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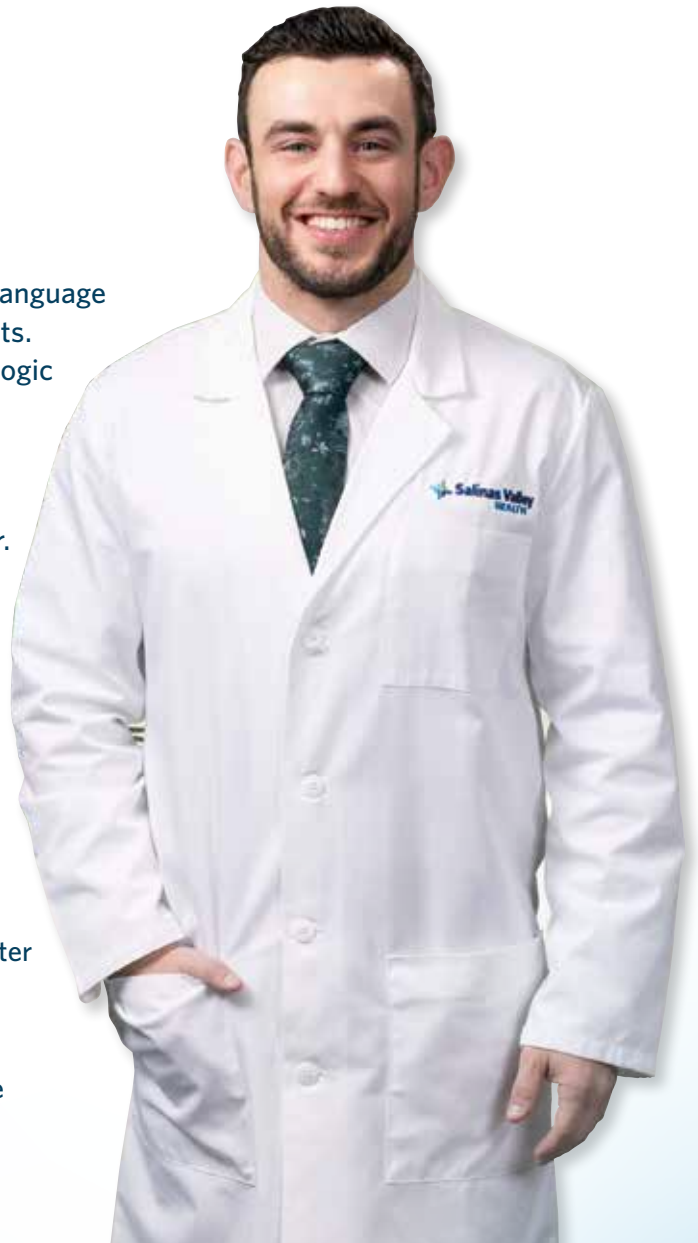
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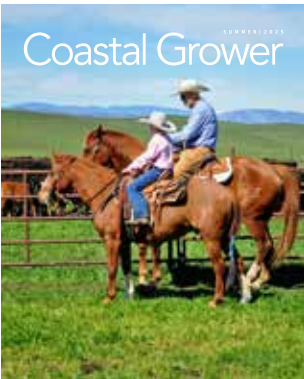
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Duty

I recently served on a jury in a civil case. Unlike most people, I don't feel dread when I receive a jury summons. I think it's my duty as an American citizen to do my part to uphold our democracy. I've never served in the military or run for public office...giving up some of my personal time is the least I can do.

Admittedly I am also interested in our judicial system and seeing it in action. One of my favorite movies of all time is *12 Angry Men* (the original version, starring Henry Fonda). I wrote a term paper analyzing the cultural and personal dynamics the plot delves into when I was in college. *A Few Good Men...To Kill a Mockingbird...Anatomy of a Murder...Philadelphia...*and perhaps the greatest of all time, *My Cousin Vinny*...I love a good court room movie.

Occasionally court room drama doesn't just happen in the movie theater. I vividly remember the O.J. Simpson trial. I know exactly where I was the day his white Bronco was fleeing down the Southern California freeways. When the verdict was read, I remember all of us stopping what we were doing at work to huddle around this little black and white television someone found in the file room so we could hear it in real time.

Whether it's Congressional confirmation hearings or Johnny Depp, I always find myself drawn to drama.

Lately I went down a rabbit hole into the Karen Read murder trial in Massachusetts. I didn't have the time or patience to watch it in real time (too many sidebars), but I did watch recaps at night on YouTube with the "LawTubers." The live chat streams and insight analysis have taken us "crime junkies" to a whole new level.

One emerging source of evidence is being referred to as "Digital DNA." In other words—your phone. It knows all about you...and tells others a lot about you. Searches, texts (even if you delete them—they will ask you why), calls made, messages left (or not), pictures, the use of certain applications, location tracking...even the temperature history of your phone can tell experts if you

were inside a warm house or outside in the snow and for how long. In the Idaho murder case forensic digital data has allegedly shown that the suspect, Brian Kohberger, turned his phone off during the time period investigators believe the murders took place. Think about that. When's the last time you turned off your phone?

Wearing an Apple watch? Depending on your settings, it could tell investigators how many steps you took and if you went up or down staircases. It can tell your heart rate history, monitor sleeping patterns, and notify others if you have a seizure. Your life is on your wrist.

Digital technology is increasingly playing a role in solving crimes. Ring or similar type cameras are everywhere. Everywhere. Parking lots, store entrances and exits, street corners—not just front doorsteps. Modern cars today have their own version of an airplane's "black box." Experts can tell how often and when you unlock or lock your doors, open the back tailgate, how fast you drive or whether you put the car in reverse or not. The cars "infotainment" system can tell investigators where and when you navigated somewhere. Who you asked the car to call for you...what radio stations you listened to and when.

Social media can play a vital role in solving crimes these days by helping to get the word out. The Gaby Petito case comes to mind. A store camera helped identify her last location and fellow campers who were posting travel diaries pulled up their pictures and found her van in one of them—which helped narrow the search location where they eventually found her body. Digital data...it's a powerful thing.

Don't get me wrong...while I prefer non-fiction to fiction and love documentaries, I also watch reality television shows. *American Ninja Warrior* is fun, and I can't wait for football season to start. I'm not all gloom and doom...but I do appreciate a courtroom.



Contributors



MAC McDONALD

Mac McDonald was a reporter, columnist and editor of the GO! weekly entertainment and dining section for the Monterey County Herald for 22 years. He was also Managing Editor of the Carmel Pine Cone for seven years. He is currently a freelance writer and editor writing about virtually every subject under the sun, from music, art, food and sports to marketing and public relations.



SCOTT DELUCCHI

Scott, a San Francisco Bay Area native, joined the SPCA Monterey County as President & CEO in 2016, following 17 years with a Bay Area animal welfare organization and an earlier career as a high school teacher and administrator. He earned a B.A. in Communication from Stanford University, where he also played (sparingly!) on two national champion baseball teams. Scott and his wife Jay (a former chef who loves living in the Salad Bowl) keep busy with two active teens and two dogs -- one active, one couch potato.



BILL HASTIE

Bill is the managing partner of Hastie Financial Group (HFG), a registered investment advisory firm. He earned a B.S in Economics from Cal Poly, an M.B.A in Financial Planning from Golden Gate University, and holds the Certified Investment Management Analyst® (CIMA®) and Accredited Investment Fiduciary Analyst® (AIFA®) designations



ESMERALDA OWEN

Esmeralda Owen is a broadcast journalist turned marketing consultant. A graduate of USC and NDSU, she worked as a reporter and news anchor for Spanish media for ten years. She has worked for the National Steinbeck Center, Hartnell College, and YOSAL. She is an adjunct professor of communication studies at Gavilan College. In 2020, she launched her consulting business to create marketing strategies, media relations, fundraising opportunities, video production, etc. for nonprofits in Monterey County. She is a mentor and philanthropist and volunteers for the Salinas Airshow board, Sunset Center board, Girls Inc, and others.



ALAN SHIPNUCK

Alan Shipnuck was a starting forward on Salinas High's 1991 Monterey Bay League championship basketball team. He wrote his first cover story for Sports Illustrated as a 21 year-old intern and is the author of 9 books, including best-sellers Phil; Liv & Let Die, The Swinger, and Bud, Sweat, & Tees. Alan lives in Carmel and is head coach of Carmel High varsity girls basketball team.



GWEN MCGILL

Gwen McGill is the founder GEM Collective, a marketing, events and public relations collective founded in 2013 focused on wine, food, events and hospitality. In 2017, she became Executive Director of the Santa Lucia Highlands Wine Artisans, a non-profit trade association dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the growers and vintners of Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands appellation.



DOUG LARSON

With a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education from Colorado State University and over forty years of experience in the Industry of Agriculture, Doug Larson maintains both a California Pest Control Advisor and Qualified Applicators License.

Through his years as a 4th generation Colorado Farmer and Rancher, Agricultural Educator, Manager, Director, Vice President, Partner, President & CEO, Mr. Larson has developed a unique set of skills and experiences focusing on the use of precision irrigation systems to better manage critical water resources in today's regenerative production agriculture climate.



MIKE HALE

Salinas native Mike Hale is a freelance writer who spent a long career in local journalism, working in various stints as both an editor and writer with the Salinas Californian, Santa Cruz Sentinel and the Monterey Herald. In 2014 he helped jumpstart KRML radio (94.7 FM) in Carmel, creating community-based programming for the "Locals Station for the Monterey Bay." He is now semi-retired, enjoying traveling abroad and discovering new adventures along the way.



VICTOR PLATA

Victor Plata is a dedicated teacher at Palma School, where he has been educating students since 2013, primarily in History and English. He also coaches cross-country, and coordinates Palma's AP testing program. Mr. Plata holds a law degree from McGeorge School of Law, and competed in the Olympic Games as a triathlete. He has been a chaperone on Palma's annual Washington D.C. trip since 2014, guiding students through our nation's capital, integrating the lessons from the classroom into real-world travel experiences.



PATRICK TREGENZA

Patrick Tregenza is a multi-award-winning commercial photographer based in California. With a career spanning more than three decades, he has worked extensively with regional farms, wineries, chefs, and publications, defining the visual identity of local agriculture and cuisine. His work has been featured in national advertising campaigns, culinary books, and exhibitions. Tregenza's photography is marked by a painterly sensibility and a deep reverence for his subjects—especially when the subject is something as universal and intimate as food.



CHRIS HAUBERT

Chris Haubert is the Creative Content Writer at Salinas Valley Health. With experience in journalism, non-profit administration, and as a volunteer, she enjoys sharing people's stories, particularly as they related to connection and community. As part of her prior work as Executive Producer at KSBW TV, Chris produced a yearlong series on Central Coast history, Time & Again 2000. She later served as Chief of Staff and Programs at The Panetta Institute for Public Policy at CSU Monterey Bay.



DIANE GSELL

Diane Gsell is a Monterey-based food stylist and lifestyle writer. Dartmouth College taught her how to write, and her mother and the culinarily-gifted Golden State taught her how to cook.

Coastal Grower values the contributions of all our writers. Contributors wishing to be recognized are listed here. In some cases contributors prefer to remain unrecognized with a bio and photo, or prefer complete anonymity. In those instances articles are published with no recognition or attribution.



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ALLA ZELTSER

Alla Zeltser is a dynamic leader in nonprofit strategy and fundraising, with over 25 years of experience helping organizations achieve transformational results. Her projects have directly helped mission-driven partners raise over \$50m, while her methodology, campaigns, materials, and donor strategies have helped drive upwards of \$100m through long-term client-led cultivation and campaigns. As founder of Disruptive Development Inc., Alla equips organizations to stand out, connect with donors, and present their case in a way that inspires meaningful, lasting investment in impact.



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San Benancio 4-H Shines at the Salinas Valley Fair

By Jeff Mendelsohn



San Benancio "Cloverbuds" with their rabbits.

Each spring, hundreds of local 4-H members from all over Monterey County descend upon King City for the annual Salinas Valley Fair. The nearly week-long event serves as south county's version of "Big Week" and has welcomed as many as fourteen local 4-H clubs from Monterey County alone.

The event is highlighted by the junior Livestock Auction, which provides members the opportunity to showcase their hard work by auctioning off their animal (a pig, in most cases) in front of a generous group of local bidders. The goal for each member is to generate enough revenue at the auction to cover the cost of raising their animal during the weeks and months leading to the fair. For the local San Benancio 4-H club and others like it, the fair preparation begins in January.

"We typically get our pigs around the end of January," says San Benancio 4-H club leader Nette Hoover. "The pigs are generally

about two and a half months old when we get them."

Over the next four to five months, 4-H'ers are tasked with raising their respective pigs; a process that involves feeding (twice a day), bathing, walking, and yes, cleaning their pig sties.

"I definitely don't like stall duty," says first-year 4-H member Audriana Meeks. "But I do like feeding them and walking them. That part is fun."

As a 10-year old, Meeks is one of 53 members of the San Benancio 4-H club. With ages ranging from 9 to 19, there is a nice mix of veteran 4-H members, and those like Audrianna who are new to the swine scene.

For the even younger participant, 4-H offers the "Cloverbuds" program to children aged 5 through 8. Not quite ready to take on the responsibilities that come with raising a pig, these young 'buds' are more typically raising rabbits.

Whether it's rabbits for the little ones or pigs for the older kids, 4-H provides an incredible opportunity for kids to learn about the responsibility required to raise an animal.

Lauren Miller, age 14, described her experience this way:

"I have been a member of San Benancio 4-H for 4 years and my favorite thing about 4-H by far is raising animals. I have been raising pigs for the past 4 years and the reason I love it so much is because I feel like the hands-on experience with animal agriculture has really helped me grow and has taught me patience and problem-solving skills. From the early mornings at the barn feeding pigs before school, to the late nights at the fair hanging out in your friends' trailers and going on rides, it has been an experience that has given me so much insight and so many memories."

Clearly, veteran club members like Lauren are learning far more than how to clean a pig pen.

"We like to think we're teaching these kids values and responsibilities that represent what 4-H has always been about", says Hoover.

4-H began in the early 1900s as a means to bring agricultural education to the rural youth in the United States. The concept was



Caleb DeRoza shows off his pig.

rooted in the idea that young people could be more open to learning new agricultural techniques to influence their families to adopt better practices and values.

4-H stands for “Head, Heart, Hands, and Health”, and those are considered the values that each member is encouraged to work on through a host of activities and projects designed to foster growth in all members.

