their processes more efficient and grand.

Gail Zurek introduced it with pride,
ChatGPT will be a key to success,
she confided,
She urged the businesses to give it a try,
And watch their productivity soar high.

In full disclosure, it didn't work for everything. When I asked it to write a note to my husband that I was going to be home late, he knew immediately it wasn't me typing. I asked it to write some email responses, but again, they felt too formal and weren't in my voice. However, I do think it could be helpful in certain instances.

If you want to check it out, head over to chat.openai.com.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Visit www.visaliachamber.org

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

NEW

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

Business Connector Members:

- Rush Bowls
- Texas Roadhouse

Small Business Members:

- United Ammo

RENEWING

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

Business Builder Members:

- Advanced Body and Laser Center*

Business Connector Members:

- Assemblyman Devon Mathis*
- Giant Chevrolet Cadillac
- Guarantee Real Estate*
- Zeltmacher Structural Design Engineering, Inc.

Small Business Members:

- J & D Lighting & Alarm*
- LMG Ag Products*
- Patrick L. Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency*
- Porterville Storage*
- Salt + Light Works*
- Shaw's Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc.
- Tulare County Library
- Visalia Sales Yard*

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Center for Spiritual Living Visalia

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Visalia Players

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.



Rawhide welcomes new coaches for '23 season



The Arizona Diamondbacks announced their coaching staffs for their Minor League teams for the 2023 season, including the group that will lead their Single-A affiliate, the Visalia Rawhide. At the helm for the Rawhide will be Manager Darin Garner.

Garner will start his first season as the Manager of the Rawhide in 2023. This will mark Garner's eighth season with the Diamondbacks and his second stint with the Rawhide after serving as bench coach in 2021.

Tyler Mark will be returning to Visalia in 2023 as the team's pitching coach after retiring from his playing career at the conclusion of the 2019 season. Mark was a reliever for

the Rawhide during parts of the 2018 and 2019 season. This will be Mark's first season serving in this role after coaching the Dominican Summer League team in the same capacity in 2022.

Kyle MacKinnon will be the Rawhide hitting coach and making his debut with the Diamondbacks in 2023. MacKinnon has spent the past 6 seasons at McPherson College, where he spent the first five seasons as the hitting coach and assistant coach before becoming Manager for the 2022 season. In his lone season as Manager, MacKinnon led the Bulldogs to a program record 40-win season and a win over Middle Georgia State University in the opening round of the NAIA tournament.

Rolando Arnedo will be acting as the team bench coach this season. Arnedo has been with the Diamondbacks organization in a variety of roles since 2013. This will be Arnedo's first season with the Rawhide.

Connor Oates will be serving as the Athletic Trainer and this will be his first season with the Diamondbacks. Nate Kolb will be the Strength & Conditioning coach, also in his first season with the Diamondbacks.

The 2023 season home opener will be Tuesday, April 11th with first pitch at 6:30 p.m. For information on tickets and promotions visit Rawhidebaseball.com.

RIBBON CUTTINGS



Texas Roadhouse hosted a ribbon cutting to celebrate their grand opening in December. You can visit them at 4425 S Mooney Blvd.



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for their new Life Event Center Reception Hall. They are located at 127 E. Caldwell Ave.



United Ammo hosted a ribbon cutting in January for their grand opening. They can be found at 3100 S Mooney Blvd.



RUSHBOWLS.COM

Rush Bowls to open shop on Mooney



Lacey Patrick
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

Rush Bowls announced they will be setting up a shop in Visalia and are set to blend up a storm of fruit smoothie bowls and on-the-go bites for residents by mid-February.

Jason and Clarissa Osborn, franchise owners of Rush Bowls Visalia, sought to bring healthy fast food options to the Valley after a turbulent pandemic. After discovering Rush Bowls, a Colorado-based food stand, Jason and Clarissa jumped on board. Their upcoming shop will be located at 3225 S. Mooney Blvd. The new location will feature signature blended fruit and vegetable bowls, smoothies, on-the-go bites and even specialty bowls for dogs. It will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., and will be open by February.

