

www.visaliachamber.org Business Update

AWARD-WINNING MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Vol. 43, No. 14 | February 2024

IMPACT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2024

With Ben Moore, inspiration and transformation are low-hanging fruit

IMPACT Leadership Conference set to inspire and transform with keynote speaker Ugly Company founder Ben Moore and dynamic breakout sessions

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the upcoming IMPACT Leadership Conference, a transformative event designed to empower business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals in the Central Valley. The conference will take place on March 21, featuring Ben Moore, founder of The Ugly Company, and a series of dynamic breakout sessions presented by local industry experts and community leaders.

About IMPACT

The IMPACT Leadership Conference is a unique initiative by the Visalia Chamber, aiming to provide quality leadership and workforce training opportunities for business



owners and employees in the Central Valley. This conference serves as a platform for learning and development, focusing on workplace skills, personal growth, and community activism to cultivate the next generation of business and community leaders.

Keynote Speaker: Ben Moore, Founder of The Ugly Company

The highlight of the conference will be the keynote address by Ben Moore, also known as “Big Ugly,” the visionary founder of The Ugly Company. Moore’s inspiring journey, from the seat of a tractor in the San Joaquin Valley to building a successful brand and business, will be shared with attendees. His story embodies adaptability, resilience, entrepreneurial spirit, innovative thinking, purpose-driven branding, and the power of teamwork and dedication.

Breakout sessions

IMPACT will feature breakout sessions covering a diverse range of topics with valuable takeaways for attendees. Some of the sessions include:

- 1. Unlocking the Power of Multigenerational Synergy:** Explore leveraging generational differences for innovation, productivity, and team cohesion.
- 2. The Changing Landscape of Fundraising:** Learn innovative approaches to engage donors, adapt to digital fundraising, and lead successful philanthropic initiatives.



Ben Moore, also known as “Big Ugly,” is the visionary founder of The Ugly Company, based in Farmersville.

- 3. Discovering Purpose and Passion Beyond Your Career:** Embrace the Power of Community Engagement and explore a life filled with significance, connection, and fulfillment.
- 4. Unlocking the Power of**

- Positive Thinking:** Explore the impact of positive thinking on life, career, and overall well-being.
- 5. Elevate Your Workplace with AI:** Understand how AI is reshaping the future of pro-

See IMPACT on page 2

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

A heartfelt farewell and excitement for the future



Gail Zurek
President and CEO
Visalia Chamber

Dear Valued Members and Friends of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, With a mix of emotions, I write to inform you of my resignation as President and CEO of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce, effective June 7, 2024. Serving

this incredible community for nearly a decade has been an honor. As I transition, I want to express my gratitude for the deep partnership that has led to our collective achievements.

Reflecting on the transformative journey we’ve undertaken together, I am immensely proud of the innovative spirit that has defined the Visalia Chamber of Commerce during our shared tenure. Our commitment to the business community and the well-being of Visalia has resulted in significant milestones, leaving a lasting legacy for the Chamber.

I am deeply grateful to the Board of Directors serving currently and since 2014, the entire business community, and our dedicated staff for their unwavering support, collaboration, and hard work. Chamber work is not always easy, but together, we’ve made it both fun and worthwhile. Your dedication has been the driving force behind our successes, from developing crucial resources for local businesses to establishing a stable financial foundation for the Chamber.

As I bid farewell, I am confident that the Visalia Chamber of Commerce will be in capable hands. The selection committee is committed to finding a candidate to carry on the incredible work we started and help the Chamber reach new levels. If you know a qualified candidate, more informa-

tion about the position and process can be found at visaliachamber.org/president. I am excited to witness the continued success and growth of the Chamber under new leadership. To ensure a seamless transition, I will be working closely with the Board of Directors.

Serving as your President and CEO has been a profound honor. The Visalia Chamber of Commerce holds a special place in my heart, allowing me to meet and serve countless wonderful individuals in this community. The role of a Chamber of Commerce is a unique and vital one, acting as a convener of leaders addressing complex business challenges and celebrating our business community. Throughout this journey, I’ve had the privilege of working alongside all of you during the most challenging and extraordinary times in the lives of your businesses and our community.