“Our members take part in community service activities like sponsoring a local family in need, non-native plant removal for fire prevention, and beach cleanups with the goal of teaching the kids that they can make a difference,” says Hoover.

The whole process is family oriented, and requires parents and families to actively participate, which helps create a family-like environment which makes it more fun for everyone. The group also partakes in growing vegetables, woodworking, knot-tying, and even welding. All skills that would serve any community member well, not just a future ranch-hand.

“What I love about 4-H is the opportunity to learn these skills in a family-oriented environment,” says Hoover.

As the daughter of longtime 4-H supporter and farmer Dave Pedrazzi, Hoover and her husband Braden have three children in the program. Sister Nicci (DeRoza) has two kids in the program and volunteers her time as the “rabbit leader”, which is similar to the swine program, but on a smaller scale. San Benancio had only two rabbits at this year’s fair, as opposed to twenty-eight bacon-makers.

The swine program is led by local businessman Jeff Pomo, who also volunteers his time at the fair as frontman for the “Harper Canyon Band”, a local band who hit the stage as the headliner on Saturday night of this year’s fair.

“The whole thing is just a rockin’ good time,” says parent, bidder, and sponsor Mike Lipe. “This is really what it’s all about and I love being a part of it.”

Hoover points out that, at the time of the Salinas Valley Fair auction, the open market price per pound for swine was \$0.65. The 4-H exhibitors that sell their pigs at the fair make much more than the market rate (typically between \$9.00 to \$20.00 per pound, but even more for a grand or



San Benancio 4-H swine club.

reserve champion.

“It’s incredible to think that these buyers could buy a pig on the open market for much cheaper, but instead they choose to come out and support 4-H and spend so much more,” says Hoover. “I am so proud to live in a county where the majority of people understand the importance of 4-H.”

Following the fair, members enjoyed a bit of a down period as the school year wound down. But in late June, a select group of 100 4-H members from around Monterey County pack their bags for 4-H Camp McCandless, a week-long program held in Felton in the Santa Cruz Mountains. During this week, campers stay in cabins

and enjoy activities such as swimming, hiking, pickleball, archery, basketball, volleyball, as well as art projects and much more. The members learn to work together by staying organized, keeping their cabins clean, practicing good manners and problem solving. The days are filled with a plethora of opportunities for fun. Each night the entire camp gathers around a campfire where they sing songs and perform skits.

“The kids make lifelong friends at 4-H camp and learn so much about themselves during that week,” says Hoover.

Coastal Grower asked Hoover to reach out to some of the kids with questions about their experience with San Benancio 4-H.



San Benancio 4-H club.

What do you like about being a member of San Benancio 4-H?

"I like how my friends are in my 4-H. I love the meetings because I get to do activities and they are fun. I also liked to show my rabbit named Bitsy and I love when we sold vegetable and fruit at The Patch."
- Avery, age 7

"I like meeting new people, going to the fair and 4-H camp." - Bryce, age 12

"There are a lot of fun activities and interesting projects. We also do things to help the community, which feels good."
- Corbin, age 14

"I like getting up early and having the

responsibility of feeding my rabbits. Also, I have gotten more comfortable talking in front of the club because I have been practicing at the meetings." - Paige, age 9

"I like being in SB 4-H because there are a lot of fun projects to join and I have a lot of friends in this club." - Caleb, age 11

What did you learn from a 4-H project this year?

"I have learned how to take care of an animal and I learned how to show my rabbit."
- Avery, age 9

"I have learned a lot of different things from taking projects. I was the healthy living officer last year and learned about living a healthy life." - Bryce, age 12

"I have learned how to be a better public speaker because of my time as an officer. I have also learned about responsibility."
- Corbin, age 14

"It is fun to be able to show an animal in the fair. I showed a rabbit and her name is Cutie Pie. To get ready for the fair I brushed her and made sure she got enough food and water each day. I practiced showmanship a lot and right before the fair I practiced every day. My rabbit got Best of Show, Best Opposite Breed and Best of Variety. That is how she became a Grand Champion because now she has all the "legs" needed."
- Paige, age 9

"I liked fly fishing because it was something new for me this year. I learned how to tie flies and how to cast a fly rod. In the pickling and crafts project we got to make magnets out of bottle caps with cool designs on the inside. We also pickled cucumbers, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage and string beans in a special jar. I entered both my magnets and pickled vegetables in the fair and got first place and second place. In the swine project I have learned responsibility and how to raise a pig." - Caleb, age 11

Graduating senior Ellie Fuqua sums it up this way:

"Looking back on nine incredible years of 4-H, I have made lifelong friendships and unforgettable memories that have made me the person I am today. The San Benancio 4-H program helped shape me into a strong leader through its public speaking projects and endless club officer positions. In my later years of 4-H, inspiring the youngers members was a big part of my role with the club, giving them opportunities to step up, service others, and learn vital life skills. I was once unsure of myself and worried that I'd be called on in club meetings. But the comfort of the club and the community it offers led to me eventually look forward to those monthly meetings. Through it all I have gained skills and knowledge that will stay with me far beyond my time in 4-H and I am forever grateful for the opportunity it has provided me with." ❧



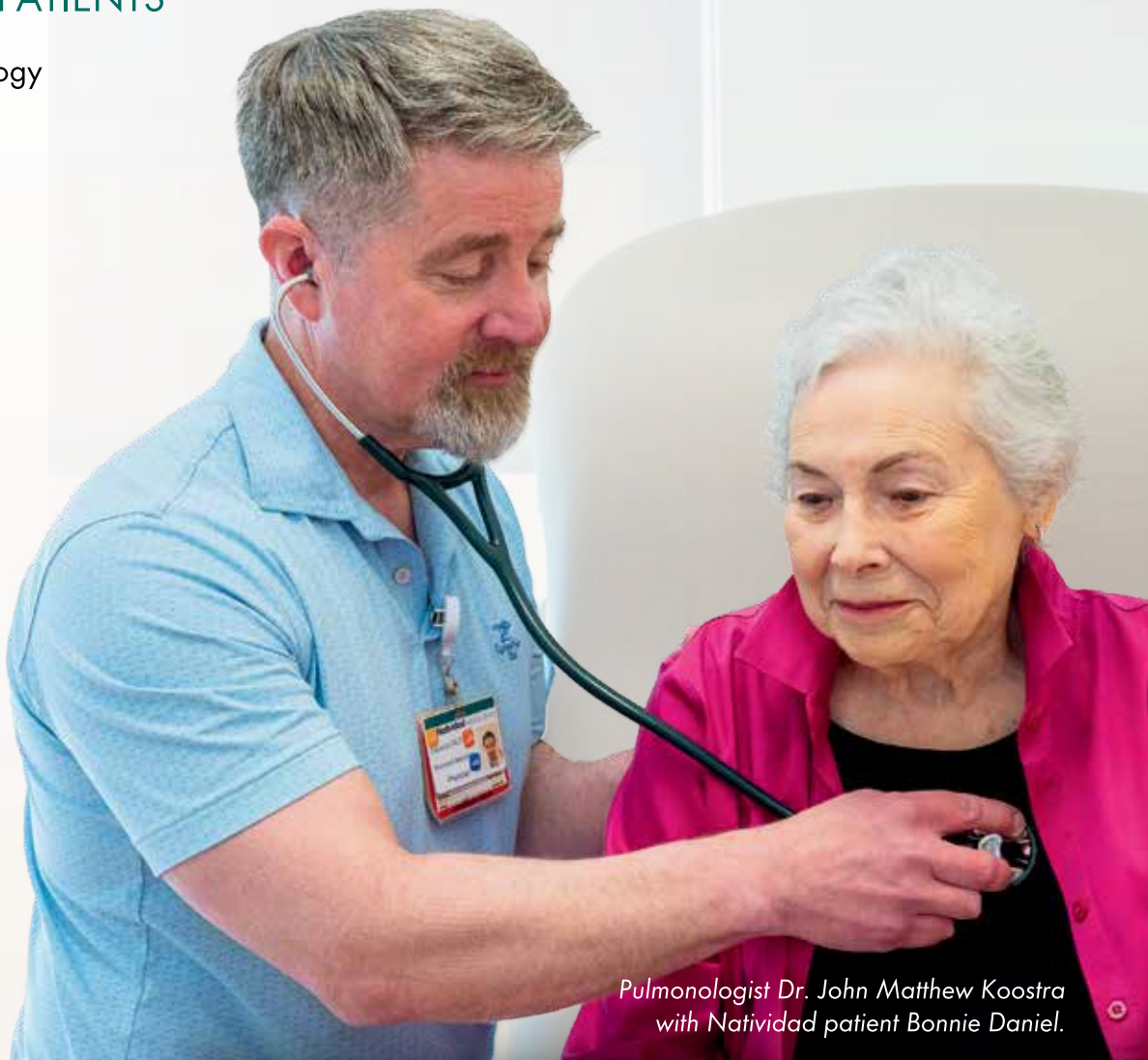
Swine club members selecting their pigs.

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SPCA Envisions Expansion to South Monterey County

By Scott Delucchi



“If you build it, they will come.” James Earl Jones’ character whispered this to an Iowa farmer played by Kevin Costner in the movie *Field of Dreams*. The SPCA has heard similar whispers for years and they’ve been turning into rallying cries recently for an animal shelter in South County.

For decades, the SPCA has provided outreach services across our expansive county from its oak-studded campus on Highway 68 in Salinas. These include school visits, response to animal cruelty calls, aid for pet owners impacted by fires and floods, and injured wildlife rescues. Recently, the SPCA doubled down on its popular South County mobile spay/neuter clinics, helping pet owners prevent countless unwanted litters, and a new addition to the education team – a bilingual teacher – will focus entirely in South County.

Still, not all services are possible to take on the road, and a trip to the SPCA from King City, for example, can easily take 90 minutes. Visiting the SPCA’s Adoption Center isn’t

easy for South County residents looking to add family pets. Instead, many turn to friends, online “dog for sale” and “free kittens” ads. Understandably, residents can’t often take time to rescue stray dogs

“...a smaller version of the SPCA’s main campus, located somewhere between Soledad and King City.”

or injured wildlife and deliver them to the SPCA since that requires two hour-long trips – without traffic; sadly, this means strays remain in harm’s way. While the SPCA offers the community low-cost vaccinations, dog training classes and a popular summer animal camp for kids, none of these campus programs are convenient for residents south of Chualar through the southern end of Monterey County.

When owners need to put beloved family pets to sleep – a service offered by

appointment at the SPCA with great care and compassion – a long car ride from Greenfield or Soledad with a failing or suffering pet feels less than humane.

To address the numerous South County-focused animal welfare needs which align with its mission, the SPCA took important steps last winter, meeting with outside professionals to begin imagining our field of dreams: a smaller version of the SPCA’s main campus, located somewhere between Soledad and King City. A facility where local residents can adopt pets, bring strays, get their dogs and cats fixed or vaccinated, send kids to camp or attend dog training classes. It’s a project with no opponents, only loud cheerleaders. Stakeholder meetings with smaller animal groups and city officials from Gonzales, Greenfield, Soledad and King City acknowledged the SPCA’s vital services and a strong desire to have the SPCA as a local fixture.

“The SPCA plays a crucial role in our animal rescue community and we’ve been touched by their generous support for grassroots partners,” says South County Animal Rescue (SCAR) board president Rosemary Soto. “We are thrilled to learn of



their steps toward bringing more services to our South Monterey County communities and enthusiastically welcome the SPCA.”

A new campus would generate excitement, address long-standing needs and become the SPCA’s most expansive move of the past 50 years. It also requires a measured, thoughtful approach. The major undertaking comes with significant considerations, beginning with financial ones.

Based on similar projects completed in nearby communities and the SPCA’s own projections, a new campus would cost \$20-25 million to build (excluding the cost of land) and add an extra \$2 million in annual operating expenses; the annual work must be supported by donations like all of the SPCA’s work. The SPCA receives no funding from national organizations, and fees collected from services cover only a fraction of expenses.

Daunting financial considerations and strategic thinking are leading the SPCA to a creative short-term approach for now to help so many pet owners who need us: leasing a small storefront space in South County as a pop-up of sorts, to serve as a recovery space for mobile spay/neuter clinics, host wellness clinics and possibly even a version of the SPCA’s popular Animal Camp for kids. A sweetheart deal from an animal-loving, South County commercial property owner, coupled with the SPCA’s significant commitment, can make this happen – and bring much-needed services to South County residents by the end of the calendar year.

That would be the start. Donated land and local support for a new campus down the road would be downright dreamy.

Editor’s Note: The SPCA is interested in your thoughts or questions related to animal-related services in South County. Please contact SPCA CEO Scott Delucchi at 831/264-5420 or sdelucchi@spcamc.org.



A Monumental Journey

Palma students enjoy a guided tour of Washington D.C.

By Victor Plata



Palma junior high students enjoying some downtime.

Day 1: From Canals to Capitals

Our journey began bright and early on Tuesday, June 3rd, touching down at Dulles airport following a red-eye flight from San Jose. After a quick breakfast, we dove straight into history with a visit to the C&O Canal at the Great Falls, learning about its vital role in transportation. Students were surprised by the size and force of the falls, which are as formidable today as they were in 1785 when George Washington founded the Potomac Company to construct a canal with locks and dams to bypass it. From there, we explored the grounds of Manassas National Battlefield, where we gained a deeper understanding of the first major battle of the Civil War.

The afternoon took us skyward at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, home to incredible aviation and space artifacts, including the Enola Gay, Space Shuttle Discovery, and the SR-71 Blackbird. After a convenient lunch at the museum, we headed downtown to the Museum of Natural History where students explored every facet of the natural world, with geology being a surprising favorite as students learned that

even solid rock is saturated with water! After a light open-air dinner at Crystal City, our evening was marked by solemn reflection at the Pentagon Memorial and Air Force Memorial, culminating in a moving night tour of D.C.'s iconic memorials, including the Lincoln, Korean War Veterans, and Vietnam Veterans Memorials.

"It was a truly poignant visit, including a moment of prayer at the grave of Palma alum Bernard Corpuz."

Day 2: Honoring Heroes & Founding Fathers

Wednesday, June 4th, began with an early start as we made our way to Arlington National Cemetery. It was a truly poignant visit, including a moment of prayer at the grave of Palma alum, Bernard Corpuz (Palma class of 1995) witnessing the dignified Changing of the Guard, and an actual burial procession with horse drawn caisson. We

then paid our respects at the Marine Corps Memorial before enjoying a charming lunch and stroll in Georgetown - ending at the "Water Gate" - the end terminal of the C&O Canal, the source of the eponym of the Watergate hotel.

