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Marty Martinez

Owner/Operator

TLG Apparel

FIRST TIME  
CATEGORY WINNERS

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# THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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FRESNO • KINGS • MADERA • TULARE

## The people have spoken

Gabriel Dillard - EDITOR

It was an evening of superlatives at Pardini's in Fresno on Wednesday as the 2024 winners of the Best of Central Valley Business Readers Choice Awards were announced.

Nearly 250 people attended the event to network and celebrate the best of the best in 40 categories. It was the 11th anniversary of the program that allows readers of thebusinessjournal.com to vote for their favorite companies starting Sept. 1 through Oct. 31.

A total of 140,755 votes were cast — a

five-fold increase from when the Best of program began in 2014 with only 35 categories. We added a handful of new categories last year, including Best Fitness Center, Brewery, Vintner, Medical Spa & Wellness Center and Construction Firm.

Be sure to flip through this entire issue to learn about the finalists and the winners. We always welcome feedback on the contest or suggestions for new categories. Please contact Associate Publisher Ashley Webster Rudolph at ashley@thebusinessjournal.com.

Gabriel Dillard | Editor can be reached at: 490-3467 or e-mail gabriel@thebusinessjournal.com

## BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEM

1ST FINALIST: LONDON PROPERTIES | 2ND FINALIST: DEYOUNG PROPERTIES

Ben Hensley - STAFF WRITER

Community Health System and Clovis Community Medical Center (CCMC) took home dual-awards in this year's Best of Central Valley Business Awards, with the hospital taking the title of "Best Hospital" and its parent organization, Community Health System, named the "Best Company to Work For" for the first time in the 2024 Best of The Central Valley Business Awards.

It was the first time the network has been named Best Company to Work For, a category historically dominated by the real estate and banking industries. This was the first time a health care organization was bestowed the title. Community Health System has more than 10,000 employees.

"We are truly honored and humbled at the nomination for

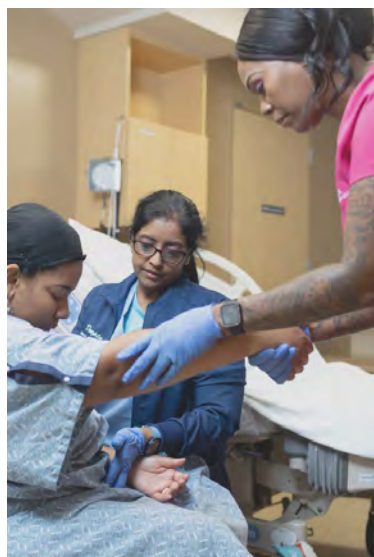
Community Health System as the 'best place to work,'" said Carla Milton, senior VP, chief human resources officer at Community Health System. "As the region's largest private employer, this recognition highlights our collaborative environment where we foster professional growth, innovation and a strong sense of community, making it a truly fulfilling workplace."

Milton added that the recognition highlights the dedication and hard work of the team at Community Health System, whose passion and commitment both enhance the workplace culture and ensure high-quality care for patients within the system at Clovis Community and Community Regional medical centers.

In addition to its regional hospitals, Community Health

System also includes Fresno Heart & Surgical Hospital and Community Behavioral Health Centers in its portfolio of inpatient hospitals. Community Health System also partners with UCSF, one of the top-three medical schools globally, recruiting physicians from around the country and world.

Ben Hensley | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail ben@thebusiness-journal.com



Photos contributed | With more than 10,000 employees, Community Health System is the region's largest private employer — and a first-time winner in the Best Company to Work For category.

## BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL

### JERRY DYER

1ST FINALIST: MIKE  
KARBASSI

2ND FINALIST: NATHAN MAGSIG



Photo by Melissa Sweeney Photography | Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer accepts his award in 2023 from Cathy "Coz" Chatoian of Community West Bank.

Frank Lopez - STAFF WRITER

Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer has had a busy year capped off by readers voting him Best Elected Official for three years in a row.

Dyer was re-elected as mayor in March, capturing over 81% of the vote for his second term.

The mayor can tout some successes that resonated with voters, including addressing homelessness near freeways, graffiti, blight and lowering the crime rate.

Dyer continues to spread his message of "One Fresno" to unify the city, and has also been a longtime advocate for the Downtown area.

Just this October, he announced the start of infrastructure improvements to water and sewer systems in Downtown Fresno and Chinatown.

Last month, Dyer visited the Persian Gulf country of Qatar to promote Fresno as a prime investment opportunity. The trip was funded by the Qatari Embassy.

"They've already invested over \$70 billion in the US, and I'm here to ensure they see Fresno as an excellent opportunity," said Dyer.

Dyer has also been active in bringing attention to the city's Façade Improvement Program to enhance the public-facing side of small businesses.

He has also been busy securing state funds to improve various facets of the city. Including \$52.1 million in funding for improvements to local road and air transportation systems.



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## EXPERT CARE THAT KEEPS YOU GOING STRONG.

Community Health Partners is honored to include Sampath (Sam) Wijesinghe, DHSc, PA-C, AAHIVS, among our talented provider team. Sam is a dedicated primary care provider who has specialized in HIV medicine for over a decade. Sam earned his master's degree from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, and a Doctor of Health Science degree, focusing on global health, from A.T. Still University. In addition, Sam is a clinical assistant professor at Stanford School of Medicine, where he serves as the clinical site director for the Central Valley region. His experience managing complicated health conditions makes him an invaluable partner with his patients. When he's not caring for his patients, Sam enjoys spending time with his family, traveling, and maintaining an active lifestyle through regular exercise, hiking and biking.

At Community Health Partners, we're proud to work with the Valley's brightest minds, like Sam Wijesinghe, DHSc, PA-C, AAHIVS. **So, no matter the need, it's met by a community of the best healthcare providers.**



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## BEST BUSINESS SUPPORTING LOCAL CHARITIES BEST HOMEBUILDER

### GRANVILLE HOMES

1ST FINALIST: TABLE MOUNTAIN CASINO RESORT | 2ND FINALIST: HARRIS CONSTRUCTION

1ST FINALIST: LENNAR HOMES | 2ND FINALIST: GARY MCDONALD HOMES

**Frank Lopez** - STAFF WRITER

Granville Homes was voted Best Homebuilder for the 12th time this year, as well as the Best Business Supporting Local Charities.

Founded in 1977, Granville has built more than 7,500 homes in the Central Valley.

Granville Homes is very active in philanthropy, supporting organizations including Hinds Hospice, Poverello House and the Marjaree Mason Center.

Each year, Granville supports dozens of nonprofit and community organizations. The Granville Home of Hope is the company's biggest annual fundraiser. It raffles off a brand new home awarded to the winner as a grand prize.

Granville CEO Darius Assemi said he is proud and grateful for the opportunity to support nine local nonprofits through Granville Home of Hope.

He is also grateful for people who took the time to vote for The Business Journal's "Best of" awards.

"I'm grateful to our community that

trusts Granville Homes and have supported our nominations for the 'Best Homebuilder' and 'Best Business Supporting Local Charities.'"

According to Granville Homes' website, more than \$9 million has been raised through the Granville Home of Hope program alone. The 2024 nonprofit beneficiaries are Angels of Grace, Breaking the Chains, CASA of Fresno & Madera Counties, Central California Food Bank, Foundation for Sanger Schools, Fresno Police & Fire Chaplaincy, Fresno Mission, Mell's Mutts and Parents & Addicts in Need (PAIN).

**Frank Lopez** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com



**Photo contributed** | Mayor Jerry Dyer selects the 2024 Granville Home of Hope winner with (from left) A.J. Fox, Darius Assemi and Erin Goldfarb.

## BEST NONPROFIT

### MARJAREE MASON CENTER

1ST FINALIST: CENTRAL CALIFORNIA FOOD BANK

2ND FINALIST: HINDS HOSPICE

**Ben Hensley** - STAFF WRITER

For the first time since 2022, the Marjaree Mason Center finds itself back in the top spot for this year's Best of the Central Valley Business Awards Best Nonprofit category, beating out finalists Central California Food Bank and Hinds Hospice in this year's voting.

"Being named a finalist in the Best of Central Valley Awards Best Non-Profit category is a true honor and a testament to the incredible work taking place to serve survivors of domestic violence in our community," said Marjaree Mason Center CEO Nicole Linder. "This recognition not only highlights our commitment to survivors and their children, but also celebrates the collective efforts of our team, our partners, and our donors who share our vision for a community free of domestic violence."

Founded in 1978 after the murder of the center's namesake — Marjaree Mason — the Marjaree Mason Center advocates for victims of domestic violence, helping provide shelter, resources, legal aid and more to those in need.

The Marjaree Mason Center's new Isnardi Foundation Community Resource Center is scheduled to open its

doors this month, doubling the capacity of the center's non-residential services. The building will house the nonprofit's 24/7 trauma center, drop-in center, non-residential survivor services, group therapy and more.

The organization has tirelessly raised funds for several years since acquiring the building, formerly Milan Institute, hosting match donation campaigns for the \$21 million project.

Paired with the expected opening of the Isnardi Foundation Building, the Marjaree Mason Center also introduced its new logo this year. Their new logo, featuring a butterfly, represents transformation, resilience and freedom, reflecting on the challenging journey survivors of domestic violence face.

