

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 43, No. 11 | November 2023

INSIDE

Kaweah Health experiences growth and change

The end of summer 2023 marks another chapter of growth and change at Kaweah Health. While we continue to see positive signs in our day-to-day operations, other challenges arrive that we must rise to meet. **2**

VUSD Forward 2030: A community-driven blueprint for the future

The Visalia Unified School Board has made incredible strides in enhancing public education for every student in Visalia. In 2021, our board set a goal to bring leadership and alignment to the families of the 30,000 plus students it serves. **3**

Leadership Visalia welcomes Class of '24

Leadership Visalia empowers leaders within their company and the Visalia community to reach their full potential and drive positive change. Fourteen participants are recognized as they begin their pursuit in the comprehensive 9-month program. **4**

EVENTS

NOVEMBER 23

Thanksgiving

The Chamber wishes everyone a joyous holiday.

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR DATES

Coffee & Conversation with Your Chamber CEO-Facebook Live

Time: 8 a.m.

TRAVEL WITH US

DECEMBER 4-9, 2023

Washington D.C. Holiday

MARCH 17-23, 2024

New Orleans and Cajun Country

APRIL 24-MAY 1, 2024

Nashville, Smoky Mountains and Bluegrass

MAY 24-JUNE 2, 2024

Memorials of World War II

JUNE 20-27, 2024

Alaska: Call of the Wild

JULY 17-25, 2024

Great Canadian Cities

SEPTEMBER 20-26, 2024

New York City and the Hudson River Valley

OCTOBER 1-9, 2024

A Culinary Journey Through Tuscany



Travel provided by:

Collette Vacations
CST #2006766-20

Chamber Explorations
CST #2048841-40

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



ZAMRZNUTI TONONI / ADOBE STOCK

More beers on tap for brewery district

Simply Brewing breaks ground, Long Shot expands and Salty Walrus files plans for new brewery along East Main Street



John Lindt
Contributing Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

Visalia's microbrewery district is starting to fill up.

After three years of working their way through the permitting process, Simply Brewing announced they have begun construction on their new start-up production brewery and taproom at 601 E. Main St. in Visalia.



Owner Justin Cate made the following announcement in a recent social media post: "Update – October 2023: This is not a drill, we have broken ground. Construction is currently in progress. Make sure to drop in for updates as we get closer to opening day!"

The brewery's plans to open were first made public in July 2020 when the Visalia Planning Commission approved its conditional use permit. Normally a brewery opening in a microbrewery district does not need a conditional use permit, but the brewery wanted to allow families and offer live music.

People under the age of 21 are allowed into a bar if the bar has a Type 23 alcohol permit. Specific to microbreweries and micro-wineries, Type 23 permits allow a non-retail, non-restaurant micro brewery or brew pub that produces less than 60,000 barrels of beer per year for draft purchases at a taproom and produces bottles for sale by retailers. Unlike other ABC licenses, type 23 taprooms allow people under the age of 21 without providing food or non-alcoholic drinks for its customers.

In addition to restrictions on the amount of beer it can produce to retain its microbrewery status, the City of Visalia requires that Type 23 taprooms only allow people under the age of 21 under conditions of: If they are accompanied by an adult at all times; offer games, activities, non-alcoholic beverages and snack foods; devote at least 20% of their indoor area to games and activities; as well as prohibit children from being at the business after 10 p.m. and from sitting at the bar

or serving counter.

Simply Brewing Company will also have games, activities, non-alcoholic beverages and snack foods suitable to all ages. The outdoor area will contain picnic tables and outdoor areas for table games, board games and corn hole, as well as providing patron access to occasional food trucks parked within the patio area.

"Although there are no plans to install a kitchen and/or prepare their own food, Simply Brewing Company will on occasion have food trucks on-site and at all times permit patrons to bring in outside food similar to the Barrelhouse Taproom operation," Cate stated in his operational statement to the city.

Currently, Barrelhouse is the only type 23 licensed taproom in the microbrewery district that encompasses the eastern portion of downtown between Santa Fe Street and Ben Maddox Way. Kids can be seen playing a game of cornhole as parents enjoy craft brews while waiting in line for a food truck in the lawn patio area behind the building on Main Street. Teens often drink sodas next to parents with pints while listening to live music. Simply's offerings included Justin's Red, English Best Beer, Cran-Apple Cider, Citra APA, Blonde Roast and Apple Ale.

On its website, Simply Brewing said the brewery is scheduled to open either late this year or early 2024.

"We are Simply Brewing Co, a new up and coming Production Brewery that will be opening in late 2023-2024 in the Brewery District of Visalia... located on Main Street just steps away from a few of your other favorite breweries," reads the website, where pictures of the building's interior and construction are posted.