The afternoon brought us face-to-face with presidential history at Mount Vernon, George Washington's beloved estate. Students toured the grounds, taking in the various enterprising elements of his farm - from agriculture to fish harvesting. Our day concluded with dinner at National Harbor, followed by exciting views from the Capitol Ferris Wheel, a picturesque end to a busy day.

Day 3: Pillars of Democracy & Culture

On Thursday, June 5th, we delved into the



Chaperone Mr. John Gnosca addresses students at Arlington National Cemetery.



A view from the top of the Washington Monument.

heart of American ideals, starting with the inspiring Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, followed by visits to the FDR Memorial and Jefferson Memorial. We then explored the majestic Library of Congress, marveling at its architecture and vast collections.

After lunch at the majestic Union Station, a major highlight was our comprehensive Capitol Tour, where students gained a firsthand glimpse of the Congressional Chamber from the gallery. We then found tranquility at the Botanical Garden before engaging with diverse cultures at the National Museum of the American Indian. Our evening included dinner, a picture stop at Lafayette Square near the White House, and a visit to the renowned Kennedy Center - once again viewing the C&O canal at the "Water Gate." One traveler recorded over nine miles of walking by the end of the day!

Day 4: Milestones and Masterpieces

Our final full day, Friday, June 6th, was packed with more incredible sites. We honored history at the Samuel Gompers Memorial and the powerful WWII Memorial. A visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture offered profound perspectives. We then took in



A look inside the Library of Congress.

the panoramic views from the Washington Monument (a true highlight!).

After lunch, we continued our civic journey with a visit to the Supreme Court, where students learned about the judicial branch with a docent-led lecture in the courtroom itself. We then shifted to art and drama with tours of the National Gallery



Thomas Jefferson Memorial statue.



Tombstone for Palma graduate Bernard Corpuz ('95) at Arlington National Cemetery.

of Art and Ford's Theater, where the story of Lincoln's final hours unfolded before us. The day concluded with an extraordinary visit to the National Archives, seeing the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights up close, followed by dinner and a trip to Nationals Park to watch the Washington Nationals play the Texas Rangers.

Day 5: Reflection and Departure

Our last day, Saturday, June 7th, allowed for final reflections. We explored the intriguing Spy Museum, enjoyed lunch at the Ronald Reagan Building, and had a deeply moving visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. We then toured the National Museum of American History before heading to Reagan Airport for a flight back to San Jose, and a short drive home to Salinas. ☺

Retirement Plan Advisory in 2025

By Bill Hastie



One of the first things a company that sponsors a retirement plan for their employees comes to learn is there are many tasks required of them by ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act) that they either cannot do or don't have the time to do. This is when the company will look to hire a retirement plan advisor. For decades, many retirement plan advisors have only focused on the three Fs – funds, fees and fiduciary – selecting good funds, cheap plan fees and fiduciary liability coverage. The retirement plan advisory industry has changed in recent years and since then requires so much more of the advisor. Let's examine three specific areas in which this change has occurred. Expertise in plan design

Whether a company is establishing a retirement plan for the first time or reviewing an existing plan, the advisor must take

into consideration several factors including the type of company and ownership structure, the goals and objectives of the company owners, and the make-up of the employees. Many companies wish to use their retirement plan as a tool for employee recruitment or retention. This will involve including plan provisions that are both attractive to the employees and still affordable for the plan sponsor. Going a step further, how the employer wishes to make contributions to the plan on behalf of the employees – matching contribution, non-elective contribution or profit-sharing contribution – also provides direction to designing the most appropriate plan.

Familiarity with how multiple retirement plans can be utilized together can make a significant difference in long-term asset accumulation. Let's take for example a small office where the owners make a significant

income and wish to maximize the amount they can contribute and deduct from their tax returns. The “base” retirement plan would typically be a 401k plan allowing a maximum annual total contribution in 2025 of \$70,000 (includes both employer and employee contributions), referred to as the Section 415 limit for participants aged 50 and older. In the event the company owners wish to contribute and save substantially more than the 401k plan's 415 limit, a second plan can be established which will allow them to contribute significantly more which is typically a form of a defined benefit plan. Articulating how these two plans can work together can be quite involved.

Expertise in investment selection and portfolio construction

ERISA, as mentioned above, requires that the plan sponsor develop and implement

a prudent process for selecting retirement plan investment options, monitoring those investment on a regular basis, and to replace plan investment options as needed. Plan sponsors rarely attempt to perform this task and will typically engage a plan advisor. Beyond this, the advisor must abide by ERISA's broad range rule, requiring that enough investment options must be available in the plan allowing the average plan participant to construct and maintain a well-diversified portfolio.

Many plan sponsors have found that by offering a wide range of risk-based portfolios (aggressive to conservative), participant engagement is often improved. These are portfolios constructed from the individual plan investment options that are typically built and maintained by the plan's advisor. Here, the advisor must have the expertise and experience to wear the hat of a portfolio manager along with their plan advisor hat. Being able to clearly articulate how and why certain investment options were selected helps create open lines of communication between the advisor, the plan sponsor and plan participants.

Expertise in financial planning

Another ERISA code section, 404c, requires that plan sponsors provide their participants with sufficient information for them to make informed investment decisions. Here again, the advisor must be able to clearly articulate the appropriate amount of investment education to meet the level of 404c. But beyond this requirement is the need to provide participants with additional financial information, such as estate and retirement income planning. While this information may not directly relate to their retirement plan, it does help the participant feel confident they are headed in the right direction toward achieving their long-term financial goals.

ERISA's exclusive benefit rule mandates that everything an advisor does must be for the benefit of the plan, its participants and their beneficiaries. This is achieved when the retirement plan advisor focuses on maintaining expertise in plan design, investment selection and portfolio construction, and

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overall financial planning – designing the best plan for the plan sponsor and the participants, maintaining well-researched investment options to help maximize retirement asset accumulation, and helping participants improve their financial lives for retirement and future generations. [ca](#)

The Long Game

How Salinas Valley Ag Leaders and Hartnell College Built a Two-Decade Partnership That's Still Growing

By Alla Zeltser



In a region where seasons are marked not just by weather but by lettuce, berries, and broccoli, Hartnell College once stood as a curious exception. A college in the heart of the world's most productive agricultural valley—with no formal ag education.

That changed twenty years ago, when Hartnell brought together a group of growers, shippers, and ag executives with a proposition: "If we commit to building meaningful ag education, will you lead?" What was initially pitched as a five-meeting commitment turned into one of the most enduring and transformative collaborations in California agricultural education.

The Ag Steering Committee at Hartnell College was never meant to be permanent. But what began as a short-term solution evolved into a long-term model of trust, partnership, and shared progress. Agriculture was rapidly changing. Technology was reshaping everything from food safety

protocols to irrigation systems and harvest automation. The industry needed a local workforce trained not just in traditional ag, but in business, compliance, food safety, and tech. The college needed industry voices to help shape programs that were timely, credible, and built to last.

A group of respected and pragmatic leaders from across the Salinas Valley stepped up. Names like David Gill, Emmett Linder, Bart Walker, Gary Tanimura, and others—all part of an initial circle who represented different corners of the ag ecosystem, but shared one belief: if a local college could deliver relevant, high-quality training, the industry would show up to support it.

They did. And Hartnell did, too.

Neil Ledford, then Dean of Advanced Technology, was tasked with turning committee feedback into academic programs. Working alongside the Ag Steering Committee, he helped shape early curricu-

lum in food safety, ag business, and precision ag—programs that would become the foundation for the Agricultural Business and Technology Institute.

What followed over the next two decades was a masterclass in how trust can evolve into impact. Committee members brought in colleagues, hired interns, funded scholarships, provided equipment, opened their facilities for field visits, and continued showing up, year after year. Some joined the Hartnell College Foundation Board. Others helped shape programs across the college—supporting initiatives in STEM, automotive, nursing, athletics, and the arts. The mechatronics program—born out of the same collaborative spirit as the ag institute—now prepares students for careers in automation, manufacturing, and robotics, with a curriculum that directly intersects with agriculture's evolving needs. Programs in nursing and allied health have expanded rapidly, with graduates filling critical shortages across Monterey County and beyond.

The Hartnell College Foundation itself has grown into one of the most successful community college foundations in California, directing millions in philanthropic investment toward scholarships, labs, student services, and campus expansions that now include King City, Soledad, Castroville, and the Alisal campuses in addition to the main campus in Salinas. Hartnell serves over 15,000 students annually, nearly three-quarters are the first in their families to attend college.

David Gill, one of the founding members and longtime chair of the committee, would be the first to redirect any spotlight away from himself. A quiet force in the room, Gill has been the kind of leader who sets a high bar by consistently raising others up. His belief in the value of education—not


as a handout but a strategic hand up—has defined the committee's approach. That clarity of purpose and steady commitment is what has kept the partnership thriving for two decades.

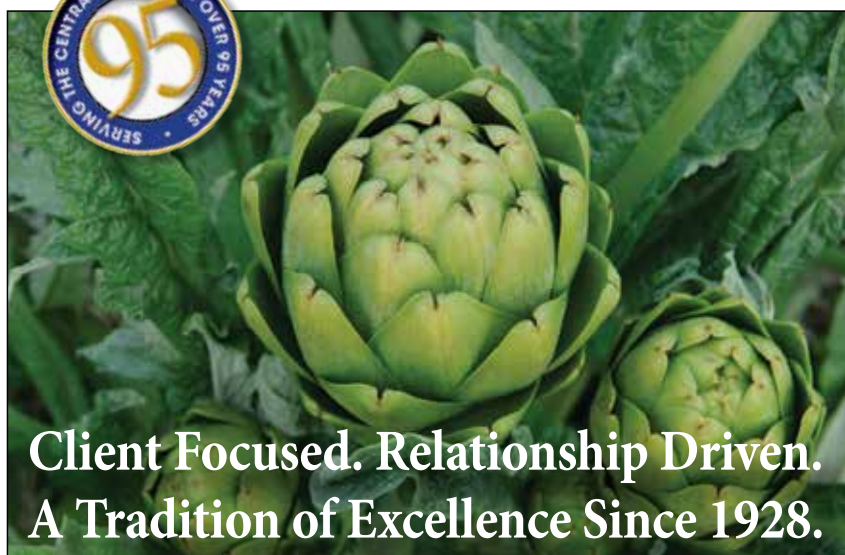
Today, Hartnell College stands as a national model for ag education—offering certificates, associate degrees, and industry-connected training in everything from automation to food safety. It hosts one of the state's most respected food safety conferences, and has built out a workforce pipeline that serves not only Salinas but the entire Salinas Valley and the broader Central Coast.

Many partnerships serve a moment. This one has endured for decades, sustained by the remarkable dedication of leaders who saw education not just as a workforce tool, but as a responsibility to their community. And at a time when industries across the country lament a lack of skilled labor, the Salinas Valley quietly built one of the most agile, responsive, and integrated models of workforce development in the state.

There are still challenges ahead. Climate volatility, evolving automation, and generational turnover will demand new approaches. What makes this partnership lasting isn't just its longevity—it's the quiet consistency of leaders who show up, stay involved, and remain committed to progress that's thoughtful, collaborative, and enduring.

Twenty years in, the Ag Steering Committee remains as committed as ever—not because they have to be, but because they believe in what happens when institutions and industries work together for the long haul. Hartnell College was once without ag. Today, it is anchored by it. And for thousands of students—and for an entire region—this quiet, consistent partnership has changed everything.

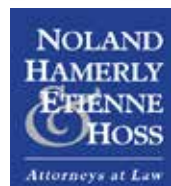
This year, the Hartnell College Foundation honored the Ag Steering Committee with its highest distinction: the Leadership Award — a fitting recognition for a group that never set out to be celebrated, only to make a difference. 



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Carmel Valley's George McKechnie launches online business SmartHomePlanner.com at age 80

By Mike Hale



When George McKechnie was born in 1945, the idea of computers did not venture outside military circles. Perfected late that year, the first general-purpose electronic digital computer used roughly 17,000 vacuum tubes, required punch cards to input and output, and weighed about 30 tons.

Fast forward 80 years and McKechnie breaks every stereotype of someone in their golden years. The Carmel Valley resident is a technology whiz, and despite his advanced years he's abandoned the idea of retirement. In fact, his latest venture is the online business Smart Home Planner, a consumer-friendly guide to technologies used in the home.

Born in an age where computers were as big as 1,800-square-foot homes, McKechnie now shows others how to operate dozens of devices in those homes that can keep us safe, keep us warm and even tell us when our milk has spoiled.

The new website provides the tools that will help people learn about the technolo-

gies, clarify their own needs and understand how the tech can be tailored to those needs. It will even help find providers.

Within a sector that is exploding in growth, McKechnie and his two associates (Ben Heinrich and Robert Daunt), saw an opportunity to fill a void when it comes to home tech.

Heinrich founded Ben Heinrich Real Estate in Carmel in 1982. In recent years, he has become particularly interested in studying how people make important real estate decisions in the context of incomplete information and uncertain outcomes — especially with regard to the smart home arena.

Daunt, a recently-retired attorney, specialized in working with website-based businesses, and those who created computer software. In recent years, he has developed a deep interest in residential solar energy systems.

McKechnie had been toying with a similar website idea for years, but with Heinrich and Daunt on board, he refocused his energies

and zeroed in on smart homes. He refused to let an old idea die because working with ideas is way better than playing golf or sitting on a porch.

"I'm an idea guy, and I love what I do," said McKechnie, whose father retired in his late 70s and his mother ran a thrift shop well into her 80s. "It's better to wear out than to rust out. I have a bucket list of projects, including three books to write."

McKechnie's perspective on smart homes stems from experience in residential construction, home electronics and the psychology of how people think about and use residential environments.

He grew up wiring houses in the father's electrical contracting business, while building home audio components and speakers for fun. Over the years, he renovated and flipped nine homes, doing most of the work himself.

As an Environmental Psychology grad student at UC Berkeley, he wrote his PhD dissertation on "A Study of Environmental Lifestyles," exploring differences in how people understand and relate to natural environments. Later, while a visiting professor at Berkeley, he helped create the Environmental Simulation Laboratory.