**Ben Hensley** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail ben@thebusinessjournal.com



**Image contributed** | Marjaree Mason Center unveiled a new logo this year.



# BEST COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE COMPANY

## COLLIERS INTERNATIONAL

**Dylan Gonzales** – STAFF WRITER

For the fourth time, Colliers International has been voted as the best commercial real estate company in the Central Valley. All four wins have been in the last six years. Colliers won three straight “Best Of” awards from 2019-21. Colliers was founded in 1968 as Charles Tingley Associates in Fresno. Since then, the Central California branch of Colliers International has become a leading commercial real estate firm, serving the San Joaquin Valley, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties.

In addition to marketing properties from office, industrial, retail, land, investment to multifamily, Colliers is also a key source of data and information about the Central Valley commercial real estate market. Colliers is heavily involved in local charities. They helped provide 525,000 meals as part of the Central Valley Community Food Bank’s Hunger Heroes campaign. They’ve also partnered with Catholic Charities for their Turkey Drive.

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1ST FINALIST: FORTUNE ASSOCIATES  
2ND FINALIST: RUSSELL G. SMITH INC.



Photo contributed | Colliers International in Fresno is a four-time winner in the Best Commercial Real Estate Company category.

# BEST RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE COMPANY

## REALTY CONCEPTS

**Dylan Gonzales** – STAFF WRITER

Realty Concepts has been voted as the best residential real estate company for the first time. It was a big year for Realty Concepts, with the company acquiring Guarantee Real Estate — the 2023 winner of the award for best residential real estate company. CEO JP Shamshoian took over the company from his father, John, in 2014. It has always been a family-owned company with a strong connection to the Central Valley, with John founding Realty Concepts in 1991. “We love the Central Valley, and we’re proud to be owned and operated out of here,” JP Shamshoian said. “We have 575 agents now doing close to \$2 billion a year in sales, and we have really found a niche as being the

locally owned company in town that really prioritizes professionalism and a strong family culture.” Shamshoian touched on what he loves most about working in the Central Valley. “The connectivity of our community and the people who I get to work with every day,” Shamshoian said. “These are people who I grew up with and care about deeply. And so I’d say that it all comes down to the people for us.” After closing 2024 with its first “best of” award, Shamshoian and Realty Concepts are already looking forward to an exciting 2025. “In 2025, we’re starting an escrow company. So we’re excited about the future,” he said.

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1ST FINALIST: LONDON PROPERTIES  
2ND FINALIST: KELLER WILLIAMS



Photo contributed | It was a big year for Realty Concepts with the acquisition of Guarantee Real Estate. An escrow company is next on the list for the firm.

# BEST REAL ESTATE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMPANY

## MANCO ABBOTT

**Dylan Gonzales** – STAFF WRITER

For the ninth time in 11 years, Manco Abbott was voted as the best real estate property company. This is Manco Abbott’s third straight win in this category. In 2022, Manco Abbott celebrated 50 years of business. Greg Bethke, executive vice president at Manco Abbott, described the nomination for this award as validating. “It kind of validates our core values, that what we are setting out to do with the core values of our company are

working,” Bethke said. “This means that our clients, our tenants and our residents on the multi-family side appreciate what we’re doing, and we’re delivering a good product to them.” Bethke, who has been at Manco Abbott for 23 years, said his favorite part of working there are the people. “Everybody here is passionate about what we do, and they all do a really good job of working towards our ultimate goals of creating value for our clients and creating a good environment for our commercial tenants and multi-family residents,” Bethke said.

1ST FINALIST- GRANVILLE REALTY  
2ND FINALIST- DANA BUTCHER AND ASSOCIATES



Photo contributed | Manco Abbott CEO Michael Goldfarb gets a laugh from staff during a 50th anniversary celebration.

While 2024 is ending with an award, Bethke is excited for what’s next in 2025. “We’re always looking to improve on what we do,” Bethke said. “So we’re looking at technology, we’re looking at additional training for our people, and, you know, looking at anything and everything we can do to make our service stand out for our clients and our tenants.”

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## BEST ARCHITECTURAL FIRM

# DARDEN ARCHITECTS

**Frank Lopez** - STAFF WRITER

Business Journal readers have voted for Darden Architects as the Best Architectural Firm for the ninth time.

Founded By Edwin S. Darden in 1959, the firm's early works supported the growing communities of the California San Joaquin Valley with their high-quality design and a strong commitment to customer service.

The firm specializes in projects in education, health care, interior design and the civic sector.

Some of Darden's notable projects include Madera Community College, the emergency helipad at the Kaweah Health Medical Center in Visalia and the Visalia Emergency

Communications Center.

Darden is currently in its fourth generation of firm leadership with Robert L. Petithomme serving as managing principal.

Today, the company utilizes new design technology to create 3-D visualizations and create more complete, concise, well-coordinated documents.

Darden also gives back to the community, offering a \$1,000 architecture scholarship to a San Joaquin Valley student since 2007 in hopes they will graduate and return to the area and strengthen the architectural profession.

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1ST FINALIST: PAUL HALAJIAN ARCHITECTS

2ND FINALIST: TETER



**Photo contributed** | Darden Architects was part of the October 2024 groundbreaking ceremony for Madera Unified's King Husein School, named for the founder of SPAN Construction, King Husein. It designed the new McClarty Center at Reedly College.

## BEST ENGINEERING FIRM

# PRECISION CIVIL ENGINEERING, INC.

**Jesus Herrera** - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Business Journal readers voted Precision Civil Engineering the best engineering firm in the Central Valley in 2024. This is the company's second time winning the category within the last three years.

The nomination "Solidifies the recognition of our collective skill-sets and commitment to the success of the Valley," Makenna Bass, director of business development said in an email.

Founder and President Ed Dunkel, Jr. is a fifth-generation Fresnan from a family with nearly 60 years of experience in engineering services. After getting its start in 2002,

Precision Civil Engineering has grown and diversified from its roots in residential land development to now include planning, land surveying, construction management and more.

As of 2024, the team at Precision has partnered with at least 1,453 clients and worked on more than 3,600 projects.

According to Bass, Precision sets itself apart from its competitors in its "genuine affection for the communities we serve."

As the year ends and the company looks to the future, the goals are growing its footprint into the South Valley and eventual expansion outside of California.

1ST FINALIST: PROVOST & PRITCHARD CONSULTING GROUP

2ND FINALIST: BLAIR, CHURCH & FLYNN



**Photo contributed** | Precision Civil Engineering, Inc. was founded in 2002 and has grown from its roots in residential land development into planning, land surveying, construction management and more.

## BEST BUSINESS BANK

# FFB BANK

**Dylan Gonzales** - STAFF WRITER

For the first time since the debut of the "Best of" awards in 2014, the category of best business bank will have a new winner as FFB Bank ascends the throne.

FFB was founded in 2005 with the intention of being a single-branch bank. Twenty years later, FFB remains a single branch bank with a lone location in north Fresno.

Formerly known as Fresno First Bank, the company changed its name in 2022 to create a more national profile.

"The team is very excited about our new name, and we are looking forward to continuing to grow our

franchise in a prudent manner moving forward," stated Steve Miller, FFB Bank president and CEO, in a news release in 2022.

"Changing the brand and making it more universal is the logical, necessary step for us to take," Miller said. "We have an opportunity to continue to grow in Fresno while also expanding beyond California's Central Valley. We think that this is the right thing to do for our current and future customers, our shareholders and for our people."

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1ST FINALIST- CHASE BANK

2ND FINALIST- COMMUNITY WEST BANK



**Photo contributed** | With a lone Fresno branch, FFB Bank has cultivated a national reach as a business bank.



BEST EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

PRIDESTAFF

Frank Lopez - STAFF WRITER

This year marks the ninth in a row that PrideStaff has been voted as best employment service in the Central Valley.

Headquartered in Fresno, PrideStaff was founded in 1978, expanding with franchises in 1995. There is a total of 85 PrideStaff locations across the country, with more opening in 2025.

PrideStaff works with more than 200 companies in the counties of Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare,

issuing approximately 30,000 W-2 forms annually — with more than 5,000 of them being local.

PrideStaff Vice President of Branch Operations Sean Akin said 2024 was both challenging and rewarding, with the team navigating a competitive talent market where finding skilled candidates remains a challenge. Despite the challenges, Akin said

PrideStaff is able to connect their clients with the talent they needed. He said many professionals are



1ST FINALIST: DENHAM  
2ND FINALIST: HIRE UP STAFFING SERVICES



Image contributed | PrideStaff is a national franchise with 85 locations across the country — and more on the way.

reevaluating their career paths, leaving traditional industries for roles with more flexibility, work-life balance and opportunities in emerging fields.

The transitioning presidential administration is leaving businesses optimistic, Akin said, and its expected demand for talent will continue across all sectors.

He said the team at PrideStaff is honored to be nominated once again.

“This nomination reflects the hard work and dedication of our team and the trust of our clients and candidates,” Akin said. “It’s a testament to our mission of making meaningful connections that drive success. Regardless of the outcome, we’re grateful for the recognition and inspired to continue delivering excellence in staffing.”