"Commitment to health and community is a value we immediately connected with when introduced to Rush Bowls," Jason and Clarissa said in a statement. "Whether our Central Valley neighbors are finishing up a workout, running errands or heading up to one of our beautiful national parks, we are excited to offer this healthy option that's perfect for an on-the-go lifestyle."

Clarissa said her passion for health began after seeing the damage COVID-19 did to the community and its families. With the hopes to give back to the community, Clarissa and Jason sought to open up a Rush Bowls in town, where they could align their passion for health and their work. Especially since being on the go is a norm in California, Clarissa said their new healthy fast food joint will hopefully keep people from purchasing unhealthy fast food.

"When we [discovered] Rush Bowls, we thought, 'Oh, this is the perfect opportunity,'" Clarissa said. "It's different, it's healthy, it's helping on the go families who are working, and moms who are running all their kids around."

Nicole McCray, the chief marketing officer of Rush Bowls, said that they use all natural ingredients in all their bowls and food items. The idea was to create an eatery that would accommodate all diets and food intolerances. They not only do this by using raw and fresh ingredients in their bowls, but they also offer free substitutions of any ingredient if a customer has a food sensitivity. McCray said the restaurant chain's most popular menu items are the açai Beach Bowl, the Peanut Butter and Jelly Bowl and the Yoga Bowl.

Jason said that though they are opening their franchise during a time where inflation is at an all-time high, the structure of their restaurant will keep them afloat even amid difficult times. Rush Bowls is not a sit down eatery. It's a quick, easy meal that doesn't require servers and has relatively low overhead, according to Jason. The only area that they have felt the pressure of inflation is with the cost of materials for construction. However, Jason said there has been a lot of support from Rush Bowls corporate office.

"[Rush Bowl's] mindset is 'let's get the store open, let's support our franchisees,'" Jason said. "We've felt a lot of support around flexibility of materials. Some franchises are so set on the material and a certain [build], but that's not the case with Rush Bowls."

One of the biggest reasons they chose to open up a franchise of Rush Bowls was because of their dedication to quality food, according to Jason. When they flew out to Colorado to meet with the Founder and CEO of Rush Bowls, Andrew Pudalov, Jason said that he spoke extensively on the ingredients, texture and quality of the food at Rush Bowls.

"That was something that really hit home. They know how to make quality food, and as we come out of the pandemic, I think people are more aware of what they're eating," Jason said. "There was a long time where [Pudalov] did not franchise. Its because there's risk always with franchising where you ask 'Will the product quality stay the same?'"

The dog bowls and bites that are offered are made from the same ingredients as the ones they make for their human customers. Since they use only natural ingredients, dogs are able to eat pretty much everything on the menu. Luckily for the pups, there are already designated bowls that fit their taste palette best. McCray said that in Colorado, it's very common for people to bring along their dogs while they're on the go. Clarissa and Jason will be keeping this feature in their Visalia location.

It's Time to Travel

CHAMBER EXPLORATIONS TRAVEL SLIDESHOW

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1

11:00AM-12:00PM

REGISTER AT VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/TRAVEL

Travel provided by: Chamber Explorations; CST #: 204884I-40

THIS PRESENTATION WILL BE OFFERED BOTH VIRTUALLY AND IN-PERSON AT THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICE (LIMITED SEATING AVAILABLE; REGISTRATION REQUIRED).



Congratulations to Chris D. McLain of **Mangini Associates Inc.** who announced his retirement in December 2022.

Lifestyle Magazine open nominations for the inaugural Reader's Choice Best of the South Valley Awards. Winners will be announced on March 17th and published in their April issue.

Visalia Rawhide hosted their "Design a Jersey" Kids Contest in January. Kids 13 and under had the opportunity to submit their designs, with the winner's design worn by the Visalia Rawhide on August 19th.

Central Valley Christian School hosted their annual Cavalier Shake in January.

Bliss Events Group will host The Blissfully Yours Wedding Show and Expo on March 12th.