After four years of teaching at the university level, he got bored. He didn't want to leave the Bay Area, so he dropped out of academic life and started a high-end audiophile store in San Francisco called Audio Excellence.

"One of the first clients through the door was Francis Ford Coppola, who happened to work a few blocks from there," McKechnie said. Other clients were famed engineer and inventor Ray Dolby and bluesman Boz Scaggs. "It was great fun," he said.

In 1980 he sold the business following a trip

to Point Lobos south of Carmel. “I was deeply involved in photography, and once I visited there I fell in love, and I had to live there.”

In 1999, he founded Axiom Audio Theater in Monterey, running the business with his son who had just finished college. The business eventually evolved into Axiom Home Tech, and McKechnie soon became a smart home technology specialist and licensed low-voltage contractor.

While his son ran the day-to-day business, McKechnie served as chairman of the Psychology Department at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, and shared a private practice in Clinical Psychology while his wife Dr. Dee Davis. When Silicon Valley lured his son away, McKechnie retired from the Medical Staff at Community Hospital and returned to Axiom, until he finally sold the business two years ago.

A Personalized Approach

Assmart home technologies continue to evolve, one guiding principle is becoming increasingly clear: a smart home is only as effective as it is personalized. According to McKechnie, the future of home automation lies not in one-size-fits-all solutions, but in systems that are thoughtfully tailored to the specific needs of each household.

SmartHomePlanner.com has identified five lifestyle patterns which are built upon these smart home technologies — many of which can be custom-tailored to support specific lifestyle needs:

Protect — Safeguard your family, possessions and home with:

- Remote monitoring and control of door locks and windows
- Intrusion alarms for doors and windows
- Smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detectors and alerts
- Security lighting (exterior and interior)
- Surveillance cameras, with local and/or cloud storage of images
- Temperature, moisture, and flooding alerts

Connect — Instant connectivity for home monitoring and control:

- Monitoring and control features which are integrated into your remote controls, smartphone, tablet and/or laptop
- Conveniently-located in-home control

panels

- World-wide remote access to smart home systems via a smartphone or table
- Use of an integration processor to coordinate the various systems
- Cloud storage of images and data, as desired

Enjoy — Live in your home with comfort, convenience and style:

- Easy-to-use multi-room music, video, and streaming
- Effortless control of your home theater
- Remotely access and control an audio or video server
- Automatically control custom lighting scenes and illuminate pathways
- Wirelessly adjust shades and drapes

Conserve — Use less electricity, gas and water with:

- Lighting control, using dimming and scene-setting functions
- Occupancy sensors, which automatically turn lighting on when a room is occupied, and off when it is vacant
- Automated window coverings to maximize solar gain in winter, and limit it in

summer

- Remotely manage heating and AC, to save energy when you are away
- Monitor and control water use with flow meters and leak detectors

Adapt — Support aging-in-place and other special needs:

- Occupancy sensors to track and time their movements throughout the home
- Bed sensors to monitor sleep quality and vital signs
- Security cameras to oversee independent living
- Smart appliances to help monitor nutrition and safety
- Medication dispensers to confirm and control prescription compliance

While this may seem daunting to some homeowners, McKechnie believes his website can be a guiding light. “The real value of smart technology comes when we understand it, and it aligns with how people actually live,” he said.

For a fuller perspective, visit smarthomeplanner.com. ☞



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From Inspiration to Impact

How a Heartfelt Conversation Enhanced Care for Neurodiverse Pediatric Patients at Salinas Valley Health

By Chris Haubert



Joe with Salinas Valley Health Pediatric Nurse Pam Yates.

A young man named Joe can be credited for sparking change in how young patients with autism and other neurodivergent conditions receive care at Salinas Valley Health. Pam Yates, RN, CPN, a pediatric nurse and chair of the Pediatric Unit Practice Council (UPC) at the medical center, recalls a poignant conversation with a close friend who said she didn't know what she would do if Joe, her teenage son with autism, had to go to a hospital. The experience, she explained, could be overwhelming for him. This brief discussion gave Pam a new perspective on her work as a pediatric nurse and opened a window of opportunity for simple improvements with a significant impact.

Safe Spaces to Build Better Long-term Health Outcomes

According to the Understood, a leading nonprofit focused on learning disabilities, roughly one in five children in the United States is estimated to be neurodivergent, meaning brain differences affect how their brain works. An estimated one in 36 U.S. children have autism spectrum disorder, a condition that may result in different behavioral responses to external stimuli. A hospital or medical center can be a scary place for these young patients. Creating a positive experience increases the likelihood of such patients seeking care throughout their lifespan.

When attending a National Magnet

Conference® hosted by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, Pam heard about a program that might help people like her young friend Joe. Following discussion with the chief nursing officer, the director of education and others at Salinas Valley Health, Pam, Lisa Sandberg, BSN, RN, CPN, Pediatric UPC Co-Chair, and Stephanie Frizzell, MSN, RN, NPD-DC, CMSRN, Director of Education, applied for a Salinas Valley Health Foundation grant that supports staff ideas to benefit patients. The funding they received provided access to the BEE MINDFUL™ program that Pam had learned about at the conference. From it, Salinas Valley Health adopted a Patient Neurobehavioral Assessment Tool (PNAT) and other related resources.

Assessment Tool Guides Tailored Care

The PNAT questionnaire plays a crucial role in understanding a person's communication preferences—whether they express themselves verbally, through pictures, or

with communication boards. It evaluates potential stressors during examinations and identifies triggers such as bright lights, loud noises, or certain textures. This information supports simple ways to tailor care to individual needs.

A sign on the room door and a sticker on the patient's chart prompt staff to cluster care and check with the nurse regarding specific patient preferences. The Pediatrics Department is equipped with fidget toys, headphones, weighted blankets, and writing boards to facilitate comfort and interaction. Another component of the BEE MINDFUL program is training to enhance nurses' knowledge, comfort and skills in caring for pediatric patients with autism spectrum disorder. In addition to reviewing program elements, the training includes a powerful educational video that allows viewers to experience what an autistic patient may hear while at the medical center.


All children one year of age or older at Salinas Valley Health are now screened by a registered nurse for neurobehavioral disorders or behavioral concerns. When a screening yields positive results, a nurse completes the PNAT and tailors the care to the child's needs.

Measurable Success Leads to Expansion Plans

The program is making a difference – for patients, their families and medical staff. Results of surveys administered before and after implementation of the BEE MINDFUL program show significantly improved confidence in nurses' comfort levels in caring for a neurodiverse child, all due to minor adjustments.

The program was so well received that nurses from other units have requested

education and use of BEE MINDFUL components to care for patients throughout the medical center. Plans are in the works to expand the program in different areas, including Outpatient Surgery and the Emergency Department.

Helping make the medical center a place where neurodiverse children feel safe receiving care fills Pam's heart. It also reminds her of the difference one person can make in the world. Salinas Valley Health recently honored Pam as a teaching exemplar during its 2025 Hospital Week awards ceremony. During her remarks, Pam paid tribute to Joe, noting the ripple effect he had on increasing her awareness, which resulted in enhancing care for neurodiverse children at the medical center, setting them up for a positive medical experience that may well have a lasting and positive impact on many lives. 



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Santa Lucia Highlands Growers Rise to Global Recognition

By Gwen McGill



The raised benchland of Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands winegrowing region.

Rising above the neat, rhythmic rows of lettuce, broccoli, and strawberries in Monterey's Salinas Valley is the Santa Lucia Highlands—one of California's premier cool-climate winegrowing regions.

Set along the elevated benchlands of the valley's western slopes, more than 5,000 acres of world-class vineyards produce acclaimed Pinot Noir and Chardonnay for globally recognized wineries including Pisoni Family Vineyards, Siduri, Rombauer Vineyards, Mer Soleil, and Morgan Winery. With a legacy of family farming, innovation, and sustainability, the region's growers have secured their place among California's most prestigious names for appellation and single-vineyard wines.

Sun, Wind, and Wine

The Santa Lucia Highlands is blessed with a rare convergence of geography, terrain, and climate that makes it ideal for cool-climate

grape varieties. Its proximity to Monterey Bay brings a steady, driving wind that flows through the Salinas Valley nearly every day during the growing season. This wind, originating from the Monterey Bay's deep, cold underwater canyon, plays a powerful role in shaping the region's grapes and the wines they become.

"...the region's growers have secured their place among California's most prestigious names for appellation and single-vineyard wines."

Each afternoon, temperatures rise in the southern Salinas Valley creating a pressure shift that funnel cool air inland from the bay. As the warm air in the south rises, dense, cold

marine air is pulled through the narrowing valley, accelerating the wind—famous locally for being strong enough to empty contents of a car with its doors open. Beginning mid-afternoon and continuing well after dusk, this wind cools the vines, halting photosynthesis earlier than in most coastal regions and slowing grape ripening.

At night, a layer of protective fog settles over the valley and hillside vineyards up to about 800 feet. Together with the wind, this fog maintains the consistent, cool temperatures that Pinot Noir and Chardonnay love.

This climate, combined with low rainfall that creates a long, even growing season, allows grapes to ripen slowly, developing full flavors while preserving freshness and acidity. In the glass, this translates into richly colored red wines with red berries, earth, and warm spice characteristics and supple texture. Chardonnay from the Santa Lucia Highlands



Two generations of the Frascioni family (Nick, Gary and Adam from left to right) farm four vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands and produce critically acclaimed wine under their ROAR label.

is known for vibrant acidity, bright citrus fruit and tropical notes.

Leadership and Legacy

The region's story begins in the early 1970s with pioneering figures like Rich Smith, Nikki Hahn, and Jerry McFarland planting the first vineyards after Spanish missionaries in the 1790s. In the 1980s, Gary Pisoni planted his family's ranch to Pinot Noir, drawing national attention with critical acclaim that attracted top winemakers from Napa and Sonoma.

Dan and Donna Lee of Morgan, Steve McIntyre, Rob Talbott, Gary Frascioni and others followed, planting the latest clones and rootstocks, launching their own wineries, and further establishing the SLH as a leader in California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Today, the Santa Lucia Highlands commands the highest per-ton grape prices and most valuable vineyard land in Monterey County and its wines are distributed nationally and across the world. Vineyards like the Pisoni Estate, Garys' Vineyard, and Sleepy Hollow are recognized among California's "grand cru" sites.

Community and Collaboration

In 2006, local growers formed the Santa Lucia Highlands Wine Artisans (SLHWA), a nonprofit trade association led by a grower board and supported by wineries across the state sourcing fruit from the region. Its mission is to promote and elevate the region among trade and consumers through education, marketing, and events.

"Santa Lucia Highlands commands the highest per-ton grape prices in Monterey County."

SLHWA programs include the Sommelier Tour, which brings top buyers to the region to walk vineyards and meet producers and taste the latest wines, and the popular Sun, Wind & Wine Festival, which draws over 700 attendees each May to celebrate with growers, winemakers, chefs, and local food artisans. Strategic partnerships with the California Wine Institute and California Department of Food and Agriculture grant funding extends

the reach of this small but mighty AVA far beyond Monterey County.

Sustainability in Practice

For decades, SLH winegrowers have prioritized sustainable farming. Nearly all vineyards are sustainably certified. Practices include cover cropping, no-till farming, and drip irrigation. Growers like Steve McIntyre are testing innovations like biochar, which enhances soil health, sequesters carbon, and improves water retention. Solar energy, pollinator habitats, and experimental plantings of alternative varieties reflect a shared commitment to environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

Alongside their vines, the region's growers farm lemon orchards and avocado groves to diversify the landscape and agricultural output and enrich the region's ecosystem.

Next-Gen Energy

Looking ahead, the next generation of Santa Lucia Highlands growers is stepping up—with new ideas in direct-to-consumer outreach, planting for climate adaptation, and sustainable innovation. These second- and third-generation stewards are ensuring the

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Monterey Motorsports Festival 2025

A fresh spin on Car Week with heart, horsepower and family fun

By Mac McDonald



Every August, Monterey Car Week roars to life with its ultra-luxe displays, high-profile auctions and glamorous parties. But for those looking to experience the thrill of car culture without the velvet rope vibe, the Monterey Motorsports Festival offers a refreshing, inclusive, affordable alternative.

What's more, the community-focused event sets aside a percentage of proceeds to benefit local nonprofits.

"We call it the ultimate car culture experience because it's not just about showcasing cars — it's about celebrating what brings people together," says Paolo Manca, founder of Monterey Motorsports Festival and the owner of several Central

Coast businesses, including P.M. Landscaping Services. "We want guests to experience the thrill of Car Week in a welcoming, high-energy setting that's built around community, accessibility, and impact."

Returning to the Monterey County Fair and Event Center on Saturday, Aug. 16, MMF blends the horsepower of Car Week with the heartbeat of the local community. From 2-10 p.m., the festival transforms the fairgrounds into an electrifying celebration of all things automotive — supercars, classics, off-road beasts, and cutting-edge electric vehicles — paired with live entertainment, immersive experiences, gourmet food and, most importantly, a mission to give back.

A festival for everyone

What truly sets MMF apart is its family-friendly atmosphere. While many Car Week events cater to collectors and connoisseurs, MMF invites everyone — from long-time gearheads to curious children — to enjoy the ride. With interactive exhibits, virtual reality test drives, and the chance to get up close to everything from off-road trucks to rare collector roadsters, the event is designed to spark inspiration and excitement across generations.

"Car Week has been immersed in a world of luxury for quite a long time, and not there is anything wrong with that, but at the end of day it excludes a lot of people," said Adam Langsbard, MMF's managing director.

"There is so much that goes into car culture, and if we can curate the full breadth of that experience, and make food, drink and music part of the celebration, then what we have is hopefully the ability to create a wider, more accessible event."

While tickets to luxury car events have risen considerably over the years, MMF

seeks a balance between creating unique automotive experiences and providing accessibility to all, from serious gearheads, to the "car curious" and even whole families. Online tickets to the all-day event start at \$89 (for a limited time), with free entry for kids, as well as discounted young adult tickets.

"It's one of the only family events during Car Week, with a specific area for kids, and that's important to us to have everyone involved," Langsbard said.

Driving awareness, accelerating Impact

MMF's impact isn't limited to the pavement. A percentage of all proceeds from the event go directly to local nonprofit organizations, reflecting the festival's commitment to driving meaningful change in the community.

