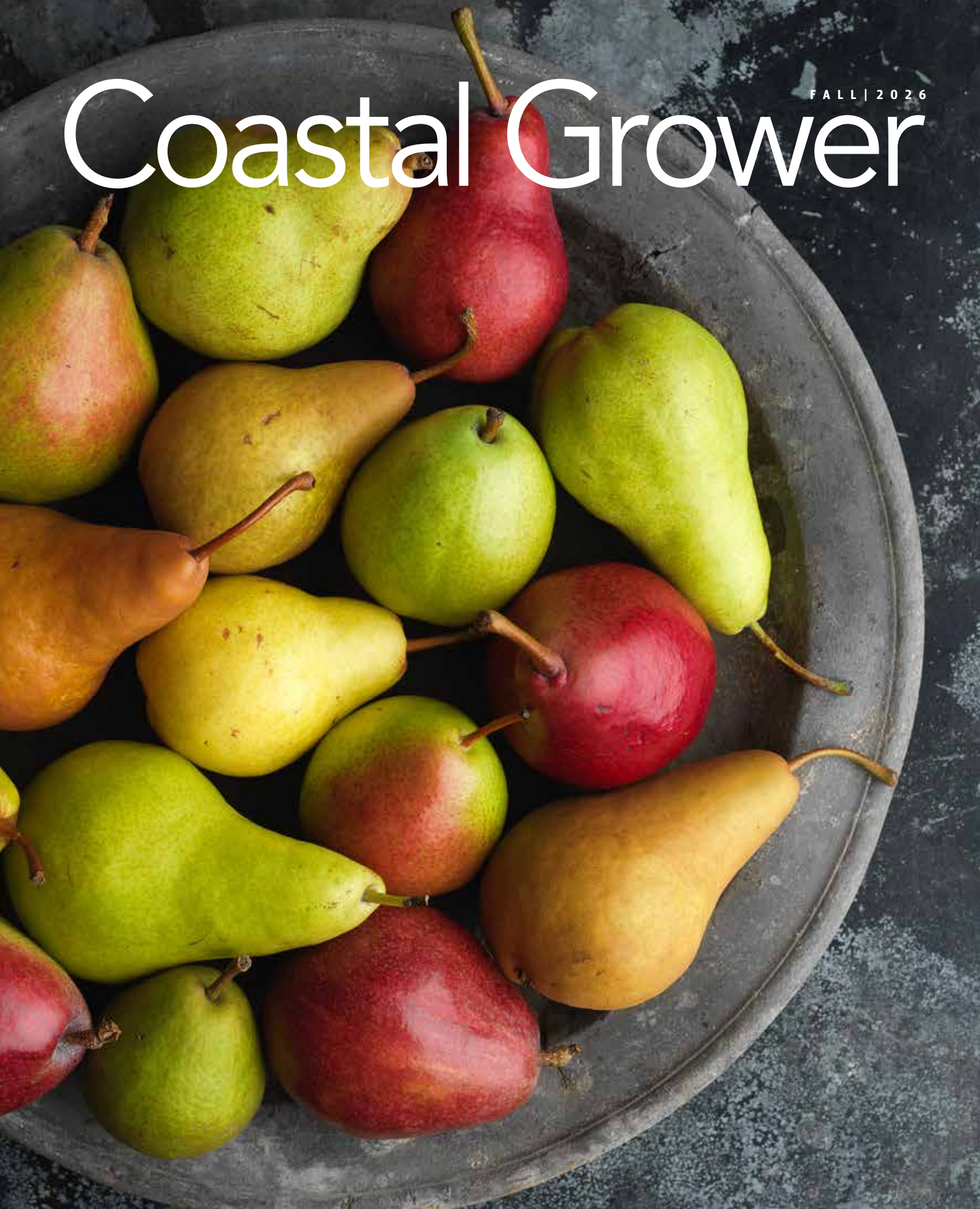


Coastal Grower

FALL | 2026





AUSONIO

I N C O R P O R A T E D

CA Contractor's License #682308 (A & B)

(831) 633-3371 ausonio.com

Project Ribbon Cutting



Pictured left to right: Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren; Monica Martinez, Santa Cruz County Supervisor and former CEO of Encompass Community Services; Kim Morrison, CEO, Encompass Community Services; along with members of the project team and community partners.

Encompass Community Services Sí Se Puede Behavioral Health Center

Ausonio Inc. was proud to serve as Construction Managers on this impactful project.

Designed to increase Encompass Community Services' capacity, the new facility will allow the organization to serve hundreds more community members each year while providing a welcoming environment focused on recovery, healing, and long-term wellness.

As a locally owned general contractor and construction management firm, we value the opportunity to help organizations bring meaningful projects like this to life. From early planning through construction, our role is to provide collaboration, cost guidance, and project oversight that helps clients achieve their goals. When local nonprofits have the facilities they need to better serve our community, everyone benefits.





QUALITY HEALTHCARE
DELIVERED LOCALLY
FOR EVERYONE



Kenneth Jones, MD

Your care, your baby, our focus

Having a child is one of life's most significant events. We offer nationally recognized patient-centered care from pre-natal screenings through delivery and beyond. Our Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is equipped to treat amongst the most medically fragile of babies. Like generations of families, you can rely on us for comprehensive and compassionate maternity care for both mother and newborn.



Learn more at [SalinasValleyHealth.com/maternity](https://www.SalinasValleyHealth.com/maternity)

Call 831-757-DOCS or one of our clinics today to schedule an appointment.



MATERNITY & FAMILY-CENTERED CARE

Salinas Valley Health Medical Center
450 East Romie Lane, Salinas
831-757-4333

Obstetrics & Gynecology
250 San Jose Street, Salinas
831-758-8223

PrimeCare
355 Abbott Street, Suite 100, Salinas
831-751-7070

Features

5 PUBLISHER'S NOTES

6 CONTRIBUTORS

10 FUTURE

The Next Decade of Coastal Agriculture: What Growers Need to Be Planting Today to Succeed Tomorrow

12 TECH

How Monterey Bay DART is Training More Drone Instructors for AgTech Careers: MsUAS Pathways Brings Drone Education to Regional Colleges and the Community

14 HISTORY

The Countess Who Changed Monterey County

16 LAND

Ferrini Ranch: Where Open Land Tells a Bigger Story

20 FINANCE

More Farm Families, Ag Leaders are Enlisting Private Banks to Manage Rising Wealth and Preserve Legacies

22 BAY

Conservation vs. Fishing: Solving a Tough Tension in Monterey Bay

26 AG EDUCATION

Rancho Cielo

28 WOMEN IN AG

Beyond Abbott Street

30 CITY

Salinas Infrastructure Summit Introduces Intriguing Ideas for Financing and Construction

44 MIND

Promoting Brain Health: What We Know So Far Is Not News; How Important It Is...Is

46 SCIENCE

Buzzing Systems: Unraveling the Inner Workings of Honeybees

50 HEALTH

Free Salinas Valley Health Speakers Bureau Brings Trusted Medical Experts to Schools, Workplaces, and Community Events

54 READ

Early Literacy Crisis

56 LEARNING

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is Coming to Monterey County!

58 TRAVEL

Our Sicilian Sojourn: A Travel Diary

62 VINE

Republican Red Winery

64 COOK

Shopping Like a Chef : Why the Best Ingredients Are Already Chosen for You

66 RESCUE

Red Rake Rescue

68 WATER

Protecting What Sustains Us: The Role of Monterey Waterkeeper on the Central Coast

70 HOME

The Art of the Closet Cleanse: Finding Calm, Confidence and Clarity Through Style

82 THOUGHT

Of Soil and Souls: What Every Harvest Teaches About the Life Within

Community

72 California Rodeo's Sweetheart Soiree

74 A New Literacy Initiative Offers Third Graders a "Golden Ticket"

78 Community Foundation for Monterey County's Women's Fund Luncheon: Standing Strong for Women & Girls



34 HOME SHOWCASE

Pacific Zen: Coastal Bliss on the Monterey Peninsula



COVER PHOTO

Photo Courtesy of Patrick Tregenza Foto
© 2026 All Rights Reserved.



What Can SSB Do for YOU?

If your business has a growing list of maintenance projects, give SSB a call today. We approach every job—big or small—with the same level of precision, quality, and attention to detail.

- General repairs and maintenance
- Tenant Improvements
- Office remodels
- Pressure washing and painting
- Doors and windows
- Emergency repairs

Give SSB a call today—and let's get to work!



831.424.1647 | SSBConstruction.com

Serving all of California, Arizona and beyond | License No. 191651

SSB

CONSTRUCTION
ROOF COATING
SOLAR PANEL CLEANING
PAINTING

Don't Miss A Single Issue!



**Subscribe to Coastal
Grower Today!
\$20 Annually for 4 Issues.**

SEND CHECK TO
Subscriptions/Koster Communications
24485 Vereda Del Valle, Salinas, CA 93908
www.coastalgrowermag.com

Coastal Grower

www.coastalgrowermag.com

PUBLISHER

Tom Koster

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Lorri A. Koster

Phone: 831-594-4156

lkoster@kostercommunications.com

EDITORIAL INTERN

Birdie Church

stellachurch07@gmail.com

ART DIRECTOR

Jay Galster

ADVERTISING SALES

Dan Bohen

Phone: 831-998-1948

dbohen@gmail.com

Coastal Grower is published by

Koster Communications, Inc.

All rights reserved by Koster Communications, Inc.

Koster Communications, Inc.

24485 Vereda Del Valle

Salinas, CA 93908

Phone: 831-594-1977

Editorial Content: coastalgrowermag@gmail.com

Business Office: tkoster@kostercomm.net

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Marzo Design

22 Loma Avenue

La Selva Beach, CA 95076

831-521-2035

jay@marzodesign.com

Coastal Grower Magazine is a publication of articles concerning agriculture and its history. Articles, opinions, advice and points of view on various aspects of agriculture and state or federal law are the opinions of the authors of each particular article and not that of Coastal Grower Magazine which makes no warranty whatsoever as to the validity of any opinion or advice given unless expressly so adopted in writing.



As a fourth-generation, family-owned company established in Monterey County in 1924, legacy and community are central to who we are. We value working with partners like West Coast Community Bank who genuinely invest in our success and share our commitment to the communities where we live, work and farm.

**Chris Drew, President & CEO
Ocean Mist Farms**



**Serving the Central Coast
Since 2004**
831.457.5000 | wccb.com



Dear Mr. Fantasy

For 30 years every August my husband and his friends (many from his childhood, others from his adult years) would gather at our house for their fantasy football draft.

Tables were set up, chairs positioned, ice chests packed with assorted adult beverages, and Papa Murphy's pizzas ready for the oven. Large white boards were assembled ready for team selections. Back in the day, it was old school. No computers or devices...everything was done by hand, including writing the name of the player you drafted on the board (and best to check your spelling or face the wrath of 20 or so fantasy experts). For this league, the no computer rule still exists. This is serious business.

Despite my love for the sport, for years I rolled my eyes at the spectacle and spent that night at a friend's house so the boys could be boys. Sure, it was a great reason to get together and connect with old friends. It sure looked like a good time. It was also a heart-felt way for them to honor my late brother (the league is named "The Nooch" ...my brother was Joe Nucci—his nickname, Nooch). But do we really need to fantasize about football? Isn't the regular season, wrapped up with the spectacle that is our Super Bowl, enough entertainment?

Apparently, not. According to AI, fantasy football is extremely popular, with millions of participants worldwide, particularly in the United States. It has grown significantly since its inception in the 1960s, evolving into a major part of sports culture and often involving both casual and competitive play. Approximately 40 million Americans play fantasy football each year. 40 million! Men make up 87 percent of players and the 25–44 age group represents over half of participants. It has evolved into a major part of sports entertainment, influencing how fans interact with the NFL and other leagues.

And, with each other.

After years of watching from the sidelines, I am now a member of two fantasy football leagues. There's the all-girlfriend "Babes and Balls" league managed under the expert eye of our commissioner, Patty Busch and the newly created "Family Feud" league (shout out to my nephew Michael for kicking it off).



If fantasizing about football with your drafted team (OK...auto-drafted team, I confess) keeps you connected, gives you a reason to connect, a reason to tease, laugh, challenge people you enjoy—then I'm all for it. Let the memes and text threads begin!

Commissioner Patty's hilarious weekly recaps actually make me excited to open my Inbox. After spending my first fantasy

season assuming auto-draft meant auto-everything (oops...didn't realize that guy was injured or so-and-so had a bye week...my last place trophy sits proudly in my office). I love the fact that my sons love me so much they now text me weekly reminding me to check my roster before the Thursday night game (their mom will never again come in last)!

The text threads make me smile...nothing like giving someone a bad time after a blow-out or lamenting with them when one of our favorites gets injured. With the girlfriend league there are certainly comments about the coaching and the competition, but also about which team has the best uniforms, the best-looking quarterback or what broadcaster we love or loathe.

Fantasy football turns fans from passive viewers into active managers. My best friend, who has never been a big football fan, is now, well, fanatic about her teams. I believe she won her league last year (or at least won some money).

While fantasy football is big business (just look at all the ads on the apps) my leagues aren't for big bucks, just bragging rights.

By the time you read this I will be managing two teams on a quest for victory...all the while staying connected with good friends and family. Touchdown!

Jperi

Contributors



LISA BRANCO

Lisa Branco currently serves as General Manager of Radicle Seed Company and Headstart Nursery. With over 25 years of experience in agriculture, Lisa is a dedicated advocate for mentoring the next generation of industry leaders. She serves on the boards of Monterey County Ag Education, the California Seed Association, and the UC Davis Seed Biotechnology Center. Lisa is also involved with the American Seed Trade Association as well as Hartnell's STEM Task Force. She resides in Salinas with her husband, Corey, and their children, Andrew and Lauren.



BIRDIE CHURCH

Birdie Church is a student journalist in the honors communications program at the University of Miami. As a writer for her school's publications—The Miami Hurricane and Distraction Magazine—she has grown a love for all things journalism. With family ties in Salinas going back generations, Birdie brings a personal connection to the agriculture and community, allowing her to connect deeply to our local stories.



SUSIE BRUSA

Susie Brusa has executive level experience in a Fortune 100 company, as CEO of Rancho Cielo, and as District Director for Congressman Jimmy Panetta. Brusa holds a B.A. from Pomona College in Claremont, where she was elected Phi Beta Kappa, and attended Harvard Business School's Executive Education Program. She was recognized as 2018 "Businesswoman of the Year" by the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. As a consultant, she has traveled around the nation, to Europe and to Asia, and she currently works on Early Literacy Initiatives with Taylor Farms.



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.



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.



TODD FISHER

Chef Todd Fisher is the creative force behind The Meatery in Seaside, CA. Named Best Butcher Shop in California 2025. He has a long and deep connection to the Salinas Valley Ag world and has been voted Monterey's Favorite Chef for years. Chef Todd champions premium sourcing, bold flavors, and chef-driven butchery rooted in craft and community.



MINDY CARPENTER

Mindy Carpenter is a Partner and Vice President of Finance at Axis Ag. Before joining Axis, Mindy made her mark at FarmWise, starting in 2020 during the company's early expansion into the Salinas Valley. A proud third-generation member of a Salinas Valley farming family, Mindy's roots in agriculture run deep. Recognized by Women in Ag and AgKnowledge, Mindy is a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion within the industry. She actively mentors and empowers the next generation of women leaders to pursue careers in a field that has traditionally lacked female representation. She lives with her husband Chris in Salinas.



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.



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.



PATRICK TREGENZA

Patrick Tregenza, a second-generation local and award-winning photographer, captures his deep connection to the community through his lens. Rooted in the region's food, wine, and agricultural traditions, his images have been telling the story of Monterey County for more than three decades.



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.



ADAM JOSEPH

Adam Joseph is committed to providing thought-provoking editorial content, a craft honed over 15 years as a professional editor and writer. A multiple first-place California Journalism Award recipient, his work has appeared in the Monterey County Weekly, Relix, Gayot, 65 Degrees, Metro-Silicon Valley, and the Salinas Californian. After serving as managing editor at Good Times Santa Cruz, he joined Rancho Cielo, where for over two years he has used his expertise in media communications to bring community stories to life as Communication Officer.



LISA WATSON CRAWFORD

An adjunct writing instructor for CSU Monterey Bay and Monterey Peninsula College, Lisa also is a feature writer, who has published thousands of feature articles and columns in local and national newspapers and magazines, plus several books.



KEVIN DAYTON

Kevin Dayton has 35 years of experience as a public policy analyst and strategist. He's the Government Affairs Liaison for the Monterey County and Salinas Valley Chambers of Commerce.



JACK KOSTER

Jack is a Ph.D. student in the Dept. of Plant Pathology at the University of Florida's Gulf Coast Research & Education Center, conducting research on strawberry diseases and their management. Previously, he completed a Master of Science in Agriculture (Plant Protection Sciences), with distinction, at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in collaboration with the Cal Poly Strawberry Center. Prior to his doctoral studies, Jack served as a lecturer of agricultural science at CSU, Monterey Bay, and as a research assistant with UC Cooperative Extension. A Salinas Valley native and Palma School alumnus, Jack enjoys connecting his academic and industry experiences to applied plant pathology research and education.



AMANDA HOLDER

Amanda Holder is Director of Communications for the Community Foundation for Monterey County. She loves sharing stories of the generous donors and dedicated nonprofits that help make our community stronger.



JEANETTE TUTTLE LEWIS

Jeannette Tuttle-Lewis has served as President and CEO of Big Sur Land Trust since 2014. A lifelong conservation leader with a background in botany and forest science, she has dedicated her career to protecting natural landscapes and strengthening land conservation organizations. She also serves on the boards of the California Council of Land Trusts and the national Leadership Council of the Land Trust Alliance.



ESMERELDA OWEN

Esmeralda Owen is the owner of Precious Stone PR Inc. She supports non-profits with marketing, events, and more. As a hobby, she teaches communication studies at Gavilan College. She is a broadcast journalist, a mentor, a volunteer, a board member of the Salinas Airshow, and chair of the Women's Fund Council.

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.



SARAH DESANTIS

Sarah is a fifth-generation Salinas Valley resident and has taught art, literature, and religion at Palma School for 33 years. She is passionate about the arts and thankful to be able to share this genre with her students. Outside the classroom, Sarah enjoys reading, traveling, cooking, spending time outdoors with her family, and their three doodles.



BETSY WALLACE

Ms. Wallace writes community stories about Central Coast schools, businesses, and nonprofits. She currently teaches writing at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey and is a writer and communications consultant with Armanasco Public Relations. Ms. Wallace is a graduate of Stanford University and San Francisco State University. She resides in Carmel Valley with her two sons.



DIRRICK L. WILLIAMS

Dirrick L. Williams is an author, speaker, ordained minister and certified life coach whose Beyond The Wall framework helps individuals and organizations explore identity, overcome fear and choose authentic, principle-centered lives.

Fresh Local Seafood
Pasta and Brick Oven Pizzas

Food, service and atmosphere we have it all!



Thank You to all of our loyal customers!

Best Italian Restaurant

Best Farm To Table

1989-2026 Celebrating Our 37th Year

Call for Reservations

47 Old Fisherman's Wharf #1
Monterey • www.cafefina.com

831-372-5200

OPEN DAILY AT NOON

The Next Decade of Coastal Agriculture

What Growers Need to Be Planting Today to Succeed Tomorrow

By Lisa Branco



Agriculture has never stood still. Every generation of growers has faced its own set of challenges, adapted, and moved forward. Today's coastal growers are no different. Yet the pace of change we're experiencing now feels faster than ever. From labor shortages and rising production costs to water concerns, regulatory pressures, and shifting consumer expectations, growers are navigating an increasingly complex landscape. At the same time, advances in breeding, technology, and production practices are creating opportunities that were difficult to imagine even a decade ago.

The question isn't whether agriculture will change. The question is how we prepare for that change.

As someone who works closely with growers, breeders, and industry partners throughout the seed and transplant supply chain, I've come to believe that success in the next decade will depend on decisions we're making today. Not just about what we plant, but how we think about resilience, innovation, and collaboration.

Resilience Starts with Genetics

For many years, variety selection focused heavily on yield, appearance, and marketability. Those characteristics remain important, but today's growers are increasingly looking for something more: resilience.

Disease pressures continue to evolve. Weather patterns have become less predictable. Labor constraints demand crops that can be managed and harvested more efficiently. As a result, breeders are developing varieties that can withstand challenges while maintaining the quality consumers expect. The seed industry has become a critical partner in helping growers manage risk. Whether it's improved disease resistance, stronger field performance, or varieties better suited to changing environmental conditions, genetics are playing a larger role than ever in farm profitability.

The varieties that succeed tomorrow may not simply be the highest yielding. They may be the ones that consistently perform under real-world pressures.

Efficiency Matters More Than Ever

Every grower understands the importance of efficiency but rising costs have elevated it from a goal to a necessity.

Labor remains one of the most significant challenges facing our industry. While there is no single solution, growers are adopting practices that help maximize available resources. Improved transplant quality, production planning, mechanization, and technology adoption are all contributing to greater operational efficiency.

Strong transplants, for example, can provide growers with more uniform stands, better establishment, and reduced risk during critical production windows. These advantages may seem incremental on paper, but over hundreds or thousands of acres, small improvements often translate into meaningful results.

The farms that thrive in the coming decade will likely be those that identify opportunities to gain efficiencies throughout the production cycle.

Consumer Expectations Are Changing

Growers have always responded to market demand, but today's consumers are asking new questions about how their food is grown. Sustainability, resource stewardship, food safety, and transparency are becoming increasingly important purchasing considerations. While consumer trends can shift quickly, the broader expectation for responsible production practices continues to grow. This creates both challenges and opportunities. Growers who embrace innovation and communicate their commitment to stewardship will be well positioned to meet evolving market expectations.

Agriculture has a remarkable story to tell. The more effectively we share that story, the stronger our connection becomes with the consumers we serve.

“One of agriculture’s greatest strengths has always been its willingness to collaborate.”

Investing in People

Technology and innovation are essential, but people remain agriculture’s most valuable resource.

One of the most encouraging trends I’ve observed is the passion and talent being brought into our industry by the next generation. Young professionals are entering agriculture with new perspectives, technical expertise, and a willingness to challenge conventional thinking.

At the same time, experienced growers and industry leaders continue to provide practical knowledge and mentorship that can only come from years in the field.

The future of agriculture depends on both. We need to continue investing in education, leadership development, and opportunities that encourage young people to build careers in our industry.

The challenges ahead are significant, but so is the talent available to address them.

Collaboration Will Define the Future

No single grower, company, or organization has all the answers.

One of agriculture’s greatest strengths has always been its willingness to collaborate. Growers, researchers, breeders, nurseries, suppliers, universities, and industry organizations each contribute unique expertise.

The most successful operations in the years ahead will likely be those that actively seek partnerships, share knowledge, and remain open to new ideas.

Innovation rarely happens in isolation. More often, it emerges from conversations, field trials, and relationships built across the industry.

Reasons for Optimism

It’s easy to focus on uncertainty. Every day seems to bring a new challenge or headline that raises concerns about the future of agri-

culture.

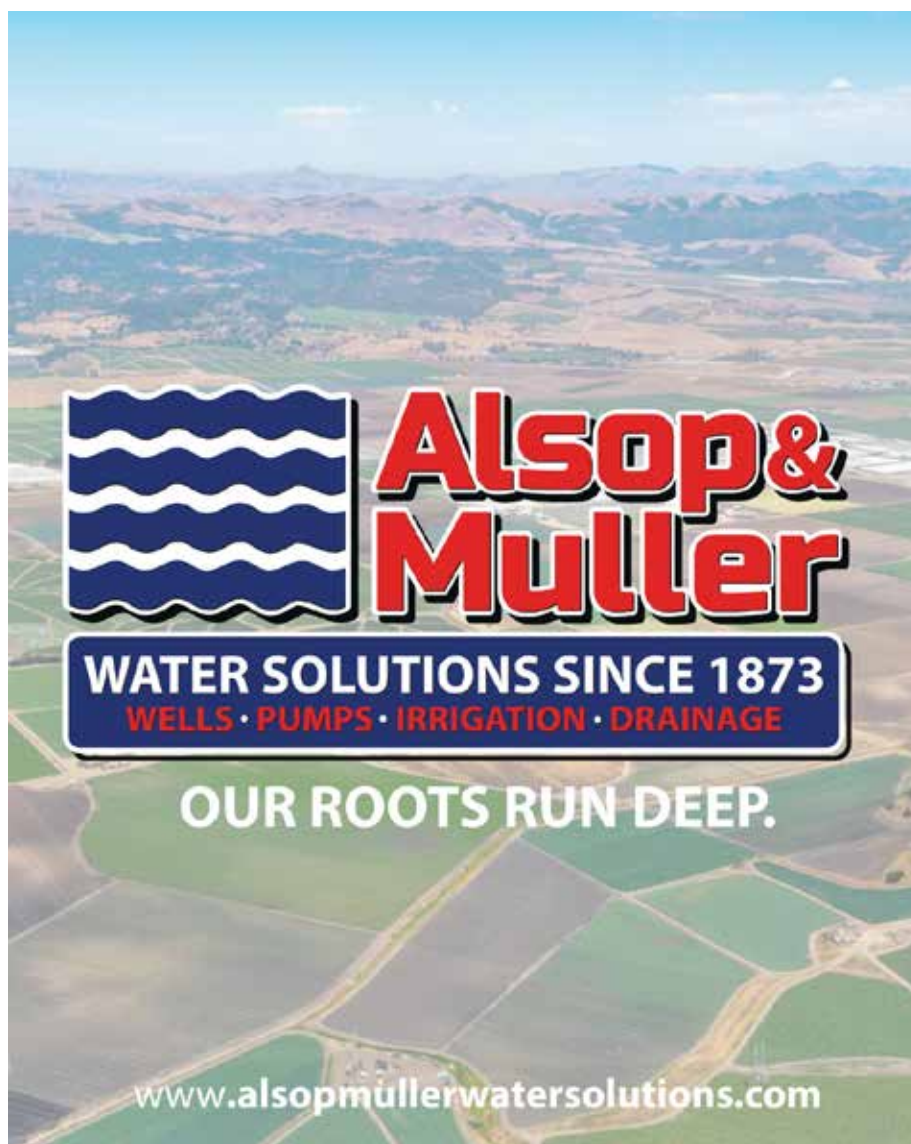
But when I visit farms, attend industry meetings, or walk through trial fields, I see something else: resilience.

