

HUMANS OF



SECONDMUSE 



Introducing **Humans of Monterey**

Through the lens of local Monterey County photographer Daniel Dreifuss, we've captured the stories of individuals who are living and shaping four key sectors—construction, tourism, blue economy, and agriculture—within Monterey County.

Here are their stories.




Rob Nicely

Carmel Building and Design

Q: When Regenerative Monterey is successful, what will that look like?

“The underlying concept (regenerative) is not new to me, it’s about transforming commerce to align with the needs of people, the community and the environment. Our current ways of working won’t suffice going forward, as the social and environmental landscape is changing. In construction we also see regulations fluctuate, and material prices go up and down. These changes are only going to increase, which is why we need a different way of building in California. I try to look at the connection between my construction activity and how it connects to the larger economy and the larger world, and then use that knowledge to try and make my practice better for people and the planet.

When this initiative is successful, the use of sustainable materials, energy-efficient and toxin-free buildings will be the norm along the central coast. I’ve found that working locally is the most effective thing I can do to contribute to a regenerative future, and through our collaborative efforts we can set the example for building and construction across California.”



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Olga Macias

Post Ranch Inn

Q: What would it look like if hospitality businesses were to do things that were more regenerative?

“Regenerative and sustainable practices are not only important to Post Ranch’s renowned success, but these practices are smart business. In the 20 plus years I have worked at Post Ranch Inn, I have witnessed the progression and evolution of “land-stewardship” as instilled by the late Billy Post and now Mike Freed. Their vision was to always keep Post Ranch as pristine as before it was a resort. It is my personal belief that God is not making anymore land and we must preserve it with our regenerative efforts. As far as I’m concerned, Post Ranch was doing the “green” thing even before it was the buzzword that it is now. I have seen the positive effects of our regenerative efforts in a tangible sense. Bottling our own drinking water from our water-well system, using hybrid vehicles to transport our guests, and purchasing from local vendors to minimize the carbon footprint.

These practices have not only streamlined costs, but have created many jobs for others like me. It is my hope that other properties can look at our track record and partake in their own regenerative initiatives because we would all benefit as both inhabitants of planet earth and hospitality-mates who rely on tourists for our livelihood.”



These practices have not only streamlined costs, but have created many jobs for others like me. - Olga Macias



Todd Farrington

Big Sur Land Trust

Q: What is your perspective on regeneration in the form of youth outdoor programs?

“At the core of the youth programs that Big Sur Land Trust does is really the desire to create opportunities for youth to experience their best selves.

Being present in a true land-based experience where they are being inspired by the natural beauty, that inspiration, that sense of awe and wonder that we all share no matter where we are from or where we live.

The hope is through our programs, kids have an opportunity for those early experiences that create a spark they want to follow, that they want to repeat and find ways to reconnect with in their day-to-day lives. Kids go to their own backyard, in their journals, and their schools, to pursue those feelings and develop and understand a connection between that feeling and something that happened to them when they were outdoors with Big Sur Land Trust and noticing the behavior changes by being outdoors.”

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- Todd Farrington




Yadira Mendiola

Self-Employed Farmer

Q: How has farming impacted your life?

“When I started farming, I saw a big difference, a really big difference about which vegetables are good and bad. I started working with a conventional company and I was the one who put fertilizers on the plants, and I just saw fertilizer and thought, this is good food for the plants, but I never thought what kind of food it was for the plants or what kind of chemicals I was applying. So I didn’t even think, or stop to think about what I was doing at that moment. Now, I am starting to see the effects of those chemicals on the crops.

I started to see the differences between conventional and organic farming. Now I am a hundred percent organic. It is the best thing that we can do for our world and for a healthy life. That is how we humans need to continue eating in the right way. We need to make big changes. We need to make big changes in our diet every day. So for me it’s really impactful. Now, the schools are changing that, and I feel so happy. I feel so proud of myself that even though I have hard times, I am farming organic vegetables. So I feel like I have to make that change too. I feel so happy when I carry some boxes of organic produce to school and see how they make a bigger difference than before. To know that we can feed our kids in the right way and the food helps.”