The Home Depot Foundation provided funding to rebuild **Happy Trails Riding Academy's** ramps and 390 bags of bark for the Sensory Trail.

Tri Counties Bank announced in January a new and improved Mobile and Online Banking that will be coming soon to customers.

Starting February 5, **CSET** is offering free tax preparation services to residents of Tu-



HAPPY TRAILS RIDING ACADEMY



VISALIA RESCUE MISSION

lare County through The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. More information can be found at cset.org/vita.

Roller Towne will open registration for roller hockey league for youth, teens and adults starting February 20th. Call (559) 733-8686 ext 10 for more information.

The **Visalia Rescue Mission** staff and board of directors welcomed Michael Simmon as the ministry's new Executive Director. Former director of program support and development at Phoenix Rescue Mission, Simmon's comes with valuable skills as an entrepreneurial executive with over 20 years of social services and business leadership experience.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Education Day Session

Lorena Lugo
Program Manager-Supervised Visitation Centers
Family Services of Tulare County

On Friday, January 13, 2022 the Leadership Visalia Group was hosted at the Visalia Unified School District by Facilitators Sharise Van Dam, Arisbet Torres-Villasenor, and Patrick Moorman. The day began with a breakfast and check in for the first thirty minutes. Once everyone was gathered and had a chance to eat something, the group drove to El Diamante High School to do a tour of the Linked Learning Academies. The group was divided into two groups and El Diamante High School Staff split up to do the tours of their Cinema & Television Arts Academy and the Strong Academy.

The groups took turns touring the two different academies and viewing the students in action. At the end of the tour, both groups met for a panel discussion at the library. The panel discussion included teachers and students from both academies. The group had a lot of great questions for the panelist. The students did an amazing job answering the questions and talking about their daily tasks with the academy. After the panel discussion, the group thanked El Diamante staff and headed back to the Visalia Unified School District office for lunch from Pita Kabob.

After lunch, there was a discussion panel of the Industry Partners. The speakers were Zack Green- Owner of Zack Green Films; Wilhelmina Santana- Executive Director of the Fox Theater, Kelly Pierce- Co-

ordinator of Volunteer Services of Kaweah Health, Carina Mello- Work-based Learning Coordinator VUSD, and John Tyndal- Work-based Learning Coordinator VUSD. They all shared how they collaborate together to make a great experience for the Linked Learning Academies' students. Each panelist shared their experiences with the students and internship opportunities they offer and how they collaborate to ensure students are studying in the right industry. All panelist shared what a success this collaboration for the students. After the discussion panel, we had Dan Storz, Senior Director K-12 Engagement Linked Learning Alliance present on the overall Linked Learning Program. He reviewed the Linked Learning Program is growing in California and shared great information about the program. The group had some questions in regards to the program being offered in small communities. The last speaker for this session was, Vickie Leoni, Director of VUSD College & Career Readiness. She reviewed the Linked Learning Programs offered throughout all the high schools in Visalia and which school offers which academies. Mrs. Leoni shared the new academy coming to Visalia for the 2023-2024 school year which focuses on Education. The group was engaged with enthusiasm and had great questions for the speaker. After all the speakers, the group brought their ideas together to discuss the community project and give some updates. At the end, everyone said their good-byes.

Eagle Mountain touts new food and beverage venues



Sara Mendez
Marketing and PR
Eagle Mountain Casino

Bradford Hamilton is the Food and Beverage Director at Eagle Mountain Casino. Hamilton is from Oklahoma and has been in the Food and Beverage business for 25 years and the Casino business since 2004.

"Half of my casino business experience has been with tribal gaming until 2013. Then, I moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, and helped open up and spent nine years at the Margaritaville Resort Casino," said Hamilton.

Following the Covid pandemic, Hamilton returned to the Margaritaville Resort, but due to many changes and policies, he decided to take time off. During that time, he was recruited by Eagle Mountain Casino.