One of those favorites, Long Shot Brewery, is planning to move into more spacious accommodations by year's end in a portion of the old Malick Motors site. The brick building is being divided up adding 4,000 square feet for beer tasting, according to architect Eric McConaughy. Long Shot currently operates out of the cozy confines of a converted appliance store around the corner at Acequia Avenue and Liberty Street.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Lessons from the Shark Tank



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

I love the TV show "Shark Tank." The format is always the same. Entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to "shark" investors hoping for an infusion of capital and expertise to make their businesses successful. The business owner touts their business as being the best, revolutionary, or market-changing. The sharks then hit them with the important question—"explain your valuation." In the early shows, business owners fumbled with the numbers, math, and reasoning for how they valued their business. In more recent shows, owners expect the question and rattle their numbers off with ease, well, usually. If an owner doesn't have the numbers at their fingertips or, worse, confesses not to know, the investor sharks bite, figuratively, of course. The lack of knowledge shows a deficiency in the owner's leadership, and investors pull out of the deal.

Knowledge is power, particularly in business. But too much data presents a problem too. While gut and instinct can be critical, they are no substitute for strong data.

Well-meaning business leaders will consume business news in vast quantities, often indiscriminately. What once would have been difficult to find is now a finger swipe away. Do you want to know what Asian Markets are doing, forecasts about Hurricane Ian's impact on Florida markets, or if the fed is going to increase interest rates? It's easy to find. Perhaps too easy.

Not as easy to find, those pesky numbers the Sharks would ask about. Information about your business is critical to its growth and success. Why do your customers choose to buy from you?

What does it cost to get them to buy from you? Why do they (and do they) return to buy again? What is the biggest threat to YOUR business's growth? Are you maximizing the strengths of your business?

Those questions aren't as easy to answer. They, typically, aren't a finger swipe away, and podcasts and cable news don't have analysts talking about it. But I'm willing to bet what's happening with Asian markets or even Hurricane Ian's effects aren't a part of the answers to what drives your business. Yet, as leaders, we're letting that news drive local decisions.

When listening to global and national news, it's easy to get caught up in a Chicken Little mentality (the sky is falling, the sky is falling). Doom and gloom are around every corner. Yes, the national economy is not doing what most would like to see. There are major signs of a recession, tightening markets, and federal response. However, those news stories are not substitutes for knowing your business.

Every community, and I'd argue business, feels the effect of a recession and boom market very differently. We must make decisions based on real knowledge of what is happening in our businesses and community. Global and national news is necessary but not a substitute for specific, accurate, local data.

As a Chamber Member, you have a team of local people willing to help. There are many local business advisors (CPAs, Marketing and Business Consultants, Attorneys, Insurance Agents, Bankers, etc.) that can help you create a dashboard with information about your business. They can craft solutions to ride whatever wave may or may not hit you. Give us a call or shoot over an email, and let's make sure you have those "Shark Tank" numbers ready.

Brewery's Hazy IPA wins gold medal

Soccer City 1852 takes the gold in the most competitive category at the Great American Beer Festival



Karis Caddell
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

1852 Brew Company scored a major goal by winning the gold medal in the most competitive category at the Great American Beer Festival, where they showed fellow craft beer enthusiasts all they have to offer.

The Great American Beer Festival is a national beer competition that evaluates hundreds of craft beers throughout the country, with over 100 categories judges evaluate and awards presented to the top three beers. After submitting four of their beers to the festival, 1852 heard back on Saturday, Sept. 23 that their Hazy IPA won gold in the Juicy IPA category.

"It's such a big thing, it's like the Olympics of beer... For Will (Peltzer) and 1852 Co. to win the most popular category, with the most entries, and to win the gold medal is just mind-blowing," founder and CEO of Soccer City 1852 Visalia, Jeremy Schultz said.

Schultz continued to explain that 1852's secret weapon when it comes to brewing beer is their brewmaster, Will Peltzer. Peltzer, whose family are local citrus farmers, had been honing his craft of brewing beers in San Diego with Karl Strauss Brewing.

"I wanted it to be really juicy. ... There's no bitterness. It's almost like an orange juice," Peltzer said.

1852 submitted three other beers to the competition this year, including their Mexican Lager for the international lager category, their blonde for the blonde ale category and their double IPA for the experimental IPA category.

Schultz thought that their Mexican lager might do well in the competition because of its popularity but noted that sports bars often sell more lager because of their demographic as a bar and soccer facility.

"Craft beer drinkers who are not so familiar with our spot might not have come here," Peltzer said. "I would probably be in that same boat because I'm a craft beer guy; and if I heard there was a soccer facility with beer, in all honesty, my first assumption would

See HAZY on page 3



New place and a new face

Arts Visalia, a community center for the visual arts, is pleased to introduce its new Executive Director and Assistant Director. Tracy Polkownikow has been promoted to the Executive Director position after 18 months as Assistant Gallery Director. Claudia Gudino was recently hired as the new Assistant Director. Both leaders are committed to the Arts Visalia mission of developing and promoting the visual arts to enhance the quality of life in our community.