"We want to be able to empower nonprofits, giving them a toolkit with free tickets and promotional elements they can use ... a chance to tell their story and gain support," Langsbard said. "For example, if a nonprofit serves disadvantaged kids, how can we make that group part of what we do in our kids area?"

In 2024, MMF raised more than \$50,000 for 13 nonprofit partners, and this year the festival is poised to make an even greater difference. The 2025 nonprofit partners include:

- Monterey County Family Justice Center
- Monterey County Fair Heritage Foundation
- Special Olympics Northern California
- Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula
- Monterey Justice League
- BirchBark Foundation
- Alliance on Aging
- I Cantori di Carmel
- Holding on to Hope Family Justice Center
- Monterey County Heritage Foundation

New organizations can still apply to become a partner and tap into the visibility and connection MMF offers. “This collaboration gives nonprofits a powerful platform to amplify their work and engage with new supporters,” Langsbard said.

The after-hours edge

One of MMF’s signature features is its after-dark energy. While most Car Week events wind down at sunset, MMF keeps the momentum going well into the night with live DJs, bands, and the glow of festival lighting illuminating the grounds. The blend of music, motion, and community spirit gives MMF a distinctive atmosphere that’s equal parts block party and motorsports expo.

“We believe that car culture is also about meetups, eating, drinking, socializing, listening to music,” Langsbard said. “We can create platforms for dialogue, and we have two stages at the Fairgrounds, with the arena holding more than 11,000 people. There are very few evening events at Car Week. Why

not turn that on and make it a big attraction for the community?”

With gourmet food vendors serving up everything from street eats to fine cuisine, and craft beverages flowing in a festive atmosphere, guests can easily make a full day — and evening — of it.

“You ever try to get a restaurant reservation during Car Week?” Langsbard asked. “It’s too crowded that week, with everyone wanting to go out. We can provide everything in one venue.”

Be part of something bigger


More than a showcase of shiny exteriors and revving engines, Monterey Motorsports Festival is about connection — to the community, to car culture and to causes that matter.

“Car culture means something different to everyone,” said Langsbard. “One person’s experience may be looking under the hood at everything while someone else’s may be steeped in food or music. We try to offer

experiences beyond steel and aluminum.”

So whether fans come for the supercars, the live music, the family-friendly fun, or simply to be a part of something greater, MMF 2025 promises to deliver a unique Car Week experience for all.

Learn more, apply as a nonprofit partner, or plan your visit at www.MontereyMotorsportsFestival.com.



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Wonder on Wheels

PG Museum of Natural History plays up the WOW factor, turning a former taco truck into an interactive experience

By Mike Hale



Over the course of 142 years, the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History has accumulated a massive and diverse array of interesting items from around the world, leading to a unique challenge: “How do we possibly share them all?”

Ironically, the pandemic in 2020 finally led to a viable solution. Without the ability, for many months, to open its doors, host field trips or attend outreach events, the museum landed on a big idea — one with a WOW factor.

Believing there is no better way to reach underserved audiences than to drive directly to them, PGMNH last September rolled out Wonder on Wheels, a fully refurbished 1976 Ford with a former life as a taco truck. The fully electric customized vehicle has ditched fryers and flattops for interactive carts linked to engaging programs about the natural and cultural history of the Central Coast.

“It got the museum thinking about another

way to reach the community,” said current Executive Director Rachel Miller. “The goal was to reach all four corners of the county, and to ask ‘what would it look like to bring our collection on the road?’ ”

PGMNH made the Wonder on Wheels project its 2022 “Big Idea” as part of the annual Monterey County Gives! campaign, a community philanthropic endeavor that has raised and donated more than \$68 million to local nonprofits since 2009. The cost for the purchase and renovation for the WOW van exceeded \$200,000, according to Miller.

Created in partnership with Tessellate, an exhibition and experience design company based in New York, WOW helps inspire imagination, curiosity and exploration. Its goal is to meet a new community of learners where they are — in classrooms and libraries, at community centers and farmers markets and more. Every aspect of the van is designed to delight the

senses, with themes celebrating the worlds of pollinators, exploration, plants and animals (specifically wildlife of Monterey County), culture and ideas.

The museum hopes this new chapter of community engagement and interest will sustain a quest for learning for generations.

“We want to share the message and mission of the museum in areas of the community where they might not have the opportunity to visit the museum,” said Miller. “The intention is to reach as many as possible, with an intergenerational focus, meaning parents and kids, a co-learning experience that will ignite conversations.”

The WOW van is equipped with carts with the themes “Pollinators and Flowers,” “People and Land” and “Monterey Wildlife.” They contain activities that allow participants to dissect flowers, go on scavenger hunts and engage in crafts. In essence the truck becomes a traveling field guide, complete with journals, drawings and descriptions. So far, the most popular topics with kids have been skulls, pelts and (of course) scat. “The kids love that,” Miller said.

The region’s early history also has proven popular, with kids learning about the early Rumsen Ohlone peoples, and the Chinese



fishermen of the 1800s who were the first to mine the rich marine treasures of Monterey Bay.

The van's outreach coordinator is fully bilingual, meaning these stories can easily be told to the Latino communities. The museum soft-launched the truck in September of 2024, and has taken it out on the road at least twice a month, "trying to make sure we're doing it right, taking it slow," Miller said. "We've been compiling information and feedback from events and have tweaked the way we present it because each community is different."

Miller said many of her staff members have taken turns driving the van, and that the response has been overwhelmingly positive. "Last October we went to a festival in Gonzales and participants appreciated that this was accessible to them and that it was a bilingual program."

The exterior of the van is wrapped in a field guide design that allows participants

to color the flora and fauna with markers. It also provides opportunities to talk about concepts such as renewable energy, because the activity carts are charged by solar panels atop the fully-electric truck.

The museum has attracted a mixture of community partners, and collaborates with them on a monthly basis, visiting libraries, schools and after-school programs, along with community festivals and farmers markets. PGMNH also plans to use the WOW van as a sustaining revenue generator, making it available to rent for private parties and events.

As a bonus, the truck has become a kind of moving billboard for the museum and its long history. "Surprisingly, many people we talk to don't know there is a natural history museum in the county," Miller said. "It's very distinctive and wherever it's parked people walk up to ask questions. We're really happy that we can provide this to our community."

About the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History

In 1883, the museum opened its doors among the first wave of natural history museums in America. Naturalists of this era, such as John Muir and Louis Agassiz, began a national tradition of hands-on science education and nature preservation. The museum has continued this tradition for 140 years. The museum's mission is to inspire discovery, wonder, and stewardship of our natural world. It envisions a community of curious minds, engaged in discovering the natural heritage and cultural legacy that exist today on the Central California Coast. The museum is a catalyst for conservation and a valued learning resource in this region, facilitating active inquiry for all ages. For more information visit www.pgmuseum.org.



Brand Man

How a New York City Creative Director is Cultivating Fresh Roots in California's Salad Bowl

By Jeff Mendelsohn



The young designer at work in New York City.

About a year ago while shopping at Star Market, a colorful snack item caught my eye. Caulipuffs®... “puffed snack made with corn, rice, and cauliflower”. “What is this healthy stuff doing in the cookie section?”, I thought to myself. I looked closer. “Non-GMO. Gluten-free. Soy & Nut free. Avocado oil. Baked not fried.”

As a parent, I'm always looking for a healthier snack for my kids. Items like Takis® and Hot Cheetos® are devoured in large quantities by Generation Alpha, and those snacks are awful for the human body, but undoubtedly keep gastroenterologists busy for the rest of this century. Side note: I'm encouraging all of my kids to consider gastroenterology as a potential profession. They'll be extremely busy when this generation grows up. So, the health benefits of these new Caulipuffs® snacks piqued my interest initially as a parent.

But, as I turned the bag around and looked even closer, I read that Caulipuffs® is “family owned...from Salinas, California.”

Well, now I was really curious. As editor of this magazine, I'm always on the hunt for a good story, and these mysterious, locally-owned Caulipuffs® had all the makings. I needed to find out more.

It took me a few weeks to track down the business owner, but eventually, in late January of this year, I made my way to CauliPuffs® headquarters on Rossi Street in

Caulipuffs® is “family owned... from Salinas, California.”

Salinas to meet the man behind the brand. Upon walking into the office, I was struck immediately by even more of the colorful packaging lining the walls. This was not your average branding for a local snack-maker. The packaging projects a smart and youthful tone. “Whoever is behind this brand has serious design chops”, I thought. As he rose from behind a large computer monitor, I was greeted with a friendly smile

and a handshake from Caulipuffs® founder Joey Rosa.

Considering what a small-town Salinas can be, I was surprised that I didn't recognize the face of the man behind this local brand. But, it was a warm greeting nonetheless, and Joey signaled me to follow him to the warehouse to get started.

A few minutes into the interview, I realized that I couldn't take notes fast enough. Joey Rosa has a lot to say, and he can be hard to keep up with, but I wanted to make sure to document all of it. So I hit record on my phone, set it down, and listened to the story of what led Joey Rosa from the big stage of branding in New York City to the founding of Caulipuffs® right here in the Salinas Valley.

After about a half hour of his detailed and passionate story, two simple truths were apparent to me. Right off the bat I knew I had to push this story to the summer issue. There's just too much content to finish this by spring. But secondly, after hearing Joey speak so coherently and passionately about his vision for Caulipuffs®, I knew I wanted to be involved.

Over the course of the ensuing months leading up to this article, both realizations came to fruition. I met with Joey on multiple occasions to gather information for the story and got to know him and his wife Thai Lan Tran (a well-known surgeon at Natividad Hospital's trauma center) much better. By late February I was invested both personally and financially in this exciting new brand, and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to share this story. It's not often a branding genius transplants from the bright lights of New York City to the serene fields of the Salinas Valley and creates a product that represents the spirit of both regions so fantastically.

Joey Rosa is a native of Long Island, New York. For those who are not familiar, Long Island is a fish-shaped island that stretches to the east of New York City.

"It's nothing like New York City," says Rosa. "My childhood felt a lot like The Sandlot – we lived on our bikes and stayed out long after dark playing sports into the evening hours."

Raised in large part by his mother, Joey and his younger brother and sister had a happy childhood. Close with their grandparents, Joey and his siblings learned the value of hard work at an early age. Weekends for the Rosa kids consisted of helping their grandparents run their local catering hall

business, prepping food and working weddings. That first experience with capitalism sparked a lifelong obsession for Rosa to work and earn money.

"I could turn my ideas into actual marketing projects."

"I was obsessed with working and earning money for as long as I can remember," says Rosa. "For my birthday or Christmas, I'd ask for tools instead of toys so I could go hustle and make a buck."

That led to more work for the young Rosa

in the construction field, another passion for the young creator.

Rosa continued to work his way through high school, where traditional classes failed to interest him. Rosa found himself drawn to creative classes in fields such as marketing and technology. Around that time, he knew a few friends studying graphic design. Almost immediately, Rosa's focus shifted in that direction.

"Graphic design required a technical skill set combined with program knowledge," says Rosa. "For the first time, I felt that I had a real edge. I could turn my ideas into actual marketing projects."

Fascinated by the tools of creativity such as video production, product development, and creative writing, Joey continued to pursue this path in college.

"I was 19 when I learned there was a bachelor's program in packaging design at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology)," says Rosa.

A bachelor's degree in packaging design blends branding with packaging. The program at FIT is one of a kind and comes highly regarded to members of the consumer-packaged goods (CPG) industry. With a nudge from his mother, Joey decided to apply.

"My mom was encouraging me to look into it," says Rosa. "Get off the island, she'd say. So I wrote an essay and a few weeks later the head of the department called our house to invite me for an interview."

At that time, admission requirements involved prospective students participating in a mock branding assignment. Rosa would have to research and design an existing product, and then submit his marketing plan that would serve as the hurdle to being invited for an in-person interview.

"I remember being pretty nervous because to this point I had taught myself everything," says Rosa. "But it ended up going pretty well."

Pretty well? Rosa knocked it out of the park. His project involved the creation of a fictitious project for Rice Krispies®, which was very popular at that time in the late 1990s. Rosa created three fictitious girl





characters to mimic the “Snap, Crackle, Pop” tagline that was so popular for Rice Krispies® at the time, naming them “Snaz, Krizzle, and Bop”. The product itself added a fresh pink color sub-segment to the existing Rice Krispies product and thus appealing to an entire new demographic.

A few days after submitting his pitch, Rosa was invited for the in-person interview with the admissions committee at FIT. The hour-long trip marked Rosa’s first ever from

sleepy Long Island to the busy streets of Manhattan. Having never been to the city alone, he brought his brother Brian along for the trip.

Seated across the room full of packaging design professors and even the department head, the bright-eyed Rosa was then bombarded with questions.

“They asked me things like ‘what training do you have’ and ‘how did you learn do this?’, says Rosa. “I looked at them and told

them simply that I taught myself.”

What happened next comes straight out of a Hollywood script. FIT accepted Joey Rosa into their 20-student upper division program on the spot, with a package that included financial aid.

“That’s when I realized that I may have a gift for this,” he says.

That fall, the boy from Long Island packed his bags and moved into the dorms to embark on a course of study and internships that would lead him to the heights of the CPG industry. To the Empire State Building itself, actually.

After graduating, Rosa landed a Junior Designer role at one of the premier branding and packaging agencies in the world at that time – Sterling Brands. Their office a large chunk of the 17th floor of the iconic structure.

“Within three years, I went from swinging a hammer to looking out the window of the Empire State Building,” he says. “Learning from some of the brightest minds in the business.”

Rosa credits mentors like Debbie





Joey and Brian Rosa at a recent industry trade show.

Millman (host of one of the longest-running and most respected design podcasts in the world) and Richard Palmer, a man Rosa calls “one of the greatest creative directors” he’s ever met.

“In those three years with Sterling, I worked on hundreds of high-profile projects with support and creative direction from some of the best minds in the industry,” says Rosa.

The experience provided Rosa with the confidence and skill-set to fast track his career and launch his own digital branding agency at the age of 26.

“I wanted to help brands scale and grow after launch,” says Rosa. “So I teamed up with a web developer and we launched Pollen Brands.”

Pollen Brands was founded as a “purpose-drive design agency”, and Rosa and his partners jumped in with both feet.

“We built a strong portfolio,” says Rosa of his client list. “I was the agency of record for Nestle®. I worked with brands like Gerber® and PepsiCo®. “But it was long hours and the constant pressure of delivering high-profile projects took its toll mentally and physically.”