Hamilton has been with Eagle Mountain Casino for 15 months now, focusing on transitioning from the current property to the new one that will be opening in 2023.

"Right now, we are hiring and putting our team members through the training processes. We will soon be opening our steakhouse during the day on weekdays and doing our diner menu training in the evenings. Cocktail servers are now pres-



BRADFORD HAMILTON

ent on the gaming floor, which is new. Our cocktail servers are walking around with actual tray service, which will replace the current bar carts at the new property," said Hamilton.

When the new property opens in 2023, it will be the first time Eagle Mountain Casino will serve alcohol.

"We will have full cocktail service throughout the casino floor, in our River Steakhouse, and our Redwood Taphouse at the new property," said Hamilton.

Hamilton also provided a preview of what to expect from the new property's food and beverage venues.

"Our Redwood Taphouse will feature 208 seats with 24 slot machines in the bar. 60 TVs will be visible throughout the whole restaurant. We will be very bar-beque centric as we have a large smoker in our kitchen. It won't be your typical pub food, more gourmet burgers and large platters. I will be introducing some mid-western and southern dishes like our Cajun queso and looking at doing some exotic meats

like fried alligator as well," said Hamilton.

Hamilton will soon be welcoming a Senior Chef who spent 13 years in Macau, China, and they will work together to solidify the food menus.

The award-winning River Steakhouse will still be traditional, and Hamilton says they are adding more seafood and other items to spice it up, but they will not change the people's favorites. "Our steaks are very well known, and we will continue to do that," said Hamilton.

The new property will also feature a new food court featuring Italian bakes and pizzas, Ramen, and Street Tacos with a total of 44 seats.

"Our Acorn Diner is massive with 200 plus seats. It will be traditional breakfast, lunch, and dinner with jazzed-up menu items," said Hamilton.

The Center Bar will be situated in the middle of the new



RENDERING COURTESY OF EAGLE MOUNTAIN CASINO

property's gaming floor; Hamilton says it will feature 24 slots and 74 seats and be accessible to anyone playing on the gaming floor.

"The Event Center will be a 2000 guest concert venue, including a pre-function area where guests can purchase alcohol before going into the concert. The event center can also be used for wedding receptions and class reunions. It will be very multi-versed on what we can do with it," said Hamilton.

Eagle Mountain Casino always

shows appreciation to its team members, and the new property will be no different. Hamilton says team members will have a private restaurant where they can relax and enjoy their breaks.

"They can get grab-and-go salads and sandwiches, bring their food, but they can also order a cheeseburger or get some chicken fingers. We will also have a blue-plate special line where team members can walk up for a themed meal like spaghetti and meatballs on a Monday," said Hamilton.

Hamilton does not want to show all his cards on new property details.

"We're bringing some things to the table that the Valley hasn't seen before, priced for the market too," said Hamilton.

Currently, Eagle Mountain Casino is located 17 miles east of Porterville and is a full-service casino owned and operated by the Tule River Tribe. Guests must be 18 years of age to enter. The casino is open 24/7. In addition, the Grizzly Food court is open 24/7, and the River Steakhouse is open Friday to Sunday, 5 to 10 p.m. Eagle Mountain Casino is a short drive from Bakersfield or Visalia.

The new casino property is scheduled to open in 2023, off Highway 65 in Porterville, next to the Porterville Fair Grounds. The new property will double in size, growing to over 100,000 square feet, featuring new dining options, 1,750 slot machines, 20 table games, and a state-of-the-art event center.



How do I utilize my benefits?

You've come to the right person! Please contact me anytime to discuss how to leverage your membership benefits to their full potential.

How do I apply for Leadership Visalia?

We normally open the application period in early summer. Follow us on our social media channels to find out the latest!

Have a question about the Chamber?