Tracy Polkownikow
Executive Director



As Assistant Director, Tracy took the lead to grow the children's art education programming and enhancing the skillsets

of the Arts Visalia children's art instructors. Gallery visitors viewing the works of the young artists and parents of students applauded the quality of the art classes that Tracy organized. She also played a key role in growing the art workshop experiences for adults, bringing in a variety of artists from the community to teach printmaking, silver jewelry crafting, painting, and artistic business practices. Aside from managing the educational programming, Tracy worked closely with the Gallery Director to learn what really makes Arts Visalia a thriving organization. After accepting the Executive Director position, Tracy dove right in and has successfully implemented the September and October exhibitions.

Tracy is a pen and ink illustrative artist who has been commissioned by both private and public entities since 2006. Her work has been collected by individuals as far away as the Czech Republic and Australia. She is a

freelance illustrator and former owner/operator of Genesis Organic Farm which included public outreach, a Community Supported Agricultural program, as well as educational programming for local families on growing food without synthetic amendments. Tracy is working to complete her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Sacramento State University. She is married to the passionately community-oriented Parker Paul and has a persnickety feline for a roommate named Haku.

Tracy's vision moving forward with Arts Visalia is to continue to provide a platform for a diverse body of artists, including those who may not traditionally have had access to gallery experience. She hopes to reach the rich trove of creatives in Tulare County and open doors for those who may have never considered showing their work in a gallery setting. She is also interested in showing the works of artists who are well practiced in art to expose patrons and other community members to the wider world of visual art. She is dedicated to dismantling the intimidating or traditional views of what an art gallery is and open doors so that visual arts can become an integral part of life for every community member.

Claudia Gudino
Assistant Director



As the new Assistant Director, Claudia Gudino is motivated to continue sharing her love and knowledge of the arts to the community. She believes that few things bring people together more beautifully than art, allowing us to transcend limitations and truly express ourselves in ways we

See ARTS on page 4

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Christopher Dushane
Company: The American Legion Sierra Post 785
Title: Sierra Post 785 Commander



Commander Chris Dushane presents American Red Cross Local Director Lori Wilson with the \$1000 donation. Also pictured is Sierra Post 785 Member and American Red Cross volunteer Ray Quintana.

The American Legion Sierra Post 785 was founded in 1954. Since inception, Sierra Post 785 members have been active in the community providing services and assistance to veterans and their families. Following American Legion's Four Core Pillars, the Legion is committed to mentoring youth and the sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow servicemembers and veterans.

Many of Sierra Post 785's members were born and raised in the Central Valley, served our country's military around the globe, and returned home to continue serving America.

Activities and support include:

- **Annual Memorial Day Ceremonies:** Sierra Post 785 members are instrumental in participating in the Avenue of Flags, including the preparation of cemetery grounds, stenciling the donated burial flags of veterans with their name, branch of service and location number to ensure the flags are flown in the same location year after year, unfurling the flags in the morning for display and properly returning them safely to storage in the evening.
- **Community Flag Replacement Project:**

To increase awareness of the American Flag and its symbolism, Sierra Post 785 replaces tattered flags throughout the community at no cost.

■ **Veterans Strengthening America:** Sierra Post 785 provides a weekly Coffee and donuts social on Wednesdays at 6:30 am at the Visalia Veterans Memorial Building.

■ **Community fundraisers:** Toys for Tots, youth sports sponsorships, Maui Wildfire relief fund, Veterans Mural Restoration Foundation Inc., four annual high school scholarships, and many more.

In 2024, The American Legion Sierra Post 785 will proudly mark its 70th anniversary, a testament to seven decades of unwavering commitment to veterans and the citizens of Tulare County. This remarkable milestone stands as a testament to the dedication of its members and the enduring values of service and camaraderie. As they celebrate their history, the post also looks ahead with a renewed sense of purpose. With the goal of expanding their outreach and impact, Sierra Post 785 is passionate about welcoming new members into their ranks, ensuring that their mission continues to thrive and benefit the community for generations to come.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

CITY UPDATE

The Nonprofit Program Fund

In a season of thanks, the City of Visalia has much to be grateful for. Visalia is as vibrant as ever, with enthusiasm and activity throughout the community. With the end of 2023 on the horizon, we're reminded of the richness of the past months and the opportunity the new year holds.

To help keep our City shining bright, Visalia supports the efforts of agencies working with young people through the Nonprofit Program Fund.

While the application period will soon be coming to a close, nonprofits that provide programs and services to Visalia youth still have time to apply. There is \$65,000 in total grant funding available, with grants ranging from a minimum of \$1,000 to a maximum of \$6,500.

Applications are accepted now through Wednesday, November 15 at noon. Review of applications begins November 16.

A yearly opportunity, the City Council tasks the City's Citizens Advisory Committee to administer the Nonprofit Program Fund. Funding for the grant is based on a competitive process, and only



one application per agency will be accepted.