By then, the recently married Rosa was tired of the grind of the big city and looking to settle down with his new bride, Dr. Thai Lan Tran. They sat down as a couple and

looked at their options and eventually chose Salinas due to the trauma needs at Natividad Hospital. Joey would continue to work remotely in his various CPG endeavors (Rosa had just helped launch a plant-based protein bar called Mezcla™, and Thai Lan would work her magic at the hospital.

The kid from Long Island was moving to California to start a family. The year was 2018.

Fast forward a few years. The Rosas now

find themselves firmly entrenched in the community, with two daughters in elementary school and a house off River Road in Salinas. While packing their school lunches during one of Thai Lan’s long shifts one morning, the idea man got another idea. “I was thinking about how there just aren’t enough healthy snack options for our girls,” says Rosa. “And I’m driving by these beautiful Salinas Valley fields on the way to school each morning and thinking ‘there’s gotta be something.’”

After contemplating for a few days, Rosa knew he wanted to incorporate the local bounty and use his experience to build something of his own. “Something big. Something inspired by our community,” he says. “But rooted in our values as a family.” After settling on cauliflower most versatile option for his brainchild, he started sketching out concepts. Shortly thereafter in early 2023, Caulipuffs® were born.

With his experience in building brands, Rosa went to work. He reached out to friends in the industry who could help him make his vision come to life. Focusing on using gluten-free base ingredients like corn, rice, and cauliflower. Met rice mill operators and tinkered with the recipe while never straying from his vision of a healthy alternative snack. Eventually, he settled on a recipes for several potential new flavors.

“White Cheddar was one of the first flavors



Joey's daughter Kaia stocking shelves at Star Market in Salinas.



Caulipuffs partners with non-profits such as Food Bank for Monterey County.

I came up with, and to this day it's our best seller," he says. "But Honey BBQ and Salt & Pepper aren't far behind."

After launching Caulipuffs® and successfully working his way into partnerships with both local and national retailers, Rosa began working on a new project that favored the traditional potato chip style as opposed

to the puffed snack. Never straying from his vision to give back, Rosa consistently donates to the Monterey Food Bank and many other purpose-driven organizations around California and the USA.

"I'm just as excited about Caulitos™," says Rosa of his lentil, rice, and cauliflower chip. "I think there's a real path for this product

not just in retail, but in foodservice."

At this point in the interview, Rosa was speaking my language. With almost twenty years of experience in the produce industry, I was familiar with the differences in consumers for retail and foodservice. Joey

"Within three years, I went from swinging a hammer to looking out the window of the Empire State Building,"

already had some great inroads into the retail market, and I mentioned that I'd be happy connect him with some of my contacts on the foodservice side. "Forget the story," I thought. "I want to get involved with this business."

So one meeting led to another, and over the past several months the story has continued to develop. But I couldn't push the story for a second time, so I thought I'd share what there is so far.

I don't know future holds for Caulipuffs®, or exactly how this story will unfold. But I have a hunch it will end well for the Brand Man, and everyone who goes along with him. ☺



Rosa's wife, Dr. Thai Lan Tran, with their daughters Kaia and Addie.



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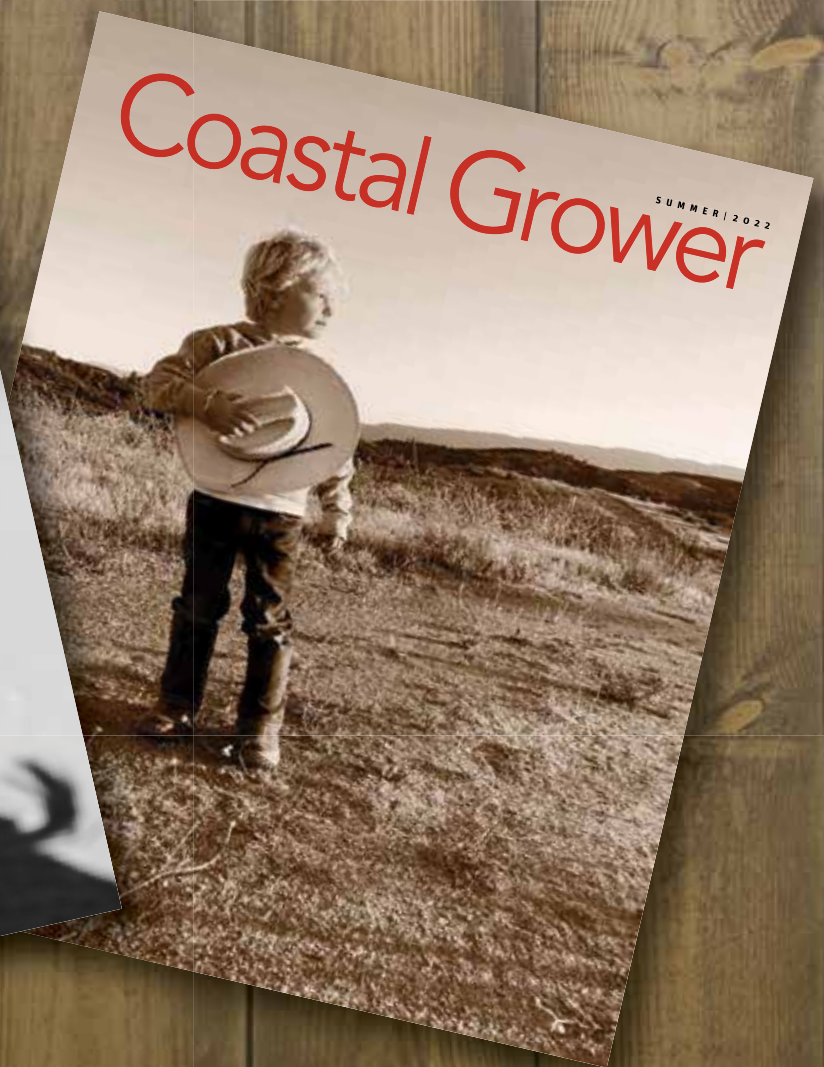
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| HOME SHOWCASE

Hidden Treasure: Marks Ranch

By Diane Gsell

Photography By Patrick Tregenza





Friends, acquaintances, business colleagues, relations...sometimes the lines are blurred as people flow between categories as the years go by. But the inner circle, those who truly have our backs when we need support and, in return, are trusted with our deepest secrets, seems to withstand the test of time.

Here in Monterey County you know you've made it into a local's inner circle when they share a diligently guarded list that proves invaluable several key times a year: where to enjoy a solitary hike on peak tourist weekends. While some locals keep such tips to themselves, groups like Big Sur Land Trust work hard to provide access to vibrant outdoor resources to all. In keeping with that mission, Coastal Grower, a magazine by locals and for locals, has chosen to showcase one such sparkling asset so it might be enjoyed all the more.

Monterey County is rich in vibrant recreational trails of all varieties: beginner, rugged, coastal, inland, flat, steep, forested, wide open, understated, breathtaking. Avid hikers choose their spots to suit the day's conditions, whether that means combatting heavy winds, dodging unrelenting heat, or sidestepping the influx of the hiking masses that descends upon our peninsula to share in our natural resource bounty.

Nestled alongside Salinas' popular Toro Park, on the often-sunny Highway 68 Corridor, Marks Ranch offers a serene hiking experience full of both natural beauty and hauntingly charming historic structures. Acquired by Big Sur Land Trust in 2007 as an 816 acre parcel, most of the ranch's front 79 acres were retained by the Trust, while the rest were transferred to the county. These peaceful acres can be easily accessed for day hikes via reservation on the Trust's website: bigsurlandtrust.org. Yet most tourists, and many locals, who frequent Toro Park aren't aware of Marks Ranch's existence, so it













continues to be a vibrant community resource hiding in plain sight.

Once through the gate, visitors are treated to wondrous natural features that shine in any season. Lush grasslands, vibrantly green in spring, mature to a rich golden hue in summer, and along the way they may be dotted with as many as 90 different kinds of wild flowers. Once a critical food source for Indigenous gatherers, acorns are abundant in autumn, as are their larger buckeye cousins. Birders might enjoy observing acorn woodpeckers, wild turkey, hawks, owls, turkey vultures and busy little groups of quail, my winner in the bird cuteness category. Ground squirrels will most certainly make an appearance, either darting across the grasslands or standing tall and motionless on their hind legs. One most likely will see signs of the more elusive foxes, bobcats, mountain lions, badgers, snakes and coyotes.

The ranch's grasslands are interspersed with mature oak woodlands as well as somewhat rare, for California at least, sycamore trees. Non-native eucalyptus trees are also present, serving as both beneficial wildlife habitats and problematic agents of fire hazard and displacement of native species.

The original stewards of this land were the Esselen and Ohlone peoples. Next, the parcel became part of a Spanish land grant to Jose Ramon Estrada before being sold to the Marks family in 1890. When patriarch Benjamin died, matriarch Nisene shifted the ranch's focus to egg production, a move that proved to be quite profitable. Both the family and business thrived, and multiple structures were built, some of which still stand today.

What's referred to as Pop's House, once home to Andrew Marks, sits alongside a weathered storage barn that, ironically, bears a Dance Hall sign. The house is boarded up and in a state of disrepair but adds a glimpse of a bygone era for passing hikers. A charming stone-studded cottage built into a hillside gives off hobbit vibes, though historians would lead us to believe that its true function was as the ranch's egg incubator. Hikers pass an egg-shaped aquaculture lattice on the way to The Big House, a stately example of Spanish colonial revival architecture built in the 1920s and 1930s. Although the interior is closed to visitors, savvy eyes can peer beyond the back





gate to view what's known as Herman's Garden.

An avid botanist and the youngest of the Marks children, Herman collected rare cacti and unusual palms from around the globe to showcase in the grounds behind the main house. Many of his transplants remain today and hint at the grandeur of the garden at its peak.

The last in the family to live on the grounds, Herman willed the ranch to St. John's College of Annapolis, Maryland, in hopes that a conservation-focused west coast campus could be built there. When that proved impractical, negotiations began with a developer whose vision, though seemingly at odds with the future Herman had imagined, included the construction of 550 homes.

Though some might argue our county is more in need of homes than hiking trails, others delight in the fact that Big Sur Land Trust was able to step in and offer community access to such amazing acreage. Perhaps more importantly, preservation of the land provides access to wildlife whose lives rely on such corridors to move across the landscape to find food, shelter and mates.

Even those who aren't hikers or wildlife enthusiasts might find comfort in the fact that both in 2016 and 2020 Marks Ranch served as an active staging area for crews battling brutal wildfires. Not just a place for a few extra trucks, the land became a makeshift village of sorts providing mess halls, lodging and showers for those working hard to keep the flames at bay.

Whether enjoying a leisurely outing of a few hours, or combining Marks Ranch trails with those of neighboring Toro Park for a full-day experience, in-the-know locals share an amazing resource that came very close to being a subdivision. May we all take pride in these treasured lands, as they are part of what makes living in our county so special.

So that's your insider tip of the day. Should any readers care to even the score, feel free to pass along the coordinates of your favorite porcini patch. ☘





Reshaping Golf Courses in Northern California

By Alan Shipnuck

Don't look now, but Northern California is enjoying its second great golf boom. The first one occurred a century ago, when Pebble Beach, Cypress Point, San Francisco Golf Club, Pasatiempo, the Olympic Club and other classic courses were birthed. Now, an emphasis on restoration and inclusivity is bringing great golf to the masses. "What a time to be alive," says Jim Urbina, the earth-shaping maestro who oversaw the back-to-the-future rebuilding of Pasatiempo's celebrated green complexes.

"Pasa" was designed by Dr. Alister MacKenzie, the genius behind Cypress Point, Augusta National and Royal Melbourne, among other (aggressively private) citadels. But Pasatiempo was so dear to his heart that the good doctor settled in a house off the sixth fairway. Working with old photos and MacKenzie's original drawings, Urbina has brought the greens and bunkers back to how the course looked in 1929 when Bobby Jones christened its opening. The reborn Pasa is more interesting and more playable; the enlarged greens have many more usable hole locations. Urbina's obsessive attention to detail was driven by a sense of civic duty, as Pasatiempo is one of the few Top 100 courses that welcomes the public. "This course means so much to so many," he says. "We had to get it right."

The need to preserve MacKenzie's legacy has been felt at Cypress Point, which will host the Walker Cup—amateur golf's version of the Ryder Cup—in September. Cypress recently reinstalled a bunker behind the first green that had been lost to the sands of time and reclaimed parts the 8th fairway that had been subsumed by encroaching dunes. Sandy Tatum, the late president of the USGA, once called Cypress Point, "the Sistine Chapel of golf." The recent brushstrokes have made it just a little bit better.

A few minutes down 17 Mile Drive, the ultimate mulligan is in the offing: a sweeping redesign of Spanish Bay. With an assortment of awkward and unmemorable holes, the course has never matched the grandeur of its seaside setting. The Pebble Beach Co. is bringing in the big guns: Gil Hanse and his Caveman Construction crew, who are among the leading practitioners of modern golf course design. Work will begin in the spring of 2026. "Golf on the Monterey Peninsula is an unrivaled experience," says Hanse, "and we are thrilled at the opportunity to put our stamp on one of the most spectacular backdrops in the world." Throw in the Tiger Woods's redesign of the Peter Hay par-3 course and the Pebble Beach Co. has belatedly joined the arms race of top-end resort destinations, as Bandon Dunes, Pinehurst and others are continuously reinventing their offerings. "There is definitely a pressure to keep up with the Joneses," says architect Jay Blasi, who oversaw the wildly successful redesign of Golden Gate Park Golf Course. "There has always been that pressure in the private club world, but now we're seeing that with resort courses and even public courses." Some of that is driven by the natural life cycle of the infrastructure. "The irrigation system is the largest investment any course will make, and it typically lasts 30 years," says Blasi. "Once you commit to digging up the irrigation it makes sense to address other issues as well."

That's what the Northern California Golf Association decided with Poppy Ridge, the course it owns in Livermore. (Not to be confused with the other course the NCGA owns, Poppy Hills in Pebble Beach, which was upgraded in 2014 and serves as the headquarters for the NCGA.) Poppy Ridge previously had three distinctly different 9's but Blasi was given free reign to pick the best land to make a new, more unified 18-hole

course along with a sporty 9-hole short course, the Ridge. With the most extreme terrain having been eliminated, Poppy Ridge is now walkable and more playable for mid-to-high-handicappers. It opened in May 2025 to rave reviews, with the inventive, semi-blind 14th hole already being hailed as one of the best par-3s in California.