I see growers continually adapting. I see breeders developing better solutions. I see young professionals bringing fresh energy to our industry. And I see a supply chain committed to supporting the people who produce our food.

The next decade will undoubtedly bring change. It always does.

The growers who succeed won’t necessarily be the ones with the fewest challenges. They’ll be the ones willing to learn, adapt, and invest in the future.

The seeds of that future are already being planted today. 



Alsop & Muller

WATER SOLUTIONS SINCE 1873
WELLS • PUMPS • IRRIGATION • DRAINAGE

OUR ROOTS RUN DEEP.

www.alsopmullerwatersolutions.com

How Monterey Bay DART is Training More Drone Instructors for AgTech Careers

MsUAS Pathways Brings Drone Education to Regional Colleges and the Community

By Betsy Wallace



Since 2018, Monterey Bay Drone, Aviation, and Robotics Technology (DART) has worked steadily with partners in aviation, education, and agriculture to prepare the Central Coast to manage more low-flying vehicles like drones and air taxis. As drone use expands into agriculture with applications such as spraying, crop monitoring, mapping, and field data collection, the question of workforce readiness becomes more pressing. In response, DART has partnered with regional colleges and community organizations to rapidly train new drone operators in an innovative program designed to plant a seed that will sustain the education pathway.

MsUAS Pathways Expands Access to Drone Education

The Maturing Regional AgTech and Aerospace Job Readiness Pathways program,

known as MsUAS Pathways, prepares Central Coast residents for FAA Part 107 certification (a commercial drone pilot license) and careers in drone operations and AgTech. The program emphasizes training the trainer: increasing the number of certified drone pilots capable of teaching piloting courses, feeding into readying the workforce needed for agricultural field applications.

MsUAS Pathways was made possible by a grant to the Hartnell Foundation from the James Irvine Foundation and follows a curriculum established by the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC)-affiliated Drones Uplifting California Communities (DUCC) initiative. The grant allows DART to support Hartnell as it develops an FAA Part 107 certification course and integrate drone curriculum into existing STEM and AgTech programs, with similar support for Monterey Peninsula College.

Drone Certification Classes and Camps MsUAS Pathways also brings drone education into the community via outreach and instruction. An intro course at the Monterey Adult School, a one-week Drone Boot Camp at Seaside High School, and a hybrid class for Veterans deliver technical aviation training to a diverse cross-section of residents and promote first-time interest in aviation careers.

- **Drone Boot Camp, Seaside High School:**

This one-week boot camp is for ages 16 and up. Drone Boot Camp is a unique five-day training program designed for a wide range of skill levels and interests, from beginners to users who want to learn how to use drones for fieldwork and mapping.

- **Intro to Drone Operations” at the Monterey Adult School, Seaside:**

Held Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:00PM, this course is for adult learners 18 and up. This class is ideal for recently graduated high school students, those working toward a GED, or working adults looking to acquire a new skill or upskill within their field.

- **Veteran’s Drone Training course (hybrid):**

The veteran’s class serves active duty, Reserve, National Guard, those transitioning to civilian careers, or any Veteran status. The program is intended to reach veterans of varying ages, levels of education, and career stages.

Implementation of MsUAS Pathways is led by Pete Church, DART’s MsUAS Pathways workforce project manager and a hands-on instructor. Church is a Navy reservist who served as an H-60 Seahawk helicopter pilot and later instructed at the US Naval Academy and at Joby Aviation in Marina. He is passionate about opening opportunities for veterans and communities that have less access to aviation careers. “Our goal is to start that pathway at an engageable age in areas of the commu-

nity where otherwise some of these classes and opportunities wouldn't be available," says Church.

Church explains that all community courses are designed to be both affordable and flexible to meet many needs: "We could have a 20-something transitioning vet getting out of active duty, looking for a skillset to bring to the civilian side, or people in their 50s and 60s who are retiring and looking for new opportunities," says Church.

The train-the-trainer model is already proving workable, as instructors from UCSC and Seaside High, with newly acquired FAA certificates, co-instruct with Church at the Monterey Adult School and the Drone Boot Camp, and will go on to bring courses back to their classrooms.

Regional Partners in Train-the-Trainer

MsUAS Pathways is the community-embedded arm of a regional workforce effort that DART runs with the UCSC CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research (CIDER). The forerunner of both programs is a foundational "Skills Demand Study" conducted in 2024. DART and CIDER explored core questions such as, "What makes drones feasible in ag?" and "Where in the workforce supply chain are drone operating skills needed?"

The study found that the potential market for drone use in ag is growing, with the most momentum around using larger format drones to deliver targeted aerial applications of fungicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and beneficial insects to crops that have traditionally been the subject of crop dusting. Josh Metz, DART's executive director, explains that a pilot on the ground instead of in the seat can operate in all kinds of conditions. Drones can also target precise areas of a crop. The Skills Demand Study identified a need for targeted training initiatives to attract and retain a workforce to keep pace with integration of technology and automation. "The trend we see is that the equipment is aging and the pilots who fly them are retiring, so there's a gap forming there that we're addressing," says Metz.

Scalability and Challenges

The MsUAS Pathways program initially runs for two years, with a goal of training 150 new instructors and guiding 50 students toward FAA certification. CIDER will simultaneously



be expanding its train-the-trainer curriculum statewide through the DUCC initiative, made possible by a grant from California Jobs First.

But challenges to adapting drone use in agriculture remain. A spray drone must carry a large volume of liquid, so it must be a larger aircraft. Metz explains that the federal government has restrictive policies around using drones from other countries, in particular China, and China is the world's biggest supplier of agricultural spray drones. Another potential bottleneck is that people that apply

"The idea is to train a set of teachers who can then become their own experts and continue to evolve with what agriculture is going to demand."

aerial applications of any material require certifications and special licenses.

MsUAS Pathways is clearing some obstacles to drone adoption by making pilot training more widely accessible. Scholarships are available to the classes and camps, and Church continues to reach out to community groups and local businesses to engage them in additional drone education programs, drive enrollment in existing courses, and explore aviation career links.

DART's Role in Promoting Low-Altitude Flight

Metz co-founded the 501(c)(3) non-profit based on a vision of translating advanced air mobility (AAM) and unmanned aircraft

systems (UAS) into quality jobs and regional economic opportunity. With more than fifty partners and affiliates across the state, DART creates opportunities for engagement in the low-altitude economy at every level: workforce training, infrastructure development, and community collaboration.

DART is perhaps best known for hosting the annual LIFT Summit in Monterey, California's leading forum for cross-sector collaboration across the low-altitude economy. Collaborators from education, industry, and government gather to discuss how to practically integrate AAM/UAS into regional economies, create policy, and build infrastructure into airports.

"While the LIFT Summit promotes partnership and underscores the Central Coast's growing role as a hub for next-generation aviation," says Metz. "MsUAS Pathways further accelerates infrastructure development and workforce training, two areas crucial to drone adoption and the future of ag on the Central Coast."

DART's vision for MsUAS Pathways is that it will spur drone skills development across sectors, whether through schools, community-based organizations, private companies, or within public agencies looking to bring expertise in-house. For Metz, the vision is clear: "Train a set of teachers who can then become their own experts and continue to evolve with what agriculture demands."

DART's mission is to advance the low-altitude economy by catalyzing cross-sector collaboration for quality jobs and community vitality. For more information or to register for a MsUAS Pathways course, visit mbdart.org.

The Countess Who Changed Monterey County

By Scott Delucchi



*The Countess about to take her first flying lesson, with her husband George Hay. Credit: The Image Works (as shown in the novel *Wealth, Sorrow, Redemption* by Kathleen Ambro).*

Visitors to SPCA Monterey County don't realize they are walking through the vision of a British countess who once raced automobiles across Europe, drove across Africa, reported from the Spanish Civil War, and worked with Allied intelligence before settling quietly in Carmel, California.

Enid Hamilton-Fellows, one of Monterey County's best-kept secrets, might have snorted at Dos Equis's "Most Interesting Man in the World" title. Long before seeking an artist's life in Carmel in 1949 and becoming SPCA Monterey County's visionary benefactor, she lived a globe-trotting, death-defying life that could have nabbed Meryl Streep a fourth Oscar.

Early Years

Born in London in 1904 to a prominent tobacco family, Enid married George Hay, the 14th Earl of Kinnoull, in 1923. Enid became "the baby countess," as British

media dubbed the 18-year-old, high-society newlywed. Her family's wealth allowed for adventurous pursuits, including flying airplanes and motor racing. When she wasn't going fast, she was painting and writing.

Their marriage dissolved by 1925, and young Enid returned briefly to London before moving to Paris. Raised Protestant, she felt drawn to Catholicism and converted in 1928, taking the name Claude after Saint Claude La Colombière.

Through Catholic associations, she met Pope Pius XI, who suggested a mission through Africa. She left on Easter Day in 1931 and returned nine months later. Serving as the primary driver, handling all mechanical repairs, and establishing six new missions, she set what was then the world record for distance traveled by automobile.

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 led to further international intrigue. Working as a photojournalist for the Catholic press, Claude spent six months in

active war zones. Life became even more dangerous when she returned to Paris to assist the British Secret Service and French military intelligence in resisting the Nazi invasion and exposing Communist networks. Her efforts landed her on a list of high-value Nazi targets. Using her connections, she obtained an asylum visa to the United States and, ultimately, a home on Torres Street and 11th Avenue in Carmel.

Soon after her arrival, animal welfare in Monterey County changed forever.

The Countess, Carmel & Animals

The Countess (as she was affectionately known in Carmel) joined the SPCA's Board of Directors in 1949. A major focus was the shelter's dilapidated facility at David Avenue and Lottie Street in Monterey. In a 1970 book chronicling the SPCA's first 65 years, she wrote: "The existing buildings reached a state of decay where lasting repairs could no longer be made and attempts to patch them up were a waste of money... the shelter had become a disgrace to the Monterey Peninsula."



*The Countess with one of her poodles. Credit: The Anita Roy Family (as shown in the novel *Wealth, Sorrow, Redemption* by Kathleen Ambro)*

Efforts turned to finding a larger site, but lot after lot was discarded due to zoning restrictions or vocal neighbors objecting to an animal shelter nearby. “With heavy hearts, we gave up any hope of moving and decided a new building must be put up on the old site,” she recalled. Early fundraising fell flat. “I set out to visit the homes of the rich,” she wrote. “One tycoon said that his only interest in animals was to obtain an elephant to live in his garden, a project which to his disgust, had been denied by local authorities.”

Bake sales, thrift shops, and wine tastings brought in meager funds, while initial dog training fees barely supported operations. The only upgrade to the old facility was a coat of paint, a “ghastly hue” sitting unwanted at a local paint shop that was practically given away. It did little to calm neighbors complaining about nighttime barking.

SPCA Finds a Home

The shelter’s prayers were answered in 1966. The Countess recalled that “a young real estate agent who was sympathetic to the SPCA’s aims brought a piece of available land to my attention.” The property, situated on Salinas Highway (now Highway



Enid Margaret Hamilton Fellows, *Vogue Magazine*, 1923 (as shown in the novel *Wealth, Sorrow, Redemption* by Kathleen Ambro).

68), was slated for a housing development. “I instantly fell in love with this peaceful valley surrounded by rolling hills and lovely oaks... the land was, in every way, perfect for the permanent home of the SPCA.”

She walked the property with her poodle,

envisioning bulldozers at work while sparing every oak tree possible. She mapped out where the shelter should sit and how the road would curve around the small hill.

The Countess purchased the land, named it La Vega Verde (“The Green Valley”), and donated it to the SPCA. Her vision extended well beyond dogs and cats; she declared the sanctuary would also someday house stables and a humane education center. Her ambition inspired others, including a secret Pebble Beach couple whom she referred to in her writings as “Mr. and Mrs. X,” who pledged \$1,500 a month.

To rally community support, SPCA board members held a public meeting in a Salinas bank boardroom. Only six people attended. One was an elderly laborer in worn clothes named Van Buren Jackson, from Lockwood in South Monterey County. Hunched over two canes, he sat in silence throughout the presentation and was the first to leave, a faint smile across his wizened face. Weeks later, the board learned Mr. Jackson had passed away and left his entire estate to the SPCA.

With Van Buren Jackson’s transformative bequest, the quiet backing of Mr. and Mrs. X, and the Countess’s unyielding determination, La Vega Verde became a reality. The bulldozers arrived, the oaks were spared, and a modern era of animal welfare in Monterey County was born.

Today, visitors to the SPCA witness the full realization of her grand vision: a vibrant, independent refuge that protects dogs, cats, horses, barn animals, and local wildlife. Enid Hamilton-Fellows – race car driver, covert asset, and Countess – found her greatest adventure in our peaceful valley.

Every healed wing in the wildlife center, every rehabilitated horse in the barn, every child who learns about the humane treatment of animals, and every adopted pet carrying a new lease on life remains a direct legacy of her fierce determination. ☾



“La Vega Verde,” a property on Hwy 68, as it looked when *The Countess* purchased it in 1966, then later gifted to the SPCA. Credit: C. Kinnoull

Ferrini Ranch

Where Open Land Tells a Bigger Story

By Jeannette Tuitelle-Lewis

Photos Courtesy Of Burke Boynton & Mark Pendergast



Along Highway 68, an 869 acre ranch offers Central Coast growers a familiar lesson: land, water, weather, and working agriculture are connected.

A Landscape Hiding in Plain Sight

Anyone who travels Highway 68 between Salinas and the Monterey Peninsula knows the view: rolling grasslands, oak-studded hills and long folds of open country that change color with the season. Ferrini Ranch is part of that everyday landscape - so familiar that it can be easy to overlook how much work it does.

The 869-acre property sits at the western edge of the Salinas Valley, where farms, rangeland, neighborhoods and protected open space meet. For years, the ranch was approved for 185-home development. In late 2024, Trust for Public Land acquired the property, working with Big Sur Land

Trust to move it toward permanent conservation. Big Sur Land Trust is now managing the ranch while the partners assemble the final public and private funding needed for Big Sur Land Trust to acquire the property and secure its permanent protection.

“Precipitation totals alone do not tell the whole story. Timing, temperature, and intensity determine what the land can hold.”

For the agricultural community, the story is not simply about stopping development. It is about keeping a large, connected piece of land functioning in a region where every acre affects water, wildlife, and working lands.

The Value of Staying Connected

Ferrini Ranch links the Sierra de Salinas with protected lands around Fort Ord National Monument. That connection matters to mountain lions, deer, bobcats, and other wildlife moving through an increasingly developed corridor. It also matters to agriculture.

Working lands are not islands. Wildlife movement, pollinator habitat, invasive plants, erosion, fire behavior, and water flow all extend beyond property lines. A connected landscape gives land managers the space to address these issues on a meaningful scale. It can support grazing and other stewardship practices, protect steep-slope soils, and preserve the open character of the Highway 68 corridor.

The ranch also includes seasonal drainage, native and annual grasslands, oak woodland, and agricultural ground. The

diversity provides opportunities to evaluate how different management approaches perform under changing conditions.

Reading the Season On the Ground

Growers are practiced readers of small signals. A north-facing bank stays green

while the field across the road begins to cure. A short storm produces more runoff than recharge. A warm week pushes growth ahead, only for wind or a cold snap to interrupt it. Ferrini Ranch displays those contrasts across hundreds of acres.

The 2025–26 water year offered an espe-

cially vivid example of California's new weather volatility. February storms had ended a long dry stretch, but warmer systems were already melting snow at lower elevations in the Sierras. Record March heat then accelerated the loss, turning what had looked like a partial recovery into an exceptionally early melt.

Ferrini Ranch is not dependent on Sierra snowmelt in the way many inland farms are, but the statewide pattern is relevant. It reflects a larger shift; growers already recognize precipitation totals alone do not tell the whole story. Timing, temperature, and intensity determine whether water soaks in, runs off, or disappears quickly back into the atmosphere.

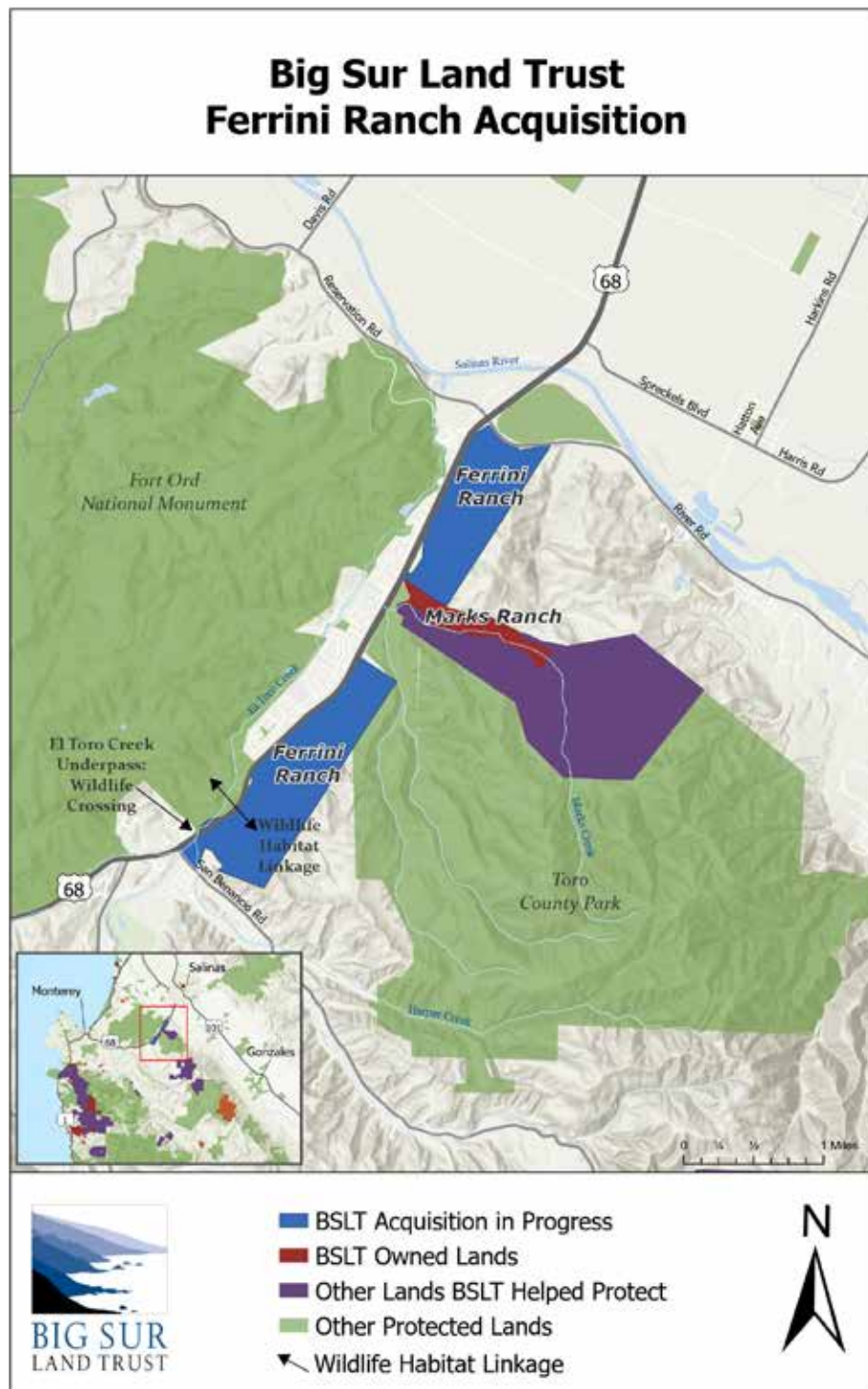
When "Average Rainfall" is Not Average

A season can finish near a historical rainfall total and still behave unlike an average year. Several light storms may wet the surface without reaching deeper soil layers. One atmospheric river can deliver a large share of the season's rain in a few days. Warm winter temperatures can bring earlier plant growth and earlier drying.

On Ferrini Ranch, steep terrain makes those differences visible. Intense rain can move rapidly off slopes, carrying soil and debris, and reducing the opportunity for infiltration. Cooler aspects and shaded drainage may hold moisture longer, while exposed grasslands green quickly and cure quickly. Bloom times can stagger across the property, changing the seasonal availability of forage and pollinator resources.

Conservation as Active Management

Permanent protection does not mean putting a fence around Ferrini Ranch and walking away. The more useful vision is active stewardship informed by the land itself. That could include carefully planned grazing, invasive-species control, oak woodland care, erosion reduction, row cropping, fuel management and monitoring of wildlife movement and seasonal water. Over time, observations from the ranch can help managers compare what happens after wet winters, warm winters, late storms, dry springs,





and fire-weather events.

This is where the property may prove especially valuable to the broader agricultural community. Farms and ranches have always adapted through close observation, experimentation, and accumulated local knowledge. A protected property of this scale creates space to test stewardship approaches and share lessons without converting the landscape that makes those lessons possible.

A Familiar Central Coast Story

Ferrini Ranch is striking, and its story is familiar. The Central Coast's identity has been shaped by productive soils, working families, open hills, scarce water, and a climate that rewards attention. Growth will continue, and agriculture will continue to evolve. The question is whether the region retains enough connected land to absorb change and enough flexibility to respond wisely.

Seen from Highway 68, Ferrini Ranch may look like a beautiful pause between developed places. Look more closely, and it is infrastructure: for wildlife, water, fire resilience, agriculture, and the scenic character that supports the region's quality of life.

Its future will be determined through conservation practices and long-term planning. Its value, however, is already visible. In a year of weather whiplash, Ferrini Ranch reminds us that the best early-warning system is often the land itself - and that keeping land intact gives us time and opportunity to listen.

For more information

Big Sur Land Trust:

<https://bigsurlandtrust.org/>

Big Sur Land Trust Ferrini Ranch:

bigsurlandtrust.org/where-we-work/ferrini-ranch/

Trust for Public Land:

tpl.org/our-work/ferrini-ranch

California Department of

Water Resources snow surveys:

water.ca.gov ❧

DAILY COMMUTE



BIG NIGHT OUT



OFF-ROAD WITH SCENIC ESCAPE



SAFE FAMILY MEMORIES



THE HEART OF AUTOMOTIVE IN SEASIDE.



VICTORY
TOYOTA



LEXUS
Monterey Peninsula

LAND ROVER
MONTEREY

VOLVO

Volvo Cars
Monterey

More Farm Families, Ag Leaders are Enlisting Private Banks to Manage Rising Wealth and Preserve Legacies

By Esmeralda Owen



The Monterey – Salinas Valley region is known for its rich history in agriculture, hospitality, and innovation. Many come to work, start businesses, live, and retire in this area with beautiful landscapes, proximity to the beach, golf courses, and entertainment.

The Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties are experiencing a growth in wealth, separate and independent from the traditional enclaves of Pebble Beach, Pacific Grove, and Carmel.

According to a Beacon Economics presentation to the Monterey County Business Council last Fall, this new wealth is being sourced from greater household income and wage growth, rising real estate values, and the ancillary economic gains from the region's tourism and agriculture sectors.

More first-generation wealth creators are emerging, especially mid-size to large business owners, than ever before. This entrepreneurial energy is reshaping the financial landscape of the entire region.

Much of this growing and new wealth has been driven by agriculture and farming, in fact, with more private banks indicating greater advisement interactions than ever.

Private Banks

A private bank provides personalized, high-touch financial services such as wealth management, investment, and tax planning, estate and legacy planning, and exclusive lending that is tailored for high-net-worth individuals.

Recently, Bank of America's Private Bank executive for Silicon Valley and the Monterey

region, Matt Brady, sat down with Coastal Grower to discuss the exciting and unique wealth planning opportunities for agriculture executives and farming families across the region.

"Our private bank advisors work with farmers in particular to manage what are often more complex assets - not just the farm business but also their high-value land. We provide guidance to manage their property and operations in accordance with their long-term wealth goals," said Brady.

"Many farmers in particular have their families involved with the business and are considering either succession planning to pass down the business to their kids or a full exit strategy to sell their business and then utilize the liquidity for future generations," Brady continued.

While private banks are not new to Monterey's traditionally wealthy enclaves, these boutique-style offices are attracting more younger, newer clients with their white-glove concierge level of service, along with advising more executives in agriculture businesses and farmers ready to retire or sell.

Most of the existing private banks in the region are strictly investment-based, helping clients grow their money through investment vehicles. Brady says his team regularly partners with those local private banks when their clients need more than just investment services. That's because they also provide tax consultation, estate planning, business valuation and sales support, and wealth and trust services in addition to investment guidance.

With the agricultural industry being the largest employer in the region, more business owners and longtime employees who have been accumulating wealth, so these types of services can be important.