Send me a message:
Jena@visaliachamber.org

IMPACT
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
APRIL 20, 2023
VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/IMPACT

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Raising Cane's
CHICKEN FINGERS

Tuesday, March 21st 4:00-6:00PM 3541 S. Mooney Blvd

NETWORKING • CONNECTION • COMMUNITY

Thank you TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

CHAMPION:



VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:



KEYSTONE:



MEDIA PARTNERS:



The Visalia Home & Patio Springfest returns



The public is invited to join us at the 30th annual Visalia Home & Patio Springfest, February 3, 4 & 5, at the Visalia Convention Center.

This year, the landscaping specialists at Gowin Green will again design a special "Affordable Backyard Landscape" in the center of the large Exhibit Hall. "We plan to target new and existing home owners, especially those in need of an affordable landscape redesign" reports Show Manager, Steve Tarter. "The goal is to create an outdoor living area that will accommodate the ongoing weather changes and water availability throughout the South Valley.

Planning to start with the patio? These local companies—will all be under one roof—at South Valley's largest Home Show. Backyard & Home, located in Bakersfield, has recently joined the home show and will display patio covers sunrooms, fireplace inserts, grills, smokers, and hot tubs! Local pool builders like Prestige Pools and Pools Plus will be on-hand to help you design a one-of-a-kind swimming pool. For outdoor cooking, then look no further than Tropic Touch BBQs as they specialize in BBQ islands and outdoor kitchens. And sink into the seat of luxury and experience the feeling of complete relaxation at the Patio Resort Lifestyles' booth. You can enter-to-win one of the outdoor patio sets they are contributing to the annual Treasure Hunt.

Springfest is the place to get answers about how to replant, refresh, and revitalize your garden in ways that support the environment. This year the Garden Center returns inside the Exhibit Hall. In addition to floral societies and garden clubs, show visitors will find garden art by urban crafters including Earth Arts Studio, Mosaic Yard Art, and Simply Treasures. UC Master Gardeners has also arranged hourly seminars on a variety of subjects like rose care, tree care, pest control, landscape design, and pool maintenance.

New this year, Luis Nursery joins the Garden Center. Their variety of house plants can be the perfect addition to your home bringing life, color, and a fresh look. Come see low maintenance succulents, cacti, and an assortment of varieties available at this time of year. And, check out their new line of Fairy Garden miniature landscapes with a variety of houses, fairies, animals, and plants to keep the imagination running wild.

Bring the entire family to Springfest! This year White's Music Center is sponsoring a Kids Recital, where young musicians will have a chance to perform in front of a crowd of on-lookers.

There will also be visits by OTIS the Imagination Dragon and a chance to win tickets to Imagination U Children's Museum. And be sure to take them to the Home Depot Kids Clinic, where they can get their hands

dirty, potting a plant at the Home Depot's Kids Potting Activity.

Set your appointment with a qualified remodeling contractor at the Visalia Springfest. Whether you need a bath or kitchen upgrade, come and talk with the experts at The BathPlanet or Valet Organizers. If it's time to replace your windows, get an estimate from Troys Glass. But if all your room needs is a touch-up, talk with local professionals like Luis at Legendary Painting.

Want something more "down home," let Habitat's Restore show you how with little effort and money you can affordably redecorate in style.

Technology savvy millennials will find new smart home devices, competitive internet and entertainment packages from companies including Comcast, T-Mobile, and Western America.

This year's Springfest Marketplace has great ideas for Valentine's Day including great Chocolate Apples from Paul's Products, great furniture runners from Sew Purrfect by Cheryl, hand-painted jackets & hats,

handcrafted wooden vases and decorative items from Itsy Gifts, and Woodworking By Gary, classic 60's/70's vinyl records, wallets, purses, leggings, health products, and much more.

Enjoy lots of great food when you visit this year's Springfest. Sadie Mae's Catering will be serving up her great Southern BBQ, including peach cobbler. Javi's Taco Shack will have breakfast burritos and great Mexican plates, and Yoshi's joins the concession line-up with a variety of Asian specialties. For dessert, stop by The Pie Maker and grab pie ala mode.

And as you stroll through the show, enjoy great snacks like gourmet roasted nuts, baked cookies, and Dippin Dots.

Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets at the door are \$8 general admission, \$6 seniors/military, and free for children 12 and under.