"To the NCGA's huge credit, one of primary objectives of the whole thing is to keep golf affordable," says Blasi, noting that NCGA members can play Poppy Ridge for \$70. "It's now one of best values in entire country. Who is going to be long-term steward of public golf? That's an important topic. It's really easy for municipal golf to go away or be compromised." That same spirit animated the 45 new holes at Corica Park in Alameda, turning it into a leading municipal destination.

Of course, the high-end private projects will always get a lot of attention. Hanse recently completed a sweeping restoration of Olympic Club's Lake Course, site of five U.S. Opens. It will enjoy a national TV audience while hosting the U.S. Amateur in August 2025. Expect lots of photos on social media from freeloading reporters when they sneak next door to sample Hanse's gorgeous retrofitting of Lake Merced Country Club or the reimagining of the California Golf Club, which earned such acclaim upon reopening in 2008 it helped kick off this ongoing golf boom. "It's a really great time to be a golfer in Northern California," says Blasi, who lives in Palo Alto. "We're so blessed to have such diversity of settings and landscapes: foothills, forest, valleys, redwoods, dunes, rugged coastline. Then you add in all the great championships we host, the passion of the golfing communities, the great weather...it's golf heaven. And somehow it keeps getting better." ☞

LIPELINE

— TRUCKING —

GOD IS GREAT, AND SO IS FREIGHT



Fore the Kids!

By Esmeralda Owen



Youth on Course CEO Adam Heieck (center) with Bank of America executives (left to right) Hiram Yanez, Jennifer Dacquisto, Sherry Farson, Matt Keith

The Monterey Bay area ranks among the nation's most coveted golf destinations, attracting locals, celebrities, and tourists to its pristine fairways. However, this sport often sits in the rough when it comes to accessibility, with greens fees putting it out of bounds for many families.

But a game-changing nationwide partnership between Monterey-based Youth on Course and Bank of America is giving young players a shot. Through the Golf with Us program launched in April during The Masters Tournament, more than 75,000 kids and teens ages 6 – 18 years of age signed up for a free annual membership to access more than 2,200 participating golf courses across the US, including more than 30 courses across Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties. They then get to play rounds of golf for \$5 or less.

The immediate positive response to the

new program reflects the growing popularity of the sport of golf with younger generations and the need for lower-cost options for a sport that has traditionally felt inaccessible or too exclusive for some.

“...they get to play rounds of golf for \$5 or less.”

“At Youth on Course, we believe golf is more than a sport. It is a platform for growth, community, and opportunity,” said Youth on Course CEO, Adam Heieck. “We started right here in Monterey in 2006 with three courses and 100 members, driven by a simple mission: to increase youth access and opportunity through golf.”

Max Perez, 16, from Salinas High School, is an avid golfer and excited that more teens like him can now enjoy the benefits of golf.

“Golf has become a major part of my life,” he said. “I enjoy the calmness of it, also the complexity in every move, as well as being surrounded by nature.”

Perez was introduced to golf when he was just seven years old through the First Tee program in Salinas, and then he joined Youth on Course. He has stayed disciplined in the sport, his academics, and life.

“As a child, Max was not patient at all,” said his mom, Aida Perez. “I am so thankful he found golf to give him that mental stability, structure, discipline, and drive for life.” Unlike team sports, golf doesn’t require exceptional speed, strength, or a particular physical build to excel, making it a perfect match for all kids.

“Through our new national partnership with Bank of America, we are expanding that impact even further by connecting more kids, families, and communities to the life-changing benefits of the game,” said Heieck.

The benefits of golf extend well beyond the scorecard: walking the course provides aerobic exercise and practicing that perfect swing enhances hand-eye coordination. Young golfers also develop patience, focus, and strategic thinking as they navigate each hole.

The social advantages are equally impressive.

Out on the links, kids can make new friends while building self-confidence, learning persistence, and understanding the importance of following rules - life skills that transfer to the classroom and beyond. Bank of America’s Jennifer Dacquisto agrees.

“There is a transformational power in sports that instills growth and lessons that can be applied both on and off the course,” said Dacquisto, Bank of America Monterey Bay President. “Witnessing the positive

response to our Golf with Us program has been so exciting.”

Max currently works as a caddy at Cypress Point Club, where part of the perks include meeting celebrities like Tiger Woods, Bill Murray, and many more. He looks forward to being considered as an Evans Scholar to receive a scholarship to pay for student housing for four years at the University of Oregon, where he wishes to attend next year as a business major.


“The social advantages are equally impressive.”

“The Golf With Us initiative is rooted in community and built on shared values,” said Heieck. “Together, we are making golf more affordable, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse communities we serve while also investing in new markets and extending support far beyond the course.”

The Golf with Us program includes more than just affordable access to play. Young golfers also receive a registered handicap index in the United States Golf Association’s Golf Handicap Information Network (GHIN) system, plus ongoing development and learning opportunities to help them stay on course.

“Investing into Youth on Course, which is such a great local nonprofit right here in our own backyard, helps place them on the large national platform that they deserve – which in turn provides opportunities to more youth like Max,” Dacquisto said.

“I encourage youth to give golf a try,” said Max. “It can change your life.”

Go to www.BofA.com/GolfwithUs for more information. 



Youth on Course member Max Perez



Max with his mother Aida Perez

Rice Production in California

By Douglas Larson



Aerial application on rice to combat damaging algae and tadpole shrimp near Willows, CA.

Here in California, we often hear about issues relating to the scarcity of freshwater supplies. In fact, I often write about it myself. If you have lived in the state for any number of years, you have likely experienced drought conditions personally and are keenly aware of the countless calls for the state to initiate long term storage solutions along with their conservation initiatives.

Having said that, the impression is that the Golden State receives very little annual rainfall. Well, like most topics, this depends on perspective and even more so on location. I suppose that the three most important things about real estate also applies towards rainfall accumulations... location, location, location.

Truly, annual precipitation rates vary greatly throughout the state. From somewhere around six inches in Bakerfield to over six feet in places like Mendocino Country. Of course, much of the water that supplies the driest portions

of the state derives from winter snowfall accumulations high in the Sierras. Each spring, as the weather warms and that snow melts, the runoff from those majestic snow-capped peaks flows downstream, into rivers and canals, filling reservoirs, aqueducts and pumping stations to supply millions of thirsty Californians along with millions of thirsty crop acres.


Knowing that there is a continual struggle for sufficient surface water supplies for Central Valley farmers, it may seem strange that California is the second largest producer of rice in the United States. Any short drive Northwest of Sacramento this time of year and it will become abundantly clear that there are about 500,000 acres of rice production in the state, most of which is in the Sacramento Valley.

Globally, rice is the number one consumed grain and the primary food staple for over half of the world population according to the USDA. Of course, as we have all learned through countless movies depicting endless rice “paddies” in far-away lands, this crop is highly dependent upon sufficient water to allow for longstanding flooded fields. So, it may seem strange that a state known for drought and strained water supplies grows so many acres of rice and has done so for over 100 years, but this

crop is an important part of the state’s diverse agricultural landscape.

The crop is important for many reasons. Not only does it contribute \$1 billion to the local economy, but according to the Rice Federation, the industry employs 10,000 people in the Sacramento Valley alone. Additionally, these rice fields provide much needed wetlands habitat for more than 200 bird species. All the while, according to the California Rice Commission, 1 acre of rice meets the annual consumption needs of 350 US consumers.

With most of the crop being medium-grain rice, if you have enjoyed a sushi dish somewhere in the United States, you certainly have a California rice grower to thank as this rice is particularly well suited for these dishes. In fact, with the US meeting 80% of its own rice consumption needs and 95% of the state’s rice crop coming from the Sacramento Valley, rice remains the surprise crop for the majority of observers.

So, although water security, quality and scarcity remain hot topics for California producers, there are many ways for us to best utilize our water resources and in those years that provide ample flow, rice continues to be an important one for a multitude of reasons. 



Rice production in Glenn County, CA.



Overlooking mid-season rice field near the Sutter Buttes in Sutter County.

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YoSAL Annual Gala

Supporting Youth of Monterey County

An amazing was had by all at the Youth Orchestra of Salinas (YoSal) annual gala. Founded in the summer of 2010 by Joanne Taylor, YoSal is a non-profit organization committed to social change in our community's youth through the inspiration, discipline, and performance of classical and ensemble music.

This year's gala was held on Friday, May 9th at the Taylor Building in Salinas City Center. The evening was celebrated the power of music "Vegas style". Guests enjoyed everything from casino games to a new rendition of one of Elvis Presley's popular songs, "Viva Salinas" The highlight of the show, as is the case every year, were the child musicians themselves. Student success was showcased with a progressive concert displaying talent as it forms from the OrcheSTARS to the mature Youth Symphony.

Also showcased was an amazing performance by the YoSal Mariachi Banda! Music is a language of expression and comes in many forms. Playing in unison is a practice that will last a lifetime. YoSal organizers would like to express their sincere appreciation for all supporters and sponsors for another successful year.

To learn more about YoSal, please visit www.yosal.com.



1.) YoSal Board Members: Kari Valdés (Gala co-chair), Tanya Reinhardt (Gala co-chair), Joanne Taylor, Coleen Bailey, Chris Steinbruner, Ameena Khawaja.
2.) Ken and Kathryn Smith, Jenny and Donn Wilkerson. 3.) Sergio Soto, Karen Soto, Emily Lyons, Matt Lyons, Ross Jensen, Bobbie Jensen, Shannon Golz, Joe Golz.
4.) Chris Steinbruner, Jill and Mark Kennedy. 4.) Chris Steinbruner, Jill and Mark Kennedy. Felicia Denham and Vanessa Tottino 6.) Chris Steinbruner, Jill and Mark Kennedy. Felicia Denham and Vanessa Tottino Trey Busch, Kate Rivera, Mindy Busch, Yanne Dalman, Roberto Rivera.



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Farmers Partner with RDO & John Deere to Raise Funds for Yuma's Family Advocacy Center

RDO team members understand that thriving communities require strong partnerships and support from area businesses. Richard Arias, RDO's Vice President of Southwest Agriculture, challenged team members to create an innovative way to raise money for community organizations serving area families and children nearly four years ago. That's when RDO team members decided to launch the Desert Coast Growers Invitational golf tournament.

"The team has come together to support families and kids in the Desert Coast region, where many of our stores are located," Arias said. "It's important for us to demonstrate that partnerships with area farmers go beyond just the equipment and technology, the service we provide in our stores."

Arias said that this tournament comprised of growers and community members creates opportunities for team members to connect with an organization that helps kids and families when they are in critical need.

Arias shared the effort by RDO, John Deere and growers from Yuma and its surrounding areas to support Amberly's Place and the potentially lifesaving service and support programs it offers for the second consecutive year. In total, this tournament has raised more than six figures for Amberly's Place.

"Amberly's Place has operated for more than a quarter of a century and continues to grow its programs and services to respond to area families' needs," Arias said. "Many of our team members and manufacturing partners, like John Deere, recognize the vital service and support Amberly's Place provides."

Amberly's Place, Yuma's Family Advocacy Center, was selected to receive 100% of the funds raised during the fourth annual Desert Coast Growers Invitational golf tournament. "The donation from last year's tournament allowed us to serve more than 3,100 families and individuals during emergencies," said Tori Bourguignon, Executive Director at Amberly's Place.



The Salinas Airshow team at the awards ceremony in Las Vegas.



Marketing Director Esmeralda Owen receives the award for Best Overall Marketing Program at ICAS.

"We replaced door locks, repaired broken windows and provided transportation, lodging and auto repairs."

Bourguignon said the funds raised by RDO and John Deere also paid for essentials like food, diapers, clothing and help with utility bills, rent/mortgage payments and counseling or other medical services necessary for victims.

"While our grant funds cover salaries and employee-related expenses, they do not cover urgent needs, so the proceeds from this golf tournament have been crucial in addressing these expenses for so many victims and families," Bourguignon said.

John Deere's Business Division Manager, David Gordillo, expressed his team's eagerness to partner with RDO as this tournament's title sponsor.

"Humanity is a key value at John Deere, so we support the development of strong and healthy communities where RDO stores are located and embrace an opportunity like this one to support Amberly's Place as this organization meets so many critical needs in Yuma and its surrounding communities," Gordillo said.

Bourguignon said the funds raised create pathways for victims to access trauma-informed wrap-around services when families and individuals are in critical need.

"Being selected for the second consecutive year is a tremendous honor for us and signifies the strong partnership we have with RDO, which resonates deeply within our community," Bourguignon said.