Farmers in particular have been utilizing wealth advisors to learn how to better finance their business operations, and look to the future to:

- best transition the management of the business
- look into charitable giving and related charitable tax benefits
- sell the business upon retirement with the best valuation, or pass it on to the next generation of the family

Succession Planning on the Rise

When it comes to succession planning or selling a business outright, experts say time is what will help reap the greatest returns.

"We suggest families and executives start succession or sales planning as early as possible," said Brady, who also used to be a tax attorney. "There are legal aspects to planning and business transitions, so we work with clients far in advance for the best tax planning and the best results in a transition."

As demographic changes see more Baby Boomers retiring, business owners are considering their options, be it passing their business to a family member, a colleague, or to a third party. This legacy planning for their hard-earned assets is critical for wealth management and utilization – and can be

complex emotionally, legally, and fiscally.

"We see it time and time again – a failure to transition businesses or other assets effectively to the next generation," said Brady. "But we are here to coordinate, facilitate, and implement the client's wishes."

The Next Generation

Another important element of what private banks provide is educating the next generation of family members who will inherit that business or wealth, so they're prepared to manage the estate and its assets.

As those demographic changes of an aging population continue, experts say a great wealth transfer of trillions of dollars will be passed to the next generation over the next two decades.

This means estate planning for assets, trust services, and efficient tax strategies for transferring wealth to the next generation are more important than ever. And they are a core element of ultra-high net wealth advisory firms.

But families aren't the only benefactors

of this growing wealth in the Monterey Bay region.

Philanthropy

Charities, foundations, and nonprofits are a strong element of the community, and many wealthy individuals and families value philanthropy as a way to give back and help influence positive, lasting impact as part of their legacy.

During a presentation for Monterey nonprofits last year, national philanthropic strategist Misti Sangani, who is based in San Jose, noted that total charitable giving among wealthy households has surged more than 30 percent over the past decade, with the Monterey community donating roughly 10 times more than the general population, on average.

The Monterey-Salinas business community is incredibly generous. Through trusted advisors, they can channel that passion for community into strategic philanthropy that creates lasting impact, not just for families, but for the broader region. ☞

Providing superior employee benefits to the Tri-County region.

Extensive experience and knowledge of agribusiness and employee benefits.

BEI BRENT EASTMAN
INSURANCE SERVICES, INC.

(831) 751.0700
51 Katherine Ave., Salinas
brenteastman.com
License# OE72648

THE NEXT GENERATION OF BEI

Conservation vs. Fishing

Solving a Tough Tension in Monterey Bay

By Mike Hale



On many mornings along Monterey Bay's working waterfront, fishing boats return quietly to harbor after long hours at sea. Decks are washed down, crates of fish are unloaded, and the rhythm of a centuries-old industry continues — often unnoticed by visitors strolling Cannery Row or watching sea lions bark from the docks.

For Melissa Mahoney, those boats represent far more than a picturesque coastal scene. They are the foundation of a regional blue economy, a cultural legacy, and a critical component of Monterey Bay's long-term environmental stewardship.

As executive director of the Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust, Mahoney is working at the intersection of conservation, food systems, and economic resilience. Her focus is clear: ensure a healthy ocean while creating

conditions in which local fishing families, seafood businesses and coastal communities can survive — and thrive — in a rapidly changing world.

"We're the only nonprofit organization in this region focused on putting local seafood on local plates," Mahoney said. "If seafood is landed here, it is among the most sustainably managed protein sources in the world. That nutrition should be valued, celebrated and accessible to everyone."

A Lifelong Pull Toward the Ocean

Mahoney's journey to the Monterey waterfront began far from the Pacific. She grew up in landlocked western Colorado, where a fascination with fish and sharks took hold early.

"I fell in love with watching Jacques Cousteau on television," she said. "He gave me the idea that I could help protect the ocean, travel widely and build a meaningful life around marine science."

Family trips to the coast reinforced that vision. After college, she traveled extensively, diving and working in remote regions of the Pacific. Those experiences shaped how she understood both marine ecosystems and the human communities dependent on them.

"In many places, people harvested whatever they could from the water simply to survive," Mahoney said. "I realized conservation is often a luxury. Lasting solutions require working with resource users, building local governance, and respecting lived experience. True conservation must feed people and protect resources for generations."

That philosophy has guided more than two decades of work along the West Coast. Mahoney has operated within complex state and federal fisheries management systems, advanced electronic monitoring technologies to help reduce operational costs for fishing

vessels, and supported fishermen adapting to evolving environmental and regulatory realities.

Since becoming executive director of the Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust in 2022, she has brought that experience to one of California's most historically significant fishing regions.

When she is not immersed in fisheries policy, Mahoney spends her free time outdoors — surfing, swimming, hiking, and walking the coastline with her family.

"This place is extraordinary," she said. "Being outside here is grounding and motivating at the same time."

A Rapidly Changing Industry

Monterey's fishing history stretches back generations. Over the past half-century, however, the industry has experienced



dramatic transformation.

In the decades following World War II, technological advances — including larger trawlers, nylon nets, and radar — accelerated harvest capacity. By the 1980s, many fisheries expanded rapidly under limited regulatory oversight and incomplete scientific understanding.

By the 1990s, the consequences were evident. Several major fisheries collapsed due to overfishing. On the West Coast, the groundfish trawl fishery entered crisis in the early 2000s when multiple species were declared overfished.

The sector eventually rebounded through sweeping reforms that strengthened management, accountability, and environmental protections. Today, U.S. fisheries are widely recognized as among the most highly regulated and sustainably managed in the world.

“She sees increasing urgency for collaboration between coastal food producers.”

Yet conservation gains did not automatically translate into economic recovery.

Prices stagnated against cheaper global imports. Operating costs rose. Critical fishing infrastructure — including processors, ice facilities, and dockside equipment — disappeared across California ports.

For fishing families, the result has been a highly regulated, capital-intensive, and economically fragile business environment. Mahoney believes the broader food system has yet to fully recognize the role commercial fishermen play.

“Seafood harvesters face many of the same risks as farmers,” she said. “Both depend entirely on weather cycles, ecological variability, and the boom-and-bust nature of harvesting natural resources. Agriculture has long been supported through programs like the Farm Bill and agencies such as USDA and CDFA. Seafood is still working to be recognized at that same level — despite being

an essential source of healthy protein and a cornerstone of coastal economies.”

Closing that recognition gap, she said, is critical to sustaining working waterfronts and maintaining regional food security.

Strengthening the Local Seafood Economy

The Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust was created to help stabilize and revitalize the local seafood sector through strategic, community-focused interventions.

One key initiative involves securing access to fishing rights, or quota shares, within the once-struggling groundfish fishery.

The Trust owns quota shares that translate into millions of pounds of rockfish, flatfish, and sablefish. These shares are leased to local fishermen on a first-come, first-served basis. By managing these assets on behalf of the broader community, the organization helps ensure that access to public marine resources remains anchored locally rather than consolidating elsewhere.

The Trust also provides business support to fishermen navigating regulatory complexity and changing market conditions. During the COVID pandemic, the organization helped fishermen secure federal relief funding while developing new direct-marketing channels, including dockside sales and participation in farmers’ markets.

Another initiative focused on expanding local seafood consumption among food-insecure populations. The Trust began purchasing locally caught fish and donating it to regional food banks — supporting both fishermen and families facing economic hardship.

The Community Seafood Program proved so effective that two food banks have since established their own seafood procurement budgets, continuing to purchase directly from local suppliers.

Building a More Connected Coastal Food System

Mahoney believes one of the Fisheries Trust’s most important roles is serving as a convener among the diverse stakeholders shaping Monterey Bay’s coastal economy.

Fishermen, farmers, scientists, regulators,



chefs, tourism leaders, and conservation organizations all influence how natural resources are managed and how food moves through regional markets.

Yet these groups often operate in separate policy and planning arenas.

“The challenges facing fisheries today are larger than any one sector,” Mahoney said. “Climate impacts, regulatory pressures, infrastructure loss and market volatility require coordinated thinking across industries.”

She sees increasing urgency for collaboration between coastal food producers.

“As agriculture and fisheries both navigate climate uncertainty and shifting economics, there is real value in creating structured dialogue around resilience, market development and stewardship,” she said. “A fisher-farmer roundtable could help strengthen understanding of how these sectors are interconnected within our regional food system and coastal economy.”

Emerging opportunities are also reshaping



LIC OPR # 9793




831-442-1915
800-675-7909

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Warehouses
- Wineries
- Packing Sheds
- Tree & Ornamental Spraying
- AIB Trained
- Weed Abatement
- Insects
- Rodents
- Birds
- Squirrels

the conversation. These include kelp restoration, marine technology innovation, ecotourism, and shoreside aquaculture — all components of what Mahoney describes as Monterey Bay’s evolving “blue economy.” The goal is not simply conservation, she said, but long-term economic and environmental stability.

“We see revitalizing the local seafood economy as central to the region’s future,” Mahoney said. “It is deeply tied to Monterey Bay’s identity, its tourism appeal and its overall ecological health.”

Looking Ahead

Monterey Bay is globally recognized for its marine biodiversity and dramatic coastal landscapes. Each year, millions of visitors arrive to experience whales, sea otters, and the region’s iconic underwater canyon.

But the bay’s identity is also shaped by the fishermen who have worked these waters for generations and by the support businesses that make local seafood available to the public.

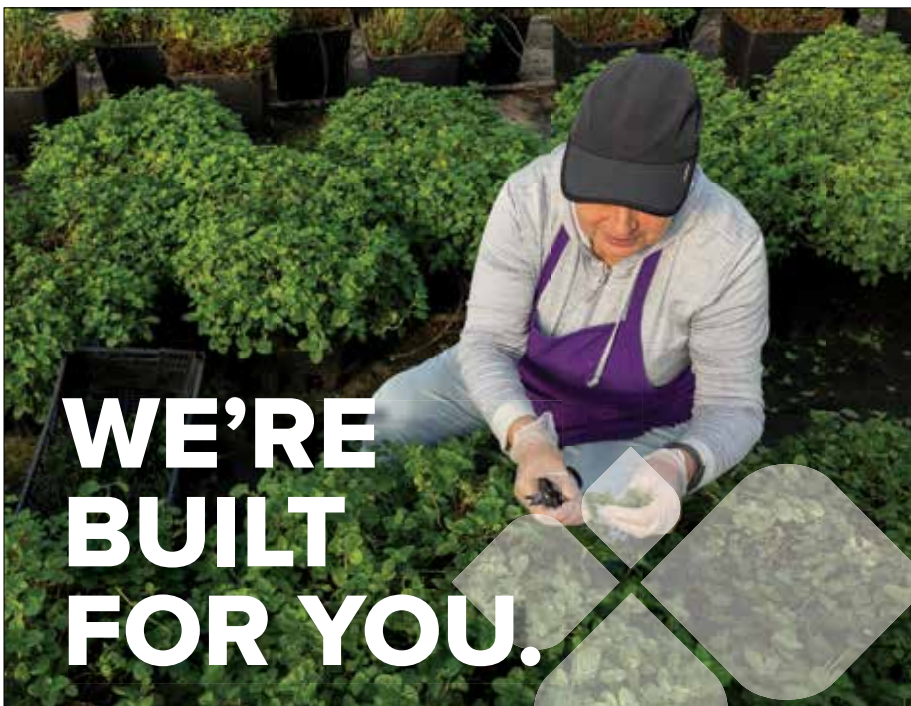
Preserving that heritage will require continued innovation, collaboration, and broader public understanding of seafood’s role within sustainable food systems.

Even farmers exploring the use of fish byproducts to improve soil health are part of a growing movement toward more circular, regenerative regional economies.

For Mahoney, the work is both professional and deeply personal.

“We are not just trying to sustain fisheries,” she said. “We are working to support coastal communities, maintain access to healthy local food and ensure that future generations inherit both a thriving ocean and a viable working waterfront.”

For more information about the Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust and its programs, visit: www.montereybayfisheriestrust.org.



LENDING DESIGNED FOR FARMERS AND RANCHERS.



You need financing made specifically for agriculture. At American AgCredit, we’ve proudly served farmers and ranchers for more than a hundred years; with financial strength and expertise to grow your business, today and tomorrow.

Visit us at agloan.com/products



**American
AgCredit**

A Part of the Farm Credit System.  Equal Opportunity Lender.

Born resilient: spinach genetics that weather the season

ENZA ZADEN



Learn more about our
high resistance varieties

How Rancho Cielo's Ag Tech Program Found Its Speed

By Adam Joseph



L-R: Ag Tech students Jasmin, Gonzalo and Juan with their goats at the Salinas Valley Fair last May, where they placed seventh overall in the Future Farmers of America Goat Showmanship competition.

It is May in Salinas, which means the light comes in gold by the late afternoon, and at Hope, Horses & Kids' stables — Rancho Cielo's onsite nonprofit partner — three goats are being blow-dried. Their fur lifts in the warm air, one of the last details of a long grooming process before their big debut. In a few hours they will be taken to King City for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Goat Showmanship competition at the Salinas Valley Fair. The bathing, the brushing, the tagging of ears—all of it arduous, all of it necessary, all of it leading to three Rancho Cielo Ag Tech students, Jasmin, Juan, and Gonzalo, walking into a show ring for the first time.

They are not alone. They have 17-year-old Eddie Chambers, a 2026 graduate of Rancho Cielo's Ag Tech Program. He started show-

ing at state fair competitions through 4-H at the age of eight. By the time Jasmin, Juan and Gonzalo needed someone to walk them through the unglamorous mechanics of readying a goat for competition, Chambers was the obvious choice. He knew what they did not yet know: Showmanship is built in the small, repetitive hours before anyone is judging.

FFA Comes to The Ranch

This spring, at the CA State FFA Leadership Conference in Ontario, California, Chambers received something larger than a ribbon. He accepted Rancho Cielo's official National Future Farmers of America charter membership, powered by the nonprofit's educational partner John Muir Charter Schools. He also received his CA State FFA Degree, an honor reached by about 3 per-

“...students are finding their way into stronger threads of the FFA curriculum.”

cent of the association's more than 100,000 members. The number is the kind of number meant to communicate scarcity, meant to say, simply, this was hard, and few do it. He can now pursue the American FFA Degree, which goes to 1 percent of FFA members nationwide.

Other Ag Tech students, meanwhile, are working quietly toward their Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certification, a nationally recognized animal care credential for participants ages eight to 21. All Ag Tech students will work toward it now, whether or not they plan to show animals.

A Successful Fair

The goats, in the end, placed seventh over-

all in showmanship at the Salinas Valley Fair. The following day, Jasmin, Juan, and Gonzalo sold their goats in the Junior Livestock Auction, and the sales went well, with every dollar circling back to the students' own education and hands-on learning. The students who chose not to participate in the animal side of the program did not come away empty-handed either. They had 21 Still Exhibit entries, boasting floriculture masterpieces, from a succulent table and chairs set to wine barrel gardens, garnering two Best in Shows, more than 10 first-place ribbons and four second-place ribbons. It is the kind of tally you read twice because it suggests a program working at a different speed than it was just one year ago.

That speed has a name: Matt Marshall.



One of the nearly two dozen floriculture still exhibits Rancho Cielo Ag Tech students created for the Salinas Valley Fair. The table and chairs set took home a Best in Show ribbon.



L-R: Rancho Cielo Ag Tech instructor Matt Marshall, 2026 Ag Tech graduate Eddie Chambers and Ag Tech student Jasmin Serrano posing with their newly acquired National FFA Organization certificate last March in Ontario, California.

Meet Matt

Marshall took leadership over Rancho Cielo's Ag Tech program last year, and since then the energy around it has been active, beginning with the development of Rancho Cielo's Future Farmers of America chapter. Marshall came to this work via a degree in Agricultural Science from Cal Poly, concentrated in Animal Science, followed by a Master's in Agricultural Education. He also teaches agriculture courses at Hartnell College, which matters more than it might first appear.

"My goal is for [the Ag Tech program at Rancho Cielo] to have a strong identity," Marshall explains. He sees potential in developing the program with three distinct pieces: ag business, animal science, and plant science, with coursework and hands-on vocational experience in each area.

"It makes sense, because that's where the student interest is, but also those are the three specific degree transfer programs at Hartnell," Marshall says. "If we create that strong identity, we can create stronger partnerships and dual enrollments [in those areas] with Hartnell."

Already, students are finding their way

into stronger threads of the FFA curriculum, working with Rancho Cielo Garden Manager/Master Gardener Julie Lorenzen and California Climate Action Corps (CCAC) Fellows on various projects, including a native hedgerow, which is groundcover planted to mimic a natural ecosystem.

"It'll be exciting for new students to see that grow and evolve as we're talking and building some infrastructure, looking for support to build a farm, build some facilities, buy some equipment to make that identity even stronger in ag business, plant science and animal science," Marshall says.

There is a detail worth pausing on, because it explains something about how FFA functions in this state: In California, the moment a student enrolls in an ag program like Rancho Cielo's, that student becomes an FFA member. Automatically. No separate application, no second commitment.

"That's the beauty of FFA; you know it offers a variety of opportunities, and kids can pick and choose which ones they want to be involved in, experiences that they like," Marshall explains. "Some students want to do more plant things; some want to do animal things."

And then there is land. A five-acre plot, to be specific, between Rancho Cielo's vocational center and Hope, Horses & Kids has been marked out as a potential development site, and Marshall talks about it the way people talk about things they have already built in their minds, waiting only for the world to catch up.

"I guess long term, my goal is to build," Marshall says. "I'm calling it an 'Agricenter,' a set of facilities that allows those three core curriculum areas of ag business, plant science, and animal science to come to life out here. We could have an operational farm and a student store that students can manage, farm-produced goods that the community can come out and buy."

The Hartnell connection runs in both directions. Hartnell wants to grow its animal science program but lacks a functional farm of its own; if Rancho Cielo builds one, Hartnell students could come out for classes and labs Marshall would teach himself, and Rancho Cielo students could leave with college credit already in hand. Two institutions, one piece of ground, each growing because of the other. ☞



**BIG ACTION!
GREAT FOOD!
OPEN LATE!**

24-Hour Vegas Style
Gaming in the Heart
of Monterey Bay!