Over these nearly 10 years, our focus has extended beyond the growth of local businesses to shaping policies and legislation that positively impact the entire community. From championing the creation of a microbrewery district to advocating for sensible solutions for commercial vehicles and supporting local businesses facing ADA legal challenges, we have left an indelible mark on Visalia. Our collaborative efforts, especially during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, showcased our commitment to supporting and connecting local businesses with vital resources.

As I step down on June 7th, I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of leading the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. The journey has been remarkable, and I am confident that the Chamber will continue to thrive under new leadership.

I express my deepest thanks for your unwavering support and collaboration over the years. I am excited to see what new horizons lie ahead for this dynamic organization.

With heartfelt gratitude and warm regards,
Gail Zurek

BANK OF AMERICA

B of A deposits nearly \$900K to local nonprofits

Fresno, Tulare County nonprofits receive monetary, volunteer support from Bank of America and its local employees



Serena Bettis
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

Bank of America awarded multiple nonprofits in the Fresno and Visalia areas with various grants throughout 2023, contributing to the company’s goals of creating local impact and promoting economic opportunity.

Nearly \$900,000 went to 10 organizations, including five Fresno County-based nonprofits, four Tulare County-based nonprofits and the Central California Food Bank, which serves the broader San Joaquin Valley, according to a Jan. 18 press release from Bank of America. Organizations in Kings, Madera and Merced counties also received grants through the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

“The funding came from philanthropic grants, employee matching gifts and sponsorships to help nonprofits remove barriers to economic mobility, specifically through programs addressing housing, food insecurity, health and mental health services and workforce development,” the press release said.

Nonprofits funded in Fresno County included the Marjaree Mason Center, the Poverello House, Habitat for Humanity, Live Again Fresno and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County. In December 2023, Bank of America named the Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County as its 2023 Neighborhood Champion and provided the clubs with a multi-year grant of \$50,000.

Tulare County nonprofits that received grants include the Visalia Emergency Aid Council, Family Services of Tulare County, Self-Help Enterprises and Community Services and Employment Training (CSET). The press release said CSET is using the grant to help fund its youth internship program.

Funding provided to the Central California Food Bank went specifically to the Groceries2Go program, Bank of America said, which is an appointment-based food pickup program that allows families and individuals to access a full box of shelf-stable foods and fresh produce every two weeks.

“Nonprofits understand the needs and obstacles the greater Fresno region faces, uniquely positioning them to develop solutions and services required to promote economic opportunity,” Mark Riley, Bank of America Fresno and Visalia president, said in the release.

“Bank of America will continue to deploy capital and resources to tackle the barriers embedded within our community and create real impact in the lives of the individuals and families we serve.”

Local bank employees also contributed 11,000 hours of volunteer service to area causes in 2023, according to the release. Bank employees assisted with food distributions, provided toys and clothing to children in need and hosted free financial education workshops—in both English and Spanish—as part of the Better Money Habits program.

Bank of America provides grants and volunteer services to organizations that apply to a variety of programs the company organizes. In 2024, local nonprofits can apply for grants through a request for proposal (RFP) process that looks at two areas of supporting economic mobility.

Organizations that focus on contributing to their community’s economic mobility based on the needs of individuals and families—such as through workforce development and education—can apply between Jan. 22 and Feb. 16.

Organizations that contribute to economic mobility with a focus on the needs of the community—such as through affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization—can apply between May 27 and June 21.

According to the Bank of America web site, this RFP process is a refined version of a local grant application, allowing committees composed of local bank officers to award grants based on local needs and allocated budgets. Grant amounts depend on the region’s mar-

See GRANTS on page 4

CITY UPDATE

Looking back, looking ahead

With 2024 underway, we can look back over 2023 to tally the final numbers and note the progress made in economic growth.

On the single-family residential side, 2023 brought a total of 335 permits issued, the lowest count since 2012. Attributable to higher interest rates and part of a nationwide trend, Visalia continues to flourish as a growth opportunity in California. With many annexations and subdivision maps again moving forward with the adoption of the Ag Mitigation Program, single-family activity looks to pick back up in 2024. Along with it is the forecast of numerous, new multi-family or single/multi-family mixed residential site plans that have cleared Site Plan Review.