Grants will be funded for continuing programs, new programs, or scholarship programs. Eligible activities are those that provide youth of Visalia with positive alternatives to juvenile violence, crime, gang involvement, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, or other unhealthy behaviors. Requests for general operating support are not eligible. However, requests for seed funding to start new programs or activities are encouraged. Funds received must be expended during the program year of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Grant applications can be obtained in person by visiting City Hall West, from the City's website at www.visalia.city/youthgrants or requested by emailing ruth.pena@visalia.city.

For questions or more information, contact Ruth Peña, City of Visalia, at ruth.pena@visalia.city or (559) 713-4327.

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



Joe Iniguez
 CASA of Tulare County

Like embarking on a ship for the first time, Mr. Walter Deissler christened our commissioning not by the breaking of an expensive bottle of wine on the buttocks of a ship, but by melting our hearts and brisking our minds with the exciting future and importance of preserving historical heritage. Establishing the City of Visalia Historic Preservation Ordinance and being a founding member of Visalia Heritage, Mr. Deissler passionately yet humbly shared how ordinances preserve the exteriors of Victorian-style homes located in the historical district of Visalia for future generations to enjoy.

Train robberies, ladies of the night, and jailbreaks seemed to be an unknown part of Visalia's historical past. As we gayly trotted behind Mr. Terry Ommen (author and historian and our guide for the day), the thirteen members of our cohort imaginatively encountered the smells of the tobacco-spit-covered floors of saloons and smoke from the fires that brought so many buildings to their demise during the late 1800s. We heard the train whistles blowing as they loaded and unloaded freight and passengers at the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Depots. From the Rocky Pointe excavated granite that decorates the curbs to the opium-smoke-filled basements of Chinatown, it was pleasing to see how enriching the past makes the present.

When potholes, floods, or chickens threaten the livelihood and safety of your homes, do you ignore such nuisances and assume that eventually someone from the city will come and take care of it? What can Visalia residents do about such issues? Well, attend a Visalia City Council meeting to ensure that your voice is heard respectfully. We had the privileged opportunity of receiving a "crash course" on the inner workings of how "things get done" in Visalia. Mayor Brian Poochigian, County of Tulare Supervisor for District 3, Mrs. Amy Shuklian, and Policy Analyst for Senator Shannon Grove, Mrs. Shannon Major, educated the cohort on the process of ordinances, legislation, and resolving issues at the city, county, and state level. I myself was surprised to learn how accessible our representatives at the city and county levels are. One of the memorable moments was how the panel spoke of establishing "friendships" and relationships to make that personal connection with constituents. "Relationships are invaluable," stated Mrs. Shuklian. Another emphasized point to note was that the best thing a resident or leader-in-formation can do is to "Get involved."

The icing on the cake was the Mock Visalia City Council meeting. See LEADERSHIP on page 4

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:

- Cinnaholic Visalia
- Circle J Event Venue
- Dentists of Visalia

Micro-Business Members:

- KM Marketing & PR
- Neighbors of Visalia/Best Version Media
- Red Chair Digital Marketing

RENEWING

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

Business Connector Members:

- Angelina Jones Photography
- Central Valley Christian Schools*
- Clines Business Equipment Inc.*
- Delta Nursing & Rehabilitation Center*

- Orthopaedic Associates Medical Clinic, Inc.*
- Peninsula Messenger Service
- Quail Park at Shannon Ranch
- Valley Pacific Petroleum

Small Business Members:

- HNH Nut Co.*
- Lagomarsino Group
- Milan Institute
- Principal Financial Group
- Realty Stars

Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- McKellar Ranch Company, Inc.*

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Stand Up for Victims*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

KAWEAH HEALTH NOTE

Growth and change



Gary K. Herbst
 Chief Executive Officer
 Kaweah Health

The end of summer 2023 marks another chapter of growth and change at Kaweah Health. While we continue to see positive signs in our day-to-day operations, other challenges arrive that we must rise to meet. Throughout the many challenges Kaweah Health has faced in recent years, I can truly say that I am honored to work with such a dedicated and resilient team who remain focused on providing the best care possible to our community. The work of everyone here at Kaweah Health is inspiring to me and hopefully to our local community as well.



We were excited to be chosen as one of 17 hospitals to receive relief funding from the State's newly-created Distressed Hospital Loan Program, which I worked closely with California Senator Shannon Grove and others to make a reality. Kaweah Health will receive a \$20.8 million interest-free

loan through the program, which will be used to increase the hospital's cash on hand to 92 days (the number of average daily operating expenses covered by cash reserves), putting us above the 90 days cash on hand threshold expected by our bond holders. The loan is repayable over six years after an initial 18-month grace period. Included in the program is a provision that the loan could be forgiven, and we will continue to work with local legislators on qualifying for forgiveness. While this funding is a step in the right direction to providing initial assistance and stability to Kaweah Health and other hospitals, more work still needs to be done such as increasing Medi-Cal reimbursement rates and removing burdensome regulations so that Kaweah Health can continue caring for the community long into the future.