I started to see the differences between conventional and organic farming. Now I am a hundred percent organic. It is the best thing that we can do for our world and for a healthy life. - Yadira Mendiola


Liz Holfius

Pierce Ranch Vineyards

Q: If Monterey was a regenerative economy, what would that look like for tourism and what would that look like specifically for the wine industry?

“For Monterey, in terms of regenerative wine, it specifically would be along the lines of tourists guided towards winemakers and wine producers that are generating a positive impact for the planet.

Regenerative wine is trying to find this balance of being a part and not separate from nature as a whole and becoming integral to the ecosystem. Communicating that to tourists and making it clear that this is who Monterey County is and wine is not just taking from the land, but adding to the land.”



Regenerative wine is trying to find this balance of being a part and not separate from nature as a whole and becoming integral to the ecosystem. - Liz Holfius


Rachel Buissereth

MEarth

Q: What does regeneration look like within education?

“Regeneration in education is culturally responsive. It’s taking into account students’ wellbeing. It’s taking into account their diversity, their class, their sexuality, gender, everything about them is being combined or being taken into that education moment, right? Using their senses, having them think and wonder and explain in their own words what something means to them. Because when someone brings their whole identity and their whole self to education, then it makes those connections that are so, so important.

One thing that the school systems in Monterey are struggling with, is how do we serve the needs of every single one of those kids all over the spectrum. You have folks who are from Carmel at the top 1% of society. And then you have children of immigrant farmers who are struggling for housing, for food, for healthcare, for access to education beyond the school system. So if Regenerative Monterey did it right, those disparities and those differences that you have within the school system, they wouldn’t matter. And so if those needs are met, that means that students, when they’re having their education experience, can really focus on learning.”

A woman with glasses and a pink shirt is crouching in a garden, holding several strawberries. The background shows a lush garden with various plants and trees.

When someone brings their whole identity and their whole self to education, then it makes those connections that are so, so important. - Rachel Buissereth

Elizabeth Carpenter

FishBio

Q: If regenerative Monterey is successful, what would that look like?

“In my mind, if we all worked collectively as a county to create a regenerative economy, the natural environment (oceans, forests, rivers) would be the main indicator of our success. The kelp forests would be lush, the commercial fisheries would be thriving, the forests would remain green, the agricultural fields would be prosperous, and the rivers would be clean and free of pollution.

Monterey would be a place to brag about, more so than it already is. Tourists would come to be immersed in this harmonious lifestyle, where they can walk down to the docks in the morning and buy fresh fish from local fishers, snorkel in the kelp forests, enjoy the local art and culture, and learn the true history of this fascinating place. And the money brought in by visitors would go to the people that live here, because at the end of the day, the locals really are the beating heart of this place. They are the ones who are most determined (and passionate about) taking care of and protecting our ocean and our forests. By investing in our foundation, much like we would in the ocean (aka kelp forests), we would truly create a regenerative place.”




The kelp forests would be lush, the commercial fisheries would be thriving, the forests would remain green, the agricultural fields would be prosperous, and the rivers would be clean and free of pollution. - Elizabeth Carpenter

Prati Rosen
Farallon Strategies

Q: If Regenerative Monterey was successful what would that look like for Monterey County?

“Achieving a Regenerative Monterey would bring positive and transformative change. The restoration of the environment would foster thriving ecosystems and greater biodiversity. Local communities would gain the benefits of sustainable industries and eco-friendly tourism, while regenerative agriculture would enhance food security. Moreover, the county’s resilience to climate change would significantly improve, and the collaborative efforts would create a strong sense of community engagement and responsibility for a sustainable future.

Farallon Strategies’ strong commitment to establishing a more resilient and sustainable future can be seen through their proactive involvement in supporting Central California communities and beyond with the skills and resources needed to navigate climate change challenges and embrace this regenerative mindset.”



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- Prati Rosen



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