POKER


ULTIMATE
TEXAS HOLD'EM


THREE CARD
POKER


21


DRAGON 7


BACCARAT


PANDA 8

**111 MONTEREY ST.
SALINAS**



BANKERSCASINO.NET

831.422.6666



GEAR-000745, GEAR-000750, GEAR-000751, GEAR-000752, GEAR-000753, GEAR-000754, GEAR-000755, GEAR-000756, GEAR-000757, GEAR-000758, GEAR-000759, GEAR-000760, GEAR-000761, GEAR-000762, GEAR-000763, GEAR-000764, GEAR-000765, GEAR-000766, GEAR-000767, GEAR-000768, GEAR-000769, GEAR-000770, GEAR-000771, GEAR-000772, GEAR-000773, GEAR-000774, GEAR-000775, GEAR-000776, GEAR-000777, GEAR-000778, GEAR-000779, GEAR-000780, GEAR-000781, GEAR-000782, GEAR-000783, GEAR-000784, GEAR-000785, GEAR-000786, GEAR-000787, GEAR-000788, GEAR-000789, GEAR-000790, GEAR-000791, GEAR-000792, GEAR-000793, GEAR-000794, GEAR-000795, GEAR-000796, GEAR-000797, GEAR-000798, GEAR-000799, GEAR-000800, GEAR-000801, GEAR-000802, GEAR-000803, GEAR-000804, GEAR-000805, GEAR-000806, GEAR-000807, GEAR-000808, GEAR-000809, GEAR-000810, GEAR-000811, GEAR-000812, GEAR-000813, GEAR-000814, GEAR-000815, GEAR-000816, GEAR-000817, GEAR-000818, GEAR-000819, GEAR-000820, GEAR-000821, GEAR-000822, GEAR-000823, GEAR-000824, GEAR-000825, GEAR-000826, GEAR-000827, GEAR-000828, GEAR-000829, GEAR-000830, GEAR-000831, GEAR-000832, GEAR-000833, GEAR-000834, GEAR-000835, GEAR-000836, GEAR-000837, GEAR-000838, GEAR-000839, GEAR-000840, GEAR-000841, GEAR-000842, GEAR-000843, GEAR-000844, GEAR-000845, GEAR-000846, GEAR-000847, GEAR-000848, GEAR-000849, GEAR-000850, GEAR-000851, GEAR-000852, GEAR-000853, GEAR-000854, GEAR-000855, GEAR-000856, GEAR-000857, GEAR-000858, GEAR-000859, GEAR-000860, GEAR-000861, GEAR-000862, GEAR-000863, GEAR-000864, GEAR-000865, GEAR-000866, GEAR-000867, GEAR-000868, GEAR-000869, GEAR-000870, GEAR-000871, GEAR-000872, GEAR-000873, GEAR-000874, GEAR-000875, GEAR-000876, GEAR-000877, GEAR-000878, GEAR-000879, GEAR-000880, GEAR-000881, GEAR-000882, GEAR-000883, GEAR-000884, GEAR-000885, GEAR-000886, GEAR-000887, GEAR-000888, GEAR-000889, GEAR-000890, GEAR-000891, GEAR-000892, GEAR-000893, GEAR-000894, GEAR-000895, GEAR-000896, GEAR-000897, GEAR-000898, GEAR-000899, GEAR-000900, GEAR-000901, GEAR-000902, GEAR-000903, GEAR-000904, GEAR-000905, GEAR-000906, GEAR-000907, GEAR-000908, GEAR-000909, GEAR-000910, GEAR-000911, GEAR-000912, GEAR-000913, GEAR-000914, GEAR-000915, GEAR-000916, GEAR-000917, GEAR-000918, GEAR-000919, GEAR-000920, GEAR-000921, GEAR-000922, GEAR-000923, GEAR-000924, GEAR-000925, GEAR-000926, GEAR-000927, GEAR-000928, GEAR-000929, GEAR-000930, GEAR-000931, GEAR-000932, GEAR-000933, GEAR-000934, GEAR-000935, GEAR-000936, GEAR-000937, GEAR-000938, GEAR-000939, GEAR-000940, GEAR-000941, GEAR-000942, GEAR-000943, GEAR-000944, GEAR-000945, GEAR-000946, GEAR-000947, GEAR-000948, GEAR-000949, GEAR-000950, GEAR-000951, GEAR-000952, GEAR-000953, GEAR-000954, GEAR-000955, GEAR-000956, GEAR-000957, GEAR-000958, GEAR-000959, GEAR-000960, GEAR-000961, GEAR-000962, GEAR-000963, GEAR-000964, GEAR-000965, GEAR-000966, GEAR-000967, GEAR-000968, GEAR-000969, GEAR-000970, GEAR-000971, GEAR-000972, GEAR-000973, GEAR-000974, GEAR-000975, GEAR-000976, GEAR-000977, GEAR-000978, GEAR-000979, GEAR-000980, GEAR-000981, GEAR-000982, GEAR-000983, GEAR-000984, GEAR-000985, GEAR-000986, GEAR-000987, GEAR-000988, GEAR-000989, GEAR-000990, GEAR-000991, GEAR-000992, GEAR-000993, GEAR-000994, GEAR-000995, GEAR-000996, GEAR-000997, GEAR-000998, GEAR-000999, GEAR-001000, GEAR-001001, GEAR-001002, GEAR-001003, GEAR-001004, GEAR-001005, GEAR-001006, GEAR-001007, GEAR-001008, GEAR-001009, GEAR-001010, GEAR-001011, GEAR-001012, GEAR-001013, GEAR-001014, GEAR-001015, GEAR-001016, GEAR-001017, GEAR-001018, GEAR-001019, GEAR-001020, GEAR-001021, GEAR-001022, GEAR-001023, GEAR-001024, GEAR-001025, GEAR-001026, GEAR-001027, GEAR-001028, GEAR-001029, GEAR-001030, GEAR-001031, GEAR-001032, GEAR-001033, GEAR-001034, GEAR-001035, GEAR-001036, GEAR-001037, GEAR-001038, GEAR-001039, GEAR-001040, GEAR-001041, GEAR-001042, GEAR-001043, GEAR-001044, GEAR-001045, GEAR-001046, GEAR-001047, GEAR-001048, GEAR-001049, GEAR-001050, GEAR-001051, GEAR-001052, GEAR-001053, GEAR-001054, GEAR-001055, GEAR-001056, GEAR-001057, GEAR-001058, GEAR-001059, GEAR-001060, GEAR-001061, GEAR-001062, GEAR-001063, GEAR-001064, GEAR-001065, GEAR-001066, GEAR-001067, GEAR-001068, GEAR-001069, GEAR-001070, GEAR-001071, GEAR-001072, GEAR-001073, GEAR-001074, GEAR-001075, GEAR-001076, GEAR-001077, GEAR-001078, GEAR-001079, GEAR-001080, GEAR-001081, GEAR-001082, GEAR-001083, GEAR-001084, GEAR-001085, GEAR-001086, GEAR-001087, GEAR-001088, GEAR-001089, GEAR-001090, GEAR-001091, GEAR-001092, GEAR-001093, GEAR-001094, GEAR-001095, GEAR-001096, GEAR-001097, GEAR-001098, GEAR-001099, GEAR-001100, GEAR-001101, GEAR-001102, GEAR-001103, GEAR-001104, GEAR-001105, GEAR-001106, GEAR-001107, GEAR-001108, GEAR-001109, GEAR-001110, GEAR-001111, GEAR-001112, GEAR-001113, GEAR-001114, GEAR-001115, GEAR-001116, GEAR-001117, GEAR-001118, GEAR-001119, GEAR-001120, GEAR-001121, GEAR-001122, GEAR-001123, GEAR-001124, GEAR-001125, GEAR-001126, GEAR-001127, GEAR-001128, GEAR-001129, GEAR-001130, GEAR-001131, GEAR-001132, GEAR-001133, GEAR-001134, GEAR-001135, GEAR-001136, GEAR-001137, GEAR-001138, GEAR-001139, GEAR-001140, GEAR-001141, GEAR-001142, GEAR-001143, GEAR-001144, GEAR-001145, GEAR-001146, GEAR-001147, GEAR-001148, GEAR-001149, GEAR-001150, GEAR-001151, GEAR-001152, GEAR-001153, GEAR-001154, GEAR-001155, GEAR-001156, GEAR-001157, GEAR-001158, GEAR-001159, GEAR-001160, GEAR-001161, GEAR-001162, GEAR-001163, GEAR-001164, GEAR-001165, GEAR-001166, GEAR-001167, GEAR-001168, GEAR-001169, GEAR-001170, GEAR-001171, GEAR-001172, GEAR-001173, GEAR-001174, GEAR-001175, GEAR-001176, GEAR-001177, GEAR-001178, GEAR-001179, GEAR-001180, GEAR-001181, GEAR-001182, GEAR-001183, GEAR-001184, GEAR-001185, GEAR-001186, GEAR-001187, GEAR-001188, GEAR-001189, GEAR-001190, GEAR-001191, GEAR-001192, GEAR-001193, GEAR-001194, GEAR-001195, GEAR-001196, GEAR-001197, GEAR-001198, GEAR-001199, GEAR-001200, GEAR-001201, GEAR-001202, GEAR-001203, GEAR-001204, GEAR-001205, GEAR-001206, GEAR-001207, GEAR-001208, GEAR-001209, GEAR-001210, GEAR-001211, GEAR-001212, GEAR-001213, GEAR-001214, GEAR-001215, GEAR-001216, GEAR-001217, GEAR-001218, GEAR-001219, GEAR-001220, GEAR-001221, GEAR-001222, GEAR-001223, GEAR-001224, GEAR-001225, GEAR-001226, GEAR-001227, GEAR-001228, GEAR-001229, GEAR-001230, GEAR-001231, GEAR-001232, GEAR-001233, GEAR-001234, GEAR-001235, GEAR-001236, GEAR-001237, GEAR-001238, GEAR-001239, GEAR-001240, GEAR-001241, GEAR-001242, GEAR-001243, GEAR-001244, GEAR-001245, GEAR-001246, GEAR-001247, GEAR-001248, GEAR-001249, GEAR-001250, GEAR-001251, GEAR-001252, GEAR-001253, GEAR-001254, GEAR-001255, GEAR-001256, GEAR-001257, GEAR-001258, GEAR-001259, GEAR-001260, GEAR-001261, GEAR-001262, GEAR-001263, GEAR-001264, GEAR-001265, GEAR-001266, GEAR-001267, GEAR-001268, GEAR-001269, GEAR-001270, GEAR-001271, GEAR-001272, GEAR-001273, GEAR-001274, GEAR-001275, GEAR-001276, GEAR-001277, GEAR-001278, GEAR-001279, GEAR-001280, GEAR-001281, GEAR-001282, GEAR-001283, GEAR-001284, GEAR-001285, GEAR-001286, GEAR-001287, GEAR-001288, GEAR-001289, GEAR-001290, GEAR-001291, GEAR-001292, GEAR-001293, GEAR-001294, GEAR-001295, GEAR-001296, GEAR-001297, GEAR-001298, GEAR-001299, GEAR-001300, GEAR-001301, GEAR-001302, GEAR-001303, GEAR-001304, GEAR-001305, GEAR-001306, GEAR-001307, GEAR-001308, GEAR-001309, GEAR-001310, GEAR-001311, GEAR-001312, GEAR-001313, GEAR-001314, GEAR-001315, GEAR-001316, GEAR-001317, GEAR-001318, GEAR-001319, GEAR-001320, GEAR-001321, GEAR-001322, GEAR-001323, GEAR-001324, GEAR-001325, GEAR-001326, GEAR-001327, GEAR-001328, GEAR-001329, GEAR-001330, GEAR-001331, GEAR-001332, GEAR-001333, GEAR-001334, GEAR-001335, GEAR-001336, GEAR-001337, GEAR-001338, GEAR-001339, GEAR-001340, GEAR-001341, GEAR-001342, GEAR-001343, GEAR-001344, GEAR-001345, GEAR-001346, GEAR-001347, GEAR-001348, GEAR-001349, GEAR-001350, GEAR-001351, GEAR-001352, GEAR-001353, GEAR-001354, GEAR-001355, GEAR-001356, GEAR-001357, GEAR-001358, GEAR-001359, GEAR-001360, GEAR-001361, GEAR-001362, GEAR-001363, GEAR-001364, GEAR-001365, GEAR-001366, GEAR-001367, GEAR-001368, GEAR-001369, GEAR-001370, GEAR-001371, GEAR-001372, GEAR-001373, GEAR-001374, GEAR-001375, GEAR-001376, GEAR-001377, GEAR-001378, GEAR-001379, GEAR-001380, GEAR-001381, GEAR-001382, GEAR-001383, GEAR-001384, GEAR-001385, GEAR-001386, GEAR-001387, GEAR-001388, GEAR-001389, GEAR-001390, GEAR-001391, GEAR-001392, GEAR-001393, GEAR-001394, GEAR-001395, GEAR-001396, GEAR-001397, GEAR-001398, GEAR-001399, GEAR-001400, GEAR-001401, GEAR-001402, GEAR-001403, GEAR-001404, GEAR-001405, GEAR-001406, GEAR-001407, GEAR-001408, GEAR-001409, GEAR-001410, GEAR-001411, GEAR-001412, GEAR-001413, GEAR-001414, GEAR-001415, GEAR-001416, GEAR-001417, GEAR-001418, GEAR-001419, GEAR-001420, GEAR-001421, GEAR-001422, GEAR-001423, GEAR-001424, GEAR-001425, GEAR-001426, GEAR-001427, GEAR-001428, GEAR-001429, GEAR-001430, GEAR-001431, GEAR-001432, GEAR-001433, GEAR-001434, GEAR-001435, GEAR-001436, GEAR-001437, GEAR-001438, GEAR-001439, GEAR-001440, GEAR-001441, GEAR-001442, GEAR-001443, GEAR-001444, GEAR-001445, GEAR-001446, GEAR-001447, GEAR-001448, GEAR-001449, GEAR-001450, GEAR-001451, GEAR-001452, GEAR-001453, GEAR-001454, GEAR-001455, GEAR-001456, GEAR-001457, GEAR-001458, GEAR-001459, GEAR-001460, GEAR-001461, GEAR-001462, GEAR-001463, GEAR-001464, GEAR-001465, GEAR-001466, GEAR-001467, GEAR-001468, GEAR-001469, GEAR-001470, GEAR-001471, GEAR-001472, GEAR-001473, GEAR-001474, GEAR-001475, GEAR-001476, GEAR-001477, GEAR-001478, GEAR-001479, GEAR-001480, GEAR-001481, GEAR-001482, GEAR-001483, GEAR-001484, GEAR-001485, GEAR-001486, GEAR-001487, GEAR-001488, GEAR-001489, GEAR-001490, GEAR-001491, GEAR-001492, GEAR-001493, GEAR-001494, GEAR-001495, GEAR-001496, GEAR-001497, GEAR-001498, GEAR-001499, GEAR-001500, GEAR-001501, GEAR-001502, GEAR-001503, GEAR-001504, GEAR-001505, GEAR-001506, GEAR-001507, GEAR-001508, GEAR-001509, GEAR-001510, GEAR-001511, GEAR-001512, GEAR-001513, GEAR-001514, GEAR-001515, GEAR-001516, GEAR-001517, GEAR-001518, GEAR-001519, GEAR-001520, GEAR-001521, GEAR-001522, GEAR-001523, GEAR-001524, GEAR-001525, GEAR-001526, GEAR-001527, GEAR-001528, GEAR-001529, GEAR-001530, GEAR-001531, GEAR-001532, GEAR-001533, GEAR-001534, GEAR-001535, GEAR-001536, GEAR-001537, GEAR-001538, GEAR-001539, GEAR-001540, GEAR-001541, GEAR-001542, GEAR-001543, GEAR-001544, GEAR-001545, GEAR-001546, GEAR-001547, GEAR-001548, GEAR-001549, GEAR-001550, GEAR-001551, GEAR-001552, GEAR-001553, GEAR-001554, GEAR-001555, GEAR-001556, GEAR-001557, GEAR-001558, GEAR-001559, GEAR-001560, GEAR-001561, GEAR-001562, GEAR-001563, GEAR-001564, GEAR-001565, GEAR-001566, GEAR-001567, GEAR-001568, GEAR-001569, GEAR-001570, GEAR-001571, GEAR-001572, GEAR-001573, GEAR-001574, GEAR-001575, GEAR-001576, GEAR-001577, GEAR-001578, GEAR-001579, GEAR-001580, GEAR-001581, GEAR-001582, GEAR-001583, GEAR-001584, GEAR-001585, GEAR-001586, GEAR-001587, GEAR-001588, GEAR-001589, GEAR-001590, GEAR-001591, GEAR-001592, GEAR-001593, GEAR-001594, GEAR-001595, GEAR-001596, GEAR-001597, GEAR-001598, GEAR-001599, GEAR-001600, GEAR-001601, GEAR-001602, GEAR-001603, GEAR-001604, GEAR-001605, GEAR-001606, GEAR-001607, GEAR-001608, GEAR-001609, GEAR-001610, GEAR-001611, GEAR-001612, GEAR-001613, GEAR-001614, GEAR-001615, GEAR-001616, GEAR-001617, GEAR-001618, GEAR-001619, GEAR-001620, GEAR-001621, GEAR-001622, GEAR-001623, GEAR-001624, GEAR-001625, GEAR-001626, GEAR-001627, GEAR-001628, GEAR-001629, GEAR-001630, GEAR-001631, GEAR-001632, GEAR-001633, GEAR-001634, GEAR-001635, GEAR-001636, GEAR-001637, GEAR-001638, GEAR-001639, GEAR-001640, GEAR-001641, GEAR-001642, GEAR-001643, GEAR-001644, GEAR-001645, GEAR-001646, GEAR-001647, GEAR-001648, GEAR-001649, GEAR-001650, GEAR-001651, GEAR-001652, GEAR-001653, GEAR-001654, GEAR-001655, GEAR-001656, GEAR-001657, GEAR-001658, GEAR-001659, GEAR-001660, GEAR-001661, GEAR-001662, GEAR-001663, GEAR-001664, GEAR-001665, GEAR-001666, GEAR-001667, GEAR-001668, GEAR-001669, GEAR-001670, GEAR-001671, GEAR-001672, GEAR-001673, GEAR-001674, GEAR-001675, GEAR-001676, GEAR-001677, GEAR-001678, GEAR-001679, GEAR-001680, GEAR-001681, GEAR-001682, GEAR-001683, GEAR-001684, GEAR-001685, GEAR-001686, GEAR-001687, GEAR-001688, GEAR-001689, GEAR-001690, GEAR-001691, GEAR-001692, GEAR-001693, GEAR-001694, GEAR-001695, GEAR-001696, GEAR-001697, GEAR-001698, GEAR-001699, GEAR-001700, GEAR-001701, GEAR-001702, GEAR-001703, GEAR-001704, GEAR-001705, GEAR-001706, GEAR-001707, GEAR-001708, GEAR-001709, GEAR-001710, GEAR-001711, GEAR-001712, GEAR-001713, GEAR-001714, GEAR-001715, GEAR-001716, GEAR-001717, GEAR-001718, GEAR-001719, GEAR-001720, GEAR-001721, GEAR-001722, GEAR-001723, GEAR-001724, GEAR-001725, GEAR-001726, GEAR-001727, GEAR-001728, GEAR-001729, GEAR-001730, GEAR-001731, GEAR-001732, GEAR-001733, GEAR-001734, GEAR-001735, GEAR-001736, GEAR-001737, GEAR-001738, GEAR-001739, GEAR-001740, GEAR-001741, GEAR-001742, GEAR-001743, GEAR-001744, GEAR-001745, GEAR-001746, GEAR-001747, GEAR-001748, GEAR-001749, GEAR-001750, GEAR-001751, GEAR-001752, GEAR-001753, GEAR-001754, GEAR-001755, GEAR-001756, GEAR-001757, GEAR-001758, GEAR-001759, GEAR-001760, GEAR-001761, GEAR-001762, GEAR-001763, GEAR-001764, GEAR-001765, GEAR-001766, GEAR-001767, GEAR-001768, GEAR-001769, GEAR-001770, GEAR-001771, GEAR-001772, GEAR-001773, GEAR-001774, GEAR-001775, GEAR-001776, GEAR-001777, GEAR-001778, GEAR-001779, GEAR-001780, GEAR-001781, GEAR-001782, GEAR-001783, GEAR-001784, GEAR-001785, GEAR-001786, GEAR-001787, GEAR-001788, GEAR-001789, GEAR-001790, GEAR-001791, GEAR-001792, GEAR-001793, GEAR-001794, GEAR-001795, GEAR-001796, GEAR-

Beyond Abbott Street

By Mindy Carpenter

For generations, agriculture was considered a man's world. Women were responsible for raising children, keeping a tidy home, and making sure their families were fed. That was simply the way life was. My very own mother was of this generation. She would have dinner on the table every night by 5:30 so that my dad could come home from the ranch, kick off his boots, eat dinner, read the paper, watch a bit of M*A*S*H, finish with Johnny Carson, and go to bed. My dad, the only farmer we knew, would wake up early-ish and drop us off at school on his way to the ranch. While we were at school, Mom planned a hearty home-cooked dinner, managed the household, and eventually volunteered at Natividad Hospital in the gift shop when we were older. This was her life, the way she had seen it in every one of her ancestors, and she loved it.

I am not following in my mother's footsteps in any way, shape, or form. I am not a great cook. I was never content staying home, and I was never one to sit still. While I didn't need to be "on the go" all the time, I needed something more. I loved being a mom to two noisy boys, but I also wanted a career that challenged me.

Eyes on Abbott Street

Growing up, the extension of Abbott Street between Sanborn Road and Highway 101 was all agriculture. If you were on that stretch of road, you had your boots in what made Salinas the Salad Bowl of the World. I made my place in the world of finance, far from Abbott Street. I often found myself searching job listings for something that would take me in that direction, but I did not want a desk job anymore. I didn't even know if that dream job existed. Maybe there just wasn't a place for women in agriculture. I eventually gave up on the idea of finding a job down that stretch of road.

Then one day, a company I'd never heard of arrived in Salinas. They built robots for growers. FarmWise made that seemingly impossible dream become a reality. I was hired early in their journey into AgTech, and wouldn't you know it, our office was located down the very first driveway on Abbott Street after the Sanborn intersection. I had finally made it! The place I'd spent years imagining turned out to be exactly where my career would begin. I quickly realized there really weren't many women in the industry after all. In building the FarmWise team in Salinas, I was the only female for a very long time. It did have its perks: I had my own restroom!

"Once I found my place in this industry, I realized how important visibility is."

Career Growth

As I grew with the company and began sitting in on customer meetings, I found myself surrounded by growers and the children of growers my dad worked with through his years of farming. I did a lot of listening and learned as much as I could about the industry. At this point in my career, I was in the office, but I was happy. I was creating reports with the words "acres" and "commodities," and that was close enough to dirt. I eventually became Head of Field Operations and found myself in the field. This was heaven.

In all of my field escapades, I never encountered another female. I tried to use this to my advantage by speaking from a place of knowledge and experience when dealing with growers. This took a lot of work on my end, given my introvertedness, but I was up for the challenge. There were

definitely days of feeling defeated and tired of having to prove myself, but I was determined to show that I belonged out there in the dirt.

As my confidence grew, I started attending events, volunteering a few times a year with the Farm Day events in the county, attending the World Ag Expo in Tulare, experiencing the VIP tent at the California Rodeo Salinas, and meeting other women in the industry. I was even accepted into the Grower Shipper Foundations' AgKnowledge 2024 Class! What did I find? They really were out there—executives, managers, farm owners, inspectors, and agronomists.

Mentors and Leaders

One of the first women I quietly admired was Coastal Grower's Editorial Director, Lorri Koster. Years earlier, when our boys played baseball together, she was Chairman and CEO of Mann Packing, a certified women-owned business. I wanted to ask her a thousand questions, but instead, I watched from afar and admired what she had accomplished in an industry largely led by men.

Years later, Lorri spoke to our AgKnowledge class. While I appreciated everything she shared, what stayed with me most wasn't the marketing strategies or industry insights—it was seeing a woman lead with confidence, authenticity, and experience. She wasn't trying to prove she belonged. She simply did.

As I continued attending meetings, conferences, and industry events, I began paying closer attention to who was seated around the tables. While I was meeting more women throughout the industry, they were still the exception in many leadership roles. Every female executive, company president, or department leader I met stood out—not because they wanted to, but because there just weren't many of them. Their presence

reminded me how much opportunity still lies ahead for the next generation.

It shouldn't be so hard to find women with careers in agriculture, yet it seems to be. With the rise of robotics and technology, there are more pathways than ever before. Once I found my place in this industry, I realized how important visibility is. Young girls deserve to see women working in the field, in the office, and at the leadership table—and to know there is a place for them, too.

I came from a family with deep farming roots, but I was never encouraged to follow them or create my own roots. I will never know why, but my parents directed me down a different path. My mom was the guide; my dad was the support. I didn't push back; I just followed their direction. Looking back, I don't regret it. The timing of the AgTech era turned out to be exactly what I needed.

A Trip to Tulare

If you are a parent, mentor, teacher, or someone who encourages young women to dream bigger, I encourage you to take a day trip to the World Ag Expo in Tulare, California. I wish I had been exposed to an event like this when I was younger. It would have opened my eyes to the many different paths available in agriculture. Growing up in Salinas, my view of agriculture was fairly narrow. I saw crops, tractors, and the hardworking people who grew the food that fed the world. The World Ag Expo shows just how much more exists beyond the fields. It introduces visitors to soil health, irrigation, dairy technology, animal health, robotics, drones, and countless innovations shaping the future of agriculture.

For years, I was disappointed that the Women in Agriculture presence at the World Ag Expo focused primarily on culinary demonstrations and guest chefs. Those things are valuable, but women in agriculture are so much more. They are scientists, engineers, operators, business owners, leaders, and innovators. Women used their voices to help expand that conversation, and in 2025, the World Ag Expo Women's Conference Pavilion made its debut, focusing on industry panels, networking opportunities, female leadership, and innovative agricultural practices. This

past February, California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross participated in discussions highlighting the "International Year of the Woman Farmer."

A Look to the Future

Agriculture has long been male dominated, but it is changing. Progress has been made, and there is still more to come. I attended the Women in Ag luncheon last month and was honored to be in the presence of so many leaders! Today, we are business owners, executives, engineers, operators, technicians, and innovators. While we are becoming more visible every year, we are still underrepresented in many executive and leadership positions across the industry. It should be commonplace to find women in white pickups in the field, in the conference room, at busy restaurants having lunch meetings with equipment companies (yes, this was me yesterday!), having a voice of experience and knowledge in discussions. The place was always there. It just wasn't always visible. Sometimes it just needed more women willing to take a seat at the

table—and more people willing to make room for them.

That young girl from Salinas with big dreams of driving down Abbott Street towards Highway 101 fought for her place on the road. She has finally found her voice, her expertise, and her place at the table. She is only getting started. If she were sitting with her dad at the dirty green table in his shop off of Espinosa Road while wearing her dirty work boots and flannel shirt, he would be so proud. Sure, he'd still shake his head and say his favorite bad word that starts with an "s" and ends with a "t," but he would know that he was her guiding light the whole way. He passed away in 2019, just nine months before I began my journey in his footsteps. I wish he were here to experience all of this with me. A yellow hooded oriole recently started appearing in the big pine tree outside my office window. I'd like to think this is him checking on me. Making sure I don't get lost wandering the fields or grounds around the Axis Ag headquarters. ☘



**AG LAND
EXPERTS**

SINCE 1939

{ APPRAISALS
BROKERAGE
MANAGEMENT }

call
831.422.5327
or visit
PIINIREALTY.COM

PIINI REALTY

DRE #: 01519647

Salinas Infrastructure Summit Introduces Intriguing Ideas for Financing and Construction

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison, Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce



On Friday, June 5, the City of Salinas hosted an all-day “Infrastructure Summit” at One Main Street in Downtown Salinas (where the National Steinbeck Center is located). Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce partnered with the City to identify speakers, promote the summit, and sponsor the official reception afterwards.

Open to the public, the summit was meant to inspire attendees to consider how “collaboration can unlock the infrastructure our community needs for sustainable growth, housing, mobility, and quality of life.” A dozen speakers and panelists proposed several traditional and innovative options for the city to pay for infrastructure construction. There was a special focus on transportation projects and water and wastewater projects.

Your Chamber observed four major themes at the summit. These are listed below.

Four Summit Themes

1. Infrastructure improvements are

essential for the future economic prosperity of Salinas and for expansion of high-quality careers for current and future Salinas residents.

In his opening speech, Dennis Donohue continued his ongoing focus as Mayor of Salinas on why ambitious, intelligent, and capable young people who grow up in the Salinas Valley leave the area, even if they would prefer to remain here or return here. They see few job options that would allow individuals and families to have a comfortable standard of living in this expensive place. “We lose future entrepreneurs, homeowners, innovators, community leaders, and business owners,” Mayor Donohue said.

Your Chamber sees this happening. Demographic data confirms it.

Can the City of Salinas do anything to reverse this trend? Infrastructure improvements, combined with other economic development strategies, may encourage quality employers to establish operations or expand their existing operations. Infrastructure

improvements would also encourage construction of new housing units.

2. Infrastructure improvements in Salinas are expensive.

Costs of construction materials and equipment are higher than ever. A shortage of workers in both professional construction services and the building trades has increased the cost of labor. State and local laws and regulations add costs at each stage of an infrastructure project.

For infrastructure projects, “time is money.” In California, public and private parties spend many years -- sometimes, decades — between a decision to pursue a project until actual completion and operation. Developers must consider the cost of environmental review and obtaining permits.

3. Costs of infrastructure improvements exceeds the amount available from governments.

While multiple speakers urged the City of Salinas to be aggressive about seeking federal and state grants and low-interest loans, the process is highly competitive. A representative for U.S. Senator Adam Schiff reported that federal funding for transportation projects is trending downward. A Caltrans (California Department of Transportation) representative and a Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) representative acknowledged that their agency budgets cannot meet the region’s transportation infrastructure needs.



4. Voters want infrastructure improvements and maintenance but may not necessarily want to pay for them.

The City of Salinas Infrastructure Summit occurred three days after voters in Monterey County rejected all three ballot measures proposed by city councils to raise taxes. Voters in the City of Monterey have approved several tax increases in the past ten years, but on June 2 they rejected the latest proposed sales tax increase. Voters in the cities of Gonzales and Soledad rejected proposed parcel taxes to pay for city emergency response programs.

Chamber members have been complaining about continual increases in local taxes and fees. Some members also question if local governments are effectively spending money generated by existing taxes and fees. It's possible that City of Salinas voters may be leery about approving the upcoming November 2026 ballot measure to renew the City of Salinas Measure G sales tax.

Options For Infrastructure Financing

Under these conditions, what can the City of Salinas do to pay for infrastructure improvements?

Option #1 - Get More Federal and State Money

On occasion the City of Salinas obtains federal and state grants and loans for infrastructure improvements. But is the city doing enough to take advantage of every opportunity?

Your Chamber suggests that the Salinas City Council request and review a table showing all of the city's grant and loan applications in the last ten years to public and private entities and the outcomes of those applications. Such a table could perhaps help city leaders to determine if the city should make systematic changes to its process of seeking grants and loans for infrastructure projects and programs.

Option #2 - Raise Taxes and Fees for Infrastructure

Few people like to pay taxes. But infrastructure is not free. Someone has to pay for it.

Monterey County voters have shown willingness to support sales taxes that fund infrastructure. In 2016, voters approved Measure X, a county sales tax administered by the Transportation Agency for Monterey

County (TAMC) to provide funding for regional and local street and highway projects. Measure X was the fifth attempt since 1988 to convince voters to approve a regional transportation tax.

With that county sales tax in place, Monterey County and its twelve cities have been able to pay for more transportation projects. They also expanded their ability to acquire federal and state matching grants at a level competitive to the state's big urban counties, including acquiring funding from the Senate Bill 1 tax increase approved by the state legislature and Governor Jerry Brown in 2017. Ten years after voters approved Measure X, improvements in the condition of Monterey County streets and highways are visible and objectively measurable.

In the City of Monterey, voters approved Measure P in 2014 and then Measure S in 2018 to impose a "Street Infrastructure Rehabilitation Transactions and Use Tax." Sales tax revenue is used to "address significant deferred maintenance by fixing streets, sidewalks, and potholes." And in the County of Monterey, voters in November 2024 approved Measure AA, which will fund



(l to r): John Boies, Brian Hussar, Dennis Donohue, Brian Dowd, Brent Fogg, Don Roland, Bill McGowan

upgrades to streets, parks, recreational facilities, libraries, and water and sewer systems.

On the state level, the state is anticipating a decline in gasoline tax revenue -- the basis of the state's current funding structure for highway construction and maintenance. Zero-emission vehicles (such as electric vehicles), fuel-efficient vehicles, and changes in personal driving behavior are reducing gasoline consumption and reducing tax revenue.