Such burdensome regulations include the recent passing of Senate Bill 525, which I mentioned in my previous letter from July. It requires a mandatory \$25 minimum wage for all employees of the health care sector by 2033 or sooner. The unfunded mandate places 100 percent of the financial burden on healthcare providers, regardless of their geographic location or current financial situation, and without any increase in Medi-Cal reimbursement rates. The bill is estimated to increase annual staffing costs to Kaweah Health by \$13 million in 2024, increasing 3.5 percent annually until reaching \$25 million in 2033. The increase applies to all jobs at health care facilities including janitorial, finance, housekeeping, groundskeeping, security, clerical, food service, and more. This arrives at a time when Kaweah Health is recovering from the global pandemic and the worst financial challenges in recent history, and comes in the form of another unfunded mandate at the hands of politicians in Sacramento.

Although the financial impact to the local community is yet undetermined, it is likely to strain local businesses as they are forced to raise their wages to compete with healthcare employers in a wide range of jobs. This will in turn drive the local cost of goods and services higher, further fueling inflation.

Without question, Kaweah Health greatly values and appreciates our employees. Over many years the hospital has worked hard to create a supportive environment and recognize employees for the life-saving work they do. As a not-for-profit, community hospital, our profits aren't deposited into investors' accounts. Our profits go back into caring for the community and taking care of our employees. Although I am greatly disappointed with the supporters of SB 525 and their lack of a more measured solution to solving staffing and quality of care issues, I will continue working hard to increase revenues and advocate for higher Medi-Cal reimbursement rates in order to pay employees the highest wages possible.

In our ongoing effort to improve the quality and access to services in our community, the Kaweah Health Medical Clinic on Plaza Drive is now open and offering occupational health services and more in the Industrial Park area of Visalia. We are also very excited about our partnership with Stanford Health's cardiothoracic surgery program, through which we are welcoming our first of three new cardiothoracic surgeons to the Kaweah Health Cardiothoracic Surgery Clinic, Dr. Michael McLean. Dr. McLean is a board-certified thoracic and cardiac surgeon and Stanford faculty member who will bring world-class heart surgery to the residents of Tulare County.

Please remember that local residents can support quality healthcare in their community by using the excellent primary and specialty care, clinics, labs, testing, and more that are available locally. Some of the best care around is right in our backyard. And as always, Kaweah Health is here, committed to serving the people of Tulare County.

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

©2023, Visalia Chamber of Commerce. All rights reserved. Reproduction by any means of the entire contents or any portion of this publication without written permission is prohibited. The appearance of any advertisements in the publication does not constitute support or endorsement for any product, person, cause, business, or organization named therein, unless specifically noted otherwise in the advertisement.

CONTACT US

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

CHAT WITH CHARLIE

visaliachamber.org/chat

LEARN MORE >>

Tulare County was ranked number one ag producing county in the United States for 2022.

Visalia Rawhide was honored as the Community Spirit Award at **United Way of Tulare County's** Annual Breakfast.

Able Inc. announced the promotion of Chad Oldham to the position of Human Resources and Administrative Generalist. Chad joined Able as a CES instructor in 2018.

Tulare County Economic Development Corporation was awarded a \$25,000 grant from **Bank of the Sierra**.

Congratulations to **Chapala Grill** who celebrated their 20th Anniversary in October!

Bank of the Sierra announced during August and September, it donated a total of 1,500 backpacks to 21 schools and youth organizations throughout the communities it serves.

Family HealthCare Network welcomed their newest providers, Isabella Gieck, PA-C, and Usha Mahat, MD to the Visalia School Health Center. FHCN also celebrated The Book Nook's one-year anniversary in October featuring community events through-



out the month.

Central Valley Community Bank (CVCB) partnered with the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco to deliver a \$480,000 AHP grant to **Self-Help Enterprises'** Guardian Village project to create new affordable housing in Reedley. CVCB announced in October an all-stock merger agreement with Community West Bank. The merger includes a name change to Community West Bank.

Sequoia Riverlands Trust hosted their annual Evening Under the Oaks celebration in October. During the event, Mike Chrisman was honored with the 2023 SRT Alan George Conservation Award.

Delta Air Lines announced in September the launch of daily nonstop flights out of **Fresno Yosemite International Airport (FAT)** to Atlanta.

Congratulations to Jordan Mulrooney of **RE/MAX Success** who earned The Institute for Luxury Home Marketing's Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist designation in recognition of experience, knowledge, and expertise in high-end residential properties.