On the commercial front, 2023 brought 51 new commercial permits issued, equating to over 1.96 million square feet. This marked the fifth straight year of over one million square feet of new commercial space. While the bulk of the square footage comes via new industrial development, this new



commercial activity has been widespread with new retail leading the way. Similarly, commercial alteration and addition activity saw a busy year with 280 permits issued.

Commercial permit activity of note this year includes CapRock’s 3rd building, which will initiate industrial development activity west of Plaza Drive, G4 Enterprises moving forward with their 310,000 square foot spec industrial space, numerous local industrial expansions, redevelopment of the Sequoia Mall, buildout of new retail at Visalia Parkway and Mooney, Family HealthCare Network expansion downtown and a new TownePlace Suites by Marriott, near Adventure Park.

As 2024 rolls on, it’s expected to bring continued build-out of major shopping centers across town, additional industrial growth in the Industrial Park, additions downtown with professional facilities, dining, and entertainment and, hopefully, new permitting activity for other commercial areas across the city.

TRAVEL WITH US

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

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.

Keystone Members:

- Adventist Health in the Central Valley

Small Business Members:

- Tuscany Villas
- Visalia Hyundai

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Visalia Community Enhancement Foundation
- The Center for Art Culture & History Exeter (CACHE)

Micro-Enterprise Members:

- Downtown Visalia Certified Farmers Market

RENEWING

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

Community Investor Members:

- Bank of the Sierra - Main St.*

Business Connector Members:

- Franey's Carpet One Floor & Home Design Center
- Paradise Pools Inc.
- Peninsula Messenger Service*
- Ruddell Stanton Bixler Mauritsen & Evans, LLP

Business Builder Members:

- Advanced Body and Laser Center*
- Fresno Yosemite International Airport
- VWR, part of Avantor*

Business Connector Members:

- Ace Hardware Distribution Center
- Assemblyman Devon Mathis
- Cal Bennetts & All-Ways Moving
- Classic Charter
- CORE Business Interiors
- Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Mike Young
- Giant Chevrolet Cadillac
- Guarantee Real Estate*
- Health Net, LLC
- Tachi Palace Casino Resort*
- United Staffing Associates
- Zeltmacher Structural Design Engineering, Inc.

Small Business Members:

- American Care Hospice
- D.R. Horton Central Valley*
- Elaine Rider/State Farm Insurance Agency*
- Goodies Cookies & Specialty Cakes
- Graham & Associates*

- GreenBean*
- Gubler & Abbott
- Johnson & Black, LLP*
- Kids2Dentist, LLC*
- Lyle B Stillwater, M.D. F.A.C.S.*
- Pacific Capital Strategies, Inc.
- Patrick L. Salazar State Farm Insurance Agency*
- Peck Planning and Development*
- Porterville Storage*
- Salt + Light Works
- Seals Construction*
- Sequoia Cigar Company
- Sequoia Painting LLC*
- Shaw's Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc.
- The Real Estate Connection
- Tulare County Library
- Valhalla Restaurant & Gift Shop*
- Vance Physical Therapy & Wellness



Business Connector Nonprofit Members:

- Jon Stemkoski's Celebrant Singers*
- The American Legion Department of California*

Small Business Nonprofit Members:

- Executives Association of Tulare County*
- The American Legion Department of California*

* Indicates membership in the Visalia Chamber 110% Club.

Happy Trails earns prestigious professional reaccreditation

Happy Trails Riding Academy, in Visalia, California, once again recently earned the designation of Premier Accredited Center by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.).

Happy Trails Riding Academy, partners individuals who have special needs, and others, with certified professionals and equines to achieve health, wellness and learning goals. By earning PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center status, Happy Trails Riding Academy, has demonstrated it is operating in accordance with nearly 200 PATH Intl. standards for the equine-assisted services (EAS) industry. Out of the more than 800 PATH Intl. Member Centers, only 250 hold this prestigious distinction.

To become a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center, Happy Trails Riding Academy, successfully passed an evaluation by trained PATH Intl. site visitors. Center evaluations cover a wide range of topics such as horse management, participant safety, equipment, quality of instruction, facility operations, volunteerism and best-business administrative practices, all with specific standards that must be met. These standards were developed and adopted by the PATH Intl. membership to ensure that centers follow procedures essential to safe, quality EAS programming. PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center is a designation indicating



to the public that a center has met a rigorous set of quality and safety standards. PATH Intl. requires that Premier Accredited Centers be re-accredited every five years to maintain this designation.