Additional show information is available at VisaliaHomeShows.com/Springfest.

SOCALGAS

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uted funding into the Gas Assistance Fund, for a program that began Jan. 17. Many Tulare County residents are left in a vulnerable position with the recent spike in natural gas prices. The median household income in the county is \$57,394, which is well below the \$70,784 national average. To help those who may be struggling, SoCalGas has several options for Tulare County residents with assistance programs and energy conservation tips.

The program will help income-qualified customers pay their gas bills with a one-time grant of up to \$100 per household. In Tulare County, the program will be run by the Salvation Army in Porterville. They can be contacted either by phone at 559-784-7872 or in person Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. A second location in Visalia located at Community Services and Employment Training can be reached by phone at 844-224-1316 or in person Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For a full list of assistance providers listed by county and qualifications for financial assistance, visit www.socalgas.com/gaf. A detailed report about the market conditions that are creating higher gas prices for customers this winter can be found at www.eia.gov/natural-gas/weekly. Customers can also explore more bill payment and assistance options on the SoCalGas website or by phone

at 1-800-427-2200. Programs offering no-cost professional home improvements that save up to 20 percent on natural gas bills or even have past-due balances forgiven can be found at www.socalgas.com.

SoCalGas also offers energy-saving tips that can lower bills that can be found on their website. These include adjustments to thermostats, laundry and nonessential natural gas appliances. Each of these adjustments can save up to 10% for customers.

The online tool, Ways to Save, provides energy analysis and conservation recommendations that are personalized for each household. Customers can also sign up for weekly bill tracker alerts sent by email or text to monitor gas consumption, including bill-to-date and projected next bill amounts.

In a statement from SoCal-

Gas, high bills are due to price changes in the natural gas market, prices that SoCalGas was careful to state are not set by the company but national and regional markets. According to SoCalGas media stakeholder and engagement manager Brian Haas, it's the sharpest increase in 20 years.

"With prices going up 128 percent from December to January, this is a high not seen by the company in over 20 years," Haas said. "And the sustained period of high prices has never happened before in this short amount of time. It's really been a perfect storm of factors happening all at once."

According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), price increases are mainly because of low supply and high demand. Specifically, December's first three weeks increased a combined 23 per-

cent for residential and commercial sectors in the Pacific Northwest and California.

Other factors include reduced pipeline capacity caused by maintenance in West Texas, where SoCalGas buys their gas, leading to lower westbound natural gas flows. Also according to the EIA, Pacific-region storage inventories 25 percent below last year's levels and 30 percent below the five-year national average also contribute.

"We understand that our customers are starting to feel the pain caused by large changes in the natural gas market," said SoCalGas senior vice president and chief customer officer Gillian Wright. "And we owe it to our customers to provide as many tools and tips as possible to prepare for colder weather and higher winter bills."

KAWEAH

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and white. In other words, spending more money doesn't always mean better health.

At its core, Healthgrades is an online database that provides information about physicians, hospitals and health care providers. For their annual distinctions, Healthgrades analyzes patient outcome data on more than 45 million Medicare medical claims records of the most recent three-year time period from 4,500 hospitals nationwide.

Looking at the merits that determine a top-quality facility, procedure performance in terms of complications and mortality rates are monitored. Potential risks such as pre-existing conditions that would complicate a procedure are also considered. Taken together, an expected outcome model can be created. Finally, by comparing actual outcomes to predicted outcomes, star ratings are awarded for outcomes that are either statistically higher or lower than expectations.

"We're proud to recognize Kaweah Health as one of Amer-

ica's Best Hospitals for 2023," said Brad MD, chief medical officer and Head of Data Science at Healthgrades. "As one of America's 100 Best Hospitals, Kaweah Health consistently delivers better-than-expected outcomes for the patients in their community and is setting the bar for national standards."

For an in-depth look at Kaweah Health's performance measures used by Healthgrades including a complete methodology for the process, visit www.healthgrades.com/quality/americasbesthospitals.