RIBBON CUTTINGS



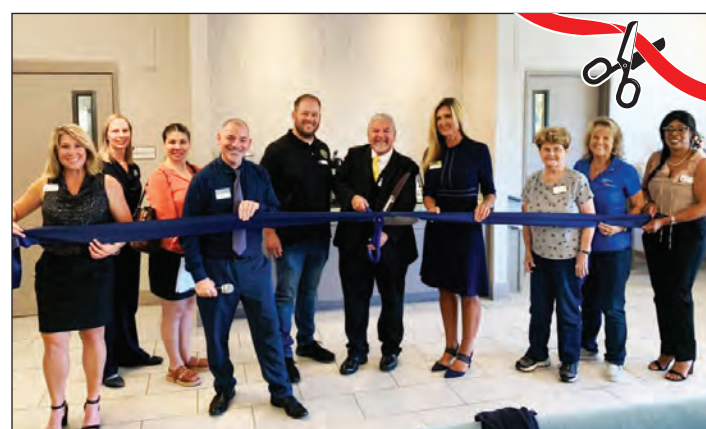
Rapid Care Center of Visalia hosted a ribbon cutting in celebration of their grand opening in September. Call (559) 334-3771 to book an appointment.



In celebration of their rebranding, Partyworks hosted a ribbon cutting. Visit them at 1917 W Caldwell Ave for your party needs.



Visalia First hosted a ribbon cutting to launch their Catalyst Bible College. For more information on the program, please call (559) 733-9070.



Walnut Park celebrated their grand reopening in October with a ribbon cutting. Call (559) 739-1339 to schedule a tour of their 4119 W Walnut Ave location.



Cinnaholic Visalia hosted a ribbon cutting in celebration of their October grand opening. Find your next treat at 204 W Main St.

Visalia UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FORWARD 2030

A Community-Driven Blueprint for the Future

The Visalia Unified School Board has made incredible strides in enhancing public education for every student in Visalia. In 2021, our board set a goal to bring leadership and alignment to the families of the 30,000 plus students it serves. Their first task as a governance team was to work with the community to find a Superintendent with experience in building strategic plans for large systems. Next, the Board worked to develop a set of Core Beliefs and Commitments to help center the work of our district. Lastly, our board requested that the work of our district be aligned across all divisions. The work of the VUSD Board over the course of the year is now culminating in our district's first strategic plan for the next five years.

We presented our first draft of the plan called, "VUSD Forward 2030: A Community-Driven Blueprint for the Future" to our board at the October 17th, 2023 school board meeting. The plan consists of themes and focus areas that encompass every aspect of Visalia Unified to help ensure our district's mission: "Every student engaged every day in high-quality, challenging, and meaningful learning experiences in a safe, supportive, and connected environment." Building this strategic plan has been an eight month-long process and there is still work to be done to build out our district's initiatives and actions for the plan. Below is an outline of how the plan will be organized and implemented, including our outlined themes and focus areas:

Foundations: Mission & Vision, Core Beliefs & Commitments, and Commitment to Student Learning.

Themes: Our intentions for the future based on our Foundations.

- High Expectations, High Achievement
- Empower Students
- Engage the Community

Focus Areas: Priorities to realize our intentions aligned to each theme.

See VUSD on page 4



PHOTO BY KENNY GOODMAN
Will Peltzer and Jeremy Schultz of 1852 Brew Co. in Visalia celebrate their Hazy IPA's recent national beer award.

HAZY
Continued from page 1

be that the beers are probably not that good."

Schultz and Peltzer are excited to see that winning gold at the festival is bringing them a new demographic of customers.

"I was like, 'Oh, the lager is going to win.' Our Mexican lager is very popular," Schultz said. "Yesterday, Will and I were sitting in the tap room and we had people come in that have never been there before, but saw that the Hazy had won gold. So

SENIOR MANAGEMENT PROFILE



Chad Vawter MBA
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Family HealthCare Network

Chad Vawter, MBA has been the Deputy CEO since January 2021. Prior to this promotion, Mr. Vawter served as FHCN's Chief Financial and Strategy Officer and Chief Financial Officer since 2012. In his 25 year career, he has built expertise in budgeting and forecasting, financial reporting and analysis, project management, operations, and strategic planning in multiple industries including healthcare, construction, and banking.

Mr. Vawter has a Master in Business Administration degree with a concentration in Finance and Management from Rockhurst University. He also graduated cum laude from Kansas State University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, majoring in Finance, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Economics.

Chad currently serves on the Visalia Chamber Board of Directors.

they were just there just to try the Hazy."

The beers Peltzer develops have been recognized before. According to Schultz, 1852 previously won best beer at Oktoberfest of 2022 which had judges from San Diego. They won with their Mexican Lager, which is currently their best-selling beer.

Peltzer started home brewing in 2016 as a hobby before mov-

ing to San Diego where he started working for Karl Strauss. After that, he worked at a couple of other breweries before becoming the brewmaster at 1852 Brew Co. in Visalia.

Schultz explained that 1852 got its name because Tulare County was incorporated in July of 1852 and the brand of the company represents regional pride and loving where you come from.

IT'S TIME TO MARKET WITH THE CHAMBER!

4,000+

E-blast list reaches: Company owners, Company execs, Civic-Minded Individuals AND MORE!