"By reattaining its PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center status, Happy Trails Riding Academy, has demonstrated a commitment to the highest standards when introducing individuals with special needs to a variety of equine-assisted services," said PATH Intl. Chief Executive Officer Kathy Alm. "PATH Intl. Accreditation is a respected benchmark in the EAS industry. It demonstrates leadership and a commitment to safety and to the highest professional standards."

For more information about Happy Trails Riding Academy, please contact Executive Director, Leslie Gardner at leslie@wearehappytrails.com, or visit their website at www.wearehappytrails.com For more information about the PATH Intl. Premier Accreditation process please visit: pathintl.org/accreditation.

Spring-tini

PRESENTED BY: VALLEY STRONG CREDIT UNION

SIP, SWAY, SAVOR: A GARDEN JAZZ AFFAIR

April 12, 2024 The Woodlands

TAKE YOUR SPRING EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL AT THE VISALIA CHAMBER'S LATEST EXCLUSIVE EVENT. IMMERSE YOURSELF IN AN ENCHANTING EVENING OF GARDEN JAZZ, INDULGE IN MINI SPECIALTY COCKTAIL TASTINGS, AND SAVOR DELECTABLE LIGHT BITES.

BUENO BEVERAGE COMPANY | ASHOORI & CO. JEWELERS

VISALIACHAMBER.ORG / SPRINGTINI

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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Editor Gail Zurek
Layout The Sun-Gazette

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Visit www.visaliachamber.org

IMPACT

Continued from page 1

ductivity and innovation in the workplace.

6. The Unstoppables: Learn from Visalia's most inspiring entrepreneurs about their experiences, triumphs, and challenges.

7. Navigating the Evolution of Marketing in a Post-Social Media World: Explore evolving marketing strategies and techniques for success in the post-social media era.

8. Effective Workplace Communication: Discover the art of addressing tough issues, curing toxicity, and overcoming team challenges for a healthier work environment.

Affordable cost and registration

The IMPACT Leadership Conference is an affordable leadership training option ensuring individuals from all backgrounds can benefit. Register at visaliachamber.org/impact

Join us

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a transformative event that brings together leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals in the Central Valley. Register now for the IMPACT Leadership Conference at visaliachamber.org/impact.



HOMEOWNERSHIP ESSENTIALS WORKSHOP

Workshop Highlights:

- Costs and Responsibilities
- Loan and Repayment Process
- Financial Readiness Assessment

Date: Wednesday, February 28th
Time: 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Location: Wyndham Visalia | 9000 W Airport Dr, Visalia, CA 93277

VALLEY STRONG CREDIT UNION

Co-Hosted By: VISALIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

This credit union is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

Name: Leslie Hayes
Company: LOM Productions Weddings & Events
Title: Owner/Lead Designer

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

Being a part of the Chamber and Ambassador has been beneficial and important to my business. It allows me to get out into the community and communicate with new and existing businesses. I know that new business appreciates our support when the ambassadors go out and cheer them onto their success. When I'm out people see my brand and have a better understanding of what I do as a wedding/event designer, planner, and manager.

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

When owners and their employees become a part of the Visalia Chamber, the goal is to go out into our community, attend events and being around other businesses. You get an opportunity to communicate and learn about each other's business but most importantly we learn about each other as we represent those businesses.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GIGI KRAUS PHOTOGRAPHY

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

We love people and an important part of what we do is to support people and their experiences. It's not our wedding or event it's theirs, our clients. I can help with as much as we can for as little as they want. The people that work for me and with me are creative. We have a huge amount of respect for each other's talents.

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

We have a 16 and 17 years old at home, they'll sometimes sit in a dark theatre with us. All kidding aside, as a family we like going to the movies and then to dinner. Sequoia Brewing seems to be the family favorite after a movie because there is something for everyone. We also like attending the Sequoia Symphony when it's holiday movie night. Last year we saw Home Alone and this year it's Elf. We usually will have Quesadilla Gorrilla before the show, another favorite.