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com

BEST PROPERTY/CASUALTY INSURANCE COMPANY

DIBUDUO & DEFENDIS INSURANCE BROKERS

Frank Lopez - STAFF WRITER

Being nominated for the 11th consecutive year as the Best Property & Casualty Insurance Brokerage in the Best of Central Valley Business Awards is an incredible honor for everyone at DiBuduo & DeFendis Insurance Brokers (D&D).

“As a family-owned business rooted in the heart of the Central Valley for 64 years, this recognition means so much to us because it reflects the trust and confidence our clients and community have in the work we do every day,” said Principal Mike DeFendis

For over six decades, D&D has been committed to serving clients with integrity, dedication, and personalized care in the insurance industry. D&D takes pride in giving back through various

initiatives and partnerships that uplift the Central Valley. Supporting local businesses, organizations, and families isn’t just part of their mission — it’s part of who they are.

“Looking ahead to 2025, we’re filled with excitement and optimism. We’re thrilled to welcome new producers and team members, all throughout California, who share our passion for building meaningful relationships and delivering exceptional service. At the same time, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the clients who have been with us over the years, helping them protect what matters most,” said Principal Matt DeFendis

D&D is also third-generation family business that began with Anthony DiBuduo and Leonard DeFendis, Matt

1ST FINALIST: CAL VALLEY INSURANCE SERVICES  
2ND FINALIST: DER MANOUEL INSURANCE GROUP



Photo Contributed | Two generations of D&D, from left: Christian DeFendis, Mike DeFendis, Matt DeFendis and Dalton DeFendis.

and Mike’s father. The award for D&D recognizes their roots, celebrates their achievements and embraces the promise of the future. It reflects their family’s legacy and enduring values.

“We hope to make our father proud, it

fuels our drive to continuously innovate, grow, and deepen our impact within the community. Thank you for this nomination,” said Matt DeFendis.

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com

BEST CREDIT UNION

EECU

Gabriel Dillard - EDITOR

The Best Credit Union category for 2024 represents a homecoming for EECU (Educational Employees Credit Union) as it won the category for the 10th year after just missing the top spot in 2023.

EECU is the Central Valley’s largest member-owned credit union, with \$4.6 billion in assets and 367,087 members as of 2023. Elizabeth Dooley is the CEO.

The win is extra special for EECU as it celebrates its 90th anniversary this year, founded in 1934. With new branches, ATMs, loan products and other services, the credit union aims to serve members where their financial needs live.

At EECU, we are always looking for ways to better serve our members. Earlier this year we launched our mobile branch, which helps us make banking services more accessible — especially for those in more rural areas who can’t easily visit a branch or ATM,” said Mark V. Perez, senior VP

1ST FINALIST: NOBLE CREDIT UNION  
2ND FINALIST: GOLDEN 1 CREDIT UNION

of lending and marketing. “We also opened an ATM in West Fresno — the only full-service credit union ATM in the 93706-zip code. In addition to expanding services, we provide free financial wellness education to people of all ages, and we continue to support numerous organizations, programs and events in the community as we prioritize giving back to the communities we are so proud to serve.”

Gabriel Dillard | Editor can be reached at: 490-3467 or e-mail gabriel@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | Another recent highlight for EECU in 2024 was the inclusion of the credit union in the officially licensed Fresno Monopoly game.



## BEST AUTO DEALERSHIP

# HEDRICK'S CHEVROLET

**Ben Hensley** – STAFF WRITER

Sound the horns and rev up the engines — Hedrick's Chevrolet has made its way back to the winner's circle in this year's Best of the Central Valley Business Awards for Best Auto Dealership, taking home the accolade for a third time.

It's their first win since 2018.

Located on Shaw Avenue just inside the Clovis city limit line, Hedrick's Chevrolet was founded in 1944 in downtown Clovis. In 1965, the Hallowell family moved the dealership to where it stands today. After working with the dealership's founder, James Hallowell, for over 40 years, Bill Hedrick purchased the business from the Hallowell family in 2000.

The business is still operated by the Hedrick family, with Bill's son Brett filling the role of general manager alongside his sons Blake and Tanner, who are the current dealership principals.

Brett credited the dealership's good work to its employees, crediting their diligence in operating at peak efficiency to serve customers in the Valley and beyond.

"Employees are the ones that make the face of the business," he said. "Being a family owned store we all work and live in this community."

Brett added that through more than 60 years of connecting with the community, he hopes the dealership will continue to serve the community now and into the future.

"We keep our name out there, and I think that's when you get the recognition as far as what you do in the community," he said. "We appreciate the community support. We think that we're all in this together."

**Ben Hensley** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail [ben@thebusinessjournal.com](mailto:ben@thebusinessjournal.com)

1ST FINALIST: FRESNO LEXUS  
2ND FINALIST: SELMA AUTO MALL



Photo contributed | At Hedrick's Chevrolet in Clovis, it's all about family. From left, Blake, Bill, Brett and Tanner Hedrick.

## BEST ACCOUNTING FIRM

# MOSS ADAMS LLP

**Jesus Herrera** - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Moss Adams LLP for the third year straight has been voted the best accounting firm in the Central Valley by Business Journal readers.

"We're always honored and humbled to be nominated for these kind of awards," said Chris Morse, partner in charge at the Moss Adams Fresno branch. "I think it's validation of all the hard work that the team puts in taking care of our clients, but also taking care of each other."

Founded in Seattle, Washington, Moss Adams got its start in the Valley in 2016

with a team of just 25 accountants, according to Morse. Today the Fresno branch alone has about 90 active accountants, each specialized in one or more industry groups.

Going into the New Year, Morse said the Moss Adam team's focus will be on the possible impacts of the "micro" and "macro" economy on their client base.

"For us, it's staying focused on our two main assets, which are our people and our clients, putting them at the forefront of our decisions," Morse said.

1ST FINALIST: RATZLAFF TAMBERI & WONG  
2ND FINALIST: MOORE, GRIDER & CO.



Photo contributed | Chris Morse is the partner in charge at Moss Adams' Fresno branch.



## BEST LAW FIRM

# MCCORMICK BARSTOW LLP

**Alex Light** – STAFF WRITER

Since 1951, McCormick Barstow LLP has grown to be one of the biggest law firms in the Central Valley with more than 80 attorneys working across three different states and representing clients in a variety of industries.

For the 11th year in a row, McCormick Barstow LLP has secured its spot as Best Law Firm in the Central Valley.

This accomplishment is thanks to the quality of not just the work that they do, but the quality of the lawyers they employ and a "client first" mentality, according to Dave McNamara, a partner with the firm.

To McNamara, fostering a

collaborative environment amongst the team, as well as mentoring younger lawyers, helps make the firm stronger and opens more doors for growth.

"When I started with the firm, there were many people I could go to for mentoring," said McNamara, who started with McCormick Barstow in 1987. "There's always opportunities to learn and people have an open door policy, so here we get the benefit of learning, not only from your own mistakes, but those of your colleagues."

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1ST FINALIST: FENNEMORE DOWLING AARON  
2ND FINALIST: BAKER MANOCK & JENSEN



Photo contributed | McCormick Barstow LLP has been dominant of the Best Law Firm category, winning for the 11th year in a row.



## BEST MARKETING AGENCY

### JP MARKETING

**Jesus Herrera** - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This year marks many things for JP Marketing, including continuing their now 11-year streak as Business Journal readers' best marketing agency in the Central Valley.

"It's an honor, and we're so excited to be able to be part of the business award since the very beginning. I'd like to say that we're just really about celebrating and supporting Central Valley businesses. I know that we're excited to see a lot of our business partners on the list," said Jeanna Antonino, vice president of operations.

Antonino also talked about how for around the last year and a half, the company has been refining its brand story and looking toward the future leading up to its 30th anniversary this month.

Specifically, how they have tried to position themselves as the "creator" that collaborates closely with its clients, who it refers to as the "heroes" working to support the local community.

"It's important to us to make sure that we're helping the community and helping our clients within the community achieve their goals," Antonino said.

Founded by current CEO Jane Olvera Majors in 1994, the company has kept its California/Central Valley focus helping its clients achieve their goals regardless of the type of campaign.

Antonino explained how their team sees their role as "creators" helping "heroes." In recent years the company has worked on campaigns like Beautify Fresno and the California Highway Patrol 2023 anti-street racing/sideshow campaign.

1ST FINALIST: JEFFREY SCOTT AGENCY  
2ND FINALIST: COHEN COMMUNICATIONS



Photo by Melissa Sweeney Photography | The JP Marketing team is a veteran at Best of Central Valley Business, continuing its 11-year streak as best marketing agency.

## BEST BAR TO ENTERTAIN CLIENTS

### ELBOW ROOM

**Ben Hensley** - STAFF WRITER

Between 30 years being an owner and a record ninth time being named the Best of the Central Valley Business Award's Best Bar to Entertain Clients, Elbow Room owner Mike Shirinian has had a lot to smile about.

For the ninth time, the voters have spoken and named the Elbow Room the honors for the first time since 2021. Up to that point, the Elbow Room had been selected as the Best Bar to Entertain Clients for eight consecutive years — since the inaugural awards — before being bumped from the top spot the last two years.

This year, however, be it for the

restaurant owner's 30th anniversary or for the restaurant's bar menu (or both), voters honored the local restaurant's roots and quality in the Valley, with more than 20 percent of voters picking the Elbow Room as the Best Bar to Entertain Clients.