LEARN MORE: visaliachamber.org/marketing

Enjoy

7 POINTS DELIVERY
Cannabis delivery available in Fresno, Tulare and Kern County.

7POINTS.BIZ

Best Brands. Best Prices. Best Service!

At checkout use promo code:
7PTS30
and get 30% OFF your next cannabis delivery.

7POINTS.BIZ
CCL19-0002381 | C11-00012000-LIC

Learn more about **TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES** with **TRAVEL POINTS**

Never stop Exploring!

SIGN UP FOR UPDATES!

VISALIACHAMBER.ORG/TRAVEL
559.734.5876

TRIPS PROVIDED BY: COLLETTE VACATIONS; CST#: 2006766-20 CHAMBER EXPLORATIONS; CST#: 2048841.40

Thank you

TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

CHAMPION:



VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:



KEYSTONE:



MEDIA PARTNERS:



Daniel Alcaraz

Tri Counties Bank
 Daniel Alcaraz is a Senior Business Banker with Tri Counties Bank and has been in the banking industry for 10 years. His journey began as a teller with Bank of America and quickly rose through the ranks to specialize in small business banking. Daniel takes great pride in his dedication as a professional in his field and making a positive impact on his customers' financial lives.

Kellie Asher

Elite Medical
 Kellie Asher joined Elite Medical in 2018 and steadily advanced to the role of Clinic Operations Manager in 2020. As the primary point of contact for all clinic staff members, she plays a crucial role in communication with many of the company's clients. In 2005, she successfully completed her Front/Back Office Medical Assistant course and obtained certification from Tulare Adult School. With 18 years of experience as a Medical Assistant, she has worked in various clinical settings, including Work Compensation, internal medicine, neurology, and family medicine. Kellie was born and raised in Tulare and is a wife and mother of three. During her free time, she relishes being outdoors, whether it's fishing on her boat or camping with her family and friends.

Victoria Balderas

Community Services Employment Training (CSET)
 Victoria Balderas is a Human Resources Senior Program Coordinator with Community Services Employment Training (CSET) and has 10 years of experience within Human Resources. As a Central Valley native, Victoria has a passion for learning and providing opportunities and growth to others. She has four children with her high school sweetheart and when not working, travels with her family with competitive sports.

Dave Byl

American Ambulance of Visalia
 Dave Byl is the Operations

Manager for American Ambulance of Visalia. As a licensed paramedic for over 24 years, Dave has extensive experience in Emergency Medical Services related to training, operations, administration, budgeting, and deployment. While primarily focused on daily operations and general administration of ambulance services, Dave has experience with EMS education, basic and advanced life support multi casualty management, and has been instrumental in assisting Tulare County Health and Human Services with COVID-19 management. When not working, Dave loves to BBQ with friends and family and compete in local BBQ competitions.

Tiffany Garcia

California Dairies, Inc.
 Tiffany Garcia currently serves as the Talent Acquisition Specialist at California Dairies, Inc. She has a passion for people and tries every day to show that through her interactions. Tiffany currently lives in Lemoore with her beautiful family where they enjoy all things outdoors: swimming, camping, boating, and football.

Petra Gaytan

Kaweah Health
 Petra Gaytan is a licensed marriage and family therapist and has served the Mental Health field for over 18 years. She currently serves as the Psych Assessment Team Manager at Kaweah Health Hospital, overseeing three teams: Social Work, Psychiatric Assessment and Triage, and Recreation Therapist. Born and raised in Tulare County, Petra's goal is to continue to grow and learn as a leader and to provide the utmost care and support to her patients and staff. When not working, her life revolves around her family and enjoys traveling.

Kurt Hardcastle

Visalia Unified School District
 Kurt Hardcastle is a Business Teacher within Visalia Unified School District and an adjunct professor with over seven years of experience. In addition, he

has been a small business consultant for over 12 years, providing guidance and support to numerous enterprises. Raised in Visalia, he has a deep sense of community values and a commitment to make a positive impact on the lives of others. Kurt has served 10 years on the United Way of Tulare County Board of Directors, where he has actively contributed to various social initiatives and philanthropic endeavors.

Joe Iniguez

CASA of Tulare County
 Joe Iniguez is a Family Connections Program Coordinator with CASA of Tulare County. He was born in Tulare, raised in Visalia and currently resides in Woodlake with his family. Joe is an Orthodox Traditional Roman Catholic, who when not working, enjoys road trips, hiking, praying, and taco-tasting.

Melissa Lopez

Revel Events Co.
 Melissa Lopez is the Catering and Events Director at Revel Events Co. and has been with the company since 2019. She has helped build the organization which includes five venues, multiple hospitality staff, catering services, and bar services. Prior to her current position, Melissa lived in New York for over 20 years where she managed large dental teams. Dentistry was always a passion, but her love for serving others allowed Melissa to flourish in the hospitality industry quickly. When not working, Melissa enjoys crime and mystery shows, and is a huge Disney fan.