Zurek steps down as chamber CEO

Gail Zurek reflects on her legacy at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce as she readies to embark on a new path toward helping local businesses



Karis Caddell
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

Gail Zurek, who has dedicated herself to serving the local business community as CEO of the Chamber for almost a decade, is stepping down from her role to pursue a career in law, leaving behind a legacy of transformative leadership and a deep commitment to the well-being of businesses in Visalia.

Zurek is resigning her duties as the Chamber's CEO to pursue a career in law, that way she can continue to help local businesses in other ways. From helping the Chamber recover from effects of the 2008 recession, to staying dedicated to businesses during the pandemic, Zurek has surely left her mark on an institution that has unified the community for years.

"To work at the Chamber, you have to have a passion for local business, and I've been incredibly blessed to be surrounded by staff—and frankly—a board of directors whose passion and heart really is making sure that we have a strong vibrant local economy," Zurek said.

According to the Chamber's announcement of her departure, Zurek's impact has extended beyond conventional business counsel. Through her leadership, she has shaped local policies and legislation and fostered support for the business community in Visalia.

"Gail's departure leaves a void that will be felt throughout the business community," Nathan Halls, chair of the chamber's board of directors, said via the announcement. "Her transformative leadership has set a high standard, and we are grateful for the positive impact she has made during her tenure."

Some of the chamber's accomplishments under the leadership of Zurek include championing



PHOTO BY RIGOBERTO MORAN

Gail Zurek, who has served on the Visalia Chamber of Commerce for almost a decade, is stepping down from her role as CEO to continue helping local businesses in other ways.

the creation of a microbrewery district—which helped create jobs and revitalize the east side of the downtown district—updates to the city's sign ordinance, devising common sense solutions for commercial vehicles in residential neighborhoods and ensuring food trucks had access to customers.

Out of all of the things Zurek has done at the chambers, however, she said she is most proud of the one-on-one conversations she's had with business owners during rough times.

"My proudest moments are the phone calls that I received during COVID from business owners," she said. "What a tremendous honor, that in such a scary time, people were willing to reach out to (me) for help."

From Zurek's account, the Visalia Chamber

See ZUREK on page 4

WORLD AG EXPO 2024

Innovation to take root at ag expo

International Agri-Center gears up for the World Ag Expo from Feb. 13 to 15 to present the year's Top 10 farming products



Karis Caddell
Reporter
The Sun-Gazette

The World Ag Expo is making its annual return in February to bring together farmers, ranchers and industry professionals to observe the latest tech and news of agriculture.

Tulare will host the 2024 World Ag Expo from Feb. 13 to 15, at 4500 S. Laspina St. The event will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday. Tickets are on sale now at www.worldagexpo.com for \$20 each while children under the age of 6 get in for free.

According to the World Ag Expo website, the expo is one of the largest agricultural trade shows in the world with over 1,200 exhibitors on 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space. The show offers a wide range of ag-related exhibitors, seminars, products, wine and cheese, agricultural tours and more.

Every year the event showcases the World Ag Expo's 2024 Top-10 New Products Competition winners. Products ranged from simple solutions to autonomous robots. The contest judges consisted of farmers, ranchers and industry professionals.

Here are some of this year's winners:

Amiga V7 by Farm-ng

Amiga V7 by Farm-ng is an electric, configurable, 1.3HP platform—software—that allows farmers, developers and researchers to haul, tow, spray, apply composts, as well as assist in other

essential roles. The platform is the erector set of farm tools where the same machine can be configured over the row, wide, narrow, with intelligence and tools that lift or rotate.

The intelligence platform has an open API allowing students, developers and even elementary school students to code and configure the machine to collect data, integrate with other tools and perform repeated robotic tasks. With the GPS guidance system, it can perform precision steering and weed the same plots it seeded earlier in the year with minimal or no operator intervention.

Blue Spray by Bluewhite

BlueSpray brings autonomous precision spraying capabilities to growers in orchards and vineyards. BlueSpray leverages Bluewhite's autonomous tractor sensing capabilities to provide plant-based spraying in high resolution that can integrate into any existing sprayers, adjusting spray volume and pressure in real-time based on plant size and density, reducing the amount of chemicals used and reducing spray drift without compromising on coverage.