"Fresno's such a loyal town that moving into Fig Garden Village really legitimized the Elbow Room," Shirinian said in an interview with The Business Journal earlier this year. "Over the years we've continued to evolve. We've expanded and made two patios at the Elbow Room, a wine cellar dining room; it's grown dramatically in the 27 years we've been in Fig Garden Village."

With 27 years at its current location

1ST FINALIST: MAX'S BISTRO & BAR  
2ND FINALIST: PISMO'S COASTAL GRILL



Photo contributed | The Elbow room this year celebrated its 30-year anniversary with Mike Shirinian as owner. The bar is a popular spot to mix and mingle.

in the heart of Fig Garden Village, the Elbow Room continues to host bustling crowds today. Often the restaurant's evening atmosphere leaves patrons with little more than "elbow room" at the bar,

solidifying the winner as a prime choice for businesspeople seeking to entertain clients.

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## BEST HOSPITAL

### CLOVIS COMMUNITY MEDICAL CENTER

**Ben Hensley** - STAFF WRITER

Clovis Community Medical Center (CCMC) has been named "Best Hospital" for the tenth time in this year's competition, reflecting a quality of care and commitment to excellence shown by the team.

CCMC has been voted "Best Hospital" in all but one of the 11 years of The Business Journal's Best Of awards presentations. Last year, Kaiser Permanente took home the title, with CCMC honored as 1st Finalist.

"We are humbled by this honor,

knowing it represents the efforts of our doctors, nurses, support staff, and the community we serve," said Alan Christianson, VP, chief operating officer at CCMC. "This accolade is a testament to the unwavering dedication and commitment of our entire team, where each member plays a vital role in creating an environment of healing and hope, and this inspires us to continue pushing the boundaries of excellence in healthcare."

CCMC is one of four Community Health System inpatient hospitals in the area. The hospital was first established in 1965

1ST FINALIST: VALLEY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
2ND FINALIST: SAINT AGNES MEDICAL CENTER



Photo contributed | Clovis Community Medical Center has been the site of expansion in the emergency department, pharmacy, laboratory and more to meet the growing needs of the area.

and has seen several expansions. It was renamed Clovis Community Hospital in 1982 and opened at its current location in 1988.

Over the past decade, CCMC has seen expansion in its emergency department, pharmacy, laboratory and other services,

as well as expansion of its outpatient care center, parking facilities and more in order to meet the growing needs of care in the area.

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## BEST TECH COMPANY

### CENTRAL VALLEY NETWORKS

**Ben Hensley** – STAFF WRITER

There's been five different winners in the past five years for the Best Technology Company, with this year's honors awarded to Central Valley Networks for the first time in the Best of the Central Valley Business Awards. The first-time winner is one of the Valley's leaders in computer networks and VoIP (voice over internet protocol) services, bringing quality computer services and tech solutions to small

businesses and residents locally. Matthew Paredes is president of Central Valley Networks. Central Valley Networks' win comes on the heels of a 2023 Best of the Central Valley Business Awards cycle that did not see the company place as a 1st or 2nd finalist. "Our focus is helping you understand technology and find cost effective solutions to help you meet your needs," the company's website reads.

1ST FINALIST: PC SOLUTIONS  
2ND FINALIST: BREADCRUMB CYBERSECURITY



Photo contributed | Founded in 2006, the Central Valley Networks team has more than 30 years of professional experience.

Founded in 2006, the company's team sports more than 30 years of experience in a wide variety of industries including professional

and legal services, financial services, health care, nonprofit and more. **Ben Hensley** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail [ben@thebusinessjournal.com](mailto:ben@thebusinessjournal.com)

## BEST SHOPPING CENTER

### FIG GARDEN VILLAGE

**Ben Hensley** – STAFF WRITER

For the first time in a decade, the former champ has been dethroned, as 2024's recipient of the Best Shopping Center award goes to Fig Garden Village, knocking River Park Shopping Center off its decade-long streak as award recipient. Fig Garden Village, located on the corner of Shaw and Palm avenues in Fresno, is one of Fresno's oldest shopping centers and an Old Fig neighborhood fixture. It was built in 1956. Fig Garden Village is home to more than 30 stores from nationwide chains like Eddie Bauer and Banana Republic to local stops like the Elbow Room and Wassabi Off the Hook. "We are honored that our beloved Fig Garden Village is nominated for the Best of Central Valley Business Awards," said Keith Gmazel, vice

president of Property Management at Brookfield Properties, owner and operator of Fig Garden Village. "This is a testament to our ongoing commitment to our community to be a gathering place where people want to spend their time." While well-established in the Fresno retail marketplace, the shopping center continues to evolve and add new tenants; this year Fig Garden welcomed a new Wetzel's Pretzels. The shopping center was also home to Fresno's first Capriotti's restaurant, alongside other retailers and restaurants. "We are far more than a place to shop and dine and we are grateful to be recognized for this award," Gmazel said.

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1ST FINALIST: RIVER PARK SHOPPING CENTER  
2ND FINALIST: MARKETPLACE AT EL PASEO



Photo contributed | Since 1956, Fig Garden Village has been a fixture at Shaw and Palm avenues in Fresno.

## BEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### FRESNO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Dylan Gonzales** – STAFF WRITER

For the 11th straight year, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce has been voted as the best chamber of commerce. The Fresno Chamber of Commerce has won the award every year since the debut of the "Best of" awards in 2014, when it was known as the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce. Scott Miller has been CEO of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce since 2021 when he took over as interim CEO. "We're very appreciative," Miller said of being named a finalist for the award. "We're very honored that we have made the list again and can't wait to come to the event." It was another successful year for the Fresno Chamber of Commerce. One of the several bright spots was Leadership Fresno Class 39.

Leadership Fresno is a nine-month program "designed to empower you to shape and understand our community like never before. Have conversations with our incredible LF alumni, hear their inspiring stories, and uncover the endless benefits this program offers," according to a Facebook post from the Fresno Chamber of Commerce. While mentoring current community leaders through Leadership Fresno, the chamber is also preparing future leaders with its Junior Board program. "It is made up of mostly valedictorian level kids from around the county who are learning about all of the different things that it takes to make Fresno County run," Miller said. "It's really been a great year for the chamber."

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1ST FINALIST: CLOVIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
2ND FINALIST: CENTRAL CALIFORNIA HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Photo contributed | Scott Miller presents the Leon S. Peters Award to John Harris of Harris Ranch.



BEST WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS

LA TAPATIA TORTILLERIA

Alex Light - STAFF WRITER

In 1969 La Tapatia Tortilleria started as a side business after Helen Hansen bought her first set of tortilla making equipment, making tortillas in the evenings and weekends after her shift at the grain factory.

Decades later, the company has become a Central Valley staple and nothing short of a household name with products being sold in grocery stores up and down the Central Valley. It has won in the Best Women-Owned Business category for the fifth time — and the first since 2022.

For Yvette Cuellar, Hansen's daughter and director of public relations and

marketing for the company, this achievement is an honor.

“Being a finalist, or even being included in the voting to begin with, feels like a very humbling and prestigious honor,” said Cuellar. “It really means a lot to us that our company is important or meaningful to others, especially because we are a locally based family company.”

As it's grown, La Tapatia Tortilleria has had the opportunity to give back to the community through sponsorships, donations to nonprofits and participating in community outreach events. Cuellar attributes this, along with maintaining a face-to-face relationship with customers,

1ST FINALIST: FACILITY DESIGNS  
2ND FINALIST: JP MARKETING



Pictured left to right: | Linda Ghilarducci, Yvette Cuellar, Helen Hansen, Carla Monis and Toni-Marie Rushing.

to the success of the business, which ships globally.

“I think being out and participating in the community has helped put a face to

the company, and keep us at the forefront of people's minds,” said Cuellar.

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BEST OFFICE EQUIPMENT COMPANY

CALIFORNIA BUSINESS MACHINES

Jesus Herrera - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For the past 10 years straight, California Business Machines has been Business Journal readers' best office equipment company. President Teri Brymer credits this decade's achievement to their focus on customer service and flexibility for the future.

"We've always had a mission that our customer comes first," Brymer said. "We have to understand their needs and figure out what the solution is to their needs."

Founded by her parents in 1953 selling typewriters and adding machines, Brymer has grown the business since taking over in 2011 to now include but not limited to phone systems, EV chargers

and copiers/printers.

With no plans to end her run with the business, Brymer started making moves to have the company continue after her. Despite receiving many offers over the years, she searched for someone who held the same values as her and would keep both the company and employees intact.

She would eventually find the perfect fit in WiZiX Technology Group, with the merger announced in August of this year.

"[WiZiX] had its beginnings in Fresno, and they've operated in the Central Valley and then in the Northern California," Brymer said. "So, I consider them still a local company or a small company. Rather than in our industry, there are what we call mega dealers."

As California Business Machines looks

1ST FINALIST: CALTRONICS BUSINESS SYSTEMS  
2ND FINALIST: AUTOMATED OFFICE SYSTEMS



Photo Contributed | For the last decade, California Business Machines has dominated the Best Office Equipment Company category. This past year, the business merged with WiZiX Technology Group.

to the future, Brymer is confident that the WiZiX merger will only strengthen the company's position as the premier office equipment provider in the region. With a

renewed focus on growth and innovation, the next decade of excellence is sure to be even brighter.