A representative of a transportation organization funded by construction companies and building trades unions advocated at the summit for a tax on vehicle owners based on the number of miles driven. But as some Monterey County elected officials have noted, this "Vehicle Miles Travelled" (VMT) tax will disproportionately increase taxes for rural residents who commute long distances to job centers (such as Salinas and the Monterey Peninsula).

Option #3 - Alternative Construction Project Delivery Methods

In a traditional "design-bid-build" process, a government contracts with professional service firms to design a project, and then it contracts again to build that project with the construction company (and its selected subcontractors) that submits the lowest responsible bid.

In the past 30 years, the State of California has authorized alternative ways for governments to award contracts for public works projects. In a "design-build" process, a government awards one contract that incorporates both design and construction. This collaboration tends to reduce project costs and also reduces time between idea and completion.

Current trends in design-build project delivery include "Progressive Design Build" (PDB), "Construction Manager / General Contractor" (CM/GC), and/or "Construction Manager at Risk" (CMAR). The City of Salinas used "Progressive Design Build" (PDB) for construction of the new police station and the new El Gabilan Library, and it will use PDB for the upcoming Lake Street Lift Station project. Salinas Valley Health has used "Progressive Design Build" (PDB) for projects.

State law allows governments to use subjective criteria for prequalifying contractors and awarding contracts under design-build project delivery. The lowest responsible bidder does not have to win the contract. For this



reason, alternative project delivery methods require a high level of integrity and accountability in the selection process in order to prevent cronyism, favoritism, and corruption.

Option #4 - Innovative Financing Methods for Construction Through Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)

How was the City of Salinas able to afford to build the Salinas Police Service Headquarters (the new Police Station) and the new El Gabilan Library in the late 2010s? The city used a financing method categorized as a type of "Public-Private Partnership" (P3).

In 2016, the Salinas City Council created a California nonprofit public benefit corporation called "Salinas Public Facilities Inc." that has only one member - a private non-profit development firm called Public Facilities Group. Then, Salinas Public Facilities Inc. borrowed money to build these two projects by selling "lease-revenue bonds" to investors.

When a non-profit entity issues (that is, sells) tax-exempt bonds on behalf of a state or local government in this kind of arrangement, it is called "63-20 financing," that is done by issuing "63-20 bonds." (The name originates with a 1963 U.S. Treasury ruling that established criteria for such arrangements.) Investors get their principal paid back over time with interest, and that interest is exempt from federal and state taxes.

Salinas Public Facilities Inc. borrowed \$48,825,000 via lease-revenue bonds to build the new police station and must pay back \$68,176,830 in debt service (principal and

interest) to bond investors by 2034. It borrowed \$19,830,000 via lease-revenue bonds to build the new El Gabilan Library and must pay back \$34,677,973 in debt service to bond investors by 2048.

The City of Salinas "leases" the projects from Salinas Public Facilities Inc. and pays the leases using Measure E and Measure G sales tax revenue. Then, the lease payments are used by Salinas Public Facilities Inc. to pay back principal, with interest, to bond investors.

Is there potential for the City of Salinas and non-profit entities or private companies to enter into more P3 type-arrangements for infrastructure projects? Your Chamber has ideas about how P3s could encourage development of hotel and hospitality projects and provide the City of Salinas with much more Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue. Contact Colleen Bailey at 831-751-7725 or at colleen@SalinasChamber.com if you are interested in participating in this project.

Option #5 - Tax Increment Districts (TIDs)

Under TIDs, taxing authorities (such as cities and counties) designate a specific geographic area as a special district for infrastructure development. Property taxes assessed for that district at that time are established as a standard base rate. As the property is developed and its value goes up, the base rate remains the same for the taxing authorities, while the "incremental" increase in tax assessments is diverted to a separate

fund. Then, that fund is used to pay directly for infrastructure projects in that district and/or pay back money borrowed for such projects.

In 2023, the City of Salinas created a specific type of Tax Increment District (TID) called an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD). The California legislature authorized EIFDs following the 2012 dissolution of California's redevelopment agencies, including the Salinas Redevelopment Agency.

Your Chamber expected this EIFD would help finance improvement and expansion of the city's Industrial Wastewater Treatment and Conveyance System to serve agricultural processing facilities. In a letter to the city council, your Chamber stated that it "supports the formation of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) to fund backbone infrastructure at the Salinas Ag-Industrial Center (SAIC), provided that development within the EIFD conforms to the Economic Development Element of the General Plan."

The Monterey County Board of Supervisors must approve the City of Salinas EIFD. It approved an EIFD for the City of Gonzales in 2021 but has not acted to approve the Salinas EIFD.

Option #6 - Value Capture Zoning®

Earlier issues of the Business Journal have reported that the City of Salinas has adopted fifteen "specific plans" since 1988 for land use. The keynote speaker at the Infrastructure Summit--Larry Kosmont of Kosmont Companies--argued that state laws allowing "density bonuses" to developers should spur cities and counties to abandon specific plans and instead adopt new zoning strategies to make money from these laws.

Density bonuses allow higher numbers of units and smaller numbers of parking spaces and are meant to entice developers into including more affordable units in their projects. Mr. Kosmont encouraged the City of Salinas to take advantage of density bonuses and consider using a "Value Capture Zoning®" strategy, trademarked by Kosmont Companies.

"Value Capture" is the concept of municipalities adopting financing strategies to obtain more revenue when property values increase following infrastructure improvements. Common methods for value capture

in California are developer impact fees, community benefit districts (such as the Salinas Downtown Community Benefit District), or tax increment financing (as described above). Kosmont Companies proposes expanding the value capture concept to zoning.

For example, the City of Salinas would create a land use zone in an area already identified for future housing in its current 6th Cycle Housing Element but outside an existing specific plan area. The city would assign favorable density conditions in this zone to give housing developers an opportunity to make more money. Then the city would grant the density zoning to itself and put it in an account called a "Development Opportunity Reserve®" -- a concept also trademarked by Kosmont Companies. Finally, the city would sell its density zoning to housing developers and use proceeds from that trade to pay for infrastructure.

Option #7 - Borrowing Money from the Community Rather Than Wall Street

Institutional banks, pension funds, insurance companies, and wealthy individuals are major buyers of municipal revenue bonds. They're not buying bonds issued by the City of Salinas because they love Salinas; they buy them because the interest earned is tax-exempt and the investment is relatively low risk.

But what if the City of Salinas borrowed money from institutions and people in Salinas, so that returns on investment would stay in Salinas rather than going to Wall Street? One speaker at the Infrastructure Summit proposed an "impact finance" or "community capital" project to do that.

Under this model, local foundations, corporations, wealthy residents, and even other governments could lend money directly to the City of Salinas. They would be willing to accept a potentially lower rate of return than they would expect from routine types of investments.

To some extent, this investment idea is already exercised in Salinas. Notably, Taylor Fresh Foods has purchased and renovated Downtown Salinas properties with the expectation that the investments may have a low rate of return or may even lose money at times.

Your Chamber of Commerce and local foundations and companies are investigat-

ing the feasibility of this kind of financing in Salinas. Contact Colleen Bailey at 831-751-7725 or at colleen@SalinasChamber.com if you are interested in participating in this project.

While not mentioned at the Infrastructure Summit, several U.S. municipal governments have considered programs for smaller investors to engage in impact finance, specifically through blockchain technology to issue "microbonds." In 2024, the City of Quincy, Massachusetts became the first U.S. municipality to sell tax-exempt municipal bonds when it used blockchain technology to borrow \$10 million for street and sidewalk improvements. The City of Berkeley has also considered issuing blockchain microbonds.

Locally, in the mid-2010s a former Monterey city councilmember encouraged that city to consider issuing blockchain microbonds, which did not happen. However, he was able to get the ComCap community capital national conference to be held in the City of Monterey in 2017. Perhaps some Business Journal readers attended that conference nine years ago and would support implementation by the City of Salinas of impact financing and community capital ideas.

An Option Not Considered at the Conference

Your Chamber is aware of another option supported by some community members: do not raise or spend any additional money to build new, expanded, or improved infrastructure. Instead, limit infrastructure construction solely to maintaining what is already built.

This option would supposedly improve quality of life by naturally perpetuating the city's slow population decline, inhibiting economic development, and limiting taxes. While some residents may believe in "no-growth" or "de-growth" as desirable visions for the region's future, the Chamber believes it would hinder the Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity."

This article from the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Journal is reprinted with permission. ☞

| HOME SHOWCASE

Pacific Zen Coastal Bliss on the Monterey Peninsula

By Diane Gsell / Photography by Patrick Tregenza





If you've ever seen a stunning home in a magazine and thought "if only this could be mine," Pacific Zen might be the house for you since it's available as a monthly vacation rental of your dreams. Managed by Carmel's Sanctuary Vacation Rentals, the estate is located in the serene Carmel Meadows neighborhood. The 8,300 square-foot home boasts some of the best views, and zenful vibes, on the Monterey Peninsula.

As if the panoramas of both Point Lobos and the ocean beyond weren't enough, the architecture of the home itself matches the grandeur of the setting. Built in 1999 and upgraded with the most contemporary of touches, the home might echo the feel of Big Sur's Post Ranch to some as its architect, Daniel Piechota apprenticed with one of the Inn's primary contributing architects. His design somehow manages to find a place where contemporary aesthetics can seamlessly harmonize with the natural coastal landscape.













Alaskan Yellow Cedar lines dramatic barrel-vaulted ceilings creating the grandest of main entrances flanked by dramatic exposed concrete walls. An artful double staircase drops into a dreamy main floor where both glass walls and a substantial clerestory bring abundant light into the airy space. It's hard to imagine ever wanting to leave a perch in the living room due to its stunning views. But no need to stay put as nearly the same visual feast is present in the dining area, some bedrooms and even the sunken family room below.

As much as this architectural marvel might inspire you to be luxuriously house-bound, the outdoor options are equally majestic. A back gate opens directly onto the scenic bluffs of Carmel River Beach Trail, leading to idyllic Ribera Beach, the perfect place to watch the sunset.

As the crisp air of evening takes hold, the home's multiple fireplaces soften the chill. With dramatic views fading with the setting sun, built-in evening fun can be found in the cozy theatre room. While spending time in this dream of a home might make most feel like they're in a movie, here they can instead comfortably watch a movie on a state-of-the-art oversized projection screen.

A stay at Pacific Zen is an other-worldly peaceful retreat for anyone tapping out of a bustling urban existence. Under its spell, some may find that calm is the new excitement.



Hartnell College's Red Scout Team Brings International Farm Robotics Honor Home to the Salinas Valley



Local students combine artificial intelligence, robotics and hands-on agricultural knowledge to develop technology designed for specialty crop growers

In the Salinas Valley, agriculture has always been driven by innovation. Today, some of the next generation of that innovation is coming from students who grew up surrounded by the fields they now hope to help transform.

Hartnell College's "Red Scout" team earned the **Western Growers Award for Excellence in Specialty Crops** at the 2026 Farm Robotics Challenge, taking one of the top honors in Division II, a new competition category created specifically for two-year colleges.

The award was announced May 21 during a ceremony at the Plug and Play Tech Center in Sunnyvale, where students from California and around the world showcased technologies designed to address real challenges in agriculture.

For Hartnell's students, the project began with a crop deeply connected to the Central Coast: artichokes.

Technology Built for the Field

Red Scout developed an artificial intelligence-driven, robot-mounted crop-monitoring system designed to track artichoke growth and plant counts throughout a 120-day growing season.

Built on the Amiga robotics platform, the system uses 2D and 3D imaging to gather information as plants develop, creating a continuous picture of crop conditions over time. The technology could ultimately help growers better understand plant growth, stand counts and changes throughout the production cycle.

The project reflects the mission of the Farm Robotics Challenge, which asks students to work with farmers to identify agricultural problems and develop practical solutions using robotics, automation and artificial intelligence. "Our students went up against four-year universities from around the world and came home



with a statewide award — and they did it solving a real problem for growers right here in the Salinas Valley," said Michael Gutierrez, superintendent/president of Hartnell College. "That is exactly what Hartnell is here to do: give our students the hands-on experience and the technology skills that lead to good careers without leaving the region they call home."

From the Classroom to the Salinas Valley

Now in its fourth year, the Farm Robotics Challenge attracted 96 teams representing 13 countries. The competition is hosted by UC ANR Innovate and the AI Institute for Next Generation Food Systems, with more than \$100,000 in prizes and awards offered.

Hartnell has participated every year since the challenge began, continually refining its work and providing new students with opportunities to gain hands-on experience with agricultural robotics.

"Hartnell College has competed every single year since this challenge began regionally against the universities, and you can see that persistence in the quality of their work," said Richard Chapman, professor of agricultural engineering and Red Scout team advisor. "These students aren't just learning robotics and AI in a classroom — they're putting it to work in the field, side by side with the farmers who feed the country."

That experience is increasingly important as robotics, sensors, imaging, data analytics and artificial intelligence become more integrated into specialty crop production. Successful agricultural technology requires more than engineering expertise; it requires an understanding of crops, field conditions, economics and

the needs of growers and farmworkers.

Hartnell students have the opportunity to gain that understanding in the heart of one of the nation's most productive agricultural regions.

Growing the Valley's Next Generation of Ag Tech Talent

The Red Scout team included Christopher Talavera, Tomas Calusdian, Marc Anthony Jimenez, Denise Regalado Ramos, Alondra Garcia Bejarano, Diana Ruby Espinoza-Morado, Adolfo Ramirez, Alonzo Cabrera, Socrates Figueroa, Victor Manuel Ortiz, Arshdeep Cheema, Kaylene Cervantes, Erick Oviedo, Grant O'Callaghan and Geo Munoz.

The team was guided by Richard Chapman, professor of agricultural engineering; Edlin Hernandez, program coordinator for the Career and Transfer Hub; and Andrea Tinajero, program coordinator for the USDA NextGen Grant.

For the students, the Western Growers award is an important achievement. For the Salinas Valley, the larger story is what comes next.

The students integrating artificial intelligence, imaging and robotics into an artichoke field today could become the engineers, technicians, researchers, entrepreneurs and agricultural leaders helping Central Coast growers solve tomorrow's challenges.

Red Scout demonstrates that the next generation of agricultural innovation isn't only being developed in university laboratories or Silicon Valley technology companies.

Some of it is being built by community college students right here in the Salinas Valley.

Promoting Brain Health

What we know so far is not news; how important it is. . . is

By Lisa Crawford Watson



The author's parents, Marilyn and Linn Watson at her 80th birthday celebration months before she received her Alzheimer's diagnosis.

Marilyn Crawford Watson was a woman of substance, formed by strong moral conviction, a natural proclivity for music, and Grace Kelly elegance. She, who with our father, raised five children, among us two sets of twins, was patient, insightful, wise. She began her days by stretching, followed by a walk around the reservoir near our home, or a game of tennis at the club. She was invincible and proved it over the years, facing challenges head on. Until she reached her late 70s, and we began, little by little, to see her disappear into herself.

My mother was 87 when she finally succumbed to Alzheimer's disease. Her children have spent the ensuing years missing her and trying to figure out how to guarantee this will never happen to any of us. Yet, the thing is, there are no guarantees. Not yet.

But what we have learned, through tremendous and ongoing research in this country and others, is that, in addition to

drug research on the horizon, there are lifestyle choices we can make that just may protect us against or, at least, forestall the slow dance into dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

The MIND—Mediterranean Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay—Diet, was created by the late Dr. Martha Claire Morris, who succumbed to cancer, not dementia, in 2020. Morris, a nutritional epidemiologist who studied the connection between diet and Alzheimer's disease, reported that following the MIND Diet could boost brain health and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's onset by up to 53 percent. For anyone who has lost a family member to this disease, who subsequently questions their own health and wellbeing every time they can't remember the names of all four of the Beatles, this is promising news.

Feed Your Brain

According to the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, The MIND Diet

focuses on seven food groups, six of which should compose our daily diet, and a seventh group comprising what should be limited. And the thing is, it's pretty sensical. We could probably pass the test if we had to guess what's good for our brain and what is only good for our mental state. Like when someone breaks up with us by the end of the first date, so we shut the front door, open the freezer door, and reach for chocolate ice cream.

Ice cream lives in that seventh group, where it cohabitates with other sweets and pastries typically high in added sugars and refined flour—and lacking in critical nutrients for overall health. Some folks call this "recreational eating." But the Mind Diet—which promotes daily consumption of brain-boosting foods, among them three servings of whole grains, plus leafy greens daily, two servings of berries—particularly blueberries—nuts five times a week and beans every other day, healthy fats—particularly olive oil—plus poultry at least twice a week and fish at least once a week—means business.

So does Claire Day. The Chief Mission and Program Strategy Officer at the Alzheimer's Association of Northern California and Northern Nevada has led extensive studies on the impact of living an optimally healthy lifestyle on promoting and conserving brain health.

Research Begins

Newly out of college, Day began volunteering as a support-group facilitator at a long-term care community, where staff kept increasing her volunteer activities until, one day, they gave her a job. The connection, she says, was immediate.

"I have been working for the Alzheimer's Association since 2001 in various roles," she says, "including special events, program

coordination, early stage and support group expansion, until I began managing the Chapter's program and services team. In January 2017, I transferred to the Northern California and Northern Nevada Chapters of the Alzheimer's Association."

"For anyone who has lost a family member to dementia, who subsequently questions their own health and wellbeing every time they can't remember the names of all four of the Beatles, this is promising news."

During this time, Day and her team worked relentlessly to test and interpret the effects of following the Mind Diet—and not. This was particularly influenced by the results of the renowned "Finnish Geriatric Intervention Study to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability" demonstrated that multi-area lifestyle interventions can improve our brain health and prevent cognitive decline. Day's team led an intervention study in Northern California, which yielded similar results.

"Those who were able to make lifestyle changes slowed the aging clock by one to two years," Day says. "Most of us know we are supposed to 'eat right' and follow exercise routines sustainable through lifestyle changes. This is what will give people the best chance to decrease the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or dementia."

Essentially, the focus of the discussion is on brain health and risk reduction. Yet most of us know plenty of people who have made healthy lifestyle changes and still developed Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Which is why, says Day, we cannot let our foot off the research accelerator until we can confirm what really is causing brain deterioration.

"We are still learning so much about the brain and Alzheimer's disease. Even though it was identified 100 years ago," she says, "we're just starting to learn what's behind it. At the end of day, we will understand that the cause is this, and the treatment for the part of the brain that is impacted is that. And still, we are going to need to continue to eat right and exercise. Fortunately, so many brilliant minds are trying to figure it out."



Claire Day, Chief Mission & Strategy Program Officer for NorCal and NorNeva.

In the meantime, turns out what we know about promoting and maintaining our brain health, Grandma knew all along: "Eat your fruits and vegetables."

Fortunately, for us, we happen to live in the "salad bowl" of the country, with growing fields and orchards outside our back door, and farmers markets enabling the community to gather and sip, savor, and socialize while picking out our fresh fruits and vegetables.



Dr. Martha Claire Morris, creator of The MIND—Mediterranean Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay—Diet.

To learn more about the healthy lifestyle choices we can and should make to promote brain and body health by "eating right, challenging our mind, and "moving," study the "Brain Healthy Habit Builder" page at www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health/brain-health-habit-builder. Or call the Alzheimer's Association of Monterey County office at 831.647.9890, or visit alz.org. 



GIVING BACK

"Our scholarship program with the Community Foundation is a way for us to give back to our employees and their families. It's just the right thing to do."
— Brian Church, CEO, Church Brothers Farms

Your Partner in Giving



Here for Good
Community Foundation
for Monterey County

Donor Advised Funds • Scholarships
IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions
Charitable Estate Planning (CGAs, CRTs)
Family Philanthropy & More

831.375.9712 | cfmco.com/GiveBack | [f](#) [@](#) [in](#)

Buzzing Systems

Unraveling the Inner Workings of Honeybees

By Jack T. Koster, MS



Worker honeybees perform different tasks throughout their lives, progressing from brood care and hive maintenance to foraging. This age-based division of labor helps coordinate the needs of the colony.

Insects are the most successful organisms on the planet. When I used to teach Agricultural Entomology at the college level, I always presented this statement to my students on day one. You can probably imagine the looks of disbelief and hands being raised to debate me on that statement. Yes, insects do not have Falcon 9 rockets and self-driving cars; but one thing insects do so well is simply live. During a recent seminar at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Wimauma, Florida, where I am pursuing my Ph.D., I discussed the inner workings of honeybees and how their lives are built upon a coordinated effort of survival. To most people, a honeybee colony appears to be a collection of insects sharing the same space. In reality, a colony functions more like a single living organism, a superorganism, whose survival depends on the coordinated efforts of thousands of individuals.

A Family of Bees

Honeybees belong to the order Hymenoptera, a group that also includes ants and wasps. Members of this order fill important ecological roles as predators, parasitoids, pollinators, and decomposers. While many Hymenopterans live solitary lives, honeybees have evolved one of the most advanced forms of social organization, known as eusociality. Eusocial species are characterized by three traits: overlapping generations, cooperative care for their young, and the reproductive division of labor. Inside a single beehive, not every bee is equal. The queen serves as the primary reproductive female, capable of laying thousands of eggs. Worker bees are also females, but their reproductive capabilities are suppressed by chemical signals released by the queen and developing brood. Male bees, known as drones, have one purpose: to leave the hive and mate with a virgin queen. Together, these castes

form an integrated system in which different individuals perform specialized functions, much like tissues and organs within our own bodies. To tell you about the inner workings of honeybees, I want to introduce you to just one individual in this colony: A-bee-gail.

"Inside a single beehive, not every bee is equal."

Meet A-bee-gail

A-bee-gail starts her life the same way her mother, the queen, did. She develops from a fertilized egg. Genetically, they are nearly identical. The difference between her and her mother is not their genetics, but how they were raised. Larvae destined to become queens receive a specialized diet of royal jelly during development. This nutrition triggers physiological and developmental changes that allow the larva to develop into a queen capable of reproduction. Larvae that do not receive this specialized diet develop into workers. Drones follow an entirely different developmental pathway, developing from unfertilized eggs laid by the queen. Researchers have discovered that these dietary differences influence gene expression through mechanisms like DNA methylation. In other words, this specialized diet does not change genes; it changes how those genes are used. A-bee-gail's fate was decided before she ever left her cell.

Her Early Era

Immediately upon emergence, A-bee-gail is greeted and fed by her sisters, where she is integrated into her first role within the colony: nurse. For days she remains inside the

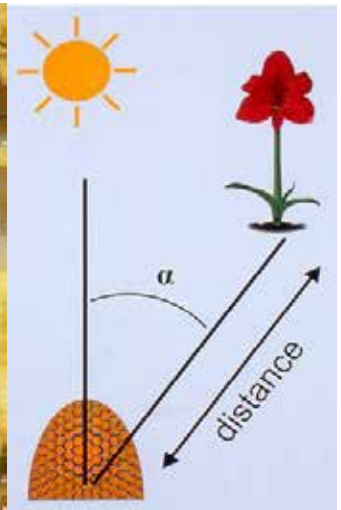
hive, feeding developing larvae and helping maintain the carefully regulated environment needed for brood development. At this point, A-bee-gail never leaves the hive—she has never seen a flower, the sun, or taken flight. Her efforts are fully directed toward supporting the next generation. As she ages, however, her role begins to change. Honeybee workers exhibit a phenomenon known as age polyethism, where different tasks are performed at different stages of life. The colony's needs remain constant. The workers performing them do not. After serving as a nurse, workers may clean cells, process food brought in by foragers, build wax combs, guard the hive entrance, or perform other maintenance duties. As the hive population continues to grow, A-bee-gail moves on to her next task: becoming a forager.

“...honeybee colonies reproduce not as individuals, but as a system.”

Her Next Steps

Foraging is one of the riskiest jobs for any honeybee. These small insects must face predators, weather, exhaustion, and even entomology students trying to catch them for their insect collections. They are responsible for sustaining the colony. Before beginning her career as a forager, A-bee-gail performs a series of orientation flights. She then visits thousands of flowers during her lifetime while collecting only a small amount of nectar. What seems insignificant for one bee becomes transformative at the scale of the colony. Thousands of workers acting together generate the stores of honey and pollen needed to support thousands more. Foraging is typically the final stage of a worker's life. The wear and tear of flight, exposure to predators, and the demands of constant work eventually bring her life to an end.

So, let's pause. Just days ago, A-bee-gail was sealed inside a wax cell, one of thousands developing within the hive. She had never seen sunlight, never left



Honeybee colonies coordinate their activities through decentralized communication. Pheromones provide information about reproductive status and colony condition, while the waggle dance allows foragers to communicate the location of food resources.

the nest, and knew only the chemical and social environment of her sisters. Yet every task she performed, from feeding larvae to gathering nectar, contributed to one of nature's most sophisticated biological systems. This coordination occurs without any central authority. Although the queen is often imagined as ruling the hive, she does not direct daily operations. Instead, honeybee colonies rely on decentralized communication systems. Pheromones convey

information about reproduction, colony coordination, and danger. The famous waggle dance allows foragers to communicate the direction and distance of food sources. No individual bee understands the needs of the entire colony, yet collective decisions emerge from countless local interactions.

The Next Generation

Like any successful organism, a honeybee colony must eventually reproduce. Yet



Swarming is the reproductive event of a honeybee superorganism. The old queen leaves with thousands of workers to establish a new colony, while a newly emerged queen takes over the original hive.