The BlueSpray data feeds into the Bluewhite data platform and is immediately available to the grower and to an agribusiness ecosystem for data insights, compliance and business optimization.

Burro Grande, plus Atlas Online Route Creation by Burro

As a fully autonomous robot powered by AI and outfitted with computer vision plus LiDAR, Burro Grande is the 'Big Brother' to the existing Burro platform and boasts a 5,000-pound towing capacity and 1,500-pound pallet scale carry capacity.

When paired with Atlas, Burro's online route

See EXPO on page 4



LEADERSHIP VISALIA

Leadership Visalia dives into healthcare

By Dave Byl
Operations Manager
American Ambulance of Visalia

From mental health to simulation labs and all the healthcare legislation you can handle, this past Friday was informative, eye opening and at times disappointing. The 2023-2024 Leadership Visalia cohort was

treated to a full day of healthcare, and topics such as navigating a mental health crisis, a display of the awesome simulation lab at Kaweah Health, pending legislation related to healthcare, recruitment and retention, technology and even a brief visit from the Sheriff made for some great conversation and learning. The entire day was devoted to what leaders should know as it relates to healthcare accessibility, affordability and quality of care.

Social issues, substance abuse, the stress of everyday life and physical causes are just some of the reasons why one might undergo a mental health crisis. Dr. Natalie Bolin, Carey Hayes, RN and our very own Petra Gaytan LMFT helped us learn and understand the aspects of a mental health crisis and the limitations and challenges of the local system. The effects of COVID-19 on the local mental health system can result in a long discussion, but knowing how it was affected by the pandemic is certainly important. Additionally, a tour of Kaweah Mental health was provided, to help further understand the process for improving Psychiatric health both during and after a mental health crisis.

"The trained nurse has become one of the great blessings of humanity, taking a place beside the physician and the priest," said Dr. William Osler, Canadian physician, and founder of Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Kimberly Sokol and David Marks from the Kaweah Health simulation lab walked us through the high-tech simulation possibilities made available to Kaweah Health employees and resident Physicians. The Kaweah Health simulation lab is packed full of high-tech, high-fidelity manikins to simulate a real medical problem as much as possible and we thank Dr. Sokol and David Marks for taking time to show us this valuable simulation technology.

Heather Gardiner from Employer Driven Insurance Services (E.D.I.S.) graced us with her presence to discuss new and pending laws related to the health insurance industry. SB 770, or simply known as the single payer bill, will end Medicare and Medi-Cal as we know

them today and many, for good reason, have serious concerns about an untested state-run healthcare system which requires the redirection of hundreds of billions of Federal dollars. Private health insurance will cease to exist, and it would fundamentally force every Californian into using a state-run health care system. With as many unknowns about the new system, and the lack of reimbursement transparency for already struggling healthcare providers, SB770 provides a questionable healthcare model.

Rounding out the day was a twofold discussion related to healthcare technology and recruitment. We were joined by Katharina Vester, from Valley Children's Healthcare, and JC Palermo and Daniel Baker from Kaweah Health. Efficiencies in healthcare can make it more affordable and we discussed something like patient charting software and its ability to communicate with other platforms can make it less costly and improve the speed in which care is communicated and subsequently delivered. Related to the shortage of primary care Physicians locally, If you've ever had to find a new primary care provider, you may already know there's a shortage of them in California. JC Palermo and Daniel Baker from Kaweah Health discussed some of the local strategies used to recruit Physicians to help fill the growing need for both primary care and specialty care Physicians locally.

California, and Visalia as a community play a pivotal role in shaping the healthcare landscape for not only Visalia, but the surrounding communities and counties. Home to the County's only Trauma, Invasive Cardiac and Comprehensive Stroke center, leaders and citizens in Visalia and Tulare County must navigate challenges such as accessibility, affordability, and quality of care. This will ensure the well-being of residents and visitors, not only today, but for decades to come. Understanding the intricate interplay between healthcare policies, community needs, and economic factors is essential for leadership to foster a healthier, more resilient Visalia.

IMPACT
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
MARCH 21, 2024

featuring Keynote Speaker,
Ben Moore, Founder & CEO of The Ugly Co.