BEST COMMERCIAL PRINTING COMPANY

DUMONT PRINTING

Ben Hensley - STAFF WRITER

The voters have spoken and named Dumont Printing as the top of the class for the 2024 Best of the Central Valley Business Awards, edging out finalists Fast Signs and Fresno Reprographics for its seventh win in the Best Commercial Printing Company category.

"We are truly honored and deeply thankful to be considered for this award once again, and it's all thanks to the trust and support of our clients, partners, and community," said Susan Moore, president/owner of Dumont Printing. "This recognition means so much to our team, and we're grateful for the opportunity to serve such an amazing community."

Established in 1950, Dumont Printing

operates as a full-service printer in the Valley, providing clients with digital printing, grand- and large-format printing, graphic design and more. Moore's team mission is to turn challenges into opportunities, delivering client-focused solutions with integrity and passion.

This year, Dumont surpassed milestones and invested in cutting-edge equipment, enhancing its efficiencies and upholding quality standards. The company also expanded its fulfillment center by 15,000 square feet.

"Looking forward to 2025, we are focused on further expanding our services, driving business growth, and creating more opportunities for local employment," Moore said. "These efforts reflect our dedication to innovation,

1ST FINALIST: FAST SIGNS  
2ND FINALIST: FRESNO REPROGRAPHICS



Photo Contributed | For the last decade, California Business Machines has dominated the Best Office Equipment Company category. This past year, the business merged with WiZiX Technology Group.

community engagement, and client satisfaction as we continue to build on our legacy of success."

**Ben Hensley** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail ben@thebusinessjournal.com



## BEST CATERING COMPANY

### PARDINI'S CATERING

**Ben Hensley** – STAFF WRITER

The king remains firmly on the throne as Pardini's Catering takes home the award for Best Catering Company, locking out a full decade as the recipient of the honor.

Since its inception in the 2015 Best of the Central Valley Business Awards, the Best Catering Company category has seen no other name knock the top vote-getter off the pedestal; Pardini's Catering, this year, received nearly 30 percent of votes among readers.

"It means a ton to us to be recognized and honored by the

business community," said Jeff Pardini, co-owner of Pardini's Catering. "We always do our best to take care of our business clients and corporate clients and we're very excited to be nominated yet again."

Last year, Pardini's underwent a major renovation, remodeling its event center and adding a new addition — The Red Room — to its list of offerings.

Pardini said that having The Red Room open to the public draws eyes to Pardini's already appealing event space.

"It's been great," he said. "It allows

1ST FINALIST: LOVE & GARLIC  
2ND FINALIST: MEAT MARKET

us to offer the neighborhood a different experience with the craft-cocktail bar," he said. "It also serves as a great marketing tool for booking private events in that space."

Pardini's Catering opened in 1958 and evolved into a large catering business in 1981. Pardini's works locally with several local venues and wineries and features its own space at 2257 W. Shaw Ave. in Fresno.

"Thank you and we're very honored to be voted again," he said. "We'll keep doing our best to provide excellent service and quality like we've always done."

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Photo by Melissa Sweeney Photography | Pardini's Catering has been a Fresno mainstay since 1958. From left, Jeff Pardini, Theresa Garland and Jayne Shapazian.

## BEST GOLF COURSE TO TAKE A CLIENT

### COPPER RIVER COUNTRY CLUB

**Dylan Gonzales** – STAFF WRITER

For the first time since 2021, Copper River Country Club has been voted as the best golf course to take a client. The win gives Copper River seven in this category — the most of any country club.

The nearby Fort Washington Country Club won the award the past two years and has three total, with the other coming in 2015. It is the only country club besides Copper River to win.

According to General Manager Todd Hansen, although Copper River is mainly known for its 18-hole golf course, the country club offers several amenities that distinguish it from other country clubs.

"We're kind of a resort-style facility that is unique to the Central Valley area,"

Hansen said. "Most facilities are just golf, food and beverage and don't have the other amenities. It is a nice destination place for our members to bring their guests and their clients to get the full experience."

Copper River is also one of the fastest-growing communities in the Central Valley, and Trumark recently opened sales in the community.

"The growth around here is huge," Hansen said. "It seems like every day there's something new opening up. Every day I go to work, there's a new home. They're doing a real nice job around here. And it's kind of a hot spot right now where there's a huge demand here."

**Dylan Gonzales** | Writer can be reached at: 490-3448 or e-mail [dylan@thebusinessjournal.com](mailto:dylan@thebusinessjournal.com)

1ST FINALIST: FORT WASHINGTON COUNTRY CLUB  
2ND FINALIST: SAN JOAQUIN COUNTRY CLUB



Photo contributed | The lower terrace at Copper River Country Club is a sight to behold at sunset.

## BEST SECURITY COMPANY

### MATSON ALARM CO.

**Ramon Castanos** – CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Matson Alarm Co. is once again victorious in the Best Local Security Company category for The Best of Central Valley Business Awards.

Trina Paige, general manager of Matson Alarm, expresses her deep gratitude for the award. She notes that the company has a long history in the Central Valley, dating back to 1974.

"Founded in 1974 by brothers Larry and Mike Matson, Matson Alarm joined the Pye-Barker Fire & Safety family of companies in 2022 with the goal of enhancing its service offerings to customers and providing more growth

opportunities for its team members," said Paige.

They offer a full selection security products for commercial and residential customers, such as alarm monitoring, fire alarm systems, commercial security systems, cameras, video monitoring, and access control systems. Paige explains that they always consider the needs of their consumers first.

"The Matson Alarm team is local to the community, and work is completed in-house by individuals who know the area and are committed to protecting the community," said Paige. "While

1ST FINALIST: TURNER SECURITY SYSTEMS, INC.  
2ND FINALIST: GEIL ENTERPRISES, INC. D.B.A. CIS SECURITY

local, the company also has the advantage of being supported with additional resources and the expertise of Pye-Barker Fire & Safety, the U.S. leader in fully integrated life safety systems."

Paige mentions that security is important today because there have been "emergent threats" to people's and businesses' safety. They want to collaborate with their customers to help them feel safe.

"With modern technology used by Matson, customers are empowered to manage their properties from wherever they are and know that they are backed by 24/7 monitoring," said Paige. "That peace of mind is important."