POWERS
ASSOCIATES



Merger and Acquisition Advisory

**Working together to achieve
your financial, strategic and
business goals.**

831-809-9000
PowersAssociates.com



unlike most animals, reproduction occurs at the level of the colony rather than the individual worker. When conditions permit, workers begin feeding selected larvae royal jelly. The process is not without conflict. Newly emerged queens may destroy rival queen cells or engage in lethal combat with competitors. Even in highly cooperative societies, evolutionary interests do not disappear entirely. Instead, they are managed through mechanisms that maintain colony stability. The queen also lays unfertilized eggs that develop into male drones, a consequence of the unusual reproductive system found in Hymenoptera. Eventually, the old queen departs the hive in a swarm, accompanied by thousands of her daughters as they search for a new nesting site. Others remain behind, continuing to raise new queens. In this way, honeybee colonies reproduce not as individuals, but as a system.

The System

A-bee-gail's story illustrates why biologists often describe honeybee colonies as superorganisms. A colony possesses specialized components, coordinated communication, centralized reproduction, and the ability to regulate its internal environment. Individual bees function much like cells within a larger body, performing tasks that support the survival of the whole. Viewed this way, the most remarkable feature of a honeybee colony is not the bee itself. It is the system that emerges when thousands of individuals work together as one.

In the end, A-bee-gail was never just a bee. She was part of something much larger: a living, buzzing system whose complexity continues to fascinate scientists and inspire wonder in anyone who takes the time to look inside the hive. Perhaps that is why insects remain among the most successful organisms on Earth—not because of what any one individual can accomplish, but because of what thousands can achieve together. In the case of honeybees, those thousands become something greater than themselves. ☪

Business Banking

Built on Clear Decisions

At Pinnacle Bank, our professional bankers work closely with clients to help make informed decisions that will benefit their business in the short and long term.

Featuring: Brandon Wiggins of Vision Plantscaping, and Jennifer Kuyper with Pinnacle Bank.



SBA Preferred Provider

Serving Monterey, San Benito and Santa Clara Counties.

PINNACLE BANK

888.485.7050 • www.pinnacle.bank

**Ready for Better?
Let's Talk Banking!**

Free Salinas Valley Health Speakers Bureau Brings Trusted Medical Experts to Schools, Workplaces, and Community Events

By Chris Haubert



California Water Service staff learn about nutrition for prevention and management of hypertension at June 2026 Speakers Bureau presentation.

Picture sitting down with a physician, dietitian, or pharmacist who explains a complex health topic in plain language and invites questions.

The Salinas Valley Health Speakers Bureau is a free outreach program that brings healthcare education beyond the medical center and into schools, workplaces, community centers, and nonprofit organizations throughout the region.

Launched in April 2025 and managed by the Health Promotion Department at Salinas Valley Health, the Speakers Bureau was created to directly connect trusted medical experts with people in our community and offered at no cost.

“We believe knowledge is one of the most powerful tools for improving health,” said Amanda Meyer, Health Promotion Manager for Salinas Valley Health. “Much like our

Walk With A Doc program (see sidebar), the Speakers Bureau bridges the gap between our healthcare system and the communities we serve, raising awareness through education.”

The Response Has Been Immediate

Since the program’s launch, requests have steadily come in from organizations across Monterey County and neighboring communities. While most presentations take place throughout Salinas, the program’s reach has extended as far north as Cabrillo College in Aptos and as far south as King City, demonstrating the growing demand for accessible, evidence-based health education.

Each presentation is led by healthcare professionals who are experts in their fields and committed to helping people better understand their health.

Available topics include preventive care

and wellness, chronic disease management, diabetes prevention, nutrition, obesity and weight management, pediatrics, internal medicine, pharmacy and medication education, mental health, vascular health, sleep, mindfulness, fitness, substance use disorder, and more.

The emphasis is on practical education that people can apply in their everyday lives.

Presentations have included a three-part series on women’s health spanning adolescence through menopause, as well as sessions on weight loss drugs, sleep and health, medication management, heart health, and preventive exams.

For many participants, the presentations provide more than information—they offer confidence.

“I don’t get my routine checkups because of financial limitations,” said Ana Rodriguez,



THE ONE ROAD THAT LEADS YOU HOME



DRE# 02014153
831.2621955
AGENCYONEREALSTATE.COM
275 RIVER RD. SUITE B
SALINAS, CA 93908

RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL | PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
RIVER ROAD - TORO - SAN BENANCIO - CORRAL DE TIERRA



Family medicine physician, Aurora Robledo, MD, shares information about women's health with parents at César E. Chávez Resource Center in Salinas.



Tim Albert, MD, cardiologist, Chief Clinical Officer and Chief Innovation Officer, delivers presentation on heart health at Ocean Mist Farms.



Looking for another way to connect with Salinas Valley Health physicians? Walk With a Doc brings healthcare conversations outdoors, giving community members the opportunity to learn from physicians in a relaxed, welcoming setting while enjoying a healthy walk.

Each free event begins with a brief presentation by a board-certified physician on a health topic, followed by a group walk during which participants can ask questions and continue the conversation in an informal setting. Open to all ages and fitness levels, Walk With a Doc makes it easy to learn about health, stay active, and build relationships with the physicians who care for our community.

Walks are held once a month on selected Saturday mornings at rotating locations, including the Badger Hills Trailhead at Fort Ord National Monument, Salinas Valley Health Medical Center, and other outdoor community venues.

Please note: Walk With a Doc takes a seasonal break between November and January.

Scan the code to learn more.



who attended a recent presentation at César E. Chávez Resource Center in Salinas. “I learned there are resources for taking care of our health. There are ways to stay on top of our health.”

Collaboration and Opportunity

That sense of empowerment is exactly what the Speakers Bureau hopes to foster by making healthcare professionals more approachable and creating opportunities for meaningful conversations outside of a clinical setting.

“It reflects the importance of collaboration between healthcare providers and community partners,” said Meyer.

“We know preventing heart disease starts with healthy nutrition and everyday lifestyle choices,” explained Lupita Renteria-Galvan, Human Resources Manager for Ocean Mist Farms. “But when people understand how the specific foods they eat and the habits they build can reduce their risk, they are empowered to make healthier decisions for themselves and their families.”

That focus on prevention is increasingly important as healthcare providers work to reduce rates of chronic diseases that affect families throughout the Salinas Valley. “Prevention begins long before someone becomes a patient,” said Tim Albert, MD, MHCM, FACC, FSCMR, cardiologist, Chief Clinical Officer, and Chief Innovation Officer at Salinas Valley Health. “When people have access to reliable information and understand the steps they can take to protect their health, they are better equipped to prevent disease, seek care earlier, and make informed decisions that benefit themselves and their families.”

In addition to emphasizing education that can help prevent disease before it starts, the Speakers Bureau also makes expert health information accessible to organizations that may not otherwise have the resources to host healthcare professionals.

Schools can schedule presentations for parents or students. Employers can bring wellness education into the workplace. Service clubs, faith communities, nonprofit organizations, and neighborhood groups can all request presentations tailored to their interests and needs.

Free of Charge

The Speakers Bureau reflects a growing recognition that improving community health means meeting people where they live, work and gather—providing trusted information in familiar settings where questions are encouraged and conversations feel personal.

As interest continues to grow, the program is becoming an important extension of Salinas Valley Health’s commitment to community outreach and education.

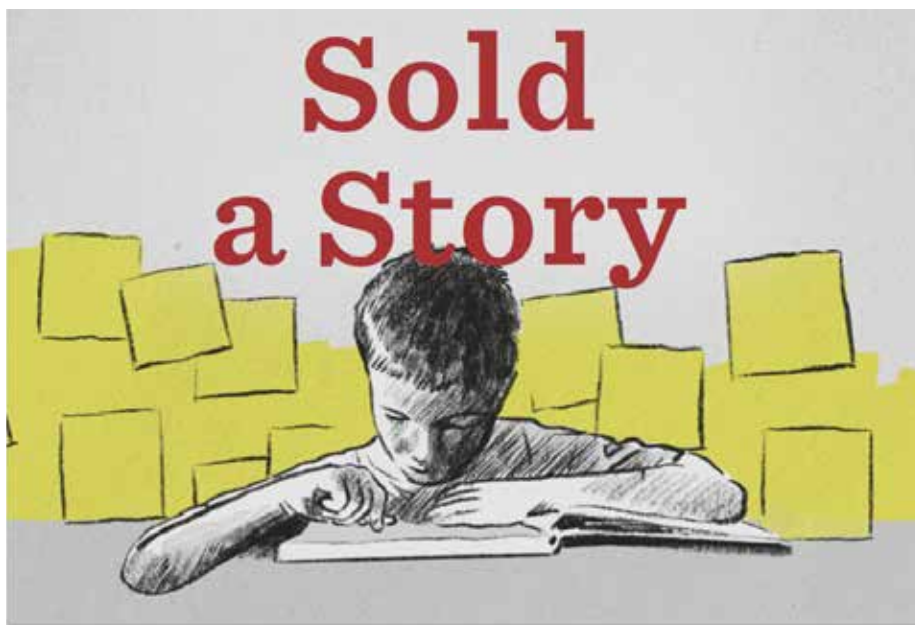
By bringing physicians, clinicians, and healthcare experts directly into neighborhoods across the Central Coast—from Salinas to Aptos to King City—the Speakers Bureau is making trusted health education more accessible and strengthening communities throughout the region.

Learn more about the Salinas Valley Health Speakers Bureau by scanning the code. 



Early Literacy Crisis

By Susie Brusa



Available wherever you listen to your podcasts.

More than half of American third grade students do not read at grade level. Let that sink in for a minute. In the third grade a student transitions from “learning to read,” to, “reading to learn.” If one cannot read, one’s learning slows significantly.

This is not a consequence of COVID. While significant learning losses during the pandemic exacerbated the crisis, the trend was well-established pre-COVID. The root cause of the problem is how we teach reading. The most popular curricula used in schools nationwide, called Balanced Literacy, uses three-cuing strategy, teaching students to guess words based on context and pictures, rather than how to decode text. Proponents of three-cuing argue that studying phonics is boring and hampers a love of reading. However, as the results show, decoding skills are essential to successful reading.

There is a solution supported by decades of global research on how the brain processes language known as the Science of

Reading (SoR). Research-aligned curriculum incorporates five pillars of instruction to develop reading proficiency: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The method also works for English Learners. It is brain science, not English language-specific; in fact, the research bears this out in dozens of countries and dozens of languages.

How Did We Get Here?

How is it that educators, who certainly want to teach children to read, got duped into ignoring decades of research about how the brain processes language, any language, and translates that to text? Follow the money. American Public Media’s brilliant podcast, “Sold a Story,” outlines the timeline and who benefits from the dominant curricula on the market. For decades educators have been trained in these failed methods. Spoiler: Teachers weren’t the recipients of the riches.

Some of the most vocal SoR opponents are the California Association of Bilingual

Educators (CABE). They assert that so much focus on phonics diminishes the importance of culturally appropriate stories. I respect much of CABE’s work, but here is the fault in their argument: 1) Unless one can decode the text, it does not matter whether the text is culturally affirming, and 2) decoding skill and culturally affirming text are not mutually exclusive.

The Science of Reading is a body of research about brain science, not exclusively decoding (phonemic awareness and phonics). It includes fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In fact, when a student is identified as needing reading intervention assistance, the Reading Specialist uses SoR-aligned curriculum to help that student get back on track. Why don’t we just start with that methodology in the first place?

Success Stories

Several states have switched to evidence-based curriculum, and with remarkable results. The “Mississippi Miracle” refers to the rising test scores in one of our poorest and least educated states. In Tennessee, the

“...illiteracy limits job opportunities and weakens our economy.”

Department of Education has mandated both curriculum change and teacher training, and the results are already improving. California does not proscribe curriculum because the voters determined that local districts would know best what their communities need. The results demonstrate that many of them are slow to respond to the crisis we face.

If your company’s product were failing, would you continue using the same manufacturing process, or would you look

for a better approach? Once you identified a more effective process, you would train your employees to implement it successfully. You would also provide ongoing coaching and feedback to ensure they understood the new process, applied it correctly, and continued to develop their expertise.

This situation is no different. Teacher credential education must train to the Science of Reading. Classroom curriculum must align with the SoR. Teachers trained in the failed methods must have professional development in the SoR. Teachers need ongoing coaching to ensure success.

Although the Monterey County Office of Education cannot mandate curriculum changes for districts, they have made evidence-based curriculum available for districts to review and pilot. They have also created and delivered a Science of Reading Academy for Monterey County teachers, partially underwritten by Taylor Farms. Bruce Taylor understands that illiteracy limits job opportunities and weakens our economy.

I have been in classrooms of schools that have changed curriculum and trained their

teachers, and I have seen first and second graders reading aloud using decoding skills. This should be the norm.

What Can You Do?

Ask the administrators of your school district whether they are using English Language Arts Curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading, and if not, insist that they do so. Frustrated Massachusetts parents have gone so far as to file suit against the creators and pub-

lishers of the failed methods. It may become a class-action.

People become teachers because they love kids and want to help them be successful; and yet, we are not teaching our children to read. Equip our teachers with what they need so they can do the job they signed up to do.

This is both an equity and an economic issue. Monterey County's children are worth it, and our future workforce depends on it.

<https://features.apmreports.org/sold-a-story/> *ca*



THERMO KING
OF SALINAS. INC.

1 Elvee Circle, Salinas, CA 93901 | 831-422-5792

COLD STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Reliable. Portable. Ready When You Need It.

Keep your products at the perfect temperature with Thermo King Cold Storage Solutions.

We provide high-performance domestic refrigerated containers designed for flexibility, reliability, and convenience.

Our Solutions Include:

- Portable Cold Storage Rentals
- Refrigerated Container Sales
- On-Site Temporary Cold Storage
- Emergency Backup Refrigeration
- Short-Term & Long-Term Options

Perfect For:

- Food Service & Catering
- Events & Festivals
- Agriculture
- Grocery & Retail
- Medical Storage
- Warehousing
- Construction Sites
- Seasonal Overflow

Why Choose Thermo King?

- Trusted Industry Leader
- Energy Efficient Units
- Flexible Delivery Options
- Clean & Well-Maintained Containers
- Fast, Reliable Service

Stay Cold. Stay Operational. Stay Confident.



The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is Coming to Monterey County!

By Susie Brusa

Monterey County is known for its productive agricultural economy, remarkable natural resources, and hardworking communities. Yet nearly two out of every three local children begin kindergarten without the early literacy skills that prepare them for success in school.

Educators often describe third grade as the point when students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Research shows that children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are significantly more likely to struggle academically throughout their school years and are four times more likely to drop out of school.

To be successful by the third grade, children must be on a path to literacy when they start kindergarten. This does not mean children need to be able to read; rather, they need to recognize letters and their sounds, hear rhymes and patterns in language, listen to stories, answer questions, and develop vocabulary through everyday conversation. Children naturally develop these skills through interaction with parents and caregivers, through conversations with adults around them, and most importantly, through listening to stories read aloud.

But what if there are no books in the home?

Since 1995, The Dolly Parton Imagination Library has gifted over 200 million books to children from birth to age five — free of charge to the family, mailed directly to their homes (or to a selected address for those with housing insecurity) each month. The research behind this program is unambiguous: children enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library arrive at school more prepared, more confident, and with a deeper love of reading.

That is why First 5 Monterey County partnered with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to ensure the selected books meet the needs of Monterey County’s children. Local philanthropist Bruce Taylor provided seed funding to launch the program, to ensure that all children in Monterey County can develop their own little library, propelling them forward on their literacy journey. A package arrives in the mail addressed to the child every month. The package is a source of joy, learning and adventure, as well as an invitation to cuddle with a parent or caregiver for story time.

“To be successful by the third grade, children must be on a path to literacy when they start kindergarten.”

This program complements other worthy local literacy efforts including The Read-to-Me Project, Salinas Area Reading for Fun (formerly RIF), The Salinas Literacy Kiwanis Club, the Science of Reading Academy at the Monterey County Office of Education, and the Golden Ticket Monterey County. It is aligned with County-wide efforts like Bright Beginnings and Bright Futures.

Research has consistently shown that investments in early childhood development produce substantial long-term returns. Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman estimates that high-quality birth-to-five programs generate an average annual return of approximately 13 percent, with long-term societal benefits of seven to ten dollars for every dollar invested. Supporting early literacy generates returns for our community many times over in the form of high school

graduates, productive workers, and stable and strong families. Costs avoided include labor shortages, incarceration (Mississippi reportedly forecasts prison capacity using third grade reading scores), and unemployment. [ca](#)



So How Does It Work?

Registering could not be simpler. Visit or go to <https://imaginationlibrary.com/usa/affiliate/CAMONTEREY/> and follow the very few prompts to start receiving monthly books!

You can choose English or English/Spanish.

Enter a Monterey County address
(Other counties are also participating.
If you want to register a child who lives in a different county, go to that county's First 5 website to register.)

THANK YOU 2026 SPONSORS



FOR SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

Contact Victoria Carlisle at (831) 775-3109

ALL AROUND GRAND CHAMPION

• Carlon's Fire and Safety • Coors/Golden Brands • Crown Royal • Jack in the Box • Wrangler

GRAND CHAMPION

- Advanced Transportation Services
- American AgCredit
- Cypress Stables
- Granite Construction
- KSBW Action News 8
- Mag One Media
- Mission Linen & Uniform Supply
- RDO Equipment Co.
- Republic Services of Salinas
- Tanimura and Antle
- Taylor Farms
- True Vet Solutions
- Univision/Unimas

GOLD CHAMPION

- AvidWater
- Bankers Casino
- Bill Massa Company
- Boot Barn
- Central Coast Sign & Design
- Church Brothers Farms
- Don Chapin Company
- Drew Massa Transportation
- Emerald Packaging, Inc.
- Empire Farm Labor Contractor/AY
- Caramba Real Mexican Food
- Fresh Foods, Inc.
- Golz Construction, Inc.
- GreenGate Fresh
- Harris Seeds
- Holiday Inn Express & Suites
- IPM Specialist
- Kaiser Permanente
- Mechanics Bank
- North Fork Rancheria Economic Development Authority
- Nutrien Ag Solutions
- Pacific Ag Rentals
- Pacific Valley Bank
- Patria/Mia Cuisine
- Sabor Farms
- Salinas Valley Health
- Smith Family Wines/Valley Farm Management
- Star Market
- Stonies Tap House & Bistro
- Tractor Supply
- Vallarta Supermarkets
- Visionary Vegetables, LLC
- Zada Fresh Farms

CHAMPION

- AG Land Trust
- Albert Alvarado Family
- Alco Water Company
- Alfredo's Concrete 1 Inc.
- Alsop Pump - Muller Irrigation
- Associated Services
- Boyds Asphalt Services
- Bunker & Sons
- Cal Construction
- California Towing
- California Water Service
- CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)
- Coastal Tractor
- Coca Cola
- Comgro Soil Amendments, Inc.
- Cruz Truck Parts Truck & Trailer Repair
- D & M Traffic Services, Inc.
- Dataflow Business Systems
- Driscoll's
- Enza Zaden
- Golden State Truck and Trailer Repair Inc.
- Hitchcock Farms
- Jefferson Farms
- Jenkinson Construction
- Justin Brands dba Justin Boots
- KLOK & KSES
- KWAV 96.9 FM
- McCormick Company
- McDonalds Raymond Costa
- MyCars.com
- Naturipe Berry Growers
- Northridge Mall
- Ocean Mist Farms
- Pacific International Marketing
- Premier Packing
- Quinn Rentals
- Rosbach Electric
- Sam Ruiz Painting
- Save On Cleaners
- SILKE Communications
- Standard Event Rentals
- Stuffies Claw Arcade
- Sturdy Oil
- The Dune Company of Salinas, LLC
- The Outdoor Market at the Rodeo/El Mercado Popular
- Torres Trucking
- United Rentals

MAJOR

- 1NEN Logistics LLC
- 95.5 BOB & 101.7 The Beach
- A & B Fire
- Ace High Designs
- Artistic HangUps
- Artistic Shower Door & Glass
- Ausonio Inc.
- Bachan Group
- BASF | Nunhems
- Bay and Basin Insurance
- Bengard Ranches
- Berkshire Hathaway
- HomeServices Real Time Realty/
- Motto Mortgage Reserve
- BioAg Sampling Services
- Black Bear Diner
- Boutonnet Farms
- Braga Fresh
- Buena Vista 6 LLC
- Butch & Vivien Lindley
- C & M Machine Shop Inc
- C&N Tractors
- CalNonprofits Insurance Services
- Cardinal Moving and Storage, Inc.
- CCC Woodworks Inc.
- Chick-fil-A North Salinas
- Christensen & Giannini
- Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas
- Coastal Grower
- Coastline Family Farms
- Cypress Berry Farms
- Denham Plastics/Bin Dr/Orbis
- Devine Glass Inc.
- Dobler & Sons, LLC
- Duda Farm Fresh Foods
- EBX Logistics
- Elkhorn Packing Co., LLC
- Elli's Great American Restaurant
- Enterprise Truck Rental/Enterprise Fleet Management
- Eurofins Rapid Microbiology
- Express Safety
- Fifth Third Bank
- Fletes Pressure Wash
- FMJ Electric, Inc.
- Foothill Packing
- Green Valley Farm Supply
- Grower's Pub
- H and H Electric, Inc.
- Henry Hibino Farms, LLC
- Iconix Waterworks
- Ippolito International LP
- Ivan's Baked Potatoes
- Jerry Freeman Painting Inc.
- JJ Berry Farms
- Johnson Associates
- KDON 102.5 KDON
- KHIP The Hippo 104.3FM
- Kleinfeldt Family BBQ Inc.
- KTOM 92.7 FM
- La Michoacan Taqueria
- La Preciosa 100.7 y 100.9
- Laughtons Cabinets
- Maid in America
- Master Painting and Coatings
- Montana Silversmiths
- Monterey Credit Union
- Monterey Payments
- Monterey Regional Airport
- Monterey Signs
- Montes Connections
- Moresco Farms
- Muzzi Family Farms
- Nature's Reward
- Nielsen Properties/Fowler Ranch
- Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss
- OverSightMD Inc.
- Painting by Noe
- PG&E
- Portobello's on Main
- POWER TALK 1460 AM & KOCN 105.1
- Precision Alarms & Automation Solutions, Inc.
- Pro Ag Harvesting
- Rabobank
- RC Farms
- RE/MAX Property Experts
- Relation Insurance Services, formerly Pan American
- River Fresh Farms
- Ryan and Sheri McMurray
- Sakata Seed America
- Salinas Valley Seeds, LLC
- Salinas Valley Tire
- Scudder Roofing & Solar
- Sonja Giovanetti Consulting
- Soria Contracting and Solutions, Inc.
- Star Sanitation
- The Barba Family
- The Kings Den
- The Sherwin Williams Company
- Toro Petroleum
- Tricord Tradeshow Services, Inc.
- Valley Harvest LLC
- Valley Overhead Doors & Gates
- Vista Verde Labor
- West Coast Community Bank
- Wheeler's Flooring
- Wilbur Ellis

SPONSOR

- 101 Exterminators Inc.
- 3 Star Lettuce
- A & I Transport
- Oseguera Company, Inc.
- Alameda Electrical Distributors
- Alera Group - McSherry & Hudson
- Alliant Insurance Services, Inc.
- American Door & Gates
- American Takii Inc.
- AMW Express LLC
- Anderson Pacific Engineering Construction Inc.
- AT&T
- Bank of America
- Benitez Security Services, Inc.
- Bokay Nursery
- Brandon Trucking
- Brian Bailey Painting
- C & A Truck Brokerage
- Cabo Construction
- Cabrera Productions
- Cactus Ropes/Cactus Gear & Cactus Saddlery
- Cal Coast Machinery
- Cal State Monterey Bay
- California Giant Berry Farms
- CO2: KRAY & KMJV
- DaneCo Electric
- Dardini Logistics LLC
- Dave Pedrazzi Family
- Dunn-Edwards Corporation
- El Kiosko
- Engineered Products
- Garcia Bros Construction Inc.
- Grimmway Produce Group
- Growers Container Co.
- Hayward Lumber Company
- HGC-Harman Group
- Jim & Sally Martins Family
- John and Jennifer Bramers
- Joseph J. Massolo
- L.A. Hearne Company
- Law Offices of William Pernik
- Mansmith's Barbeque
- MBO Orthodontics
- Merrill Family
- Monta Vista Christian School
- Monterey County Bank
- Monterey Herald
- Nor-West, Inc.
- Nutrien Ag Solutions Greenfield
- Papis & Beer
- Pezzini Berry Farms
- Pryor and Son, LLC.
- Quinn Company
- Rain for Rent
- Redox Bio-Nutrients
- Rossi Bros Tire & Auto Service
- Rural 1st
- Salinas Pump Company
- Salinas Valley Dental Care
- Sconberg Ranch
- Simplot Grower Solutions
- Smokey Key Service
- Snow Seed & Supplies Inc.
- Southern Counties Lubricants (SCL)
- SSB Construction
- Steinbeck Country Equine
- Syngenta Vegetable Seeds
- The Nunes Company
- Tom Carriger Plumbing
- UMB Bank
- Vegetable Growers Supply
- Willis Construction
- Winsupply Monterey County

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR
JULY 15-18, 2027

CARODEO.COM

Our Sicilian Sojourn

A Travel Diary

Story & Photos By Sarah De Santis



The salt pans of Marsala.

Returning to Sicily for an 18-day stay, we set off from San Francisco on June 11th with a simple goal: pack light and buy less. What unfolded was a remarkable journey—from the energy of Palermo and the refined coast of Sciacca to the warm Baroque charm of Noto, Cefalù's towering seaside cliffs, and a deeply personal trip for my husband into the mountains to reconnect with his roots. Here is a look back at an amazing adventure.