BEAUTIFUL ON THE INSIDE
THE Ugly Co.
FARMERSVILLE, CALIFORNIA

SCAN ME

Learn More: visaliachamber.org/impact

Thank you

TO OUR PREMIER MEMBERS

CHAMPION:



VISIONARY:



REGIONAL LEADERS:

MEDIA PARTNERS:



AMERICAN LEGION SIERRA POST 785

Until recently, the only drop off location to retire worn and dilapidated U.S. Flags was with the **Veterans Memorial District. The American Legion Sierra Post 785** is proud to partner with **Texas Roadhouse** and **Tahoe Joe's** with providing two new drop box locations.

Congratulations to **Tulare County Economic Development Corporation** who is celebrating their 40th Anniversary this year.

Center Valley Community Bancorp, parent company of **Central Valley Community Bank** reported the year and quarter ended highlights including a net interest margin increase to 3.52%.

Congratulations to **Common Heart** who celebrated their 1st Year Anniversary in January! The company celebrated with a customer Birthday Party including bounce house, yard games, and more.



Family HealthCare Network welcomed their newest providers to their Visalia Oak health center, including Juanita Dominguez, PA-C and Michael Needham, PA-C.

Sierra Bancorp, parent of **Bank of the Sierra**, declared a regular quarterly cash dividend of \$0.23 per share.

Valley Oak Credit Union donated \$1,340 to **Visalia Gleaning Seniors** as part of their Holiday Skip-A-Payment program.

Buena Beverage Company announced the Budweiser Clydesdales appearance at the Tulare County Fairgrounds between February 12-18th.

Thanks to the Visalia Rotary Community Foundation, the **Visalia Rescue Mission** community kitchen has expanded. Originally designed to serve 75 guests at a time, the kitchen is now better prepared to cook 300 dinners each night.

The Center for Art, Culture, and History - Exeter (CACHE) announced their new 3D virtual museum tour.

Able Inc. unveiled the launch of their innovative training structure for the CES program in January. Participants will experience 2-4 hours of paid on-the-job training and 4-2 hours of person-centered training.

The Enchanted Playhouse Theater Company announced their new show **Treasure Island**. The show will take place on February 22, 23, and 24th at the **Visalia Fox Theatre**.



VISALIA GLEANING SENIORS AND VALLEY OAK CREDIT UNION

EXPO

Continued from page 3

creation platform, users can construct, manage and share routes across their fleet. Whether towing, carrying or following, Burro Grande allows your existing equipment operators to step away from the seat of a Tractor/UTV, saving valuable labor.

Electric GUSS by GUSS Automation

Electric GUSS is an autonomous electric herbicide orchard sprayer manufactured by GUSS Automation in Kingsburg. Electric GUSS is the first electric autonomous herbicide orchard sprayer in the world and allows a single employee to operate and monitor a combination of up to eight GUSS machines from the safety of his or her vehicle using a laptop computer.

This driverless electric herbicide sprayer uses a combination of LiDAR, GPS, cameras and more to safely and autonomously drive through the orchard, day or night, row after row reducing emissions and saving spray material.

EZ Cut Seal Remover by Country Enterprises

EZ Cut Seal Remover quickly and safely removes seals from most chemical containers without getting debris in the spray or sprayer.

This item holds up to 25 seals and comes with an ejection tool to dispose of the seals without ever touching the chemical. Customizable decals are available for a great promotional item. This product was made by a farmer, for the farmer, and twist is all it takes.

Model B Smart Sprayer by Verdant Robotics

The Verdant Robotics Model B Smart Sprayer is the ultimate solution to eradicate weeds in specialty crops. The Model B works in any field, whether organic or conventional, no-till or cultivated. What sets it apart is Verdant Robotics' proprietary Bullseye Technology, delivering unmatched millimeter-level targeting of weeds in both high-density and low-density crops, over an extended opera-



PHOTO BY KENNY GOODMAN

The World Ag Expo will return to Tulare's International Agri-Center grounds Feb. 13-15 to share the latest tech and news in the agriculture industry.

tional window.

This remarkable Smart Sprayer operates day or night, regardless of weather conditions. With its lightweight design, it swiftly accesses the field, and its formidable power takes on even the largest weeds.