Photo Contributed | Trina Paige, GM, Matson Alarm





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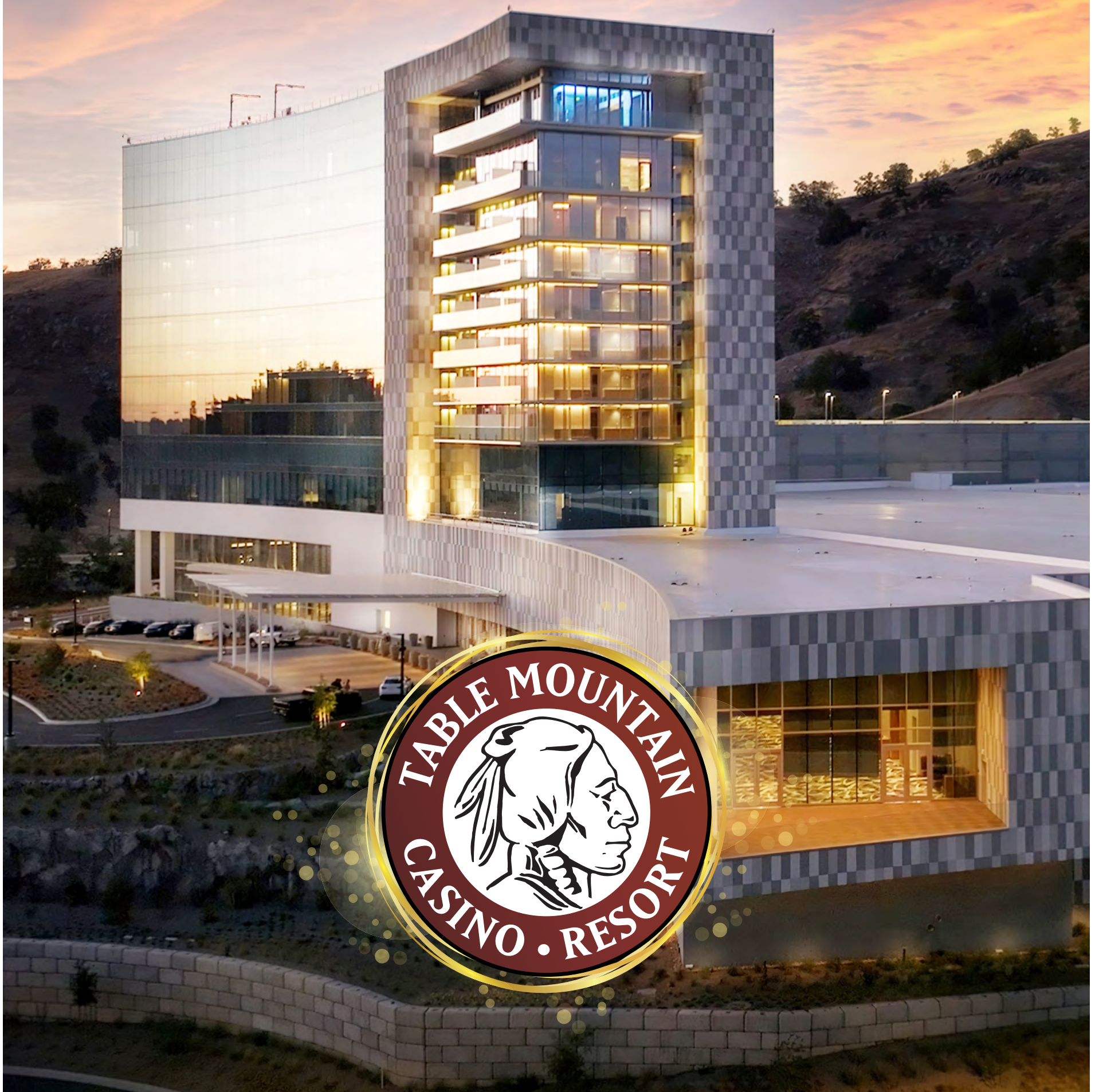
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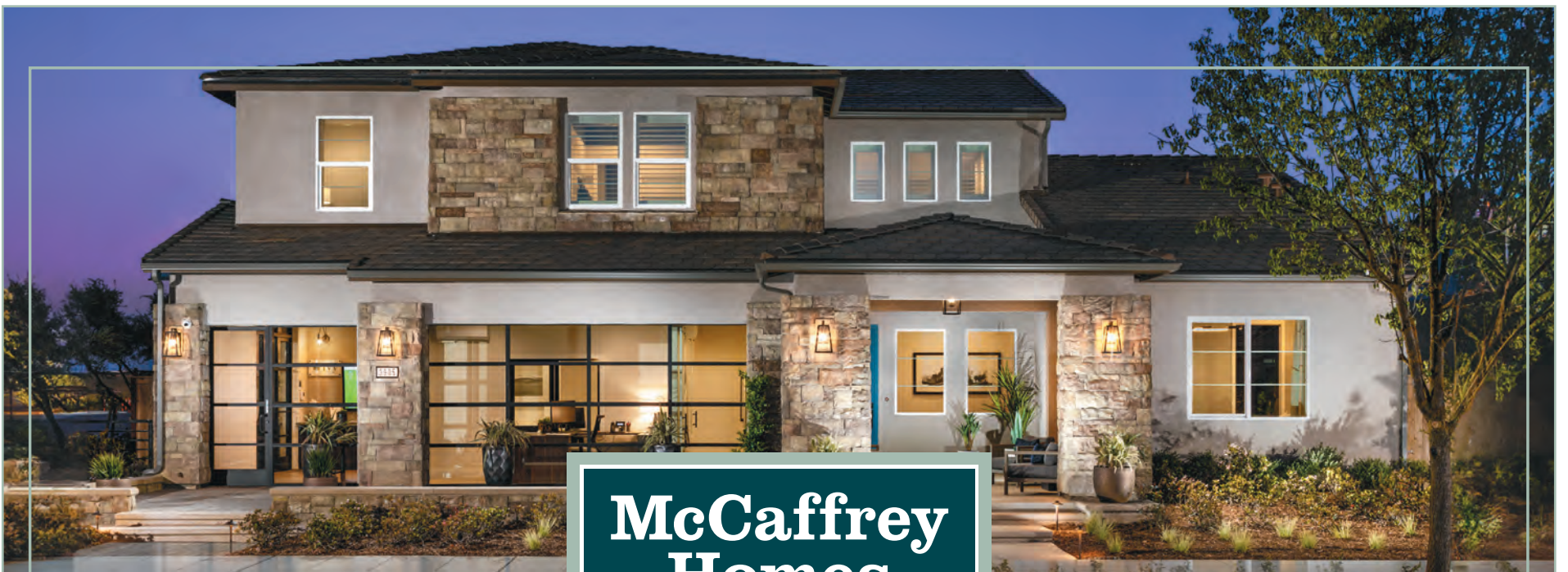
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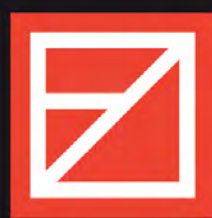
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BEST INTERIOR DESIGN FIRM

FACILITY DESIGNS

RAMON CASTANOS - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Facility Designs has once again been voted as Best Interior Design Firm — the second year in a row.

“Facility Designs is a MillerKnoll Certified Dealer specializing in custom design solutions that offer immediate impact and long-term value,” said Carrie De Young, chief operating officer. “As a WBENC (Women’s Business Enterprise National Council)-certified, woman-owned and operated small business based right here in Fresno, complete customer satisfaction has been our goal for 33 years and counting.”

She said what makes the company stand out from its competitors is its professional service to clients.

“We have the most amazing, talented, and experienced team,” said De Young. “Every member of Team FD brings an

unparalleled level of professionalism, positivity, and passion to our projects — our clients’ stand-out spaces truly begin with our team’s exceptional service.”

She said that is why so many clients appreciate Facility Designs. In addition, the company adjusts to the needs of its customers in whatever market it serves, such as business, health care, education and government.

“The needs and goals of our clients guide everything we do, and we love designing spaces that work as hard as they do for our Central Valley community,” said De Young.

Facility Designs offers customers a variety of product lines to meet their tastes and standards, including desks and workspaces, space divisions, accessories, storage and tables. Their brands include

1ST FINALIST: DARDEN ARCHITECTS  
2ND FINALIST: CORE BUSINESS INTERIORS



Image contributed | Facility Designs has been a winner in the category of Best Interior Design Firm for two years in a row.

Herman Miller, Geiger, National and more.

“Thank you to everyone who voted for Team FD,” De Young said. “We look

forward to partnering together in 2025 to strike the perfect balance of form and function to help your space achieve more!”

BEST LOCAL RADIO STATION

KISS COUNTRY  
93.7

RAMON CASTANOS - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Cumulus Media-owned Kiss Country 93.7 is a first-time winner in the Best Local Radio Station category for the Best of Central Valley Business Awards.

Chris Miller, Kiss Country’s marketing director, underscores the station’s unwavering commitment to the Fresno community, which he believes led to its win this year. He explains that the station’s strong ties are evident in the numerous organizational fundraisers it has spearheaded, such as those for Valley Children’s Hospital, Go Red for Woman, Clovis Rodeo, and many more.

“For example, we’ve got our annual Coats for Kids campaign, where we’re collecting coats in conjunction with the Fresno County Sheriff’s Department,” said Miller. “We have partnered with them for a number of years.”

Miller added the deep-rooted love for music sets Kiss Country 93.7 apart from other competitors. Miller said country is

1ST FINALIST: KMJ 580  
2ND FINALIST: SOFT ROCK  
98.9

one of the top genres in the country with a huge following. The radio station hosts reflect that by engaging the audience in discussions about the country music genre, as seen in the popular podcast by two morning hosts, Chris and Joe.

“They’ve been producing it for almost two years now, and it’s a popular podcast,” said Miller. “The hosts talk about different topics and entertainment news, which, you know, is the primary focus of country music, such as interviews with different country artists.”

According to Miller, listeners also enjoy the weekly contests, which can offer concert tickets for popular country artists, such as LeAnn Rimes at Table Mountain Casino on Dec. 11.

Miller said contests, strong community bonds and their intense love of country music helped them gain followers over the last 25 years.

“We just appreciate their support,” said Miller. “And we’re just honored to be nominated for this award and look forward to it.”



Photo contributed | Kiss Country 93.7 takes every opportunity to engage with the community, such as supporting the Coats for Kids campaign with the Fresno County Sheriff’s Office.

BEST LOCAL LUNCH SPOT TO EAT DURING THE WORK WEEK

HEIRLOOM

Ben Hensley - STAFF WRITER

The voters have spoken, and this year’s winner of Best Local Lunch Spot to Eat During the Work Week in the Best of the Central Valley Business Awards is Heirloom, marking yet another first-time winner in 2024’s competition.

Heirloom joins nine other first-time winners in this year’s competition and is the first new winner in the category since 2021.

“We have a great customer base; we’ve really grown our business throughout the years and it’s all thanks to our customers,” Meredith Jenkins, General Manager at Heirloom. “We just keep striving for bigger and better and we couldn’t do it without everybody that comes here to eat.”

Opened in 2019 at the Park Crossing Shopping Center, Heirloom is the product of Brandon Smittcamp and Kevin Koligian, the duo behind other local

1ST FINALIST: DOG HOUSE  
GRILL  
2ND FINALIST: MAX’S BISTRO  
& BAR

favorites including Butterfish and Saizon, which opened in 2023.

Featuring a menu that caters to families offering meals for four, six and eight customer tables, Heirloom uses quality products in its farm-to-table menu, mindful of where their produce and ingredients are sourced.

Heirloom also features a large salad and sandwich menu, pasta, sides, kid menus and more.

Heirloom is one of three local restaurants to have won the award since its inception in 2017. Previous award winners include Dog House Grill (2023, 2021) and Pismo’s Coastal Grill (2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017).

Ben Hensley | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail ben@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | Heirloom opened in 2019 in the Park Crossing Shopping Center with a farm-to-table approach that has resonated with Fresno foodies.