Palermo: Chaos, Churches, and Street Food Rooftop Magic

We started our adventure arriving in Palermo, a city defined by its grit and electric energy. We headed to our hotel's rooftop bar overlooking the city and watched the sun set over the terracotta roofs. It was the perfect welcome.

Palermo has a tremendous amount of history and was founded by Phoenician traders around 734 BC. It was under Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman, and Spanish rule. Therefore, it remains quite an eclectic city and is the capitol of Sicily.

The Market, Churches, and Meandering

The next morning, we set out to explore the rich history of the city with local guide, Guissepe. We quickly learned just how deeply Palermo's complex past is etched into its stone as we visited at least eight of the 80 churches inside the city limits. One of my favorite churches is the *Chiesa Del Gesu* which was built by the Jesuits in 1500 and decorated during the 1600 and 1700s. The church walls are covered with intricate marble inlay which almost looks like lace. We wove our way through several empty narrow streets stopping to admire ceramic shops and the beautifully crafted cornices under the rooftops. After thousands of steps our stomachs guided us to the famous open-air food market, Ballaro, which dates back to the 9th-century Arab rule. I ate the *Pani ca Meusa*: The famous Palermo spleen sandwich, which was tender, rich, and delicious.

Verdura Resort: Coastal Luxury & The Salt Masters of Marsala

Leaving the city behind, we headed south

for about an hour to the Verdura Resort near Sciacca on the southern coast. Spread across a vast coastal estate, the resort is a haven where we got around entirely on bicycles, riding from our room to the beach, to restaurants and back. This part of the trip was relaxing and filled with enjoyable afternoons holding true to the phrase "La Dolce Vita."

My husband, on the other hand, enjoyed *Stare a mollo*. This means floating, or standing waist-deep in the water while talking to newly made friends.

Verdura Highlights

The Resort Life: There were fun rounds of golf on their two championship 18-hole courses, relaxing at the spa in the sauna, steam rooms and pools, strolls through the organic gardens, browsing the boutiques, and lounging on the private beach reading under a vast umbrella.

The Culinary Highlights: We feasted on classic Pasta alla Norma (rich eggplant, tomato, and salted ricotta), the region's famous red prawns (*Gambero Rosso* di



Palermo's Chiesa Del Gesu church built by the Jesuits in 1500.



The dramatic coastal views of Cefalu.

Sicilia) that come in fresh daily from the historic port town of Mazara del Vallo.

Cooking Classes: We participated in two cooking classes. The first was one in which we made Cacio e Pepe, then fresh swordfish with tomatoes and mint we picked from the garden. The second was a pizza class where we learned a new recipe using semolina flour. For dessert, we made a Nutella pistachio pizza which was incredibly delicious.



Sunsets of Cefalu.

Day Trip: Marsala & The Salt Pans

One afternoon, we took a day trip to Marsala. After exploring its charming old town, winetasting at Donna Fugata and watching the windsurfers catch air over the lagoon, we made our way to the historic **Saline Ettore e Infersa**.

Along with our guide we ventured on a fascinating tour of the salt pans and the museum housed in a 16th-century windmill. We learned all about the traditional harvesting methods managed by the *salinaio* (salt master), who oversees the delicate process of channeling seawater through various evaporation ponds.

Noto: Rebuilt in Honey and Amber

Our next stop was the baroque town of Noto located east near Siracusa. On the way, we stopped at a gas station/bakery and enjoyed a memorable gelato. We checked into **Q92**, a stunningly remodeled boutique hotel where our mornings began with a cappuccino and a refreshing breakfast of granita with warm brioche.

Destroyed completely by a devastating earthquake in 1693, Noto was rebuilt from the ground up in a unified, Baroque style. The entire town is constructed from a unique local honey-colored limestone that practically glows, turning into a deep, warm

amber as the sun sets. It is a very romantic town and at night the city comes alive with music.

Noto Highlights

The Former Church of Sant' Agata: After what seemed like climbing 10,000 steps, we were welcomed with a beautiful visual surprise. This deconsecrated church has been transformed into a luxury concept store selling curated clothing, striking ceramics, and local art.

Restaurant Crocifisso: This Michelin-starred gem celebrates traditional Sicilian ingredients with a brilliant modern twist. One of the best parts about Michelin dining in Sicily is that many offer à la carte options, making an incredible fine-dining experience without the tasting menu cost.

Ristorante Manna: Located in a gorgeous courtyard closer to the beach. We dined on portobello mushrooms prepared three ways, and some of the absolute best gnocchi we've ever tasted.

Wine Tasting at Feudo Maccari: The winery was established in 2000 by Tuscan winemaker Antonio Moretti Cuseri and the winery is known for its concentrated Nero d'Avola wines which were lovely.

An Afternoon in Modica- We also took a day trip to Modica and experienced a



Cooking like the locals.

chocolate tasting class at the world famous *Antica Dolceria Bonajuto* where we tasted various dark chocolates made from using the traditional Modica production method. Here we also tried the *Mpanatigghi* (a crescent-shaped pastry stuffed with minced beef, cocoa, almonds, and spices).

Cefalù: History on the Rocks

Our next stop was **Cefalù** on the northern coast for a four-night stay at **Le Calette**. If ever there was a hotel that proved the rule of “location, location, location,” this was it. The dramatic coastal views, pristine swimming spots, and hidden sea grottos were simply spectacular.

Cefalù is a seaside town with an incredibly well-preserved medieval center. Its name comes from the ancient Greek word *kephale* (meaning “head”), a nod to the massive, head-shaped promontory rock that towers protectively over the town.

Cefalu Highlights

The Masterpiece of Roger II: We spent hours wandering the historic core, with the ultimate highlight being the Cefalù Cathedral. Built in the 12th century by the Norman King Roger II, the cathedral holds a crown jewel of medieval art: a colossal, gold-leaf Byzantine mosaic of Christ Pantocrator in the apse. Standing beneath it and gazing

up at the glowing, ancient artwork left a profound spiritual impression.

Double-Take at Qualia: In town, we dined at Qualia—a restaurant named after the philosophical concept of how we subjectively experience the world through our senses. The meal was so spectacular that we did something we are starting to do more: we booked a table for the next night to experience their full tasting menu. The decadent pasta topped with fresh sea urchin was incredible and the savory *Nero Siciliano* (the prized black pig native to the nearby Nebrodi Mountains) was a standout.

Giuseppe Forte: We stumbled upon an artist’s studio and fell in love with Giuseppe’s work. He is a contemporary Italian painter natively associated with Cefalù. We chose a painting of the Cefalu Cathedral to remind us of the spiritual beauty we felt while visiting.

Baucina: A Journey to the Roots

From Cefalù, we turned inland and climbed high into the mountains to visit the rural farming town of **Baucina**. Founded in the 17th century, this quiet agricultural community sits about 40 miles outside of Palermo.

The streets were incredibly peaceful when we arrived, and people poked their heads out of doors and windows with serious stares to see who was in the unfamiliar van.



Pasta with fresh sea urchin at Qualia.



A feast of the region’s famous red prawns.



The famous Palermo spleen sandwich; tender, rich and delicious.



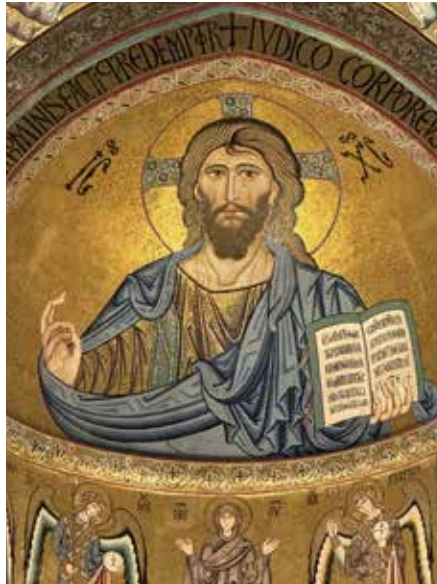
Some of the many steps taken during the trip.

As soon as my husband spoke his family name—**Brancato**—the atmosphere shifted. With knowing smiles and friendly hands, the locals pointed us down the long streets, guiding us directly to the very house where his grandfather was born.

We were welcomed inside with bowls of ice cream from the family's ice cream parlor. Despite the language barrier—not a single person spoke English—we connected instantly. We shared photos from our phones, bridging the gap between our lives in America and their lives in Sicily. John got to see the old wood shop belonging to his grandfather's brother, and we visited the town church to view the massive, striking statue of Christ that hangs inside. It was a deeply moving, beautiful afternoon filled with tight hugs as we departed.

Palermo: One Last Night in the Grit & Chaos

We returned to Palermo for our final night and once again, the city was in full swing. This time, we remembered our way and revisited a few shops. We celebrated our



The Cefalu Cathedral built in the 12th century.

final evening with a romantic dinner at the exact same restaurant we dined at a few years prior. *Osteria dei Vespri* is located in the historic Kalsa district of Palermo, set within the courtyard of Palazzo Valguarnera Ganci (famous as the filming location for the grand ball scene in Luchino Visconti's movie *The Leopard*). The meal was a perfect goodbye to the city of the Conca d'Oro.

Leaving Sicily was bittersweet. We said



The local honey-colored buildings in Noto.

goodbye to new friends, gold hued cities, days by the sea and incredible meals made with local natural ingredients. Two suitcases turned into four, but the real treasure was everything packed between the lines: the golden cities at sunset, quiet days, feeling closer to God in the old churches, taste tests with local chefs, and sea breezes. We failed at buying less but succeeded in bringing Sicily home with us. ☺



The Brancato Family.

Republican Red Winery

By Birdie Church



Wine and politics may not have much in common, but they do share one undeniable truth: red is always better. That being said, white wine is also accessible at Republican Red Winery, so if you're a Sauvignon Blanc-loving Republican, no need to fret.

A Different Kind of Conversation

Growing up in the agricultural community within the Salinas Valley, owner of Republican Red Winery, Paul Johnson found himself confused at the media's portrayal of Republicans. The people he grew up around—people who cared deeply about the land, their communities, and those who worked for them—were suddenly being portrayed by the media as hateful. Seeing this disconnect between the conservatives he knew personally and the way he saw they were portrayed in the media, Paul saw

an opportunity to create something to start a conversation.

Republican Red Winery takes the saying of “No politics at the dinner table” and flips it completely on its head. With the mission of bringing “the voice to the silent majority,” these wines serve not only as a beverage but also as a message. Recognizing that wine often brings people together around the dinner table, Johnson intended for his label to start conversations. By breaking down barriers these wines signal conservative beliefs without having to wear a bright red MAGA hat. Through each wine bottle, the goal is to share the genuine aspects of Conservatism to unite the Republican Party and bring undecided voters to the right side.

Against the Odds

Launched during the 2020 election, the wine quickly took off, gaining widespread attention within its first 10 weeks. However, come Election Day, with Trump contesting the results, social media companies deemed that political organizations could no longer advertise—ultimately cutting off Republican Red's main marketing channel. What started as Johnson trying to connect people through politics had now turned into a fight to keep his young company alive.

At a time when the fate of his company remained uncertain, Paul Johnson thought back to his father, Phil Johnson, an early pioneer in the Monterey County wine industry. Despite his success in creating Lockwood Winery, Phil had offered his son one clear piece of advice: “Whatever you do, Paul, never start a winery.”

“What he hadn't considered was e-commerce and building a brand around identity—a purpose-driven brand,” Johnson said. “The reason I think a purpose-driven brand is so important when you go into e-commerce is that you can market to a

specific group of people. You can build a brand around their values in a way that you can't do if there is just foot traffic coming by.”

Building a Brand

During this forced time away from his business, Paul went to Santa Clara University to get his MBA, where he attained more knowledge of diverse marketing channels. From there, Paul took what he learned from the first time building a business and school, and put a new marketing plan for Republican Red together, of which he has been executing ever since.

“My father gave me all of these cautionary tales about how you get screwed in the wine industry.”

With a purpose-driven brand and digital marketing, Johnson identifies people that share Republican Red's values and markets to them, allowing him to build on his father's winemaking legacy through a business model shaped for a new generation.

The National Stage

This past year, Republican Red released an





“America 250” collection, which generated national media attention, including appearances on Fox News, Newsmax and One America News, as well as coverage from The Daily Wire and several wine-industry publications. The collection’s celebration of the country’s 250th birthday showed that the values behind Republican Red extend far beyond an election year.

“Going from something that was just an idea I had, to being banned on Facebook and hearing people tell me, ‘This is a horrible idea. You can’t do this,’ to then reaching the national stage and now raising money to scale

the business—that’s really cool,” Johnson said.

Rooted in Winemaking

Before launching Republican Red, Johnson spent 15 years growing grapes and working with wineries, developing a deep understanding of the wine industry. During that time, he recognized that the market was facing an oversupply of wine. Republican Red currently sources its wines from local vineyards in regions such as Paso Robles and Monterey County. Johnson takes a hands-on approach to the selection process, meeting directly with the growers and winemakers and personally tasting each wine before

making a decision. As the company enters its next phase and raises additional capital, Johnson plans to build its inventory and begin producing original wines, allowing Republican Red to establish a distinct style and further improve the quality and consistency of its products.

Becoming “America’s Winery”

This is just the beginning for Republican Red. Johnson’s ultimate goal is to become a household name and earn recognition as “America’s Winery.” He envisions tasting rooms across the country, destinations where customers can gather for tastings, weddings and other events centered around the brand’s patriotic identity. Eventually, he hopes to expand beyond wine into products such as bourbon, vodka and beer, building Republican Red into a broader lifestyle brand rooted in American pride.

What started as an idea has grown into a rapidly expanding movement. Republican Red is more than a winery; it is a conversation starter that brings people together over their values in a demure way. For Johnson, patriotism is something to be celebrated and put on display, and Republican Red gives its customers a way to do just that. ☞



Shopping Like a Chef

Why the Best Ingredients Are Already Chosen for You

By Todd Fisher

A lot of people think good cooking starts at home. Chefs know it starts much earlier than that. It starts at the moment something is chosen, or more importantly, rejected. Good cooking comes from quality ingredients and quality ingredients come from quality farmers, ranchers, and growers.

In a professional kitchen, we don't shop for options. We shop to eliminate them. The goal isn't to find the best tomato in the pile. It's to make sure the pile only contains tomatoes worth buying in the first place.

That difference, between choosing and curating, is where most of the gap exists between how chefs approach food and how consumers experience it.

It Starts in the Field

Spend time around good growers and you realize quickly: the best ones aren't just producing food, they're editing it. Sourcing the right seed varietal for the right acreage of land for the right season.

Not every tomato makes the box. Not every head of lettuce is worth harvesting. There are decisions being made long before anything reaches a farm stand, a distributor, or a grocery store shelf.

And those decisions matter as much as anything that happens later in a kitchen.

Chefs understand this instinctively. When we source produce, we're not just asking, Is it fresh? We're asking:

- How consistent is it?
- How long will it hold?
- Where is it in its life cycle?
- Does it represent the grower well?
- Will it represent me well?

Yes, there is still the need to inspect, smell, touch and verify that something is good. I remember walking around a grocery store in Hawaii with a group of friends, sniffing the

butts of pineapples and teaching them how to pick a perfect pineapple. There are certainly indicators that need to be met to choose with confidence.

A perfectly shaped piece of produce does not guarantee it has flavor and a perfectly shaped piece of produce that lacks flavor is far less valuable than something slightly irregular that delivers exactly what it should on the plate.

Seasonality plays into this in a real way, not as a romantic idea, but as a form of quality control. When something is in season, it solves problems for you. It tastes better, holds better, and requires less manipulation.

Chefs Don't Shop—We Source

Consumers are often put in a position to compare: ten tomatoes, five bunches of carrots, three different farms. The assumption is that more choice equals better outcomes.

In a kitchen, the opposite is true. Too many variables create inconsistency. And inconsistency is the greatest enemy of good cooking.

So, chefs learn to trust sources over selection. If you trust the grower, the rancher, or the supplier, you don't need twenty options, you need the right one.

That shift, from comparing products to trusting people, is what most consumers never get taught.

The Same Standard Applies Beyond Produce

That mindset doesn't stop at fruits and vegetables.

At The Meatery, when sourcing beef, lamb, poultry, or fish the question isn't simply whether something is "good." It should be good without question because it came from one of our sources. The real questions are is

it consistent, transparent, and worth standing behind every single time.

Not all animals are created equally, there are variables in every animal, just like there is in every lettuce field. Feed, environment,

How to Shop Like a Chef

You don't need professional training to shop better. You just need to change what you pay attention to.

1. Trust the source, not the display

If you find a grower, butcher, or shop that's consistently good, stop comparing everything else. That trust is more valuable than endless options.

2. Buy for timing, not just appearance

Ask yourself when you're going to use it. A slightly underripe peach today might be perfect tomorrow. A perfect one today might be gone by the time you use it.

3. Look for life, not perfection

Irregular shape, variation in size, even minor blemishes often signal less handling and more flavor.

4. Ask one question

"What's best today?"

Good growers and good shops always have an answer.

5. Let the ingredient lead

Instead of deciding the meal first, start with what looks and feels right, then build around it. That's how kitchens operate.

6. Pay for the Good Stuff

Good ingredients cost more, there is more effort in the process, there are higher costs to do things right.

handling, and time all leave their mark. A steak isn't just a product; it's the result of a long chain of decisions.

By the time it reaches our case, the most important work has already been done so that every choice in front of you is worth buying. Then it simply comes down to a matter of what you are looking for and or craving.

The role of someone sourcing professionally is to filter those variables. To make sure that what's being offered reflects a standard, not a gamble.

That's the part most people never see.

When Choice Becomes a Burden

If you've ever stood in front of a display, unsure which option is best, you've felt it, the quiet pressure of too many choices.

Consumers have been trained to compare. Chefs are trained to trust but verify.

If everything looks the same, you're forced to guess. If everything is different, you're forced to analyze. Neither leads to confidence.

The best food systems don't overwhelm you with decisions. They remove the wrong ones before you ever walk into the store.

Why Local Still Matters

This is where local agriculture quietly changes the equation.

When you know who grew something or at least know that someone has chosen it with intention, you're no longer shopping blind. You're stepping into a set of standards.

That's the real value of working with strong growers and thoughtful sourcing. Not just proximity, but accountability.

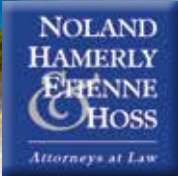
The closer you are to the source, the fewer decisions you have to second-guess.

And the experience starts to feel different. Simpler. More certain.

More like having me standing next to you, quietly saying:

Not that one—this one.

CG



**Client Focused.
Relationship Driven.**

*Agricultural Law • Business & Transactions • Construction
Dispute Resolution • Employment Law • Estates & Trusts • Land Use
Litigation • Nonprofits • Public Agencies • Real Estate*

nheh.com

**A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE
ON THE CENTRAL COAST SINCE 1928.**

333 SALINAS STREET, SALINAS, CA 93901 • 831.424.1414
584 MUNRAS AVENUE, MONTEREY, CA 93940 • 831.373.3622

**Precise portfolio management
means you're sure you get the right slices.**



The biggest challenge for many investors is finding an advisor with extensive experience. Instead of hoping your "pie chart" will save the day, let us help. We have the knowledge and skill to develop a myriad of investment strategies and are known for our precision in portfolio management.

 **HASTIE
FINANCIAL
GROUP**

307 Main Street, Ste. 300, Salinas
hastiefinancialgroup.com
(831) 422-4910

The financial professionals of Hastie Financial Group are Registered Representatives and Investment Adviser Representatives with/and offers securities and advisory services through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. Fixed insurance products and services are separate from and not offered through Commonwealth. Financial planning services offered through Hastie Financial Group are separate and unrelated to Commonwealth.

Red Rake Rescue

By Lorri A. Koster



Let's face it. It's not every day that you get to feed a baby goat from a bottle. That is, unless you are Ande Parker, founder and manager of Red Rake Rescue. I had the pleasure of visiting Red Rake, nestled in the foothills of the Gabilan Mountains, and talked with Ande about her passion for animals, her growth plans for the Rescue and, yes, I got to feed a baby goat.

"I've always loved animals. They are like therapy for me," Parker shares as I nestled little Harper in my lap, goat milk dripping off her chin. What started as a Rescue for elderly horses has expanded to other four-legged creatures from goats to dogs, cats and cows.

"We were boarding at different facilities before landing here. People don't realize horses live a long time—one of our residents had eight owners before landing here and one of our mares is 37 years old," Parker shares.

Unfortunately, Parker informs, there are

cases where unwanted animals are sadly dumped along the roadside. Or worse waste management facilities will call her when they discover discarded animals alive. One time a bag of kittens was even found up in a tree. By word-of-mouth people have heard about Red Rake and they reach out to her. Her mom helps incubate kittens until they are off the bottle. Ande will then care for the animals

to a point where they can be fostered and hopefully adopted into good homes.

While the ranch may be full of rescues, there is no shortage of love and personalities about. There's the roan equine called Trump with a wild blonde mane and forelock (hence, the name). There's Hash Brown who was so abused in his past his name was changed to signify the fresh start. The little mule, French



Fry, came from a kill pen and Cody, well, he's the horse that was taught to smile.

The dairy cows, Cheddar and Brie, help keep the grass down.

"I guess not all goats are good moms, so the babies come here and stay in our 'Goatel' until they are old enough and strong enough to go back to their owners. They follow me around and think I'm their mom," says Parker. Marley, Parkers first bottle baby, has stayed with her. "She hops in my car, and we go visit elderly folks who just love her."

Parker leases the land from an elderly gentleman who is a retired animal lover. He spends his days helping to build fences and shelters out of whatever can be scrounged up. From what I can tell, while the animals may have experienced unfortunate lives, they now enjoy a beautiful view of the Salinas Valley, the shade of oak trees and a loving caretaker.

Parker runs the ranch with the help of volunteers and is there seven days a week (with her husband helping on the weekends). Parker is working towards becoming a non-profit and seeing how far the Rescue can grow. "It's hard for me to say no...I just love animals too much."

*To learn more follow on Instagram:
[@redrakerescueandretirement](#). 🇺🇸*



Protecting What Sustains Us

The Role of Monterey Waterkeeper on the Central Coast

By Mac McDonald



On California's Central Coast, water defines both the landscape and the way of life. From agricultural fields and rural communities to coastal ecosystems and urban neighborhoods, the region depends on clean, accessible water for its health, economy, and future.

Yet clean water is not a given. It requires active protection, ongoing monitoring, and long-term commitment.

That is the work of Monterey Waterkeeper, an organization dedicated to ensuring that the waters of the Central Coast remain fishable, swimmable, and drinkable for all.

Founded in 2021, Monterey Waterkeeper operates at the intersection of science, policy, and community. Its approach reflects a growing recognition that water issues are complex and interconnected—requiring solutions that address environmental protection, public

health, and equitable access at the same time.

A Region Defined by Water — and Its Challenges

The Central Coast faces a unique set of water-related challenges. Agricultural runoff, aging infrastructure, groundwater contamination, and coastal pollution all contribute to a system under pressure.

For farming communities, water quality directly impacts both crop viability and regulatory compliance. For families, particularly in underserved areas, access to safe and affordable drinking water remains a persistent concern. Along the coastline, pollution can affect marine habitats, recreational access, and tourism.

These challenges are not isolated. They intersect across watersheds, industries, and communities—requiring coordination and

long-term thinking.

Monterey Waterkeeper's work is rooted in addressing these complexities with a science-based and community-informed approach.

Science, Advocacy, and Accountability

At its core, Monterey Waterkeeper focuses on monitoring and protecting water quality across the region. This includes identifying sources of pollution, supporting enforcement of environmental regulations, and advocating for policies that safeguard waterways.

Accountability is a key component of this work. Ensuring that existing environmental protections are upheld is often as critical as developing new solutions. Through research, reporting, and collaboration, the organization works to bring transparency to water quality issues that might otherwise go unnoticed.

“For families, particularly in underserved areas, access to safe and affordable drinking water remains a persistent concern.”

Equally important is the role of policy advocacy. Long-term water protection depends on systems that are not only reactive but preventative—reducing risks before they become crises.

Expanding Access to Safe Drinking Water Beyond environmental protection, Monterey Waterkeeper is engaged in efforts to address disparities in access to safe drinking water.

Across parts of the Central Coast, particularly in rural and agricultural communities, water systems can be compromised by contamination or limited infrastructure. Addressing these issues requires coordination between local agencies, state programs, and community stakeholders.

Monterey Waterkeeper works to ensure that these communities are not overlooked, advocating for solutions that are both practical and equitable.

Access to clean water is not only an environmental issue, but also a matter of public health and basic human dignity.

Educating the Next Generation

A defining aspect of Monterey Waterkeeper's work is its commitment to education.

Through outdoor learning experiences and community engagement, the organization introduces students and residents to the importance of water stewardship. These programs are designed to connect people directly with the environments they depend on, fostering both awareness and responsibility.

Education plays a critical role in long-term environmental outcomes. By engaging young people early, Monterey Waterkeeper helps build a foundation for future leadership in conservation, science, and policy.

Collaboration Across the Region

No single organization can address water challenges alone.

Monterey Waterkeeper works in collaboration with local governments, agricultural partners, environmental groups, and community organizations. These partnerships allow for a more comprehensive approach—one that reflects the interconnected nature of the region's water systems.

This collaborative model is especially important on the Central Coast, where economic activity, environmental health, and community well-being are closely linked.

Looking Ahead

As climate variability, population growth, and regulatory pressures continue to shape the future of water on the Central Coast, the need for sustained, thoughtful action will only increase.

Protecting water resources requires more than short-term fixes. It calls for long-term investment in science, infrastructure, policy, and community engagement.