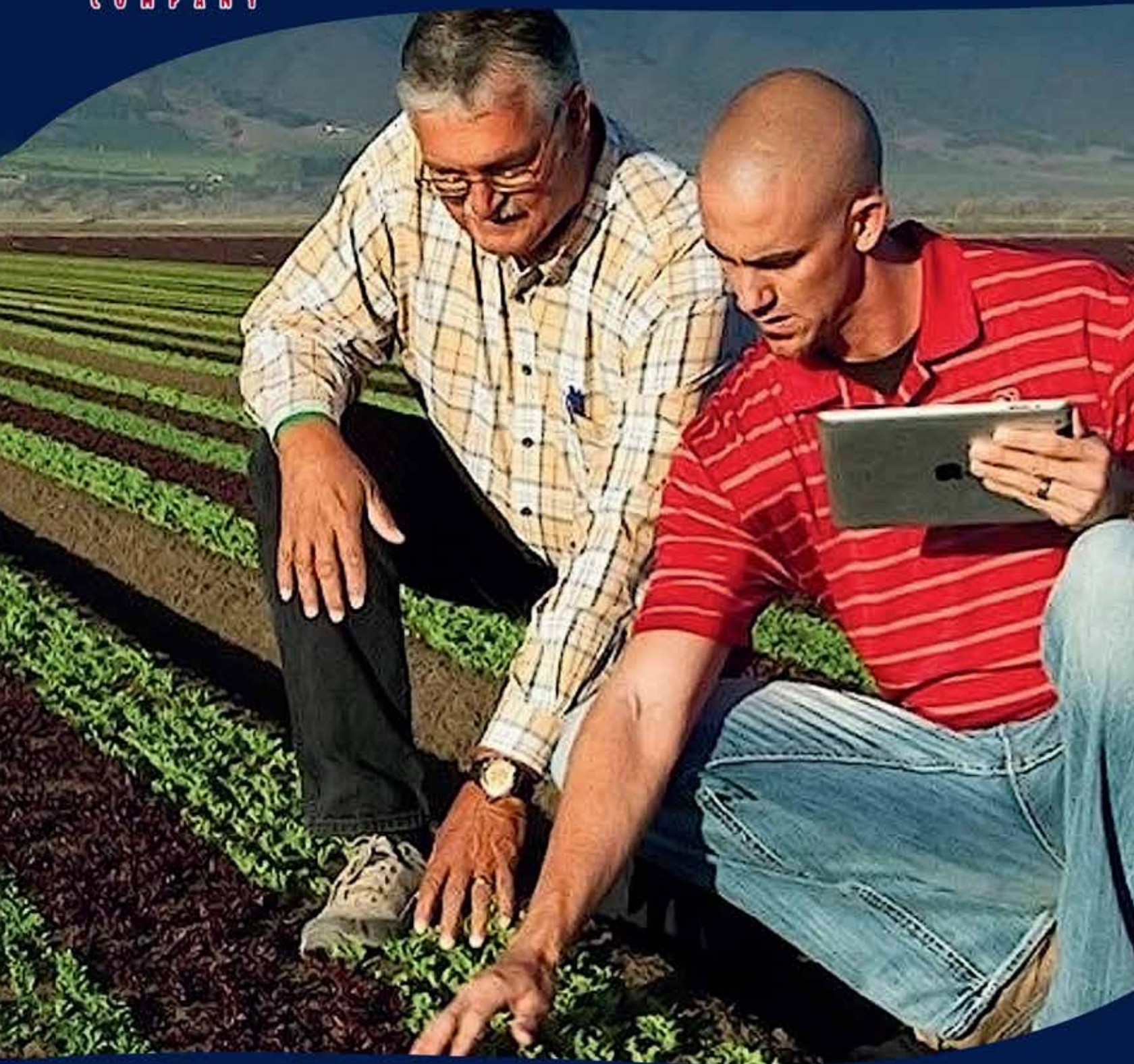
The Desert Coast Growers Invitational has raised \$240,000 for nonprofits serving Yuma and its surrounding areas. RDO team members are committed to supporting the immediate needs of the communities where they work and live.



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Relay For Life of the Salinas Valley Returns to Salinas City Center

Relay For Life of The Salinas Valley will be back at the Salinas City Center Saturday, September 20, 2025, from 4 pm to 9 pm. Once again, organizers will illuminate the Salinas sign in purple (the color purple symbolizes all types of cancer), have banners of hope lining Main Street, celebrate cancer survivors, and remember those lost to cancer or still fighting the battle with luminaria bags.

Salinas Relay has routinely been in the top 10 events out of over 3,000 relays nationwide, helping fight against this terrible disease. Last year, RFL raised \$643,000, and for the first time, we were #2 in the country, all due to the hard work and dedication of local volunteers, team members, and sponsors, many of which are part of the Salinas Agricultural community. Mark Kennedy, owner of Green Rubber Kennedy Ag, Relay Logistics Chair, and last year's co-chair, said, "Salinas always shows up, that's what makes our Relay so unique." Nancy Valdez of the American Cancer Society said, "The Salinas Relay is considered one of the premier Relays in the country that others strive to emulate."

As they have done in the past, Salinas Relay will be partnering with the Salinas Chamber of Commerce on August 28 to Paint the Town Purple. Leonard Batti, Taylor Farms, Relay Hospitality and Entertainment Chair and Chamber Chair, said, "The community involvement and spirit for the Relay For Life is amazing."

In the last 27 years, the Salinas Relay has raised over \$16.6 million dollars in the fight against cancer thanks to many agriculture sponsors and teams including Taylor Farms, Tanimura & Antle, Ocean Mist, Pacific Ag Rentals, Church Brothers, Green Rubber Kennedy, The Nunes Company/Foxy Produce, International Produce Group, Braga Fresh Family Farms, L&J Farms, Enzo Zaden and Markon Cooperative.



Once again, DGDG Salinas Honda, has donated a Honda Civic to be raffled off leading up to and the night of the Relay. It will be located at Salinas City Center Farmers Market and various locations in the area where raffle tickets can be purchased with all proceeds going to the Relay.

In 2025, there will be more than 2 million new cancers diagnosed in the United States and over a half-million projected deaths. Relay For Life has raised more than \$6.9 billion to support these efforts since 1985, and hope to continue adding to that figure this year. The American Cancer Society's mission is to end cancer as we know it, for everyone.

If you would like to participate this year as a team, sponsor, survivor, or volunteer, please visit relayforlife.org/salinasca or contact the American Cancer Society lead, Nancy Valdez, at 831-578-7630.





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Stewardship BBQ

A Community United for Conservation

Tucked away in the fabric of Monterey County's agricultural and environmental landscape, the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) is a hidden gem that has been quietly making an impact for 80 years. Established in 1945, this dedicated organization has provided direct assistance to landowners and managers, helping them voluntarily protect their soil, water, and wildlife through sustainable practices. Though long respected by those in the conservation and farming communities, RCDMC is now gaining broader recognition for its invaluable work, and its annual Stewardship BBQ has become a cornerstone event showcasing the power of collective action.

This year's BBQ, held on April 3, was RCDMC's largest yet—a sold-out evening filled with incredible food, heartfelt speeches, and a commitment to conservation. Arriving guests were greeted by the smell of sizzling barbecue and the hum of friendly conversations. Whether you were a longtime supporter or a newcomer eager to learn more about land stewardship, one thing was clear: there is broad community support for RCDMC, and its mission is more vital than ever.

Challenges Ahead

Beyond the delicious food, the event held deeper significance. Executive Director Paul Robins shared the challenges facing RCDMC, including federal grant freezes that threaten funding for vital projects. Despite these obstacles, the mood remained optimistic, fueled by the overwhelming support of the community to contribute in whatever way they could—whether through donations, equipment leads, or introductions to potential supporters.

A Night of Gratitude and Acknowledgment

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity to recognize those who make conservation work possible. A heartfelt thank-you was extended to everyone whose sponsorships helped bring this event to life. Special guests, including David Mancera with La Cultiva, Monterey County Supervisor Glenn Church, and Abby Taylor Silva with Kahn Soares and Conway, shared how RCDMC has made a positive impact on their work, from helping small farmers, to helping Salinas River stewards navigate permit requirements, to addressing eucalyptus overgrowth.



From left to right: Tony Rossi, Frank Linares, RCDMC Advisor Paul Binsacca, and RCDMC Board President Benny Jefferson (Neponset Farms). Board President Benny Jefferson and his master BBQ crew generously donated their time and talent to serve up a delicious meal for the sold-out crowd at this year's benefit.



From left to right names: Top row: Christian Montano (Cornerstone Masonry), Alfredo Cervantes (Rancho Nomada), Board Director Ignacio Mendoza (Mendoza Growers Inc.), Jorge Calva (UC Davis), and Jose Antonio Delgado
Bottom row: Adrian Zamora (Helena Chemicals), Leonardo Zamora (Nutrien Ag), Eliseo Flores (Taylor Farms)

Members of the agricultural community and local businesses came together to show their support for RCDMC and its conservation work across Monterey County.

The hardworking team behind RCDMC also took a moment in the spotlight, receiving well-deserved applause for their dedication. Board members, staff, and close partners from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were recognized for their expertise, passion, and tireless efforts in stewarding Monterey County's land and water resources.

A Look at RCDMC's Accomplishments

With so much at stake, it was inspiring to hear about RCDMC's recent achievements. From securing \$900,000 through the National Water Quality Initiative to fund on-farm water quality projects, to partnering with CSUMB to support small growers in adopting soil



RCDMC staff from left to right: Ecologist Emmily Zefferman, Soil Scientist Laura Murphy, Operations Manager Eve Mannix, and former Agroecology Team Coordinator Evelyn Nordberg. RCDMC staff and Board members worked together to make this event a success. Throughout the event, they engaged with the public to share information about the organization's programs and conservation efforts.

health practices, the organization continues to make significant strides.

The conversation also highlighted key conservation projects, including a new fish passage improvement project on Cachagua Creek, ongoing stream maintenance along the Salinas River, and forest health and fire prevention projects in the Big Sur mountains. Looking Ahead

As plates were cleared and conversations continued, one thing was clear—this year's Stewardship BBQ was more than just a fundraiser. It was a testament to the power of connection, collaboration, and shared responsibility for the land we all call home.

RCDMC extends a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who made the night such a success. Your support fuels the mission, ensures conservation efforts continue, and proves that stewardship thrives when a community comes together.



From left to right: Executive Director Paul Robins and Monterey County District 2 Supervisor Glenn Church. RCDMC led the administration of a \$1 million North Monterey County 'defensible space' eucalyptus removal program, made possible through the support of Supervisor Glenn Church and State Senator John Laird. The program helped to remove hazardous eucalyptus trees near homes.

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Jessica Harris Handley named Ag Woman of the Year

300-plus participants were in attendance at the Grower-Shipper Foundation's 29th annual Ag Woman of the Year recognition luncheon Friday, May 2, at McIntyre Estate Vineyards, to welcome with resounding applause the revelation of this year's recipient, Jessica Harris Handley.

Jessica has risen from a pivotal role at Earthbound Farm to Associate Director of Technical Product Management at Pairwise before landing at her current role as Vice President of Marketing at F&S Fresh Foods.

Just a few accomplishments and advisories include:

- Salinas Valley Fair Superintendent for Ag Mechanics and FFA exhibits
- PMA (now IFPA) exhibitor Advisory Committee, Farm Day, the IFPA Marketing Committee, the Grower-Shipper Foundation Board, the California Rodeo Marketing Committee
- The National PMA Women's Perspectives Steering Committee
- Inaugural winner of the Supermarket News' GenNext Award
- One of 40 under 40 (Produce Business)

The foundational element of this list is support. It is the ties that bind our industry together amid countless challenges, and it is



everything the 2025 Ag Woman of the Year practices—from her own time and resources to a warm embrace.

For the past 29 years, the Agricultural Woman of the Year award has celebrated the achievements of a woman from the tri-county area of Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey County, who serves as a change agent and has made unique contributions to promote the local ag industry at local, state, and/or national levels.

Congratulations to Jessica Harris Handley in being recognized for embodying this philosophy!



1.) 2025 Ag Woman of the Year Jessica Harris Handley.

2.) This year's honoree Jessica Harris Handley with a host of former winners.

3.) Former Ag Woman of the Year Tonya Antle (left) enjoys lunch with this year's winner.



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The Last Pallet

By Jeff Mendelsohn

First off I'd like to apologize to all of you readers. This issue is reaching you well behind schedule. And while I'd like to say it isn't my fault, in this case I have to own it. My travel schedule for the past few months has been extremely busy. Whether it be work trips (I work full-time in the foodservice industry), or pleasure (by pleasure I mostly mean kids sporting events), I've been all over the country this quarter and it's been a struggle to keep my head above water (not fat jokes, please).

My recent travels have taken me to L.A., Tucson, Las Vegas, Portland, Colorado Springs, Palm Springs, D.C., New York, Chicago, and Lake Tahoe. At this point in my life and career, I try to travel as little as possible, but after having whizzed around the country so much of late, I am reminded of how much I love living right here on the central coast. Most of the places I just named are cool cities and fun to visit, but I'm not sure I could live full-time at any of them (I lived in Colorado for 4 years and on the east coast for 1). My friends in Chicago wouldn't dream of living anywhere else, and my family on the east coast feels largely the same. But, in having these conversations and hearing all the reasons why each place is the best place to live (some of these people presented a pretty good case), I found myself only more convinced that the west coast is the best coast and on my most recent flight home, I jotted down some notes about why I am right (in no particular order).

The weather. Mild climates are the best and that's not debatable. Mexican food.

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We have the most taco trucks per capita in the U.S. (according to no research).

The list goes on and on.

Then I got to thinking about Coastal Grower Magazine, and the unique opportunity I have as editor to make sure that the content in each issue represents this great community and the people who live and work here. This summer issue, in my biased opinion, does just that. With the help of our growing list of contributors, this issue touches on several of the things that I consider the toast of the central coast.



For starters, new contributor Gwen McGill (thank you to my friend Mark Pisoni for the referral) updates us on the happenings at the Santa Lucia Highlands, one of the greatest wine regions on the globe. Scott Delucchi shares insight on the SPCA's efforts to expand to south county despite having torn his achilles in a high-stakes Pickleball game. Esmeralda Owen provides a great update on a fantastic youth golf program that many parents are raving about (myself included).

Speaking of golf, this issue marks the debut of local golf writer Alan Shipnuck. If you follow golf, Alan's name should be familiar. He's been on the golf beat for over two decades and has traveled the world covering the sport. Already a member of the Salinas Valley Sports Hall of Fame (and perhaps destined for the World Golf Hall of Fame), Alan is the author of 9 books including a couple best sellers. His latest, *Liv & Let Die*, is a must-read. It's an honor to have Alan's byline grace the pages of Coastal Grower, and it's a feather in my cap for being able to bring him on board.

In addition to these stories, you'll find more great content from regulars like Mac McDonald, Mike Hale, Bill Hastie, Doug Larson, and Chris Haubert. And, as always, Patrick Tregenza and Diane Gsell team up to bring you a fantastic home showcase, and a unique one, with their visit to Marks Ranch.

Palma's Victor Plata was kind enough to share his travel diary while chaperoning another junior high Washington D.C. trip; one that both of my sons had the opportunity to enjoy this past June.

A special shoutout as well to Alla Zeltser, who supports this magazine in a number of ways, but in this issue she contributed as a writer as well.

For the 4-H story, I'd like to thank Nette Pedrazzi for providing me with all the information on the great things happening with the San Benancio 4-H program. Thanks also to the kids who shared some thoughts. Hoping for more contributions from young people moving forward.

Lastly, I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my new friend Joey Rosa. Meeting Joey and sharing his story was one of the highlights of my modest journalism career thus far, and I can safely say it's probably not the last time I write about him. As the founder of Caulipuffs, I floated the idea of titling his story "Puff Daddy", but with the Sean Combs trial going on, I went with "Brand Man" instead. But Joey is much more than a brand man...he's an idea man unlike any other I've encountered, and I look forward to writing more about the real Puff Daddy as we move forward.

Finally, thank you to our advertisers, old and new, and to you readers for getting all the way to the end. I'll get the next issue out on time, unless life gets in the way.

Cheers!
-JM



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