BEST FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS

WAWONA FROZEN FOODS  
THE SMITTCAMP FAMILY

Frank Lopez – STAFF WRITER

This is the sixth time that Business Journal voters have chosen Wawona Frozen Foods, owned by the Smittcamp Family, as the Best Family Owned Business. It’s their first win since 2021.

Since 1963, Wawona Frozen Foods has been a purveyor of various frozen fruits, including peaches, pears, strawberries, plums and more.

The company is an industry leader that ships more than 100 million pounds of frozen fruit annually.

The company was founded by Earl Smittcamp, and later ran by his children. Bob Smittcamp passed

away in 2021, and Wawona Frozen Foods is led today by CEO Bill Smittcamp.

Wawona Frozen Foods employs nearly 300 full-time employees.

Each year, employees raise money for Valley Children’s Hospital, with Wawona matching those funds.

Marketing Manager Blair Smittcamp said the family is incredibly honored to be nominated for the Best Family Owned Business. She said they are proud to be a third-generation family-owned company.

The family would like to see Bill retire and take some time for himself, but “it’s not in his blood,”

1ST FINALIST: HARRIS RANCH INN & RESTAURANT—THE HARRIS FAMILY  
2ND FINALIST: DE YOUNG PROPERTIES—THE DE YOUNG FAMILY



Photo contributed | The Smittcamp Family loves the opportunity to share the fruits of its labor, literally and figuratively, with Wawona Frozen Foods.

Blair said.

“We love the opportunity to share the fruits of our labor, literally and figuratively. The Fresno/Clovis area has been so good to us and we love to

give back. The support that we have for the community is unwavering,” Blair said.

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com

BEST TITLE COMPANY

CHICAGO TITLE CO.

Frank Lopez – STAFF WRITER

This year marks the sixth time that Business Journal readers voted Chicago Title Co. as Best Title Company. The last time it won the award was in 2021.

The company gained national recognition after the Great Chicago Fire of 1891 and has established its presence in the Central Valley for nearly 100 years, marking a deep history in the region.

Jennifer Shepherd, vice president and sales manager at Chicago Title Co. Fresno/Madera, said it’s nice to be consistently recognized for its work in the community and meeting the standards they set for themselves of providing excellent service.

Work was steady this year, Shepherd said, but there was some disruption on the home resale side with concerns about real estate agent commissions.

On the refinance side, Shepherd said the team is poised for a rate cut to unlock potential clients.

Shepherd said the team is excited for the growth seen in several of their

1ST FINALIST: COMMONWEALTH LAND TITLE INSURANCE  
2ND FINALIST: FIDELITY NATIONAL TITLE CO.

offices, including the Clovis office that opened in 2023, which really blossomed.

There are 10 Chicago Title Co. locations throughout the Central Valley between Fresno, and the Tulare/Kings County areas.

In all locations in the Central Valley, Chicago Title Co. has more than 100 employees.

“It was good that business has been steady, that we’ve been able to maintain and even grow some of their operations and we are looking forward to 2025 being a good year as well,” Shepherd said.

Winning the Best Of award again is considered a benchmark by the Chicago Title Co. team, she said.

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | This year marks the sixth win for Chicago Title Co. — and their first win since 2021.

BEST LOCAL ANNUAL EVENT TO ATTEND

THE BIG FRESNO FAIR

Frank Lopez – STAFF WRITER

For the seventh time, Business Journal readers have voted The Big Fresno Fair the Best Local Annual Event to Attend.

The category was created in 2017, and the Big Fresno Fair has won every year except for 2023, when readers voted Greek Fest as the best annual event.

The Fresno Fair, first founded in 1884 and then reborn in 1948, is guided by a mission to “Celebrate, Educate, and Have Fun” and to honor the region’s rich agricultural heritage, as well as create a fun, welcoming family environment.

Last year, The Big Fresno Fair board appointed Christina Estrada as interim CEO to lead the fair until a permanent CEO search is completed.

It was a 13-day event this year, and welcomes more than 600,000 people each year.

This year, over 3,992 animals were exhibited by 3,000 4-H and FFA

1ST FINALIST: CLOVIS RODEO  
2ND FINALIST: FRESNO GREEK FEST

students.

In 2024, the Livin’ Local Marketplace featured 36 local small businesses with 15 new vendors and had \$130,000 in sales.

A statement from the Big Fresno Fair said the team is looking forward to what 2025 will bring.

“Looking ahead to 2025, we’re planning even bigger entertainment, fresh attractions, and creative ways to celebrate the Valley’s rich history and culture. There’s so much more to come, and we can’t wait to share it with our community – but we’re not ready to share just yet.”

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | The Big Fresno Fair welcomes more than 600,000 attendees each year, including families from across the region.



BEST LOCAL FITNESS CENTER

GB3

Dylan Gonzales - STAFF WRITER

For the second straight year, George Brown Sports Club, better known as GB3, has been voted the best local fitness center. This is the second year of the “best local fitness category,” and GB3 is the only fitness center to win the award.

GB3 General Manager Sean Clinton first opened GB3 with its namesake, George Brown, in 2000, and has been with the company ever since. There are currently five GB3 locations in the surrounding Fresno area.

GB3 is the only gym in town that was built from the ground up, specifically intended for health clubs.

The biggest priority in 2024 for

the nearly 25-year-old club was upgrading its equipment. “We upgraded a lot of our clubs with new cutting-edge technology,” Clinton said. We have stuff that no one else has. We also have the most equipment of anybody. We just have such a big display, and we’re just loaded with a bunch of good, top-notch equipment.”

Dylan Gonzales | Writer can be reached at: 490-3448 or e-mail dylan@thebusinessjournal.com

1ST FINALIST: SIERRA SPORT AND RACQUET CLUB  
2ND FINALIST: FIG GARDEN SWIM AND RACQUET CLUB



Photo contributed | GB3 has five locations in the Fresno area.

BEST LOCAL BREWERY

MAD DUCK CRAFT BREWING

Ben Hensley - STAFF WRITER

It’s two-for-two for local brews for one local brewery, as the voters select Mad Duck Craft Brewing as the Best Local Brewery for the second consecutive year in this year’s Best of Central Valley Business Awards.

Mad Duck has won the award both years that it has been presented. Last year, CEO Alex Costa said that Mad Duck’s unique approach to its brews and food is what puts them on the map. Costa said that the resources the restaurant extends to making food to pair with their brews.

This year, Mad Duck opened a new location on Copper Avenue, its fourth, in North Fresno. The new restaurant features indoor and outdoor seating and serves

1ST FINALIST: CROW & WOLF  
2ND FINALIST: SEQUOIA BREWING COMPANY

something for everyone, according to Becky May Foster, a manager at Mad Duck’s Copper location.

“It’s been great,” Foster said. “We got a great welcoming from the community; everyone seems to love it.”

Mad Duck’s breweries, located at the Campus Pointe and Herndon locations, distribute brews to their restaurants and other local restaurants. They offer one of every style of their brews at their restaurants.

Foster said that the community support for the business is what they are there for.

“It’s a great spot for people from all walks of life to come in and enjoy something,” she said. “There’s something for everybody and I think that’s why people feel so comfortable here.”

Ben Hensley | Writer can be reached at: 490-3461 or e-mail ben@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | Mad Duck opened its newest location on Copper Avenue in North Fresno earlier this year.

BEST LOCAL VINTNER

TOCA MADERA WINERY

Frank Lopez - STAFF WRITER

This year, for the first time, Business Journal readers voted Toca Madera Winery as the Best Local Vintner.

The family winery was first established in 2014, with the vineyard being planted in 2012 on virgin, fertile soil never previously planted with any vines, orchards or other crops.

The winery also uses its venue for events including casual gatherings, family or school reunions, weddings and company parties.

The company was founded by Walt

1ST FINALIST: ENGELMANN CELLARS  
2ND FINALIST: E & J GALLO

Whelan and his son, Brian Whelan, who both started making wine in their garage with long-time friends Justin Gennock and Tony Storelli.

Walt’s daughter Isabel Whelan handles marketing and events.

The Whelans also have a business and employment litigation law practice in Fresno.

Their wines have earned several best of shows in the Big Fresno Fair, and has won State-wide Gold and Silver awards for winemaking at large competitions.

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com



File photo | Toca Madera Winery is a two-generation family business. Walt Whelan toasts a glass with daughter Isabel Whelan.



# What happened in 2024 in sports? And what's coming?

Dylan Gonzales - STAFF WRITER

It was a consequential 2024 for the Central Valley sports scene — both collegiate and professional. Here's a rundown of what happened and what's coming.