Robert Meier

Visalia Police Department
 Robert Meier is a Sergeant within the Patrol Division of the Visalia Police Department (VPD). Originally from Turlock, Robert graduated from the police academy in 1998. Prior to his eight years at VPD, he worked with the Tulare County Sheriff's Department and Porterville Police Department. Robert is the treasurer of Enchanted Playhouse Theater Company, which promotes literacy in children. When not

working or volunteering with family, Robert is working on obtaining a second degree in theatre.

Maria Rodriguez Ornelas

Kaweah Health
 Maria Rodriguez Ornelas is a Senior Communications Specialist at Kaweah Health. She has been serving at Kaweah Health for more than three years doing social media, media relations, and reputation management. Maria is incredibly passionate about conveying authentic, profound messaging through video storytelling. When she's not running around with a camera, Maria enjoys spending time with her family, sightseeing, dancing, and is a soccer fanatic.

Adriana Soto

Tulare County Board of Supervisors
 Adriana Soto is a Board Representative with Tulare County Board of Supervisors. As a DACA recipient and the first generation in her family to attend university, Adriana graduated with a B.A. in political science and has hopes of going back to receive her master's degree in public administration. She has lived most of her life throughout the Central Valley, both in cities and unincorporated communities. Her long-term goal is to continue to help her community in the sidelines by connecting them to resources. When not working, Adriana enjoys checking off her bucket list, including riding in a hot air balloon and skydiving.

Ty Stelow

Tulare County Sheriff's Office
 Ty Stelow is a Captain at the Tulare County Sheriff's Office. Born and raised in Bakersfield, Ty graduated in 2002 from the Sequoias Kings and Tulare County Police Academy. He has been with the Sheriff's office for over 21 years and has progressed from deputy to sergeant to lieutenant and has served in various roles. Ty currently oversees personnel, internal affairs, dispatch, training, and special projects. He has pursued multiple professional growth opportunities such as with the West Point Leadership Academy, San Diego Regional Correctional Leadership Program, and FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association. When not working, Ty enjoys traveling by vehicle across the country and is an enthusiast of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

Erica Vega

Eagle Mountain Casino
 Erika Vega is a Legacy Rewards Coordinator at Eagle Mountain Casino and has worked for the company for 10 years. Her position revolves around customer service and focuses on providing guests with the best experience every time they visit. Erika is a mother to a son, loves Italian food, and enjoys road trips with awesome music.

LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 2

ing we held. Yours truly dramatically volunteered to present himself as one of five council members for the dramatization. Councilman, Steve Nelsen and City Manager, Leslie Caviglia of the City of Visalia were our instructors for the activity. It was nice to see how a real meeting might be conducted. One can easily be dismayed by the jargon and vernacular of legal procedural proceedings but take heart and know that such meetings are led by council members who take the time to sincerely guide you and listen to you when you participate; especially if it is your first time.

There was so much information and insight shared at our first Day Session. I know that my explanation of such events and happenings merely scratch the surface, but I trust that the journey the cohort has embarked on will come with its waves of challenges. It may seem at times that the ship has been shredded by the waves, and we find ourselves clinging to pieces of the shipwrecked wood afloat in the sea of the unknown. I hope and trust that we will always be there for each other as we navigate our way through the foggy murky water toward the land of becoming strong future leaders.

VUSD

Continued from page 3

- Academic Achievement and Preparedness: Ensure all students demonstrate consistent academic growth and graduate fully prepared for college and career.
- Collaboration and Leadership: Cultivate a culture of belonging, collaboration, and leadership to drive positive system transformation.
- Faculty and Staff Development: Attract, recruit, and retain staff through comprehensive professional development that supports continuous growth and effectiveness.
- Technology and Innovative Approaches: Incorporate relevant technology and employ data-informed, student-driven methods to enhance academic achievement and prepare students for college and/or career. Initiatives: Strategies that will help achieve the focus area and outcomes.
- Initiatives: Intentional strategies which will help achieve the focus areas and themes.



VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ARTS

Continued from page 1

didn't think were possible. A lover of art and education, Claudia strives to surround herself with the visual and performing arts. As a young child she was blessed to attend Vista Academy for the Visual and Performing arts where she developed her passion for the arts. She made her first pinch pot at the age of 8 and her love for ceramics has only become stronger. She creates pottery to this very day and is still in love with clay. Claudia has been an active member of the community for over 20 years, teaching CPR

classes, leading a local hike, participating in art festivals, and teaching pottery classes. Passionate about sharing knowledge with the community, she founded the California Adventure Group, which helped individuals connect with locals in their cities and towns. She organized hikes in the national parks, art walks in the city, and even rock climbing and skydiving events. When she's not "claying" around or working at the gallery, she is out on the lake paddleboarding with her dog Jasper, biking on country roads, or watching the Colombian version of American Ninja Warrior.