Oliver Colibri by Sutton Ag Enterprises

The Oliver Colibri is the only mechanical weeder available for high-density weeding applications. Utilizing automated camera technology, the Colibri identifies the exact position of the crop and precisely places saw-tooth blades between the seed lines.

The Colibri's steel weeding discs are mounted on hydraulic parallelograms with an independent hydraulic system to ensure uniform and consistent cultivation performance. The Colibri can be used on row spacings as tight as 1.75 inches making mechanical cultivation possible for the first time in high-density crops such as spinach and carrot.

Shark Wheel SWIFT Irrigation Wheel by Shark Wheel Agriculture

The Shark Wheel was invented to solve all wheel issues in center pivot irrigation. The Shark Wheel SWIFT eliminates flat tires, solves rutting, has 60-second repairs if needed, increases crop yield and reduces soil compaction.

The center pivot/lateral move

irrigation wheel leaves a DNA helix footprint in the soil. The front wheel pushes the soil right-left-right, and the rear wheel pushes the soil left-right-left right back where it started.

Shockwave X by OMC Orchard Machinery Corp.

Shockwave X is the World's First Autonomous Tree Shaker. Orchard Machinery Corp along with Bonsai have created the first Driverless Tree Shaker with no Lidar or GPS.

The machine will also be outfitted with a deck for shaking pistachios and was built on a Proven OMC chassis that allows continuous movement and efficiency, including 100 vision based autonomy that allows the machine to work in heavy dust and zero cell service conditions.

Standard PTO Kit by Tractor Protection Products

The Standard PTO Kit was designed to offer protection for both the PTO driven implement and the tractor PTO shaft. The Standard PTO Kit eliminates the difficulty found when hooking up a PTO driven implement to the tractor PTO shaft.

The most important feature of the Standard PTO Kit is that all farmers who have tractors and implements will benefit from it, regardless of the size of operation, crops grown or location of the farm. If you have a tractor with a PTO-driven implement, the Standard PTO Kit can help.

ZUREK

Continued from page 3

had to adapt a lot with the rise of the pandemic. Rewinding back into 2020, when everything went into lockdown, municipal laws and regulations on businesses were constantly undergoing change—something Zurek kept up to date with to ensure the Chamber was giving its members an accurate account of what to do during the pandemic.

"We were working with city and county leaders to understand what the state has said, and what does that then mean for us locally," Zurek said.

It was that consistent work to review the most updated COVID laws during the pandemic that sparked her interest in pursuing a career in municipal law. During that rough patch, to help members stay up to date with the changing economic impact of the pandemic, Zurek hosted a Facebook live every Wednesday morning to review changes, answer questions and talk to people.

"I wanted to show people to be optimistic and to look forward," she said. "I was really concerned as a community that we wouldn't be investing back in local businesses and nonprofits and doing all the things that made Visalia special."

Zurek went on to explain that the same love she has for local business, which now is leading her to law, is what brought her to the chamber initially. She took over in the role of CEO from Glen Morris, who had held the Chamber together during the 2008 recession as well as helped in establishing their own Chamber building.

"They were under some pretty significant financial constraints...My predecessor had done a really great job of making sure the chamber kept its doors open," Zurek said.

She explained that the financial constraints and lack of financial reserves are what required her to build a strong fiscal policy during her time as CEO. This helps designate the reserves and will make it easier for future chamber leaders to make "decisions based on vision and strategic purpose."

As for one of the other achievements Zurek is most proud of, that would be the Chamber's Jr. CEO program. This is an innovative entrepreneurship course for fourth to sixth graders that introduces students to fundamental business principles to prepare the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs.

The course is a collection of online video resources available for educators to get children interested in starting a business. This idea was one of the projects Zurek wanted to pursue during the pandemic. She hoped to combat the recessions COVID had on local business, which she was worried would keep the community's youth from pursuing business later on.

GRANTS

Continued from page 1

ket and organization size. Other grant opportunities available to local nonprofits include the Neighborhood Champion and Neighborhood Builder programs, which organizations apply to on an invite-only basis. Bank of America also has an employee matching program, where the Bank of America Charitable Foundation will match personal donations made by eligible employees to eligible nonprofits.

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