Organizations like Monterey Waterkeeper play a critical role in this effort—working not only to address current challenges, but to build



systems that are resilient for generations to come.

While community gatherings, such as their annual garden event held each Fall in Pacific Grove, help bring visibility to these issues and foster connection among supporters, the organization's work extends far beyond any single moment.

At its core, Monterey Waterkeeper represents

a broader commitment: ensuring that clean water remains a shared and protected resource for all who live, work, and grow along the Central Coast.

To learn more visit:
www.montereywaterkeeper.org

The Art of the Closet Cleanse

Finding Calm, Confidence and Clarity Through Style

By Mike Hale



In an age of fast fashion and overflowing wardrobes, the closet — once a place of personal expression — can quietly become a source of stress. Hangers crowd together, forgotten purchases gather dust, and the simple act of getting dressed can feel like navigating chaos. Yet within that same space lies the potential for something far more meaningful — a sanctuary.

At Déjà Vu Carmel, a re-couture fashion house founded by stylist and owner Golnesa Payandehjoo, the idea of the “closet cleanse” is less about fashion and more about transformation. The process, she says, restores a sense of calm and intention to everyday life — beginning with the clothes we choose to keep.

A Closet as Sanctuary

Payandehjoo describes the ideal wardrobe as a “sanctuary closet,” a space that feels less like storage and more like a private boutique boudoir.

Before a closet cleanse, she explains, many

people experience visual overload. Garments compete for attention, and the eye moves restlessly from item to item. “Your eyes go all over the place, overwhelmed,” she says. “Afterwards there is a visual stillness and a deep exhale.”

“The philosophy behind the cleanse is simple: less, but better.”

That quiet order creates something deeper than organization. It fosters calm, clarity and inspiration.

“You feel relaxed with a sense of calm, less chaos,” Payandehjoo says. “You might find yourself spending free time styling in your closet when you’re bored or not feeling well. It can be therapeutic.”

In that environment, getting dressed becomes less about searching and more about creating. People rediscover pieces they already own and develop a stronger sense of

personal style. With a clear understanding of what they have, individuals begin to shop more mindfully — or not at all.

“You might even shop in your own closet,” Payandehjoo says. “You’re no longer convinced by salespeople that you must buy something you do not need.”

Letting Go of the Past

Closets often hold more than clothing. They store memories, aspirations and sometimes guilt — items kept for sentimental reasons, expensive purchases never worn, or pieces tied to the past.

Letting go of those garments can be emotional. “It is very difficult,” Payandehjoo says. “We hold onto items for many reasons — sentimental value, cost or joy.” But the decision to reassess a wardrobe often triggers a powerful shift.

“There is an emotional change that happens when you start to even think of a closet cleanse,” she says. “You have less guilt for holding onto items that are just taking space, creating waste or holding onto the past.”

As clutter disappears, people often begin paying closer attention to their well-being posture, energy levels, and how they present themselves. “You have less stress looking for an ensemble in the mornings and you’re ready for the day,” Payandehjoo says.

The philosophy behind the cleanse is simple: less, but better.

Inspired by timeless European style, she encourages clients to curate wardrobes that emphasize versatility, creativity, and quality rather than quantity.

The Power of Reassessment

At Déjà Vu Carmel, clients are often surprised to learn how rarely they wear most of their clothing. It’s common,

Payandehjoo says, for people to use only about 10 percent of their wardrobe. To prevent accumulation from returning, she recommends revisiting the closet every six months.

“With an organized space that is cleansed often, you focus more and stay committed in all aspects of your life,” she says.

Trying on garments and rediscovering forgotten favorites refreshes the mind’s memory of what is available. Daily decisions become faster and more creative. “You have fast access to style daily,” she explains. “That saves you time to spend doing other things you love.”

Over time, the process also changes shopping habits. “There is less desire to spend time and money in stores or online,” Payandehjoo says. “You fall in love with your look and feel inspired to stand proud.”

Confidence Beyond the Closet

The effects of organization extend far beyond fashion. In many ways, the closet becomes a mirror of personal agency.

“Organization provides visible proof of your ability to manage your life,” Payandehjoo says. “Every time you open a drawer and find exactly what you need, you build confidence.”

That confidence ripples outward. People make decisions more easily and present themselves with intention. “You own exactly what makes you feel good,” she says. “That gives you complete power over your look.”

From Reactive to Intentional

For Payandehjoo, the closet cleanse represents a shift in mindset. Clutter pushes people into reactive behavior — buying items quickly, dressing hurriedly and feeling unprepared.

A curated wardrobe encourages the opposite. “There is a feeling of going from reactive to proactive,” she explains. “Being organized means you are intentionally selective, making a point to wear what works.”

Each garment becomes purposeful, chosen not for impulse but for fit, craftsmanship and personal expression.

At Déjà Vu Carmel, that philosophy is central to the concept of “re-couture” — reviving the traditional fashion house

experience with an emphasis on tailoring, individuality, and thoughtful style. The goal is not to accumulate more clothing but to build a wardrobe that feels authentic.

“If a new item isn’t aligned with your curated space, you don’t buy it,” Payandehjoo says.

A Personal Story Told in Fabric

Ultimately, the closet is more than a collection of garments. It reflects identity — the silent introduction people offer the world each day.

“Your style is the first story you tell people without saying a word,” Payandehjoo says.

When that story is intentional, the closet becomes a place of preparation and possibility — a refuge where the day begins. “A sanctuary,” she says. “Prepare for the day, set intentions, and be unique.”

Through the simple act of reassessing what we own, the art of the closet cleanse reminds us that clarity, confidence, and creativity often begin in the most personal of spaces — right behind the closet door. *es*

MAXIMIZING YOUR HARVEST. PAIRING YOUR REDS & WHITES WITH BLUE.



A NEW WORLD DEMANDS NEW HOLLAND.

For more than 35 years, the nation's finest vineyards have relied on New Holland Braud Grape Harvesters. That's because they know our top priority is preserving the quality of each and every grape. So we use the flexible SDC shaking system, which softly shakes and detaches the grape, and the proven NORIA basket system to ensure careful treatment of the vines and harvesting without ground losses. Learn more at www.newholland.com/na





Sales - Parts - Service
Established in 1971

Coastal Tractor
10 Harris Pl, Salinas, CA 93901
www.coastaltractor.com
(831) 757-4101

King City, CA
(831) 385-5401

Paso Robles, CA
(805) 239-5772

© 2017 CNH Industrial America LLC. All rights reserved. New Holland is a trademark registered in the United States and many other countries, owned by or licensed to CNH Industrial N.V., its subsidiaries or affiliates. Equipped For A New World is a trademark in the United States and many other countries, owned by or licensed to CNH Industrial N.V., its subsidiaries or affiliates.

California Rodeo's Sweetheart Soiree

Photos Courtesy of Fernando Sam-Sin

The Sweetheart Soiree, is a lively luncheon where the spirit of the West comes alive! Presented by California Rodeo Salinas and sponsored by Kaiser Permanente, this event is dedicated to all the fierce and fabulous ladies of rodeo and the western way of life. This year's sold out Soiree was held on July 9, 2026.

The boots were polished, the hats were perfectly styled, and the cowgirls showed up in true western-chic fashion. From laughter with friends to raising a glass, the Sweetheart Soiree was a beautiful celebration of the cowgirl spirit.

The cowboy crew brought the western hospitality, greeting guests with a smile, serving up lunch, and making sure every sweetheart felt like the guest of honor.

Event Chair Quincy Gourley kicked off an unforgettable afternoon, celebrating the women, friendships, and traditions that make the Sweetheart Soiree so special. Until next year, cowgirls! ☞





PACIFIC AG RENTALS
RENT THE BRANDS YOU TRUST



**YOUR ONE STOP RENTAL COMPANY
FOR AGRICULTURE EQUIPMENT!**

PACIFICAGRENTALS.COM

A New Literacy Initiative Offers Third Graders a “Golden Ticket”

By Susie Brusa



A new Monterey County nonprofit is taking an innovative approach to one of the region’s most pressing educational challenges: third-grade literacy. The Golden Ticket Monterey County Foundation will award **\$250 to every participating Monterey County third grader who demonstrates grade-level literacy by passing California’s statewide literacy assessment**—either the CAASPP English Language Arts assessment or the California Spanish Assessment (CSA).

The program is designed to test a simple but important question: Can a meaningful financial incentive motivate families and students to prioritize reading during the critical early elementary years?

Rather than serving as an unexpected reward after the fact, the \$250 incentive

is announced in advance, so families and students know exactly what they are working toward. Does the promise of a “Golden Ticket” encourage children to practice reading, inspire families to actively support literacy at home, and reinforce the importance of reaching this educational milestone?

Participation Begins with Local School Districts

Because each school community should determine whether the program aligns with its goals, participation is voluntary. School districts choose whether to enroll, with support from teachers, administrators, and governing boards. The Golden Ticket Foundation has designed the program to minimize additional administrative work for district staff.

As of July 2026, participating districts include:

- Alisal Union School District
- Bradley Union School District
- Gonzales Unified School District (beginning with the 2026-27 school year)
- Greenfield Union School District
- King City Union School District
- North Monterey County Unified School District
- Santa Rita Union School District
- Salinas City Elementary School District
- Washington Union School District
- Oasis Charter School

Why Third Grade?

Research consistently identifies third grade as a pivotal point in a child’s educational journey. It is the year when students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Students who struggle to read proficiently by the end of third grade often face increasing academic challenges as

coursework becomes more dependent on reading comprehension.

In Monterey County, fewer than one in four third graders meet statewide literacy standards. Even among fluent English speakers, only about 43 percent demonstrate grade-level proficiency on the state’s literacy assessment. As business leaders, we know that today’s third graders are tomorrow’s workforce, leading Bruce Taylor and Taylor Farms to create The Golden Ticket Monterey County. The most effective approach is to address the literacy gap early, rather than devoting greater resources to intervention and remediation later.

A Strong Future Workforce Begins with Strong Readers

The Golden Ticket Foundation does not believe that the incentive alone will solve



the literacy gap. Instead, they see it as one component of a broader strategy that includes:

- Evidence-based literacy instruction grounded in the Science of Reading.
- Professional development for teachers implementing research-based curriculum.
- Ongoing instructional coaching and classroom support.
- Family engagement that reinforces reading outside of school.

Building a Culture of Reading

The Golden Ticket Foundation hopes the program will create excitement around reading throughout local schools. Seeing



The vision of the Golden Ticket

Foundation Monterey County is that every third grader reads at grade level.

Mission: The Golden Ticket Foundation Monterey County promotes early literacy efforts by partnering with educational institutions, non-profits and others to ensure all third-grade students can read at grade level. Our efforts include, but are not limited to, family and parent education, kindergarten readiness, incentives for students and teachers, tutoring and coaching programs, professional development for educators, and technical assistance for non-profits that share our mission.

Learn more about how to join the effort: thegoldenticketfoundation.org

older students earn their Golden Tickets may encourage younger children to set literacy goals of their own, read during the summer months, and view reading as an achievement worth celebrating.

Most importantly, the Golden Ticket seeks to strengthen the partnership between schools and families. By making the incentive known from the outset, The Golden Ticket hopes parents and caregivers

will be encouraged to spend more time reading with their children, practicing literacy skills together, and supporting students on their path to becoming confident readers. [ce](#)

**MRY** | **METAMORPHOSIS**
SAFETY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) thanks our community

for trusting and supporting us for your business and
leisure travel needs over the past 85 years.



We're continuing to build something special at MRY.

Through the MRY Metamorphosis, the airport team is working every day to deliver nonstop flights, facilities, services, and amenities to transform your travel experience.



*Follow us as we deliver a world-class
experience with a hometown airport feel.*



Scan the QR code and
join the journey!
montereyairport.com/transform





PATRONS
FRIENDS
TEACHERS
COACHES
CPAs | CONSULTANTS | WEALTH ADVISORS | NEIGHBORS
VOLUNTEERS

At CLA, we're in your corner — and on it. Right there with you. Get started at CLAconnect.com/withyou.

©2026 CliftonLarsonAllen LLP. CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP) is an independent network member of CLA Global. See CLAGlobal.com/disclaimer. Securities and investment advisory services are offered through CliftonLarsonAllen Wealth Advisors, LLC, an SEC-registered investment advisor, member FINRA/SIPC.



We'll get you there

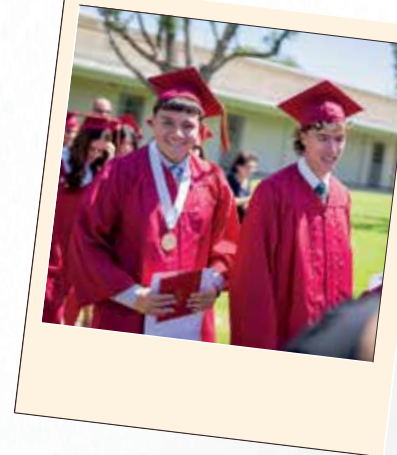


patrick**regenza**foto

agriculture
architecture
product



www.ptfoto.com
831.594.5959
248 Pearl Street
Monterey, CA 93940



Celebrating 75 Years of Excellence

Since its founding in 1951, Palma School has been dedicated to providing an exceptional education rooted in the values of faith, family, and service. As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, we extend our deepest gratitude to the generations of students, families, alumni, faculty, staff, and supporters whose unwavering commitment has helped shape and sustain our mission. Your support has been instrumental in our success, and we are honored to recognize your contributions as we look forward to the future.



Co-ed High School (9-12) | All Boys Junior High (6-8)



919 IVERSON ST., SALINAS



831.422.6391

Community Foundation for Monterey County's Women's Fund Luncheon

Standing Strong for Women & Girls

Photos by Richard Green and Pepe Jimenez



(l to r) Cecilia Romero, Christina Bellantoni, Esmeralda Owen, Janet Shing

Nearly 600 supporters gathered for the 19th Annual Women's Fund Luncheon on May 8 at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel & Spa, celebrating the collective power of philanthropy to create brighter futures for local women and girls. Centered on the theme "Standing Strong for Women & Girls," the sold-out event inspired attendees to learn, connect and invest in solutions through the Women's Fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) that help change the trajectory of people's lives.

Emceed by KSBW Anchor Erin Clark, the program explored the importance of supporting women and girls through leadership, education, mentorship and community action. Cecilia Romero, CFMC Vice President of Philanthropic Services, highlighted the Women's Fund's remarkable impact since its founding in 2003. The

fund has awarded more than \$2.17 million in grants supporting women and girls throughout Monterey County, including \$500,000 in scholarships. Scholarships and programs have expanded educational opportunities, provided emergency financial assistance to local students and strengthened leadership skills.

As the needs of the community evolve, so does the Women's Fund. This year's luncheon addressed the critical issue of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking, which affects communities throughout Monterey County. The program challenged guests to move from awareness to action by volunteering with and donating to organizations addressing these issues. By bringing people together around a shared commitment to safety, opportunity and empowerment, women and girls are

supported, protected and able to thrive, benefitting the entire community.

Keynote speaker, Christina Bellantoni, Director of the USC Annenberg Media Center and longtime political journalist, expanded on this theme, delivering a powerful message about courage, accountability and using one's voice. Drawing from her personal and professional experience, she spoke candidly about challenges women face and the importance of speaking up against injustice. She encouraged attendees to support one another and remember that lasting change begins when individuals choose action over silence.

Hartnell College student Elenis Tamayo, a recipient of a Girls' Health in Girls' Hands (GHGH) Women's Fund Scholarship, shared how the scholarship has eased financial barriers while helping her pursue a career in nursing. She credited the GHGH program, originally founded by the Women's Fund and now housed at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Monterey County, with helping her build confidence, find her voice and discover the power of asking for help. Her story shows how investments in education and



(l to r) Linda Terry, Dorothy Mahan, Lucia Boggiatto, Catherine Costa, Leah Johnson



(l to r) Daniela Suarez, Krista Hanni, Melanie Rhodes, Elsa Jimenez, Rosemary Soto, Karina Bravo and Julia Muruato



(l to r) Jonathan De Anda, Ana Gutierrez, Alessandra Tejada, Catherine Kobrinsky Evans, Lucina Navarro, Amy Dill



(l to r) Emcee Erin Clark, Elenis Tamayo, and her mother

mentorship create opportunities that create lasting impact.

“This scholarship is more than financial support. It is hope. It is encouragement. It is a reminder that there are people who believe in students like me and invest in our futures,” she shared.

Women’s Fund Leadership Council Chair Esmeralda Owen closed the program with a call to action, urging attendees to continue empowering women and girls through generosity and advocacy. Thanks to generous sponsorship support and gifts received, an additional \$50,000 will be granted this year to organizations providing trafficking education, prevention and support services including: Monterey County Rape Crisis Center, Set Free Monterey Bay, Rising International and YWCA Monterey County.

The afternoon served as both a celebration of what has been accomplished and a reminder that there is more work ahead. Together, donors and community leaders reaffirmed a shared commitment to ensuring every woman and girl in Monterey County has the opportunity to be healthy, confident and able to fulfill her dreams.

About the Community Foundation for Monterey County

The mission of the Community Foundation for Monterey County is “to inspire philanthropy and be a catalyst for strengthening communities throughout Monterey County.” Thanks to generous individuals, families and businesses who partner with the CFMC to create charitable funds in their lifetimes or through their estates, the CFMC granted more than \$46 million in 2025 to nonprofits working towards healthy, safe, vibrant communities.

Find more information and view event photos: cfmco.org/WomensFund. 

THE TRUSTED SOURCE

OVER 40 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
IN TRANSPORTING PERISHABLE
GOODS.



100%
VISIBILITY

THE ATS TEAM IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING QUALITY,
PERSONALIZED, ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO ALL OF OUR
CUSTOMERS WHILE CONSTANTLY MAINTAINING
EXCELLENCE.



Blue Book Service has awarded ATS with The Merit Badge of Honor in
Recognition of Exceptional Trading Performance.

Proud member since 1993!
2000M XXXXA

SALINAS, CA - 831.757.4244

Sales handled by Robert Silva, Colby
Varley, Whitney Frame, Karla Baze,
Gurbir Grewal, Chap Kipp, Don Terry,
Ben Patterson and Lindsay Johnson

VISALIA, CA - 559.627.0274

Sales handled by Kyle Keels, Brad Silva,
Ramon Sapien and Terri Fontana

CHICAGO, IL - 847.780.3696

Sales handled by Barry Cook and
Adam Cook

WWW.ADVANCEDTRANSPORTATIONSERVICES.COM

Reliable Construction Services for Business & Residential Projects

Gourley Construction provides quality craftsmanship and dependable service for projects of all sizes. From residential improvements to commercial construction, we deliver professional results you can trust.



SERVICES INCLUDE

- Residential Construction & Remodeling
- Commercial Construction
- Tenant Improvements
- Repairs & Maintenance
- General Contracting
- Interior & Exterior Projects
- Project Management
- Custom Work

WHY CHOOSE GOURLEY CONSTRUCTION

- Local Monterey County Service
- Experienced & Reliable
- Quality Craftsmanship
- Residential & Commercial Expertise
- Projects Big or Small

*Serving All Types of Business
and Residential Clients*



*Serving Monterey County
Matt Gourley, Owner*

831-594-8565

Of Soil and Souls

What Every Harvest Teaches About the Life Within

By Dirrick L. Williams

Every growing season begins with a simple act of courage: planting a seed.

A grower places seed in the soil without visible proof of the harvest to come. The field may appear barren, and the future crop cannot yet be seen. Yet the seed is planted anyway.

This is hope.
Hope is the courageous expectation that something beneficial can emerge where it has not existed before. Hope dares to envision abundance in an empty field, growth in dormant soil, and possibility in circumstances that have yet to reveal their promise.

Every seed planted is an act of hope. It is an investment in the future, not yet visible but believed to be possible. Each seed planted is a bold and courageous declaration that tomorrow can be different from today. Hope allows us to see beyond what is visible and invest our energy in what can be. Without hope, there is no reason to plant. There are no expectations of a future harvest and no vision of what might be possible.

In the same way, just as physical seeds are placed in fields prepared to receive them, from within us we intentionally plant seeds of expectation in the field of time, cultivated by purpose, prediction, and determination. In ways too numerous to count, our lives and expectations mirror that of seeds and soil. Yet planting alone is not enough.

Every grower understands that seeds require nurturing. They need water, nutrients, sunlight, and protection from threats that can hinder their development. Understanding is what transforms hope into progress. Understanding gained through experience, observation, and wisdom teaches us when to persevere and when to adjust. It helps us recognize opportunities and

navigate challenges. Just as a crop cannot thrive without proper care, our dreams and aspirations cannot flourish without understanding that our personal growth requires continual nourishment.

For the plant seed, throughout the growing season, much of the work happens beneath the surface. Roots develop unseen. Strength is built quietly. Progress may not always be visible, yet growth is taking place. The same is true in our lives. Many of our greatest lessons, achievements, and transformations occur during seasons when we are simply living the mundane, trusting the process, and labor to nurture the fields we have planted.

Then comes harvest.
Harvesting is the reward of confidence exercised over time. It is the moment when effort, patience, and persistence converge to manifest yesterday's tomorrow and fulfill the long-awaited expectation. The harvest reminds us of an enduring truth: we reap what we sow.

Seeds of diligence produce opportunity.
Seeds of kindness produce relationships.
Seeds of service produce impact.
And our seeds of hope, nurtured by understanding and sustained by confidence, yield a harvest that extends far beyond ourselves.

The harvest is not accidental; it is the result of intentional action repeated faithfully over time. For those who dedicate their lives to growing food and sustaining communities, this is especially meaningful. Your work is a daily reminder that growth follows principles. The same principles that bring forth abundance from the soil bring forth abundance in life.

Let every season remind us that the greatest harvests are not only found in the fields of soil but also in the character we

cultivate, the lives we influence, and the legacy we leave behind. We are all growers; the seeds we plant today become the legacy of tomorrow. For the bounty we expect each of us must courageously cultivate the inner fields of our soul.

Keep planting.
Keep nurturing.
Keep believing.
The harvest will come.

"For more from Dirrick Williams, visit www.dirrickwilliams.com and explore his newly released book, "Don't Be Just Another Brick in the Wall: A conversational Journey with truth and self-becoming"—a thought-provoking journey into the beliefs we inherit, the choices we make, and the person we ultimately become." CG

COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE HEART OF STEINBECK COUNTRY



\$3,495,000
75ROBLEYROAD.COM
CORRAL DE TIERRA, CA



GRANITE COUNTERTOPS
LIBRARY
VIEWS OF CASTLE ROCK
AND PASTURES OF HEAVEN
GUEST HOUSE
ZONED FOR HORSES



4 BED - 4 BATH - 3 CAR GARAGE - 5,025 SQFT - 5.25 ACRES - GUEST HOUSE - CASTLE ROCK VIEWS

ARROYO SECO PROPERTIES



**47305 ARROYO SECO RD,
GREENFIELD, CA 93927**

**OFFERED AT:
\$749,900**



**47317 ARROYO SECO ROAD,
GREENFIELD 93927**

**OFFERED AT:
\$975,000**

- WELL MAINTAINED RUSTIC CABIN ON 4.6 ACRES
- POOL WITH PLENTY OF SUN DRENCH DECKING
- 2 CAR GARAGE WITH CARPORT
- PARTY ROOM WITH ADDITIONAL STORAGE

- NEW CUSTOM BUILT HOME WITH ALL THE UPGRADES ON 4.6 ACRES
- BARN WITH ELECTRICITY & AMP; WATER STUBBED. ADU POTENTIAL
- ADDITIONAL FULL OUTSIDE BATHROOM
- BACK UP GENERATOR



NORM YOP
BROKER ASSOCIATE
DRE# 00407139
831.206.6310
NORM@NORMYOP.COM

agencyone
REAL ESTATE





Health care that grows *with you.*

UnitedAg's Health & Wellness Clinic in **Salinas** provides the local agricultural community and their families with convenient access to compassionate, award-winning care focused on their health and well-being.



COMPREHENSIVE CARE, CLOSE TO HOME



Primary Care

Personalized care for you and your family.



Preventive Screenings

Early detection and wellness for a healthier tomorrow.



Wellness Programs

Support for your well-being at every stage of life.



Open 6 days a week

Get care Mon - Sat, designed to fit your life and your schedule.



BILINGUAL PATIENT-CENTERED TEAM

Our dedicated, bilingual team is here to provide respectful, understanding care in English and Spanish—helping ensure clear communication and trusted care.



LOCATION

275 W. Laurel Drive, Suite C
Salinas, CA 93906
831.206.1201



Your health. Our responsibility.

We're proud to serve Salinas and the agricultural community with dignity, respect, and heart.

For more information about UnitedAg Health & Wellness Clinics, visit:

unitedagbenefits.org

GREAT CARE BEGINS HERE

24/7 Pediatric Services

At Natividad, our pediatricians are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. We're the only hospital in Monterey County to have pediatric hospitalists on staff overnight. Our pediatricians cover all admissions and emergency department consults for ages 0 to 17, plus all newborns.

"I love serving the farmworker families! I'm so thankful they put food on our plates, working sunrise to sunset. I feel so fortunate to be able to care for their children."

Natividad Pediatric Chief of Service
Heloisa Junquera, MD, MSc





SSB ROOF
COATING

Is Your Roof Ready for Winter?

SSB specializes in commercial roof maintenance, repairs, and restoration. Call us today for a free roof inspection and estimate on any work that might be needed to get your building water-tight before the rainy season.

Now is the time—don't wait for leaks!



831.424.1647 | SSBConstruction.com

Serving all of California, Arizona and beyond | License No. 191651