### Fresno Grizzlies

Although the Grizzlies had a down season by their standards, they still led the California League with over 256,000 total attendance. Not only did they lead the league in attendance, but the Grizzlies had the entire top 14 in single-game attendance. The highest-attended game in 2024 at Chukchansi Park was the Fourth of July. The game was the 19th most attended game across the 120 minor league teams at any level. While the Fourth of July will always draw large crowds due to the postgame fireworks show, according to Jonathan Bravo, the director of marketing and communications for the Fresno Grizzlies, some of the other

popular games were Star Wars Night, Princess Night and the home opener. One of the Grizzlies' biggest struggles this year was trying to bring in fans during the summer when temperatures were consistently around 110 degrees. "We never blamed the heat and never blamed the weather," Bravo said. "There's plenty of ways for fans to cool off at Chukchansi Park, with the splash park, the misters on the concourse, stuff of that nature. It was an unseasonably hot season. Our July fifth and sixth games did struggle because of the heat." With ticket prices climbing across all sporting events, the Grizzlies will be dropping their lowest ticket price to \$8 for the 2025 season. "It will be the second cheapest ticket in the California League, as compared to 2024 standards, that might very well end up being the cheapest across the board," Bravo said. "But we're really excited to continue to offer great, family-



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**Our Mission:**  
Consistently provide client experiences focused on what they value most.

## BEST LOCAL MEDICAL SPA & WELLNESS CENTER

### MUSES DAY SPA

Ramon Castanos - CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Muses Day Spa is a first-time winner in the 2-year-old category of Best Local Medical Spa & Wellness Center. Muses Day Spa, a long-standing establishment with a strong customer base, offers a diverse array of services — from soothing massages to revitalizing skin and body treatments. And of course, there are the requisite pedicures and manicures. They cater to a wide range of wellness needs. Their unique commitment to providing a holistic wellness experience is what truly distinguishes them. "Our Knowledgeable and friendly staff cater to the specific needs of our clientele to ensure each experience is relaxing and unique," according to their Facebook page. Muses regularly offers monthly specials to their customers. They also host community events, such as the Client Appreciation Party on Dec. 5. Such events are meant to recognize the importance of clients. "Enjoy a night filled with wine and hors d'oeuvres, giveaways, and one-night-only Holiday Specials on retail products and gift cards! For every \$200.00 you spend on a gift card, you will receive an additional

1ST FINALIST: MYSTIQUE MEDICAL SPA & WELLNESS  
2ND FINALIST: BODY DEL SOL AESTHETICS

\$25 gift card voucher," according to the Muses Day Spa promotion for the event. According to their Facebook page, they are deeply committed to ensuring that you always feel cared for and reassured at Muses Day Spa. "We tailor each visit to your individual experience."



Photo contributed | At Muses Day Spa, client comfort is job one.

## BEST LOCAL CONSTRUCTION FIRM

### HARRIS CONSTRUCTION

Frank Lopez - STAFF WRITER

This is the second year in a row that Harris Construction was voted as the Best Local Construction Firm. Since its founding in 1914, Harris Construction has grown its legacy spanning over five generations, becoming a prominent builder in multiple sectors, including education, civic and public safety, health care, industrial and private ventures. A statement from Harris Construction said the repeated recognition as the Best Local Construction firm is a testament to the company's commitment to honesty, integrity, customer satisfaction and community involvement. The Harris team has spent years dedicated to building strong relationships, delivering exceptional projects and giving back to the community. This year, Harris Construction successfully completed several projects, including the Child Development Center for Fresno City College, The Fairmont Elementary School Ag Farm For Sanger Unified School District, and the Video Broadcasting Center at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. There is also significant progress done on new school projects including Sanger West High School Phase III, The Terry

1ST FINALIST: QUIRING GENERAL  
2ND FINALIST: PICKETT & SONS CONSTRUCTION INC.

Bradley Ed Center for Clovis Unified School District, and just starting the new King Husein Elementary School for Madera Unified School District. "As we look ahead to 2025, we are optimistic about the future. We will start new construction on two civic buildings (Reedley and Clovis) late in the year, amongst other new educational and civic projects, plus the continuation of our other large educational and civic projects. Our goal is to continue delivering exceptional results and building on our reputation as a leading contractor in both Central and Coastal California," a statement from Harris Construction read.

Frank Lopez | Writer can be reached at: 490-3465 or e-mail frank@thebusinessjournal.com



Photo contributed | Harris Construction of Fresno has a five-generation legacy of delivering projects with honest, integrity and customer satisfaction.



# North Fork tribal member wins energy award



**Photos contributed** | Elizabeth “Liz” Perez, a Navy combat veteran, was one of six 2024 recipients of the Clean Energy Hall of Fame Awards by the California Energy Commission on Friday. The awards are for leadership and achievement in advancing the state’s clean energy goals, according to a news release.

A member of the North Fork Rancheria and the only Native American woman veteran to own a licensed renewable energy development company has been recognized as a Hall of Famer in the Golden State.

Elizabeth “Liz” Perez was one of six 2024 recipients of the Clean Energy Hall of Fame Awards by the California Energy Commission on Friday. The awards are for leadership and achievement in advancing the state’s clean energy goals, according to a news release.

Perez was the recipient of the “Tribal Champion Award.” Perez is CEO and president of GC Green, Native American Energy Services and Veteran Energy Services Co. Of Pima Indian and Latino descent, Perez followed her family’s tradition of military service, becoming a combat Navy veteran.

It was during her time in the military she realized the nation’s need for sustainability and energy independence, according to the release. After her transition to civilian life, she went into the clean energy business serving tribes, veterans and other underserved communities.

“Over the past 15 years, Liz has built a thriving enterprise focused on energy security for rural and marginalized communities, including more than 50 tribal nations and 4,500 nontribal customers across California,” according to the release. “Liz has also served her country as a U.S. delegate to Israel and Japan to help advance clean energy and sustainability.”

The other 2024 recipients include: Gene Rodrigues, assistant secretary of energy with the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Electricity, received a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Julia Zeitlin, 18, founder of the Palo Alto Student Climate Coalition in Palo Alto, received the Youth Game-Changer Award.

Dr. Fan Dai, director, University of California, Berkeley, California-China Climate Institute and Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School; Christine Viterelli-Busby, grants manager, City of Arvin; and Patricia Watts, president and CEO, Faith Com Inc. dba FCI

Management (FCI) in Cerritos, each won the Clean Energy Champion Award.

## South Central Specific Plan fails in Fresno

After five tension-filled years for the development community, the Fresno City Council officially rejected the South Central Specific Plan in a 6-0 vote during last Thursday’s meeting.

Councilmember Nelson Esparza was the only councilmember not to cast a vote due to a conflict of interest. Esparza received a campaign contribution from someone who publicly opposed the plan, reported FresnoLand.

The plan’s goal was to address land use and industrial zoning in south Fresno by reducing industrial land use by 17%. Some of the industrial areas would have been converted to residential and commercial uses.

No one spoke in support of the plan, FresnoLand reported, with several environmental advocates and south central Fresno resident arguing it didn’t go far enough to mitigate the environmental impacts of industrial development.

Business owners were concerned the plan would limit future development opportunities and raise costs.

Will Oliver, CEO of the Fresno County Economic Development Corporation, shared his enthusiasm for the council’s decision Friday.

“We commend the Council for their leadership on this topic and rejecting the South Central specific plan as proposed, and directing staff to explore different options in the future,” he said.

Oliver added that he is hopeful the city can draft a zoning plan that works for the entire community.

“I think this will establish a really good basis to create innovative policies that align with state regulations, that strengthen our competitiveness regionally and across the western United States, and also promote sustainable growth for the benefit of the entire Fresno community,” Oliver said.

Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer said the plan as drafted wouldn’t address

the needs of community as a whole.

“The last five years have brought significant shifts in our community’s needs, economic landscape, and priorities. What might have worked when this plan was drafted is no longer adequate for where we are today,” Mayor Dyer stated during the council session, reported the Fresno Chamber.

Other voices from the business community speaking against the South Central Specific Plan include Mike Betts of The Betts Co.; Ethan Smith of Newmark Pearson Commercial; McKay Duran from the Central California Food Bank; local attorney John Kinsey and many others, reported the Chamber.

## Mochilicious expands to Sanger

Sanger is now a bit sweeter with the recent expansion of a Fresno business.

Mochilicious, a bakery specializing in mochi donuts, Korean corn dogs and boba drinks, recently opened its second location in Sanger at 775 N Bethel Ave, across the parking lot from Wal Mart.

Monique Keo and Jimmy In opened their first location in Fresno in 2022 at 4823 E. Butler Ave, a few doors down from the Vallarta Supermarket.

She said they love the small town feel of Sanger, and the community has been welcoming.

Keo said they opened on Black Friday, starting off with a soft opening, menu and hours.

“We are building momentum and since Black Friday, we are seeing new faces every day — and we sell out constantly,” Keo said.

The store covers 1,300 square feet, a bit larger than the original location, which is 975 square feet.

Mochi donuts are a fusion pastry combining traditional American doughnuts and Japanese mochi, a dessert made of sweet, glutinous rice flower, or mochigome. The hybrid batter gives mochi donuts a chewier and softer taste than traditional American donuts.

Their late son, Nathan, passed away from a fentanyl overdose in 2021 at 20 years old. He is the inspiration for the opening of the first location.

Keo said she feels Nathan would be proud of the success of the first location, and the opening of the second location.

A grand opening ceremony is

planned for Dec. 21 at 11 a.m.

Keo said they constantly feel the presence of Nathan, which helps them carry on with their business.

“We got to have some type of faith that makes us feel good, and makes us feel positive,” she said.

## Take 3 burgers to return

After a four-year hiatus, Des Washington and her father Brian are bringing their passion back to Downtown Fresno with the reopening of their burger restaurant, Take 3 by Grumpy Burger Lady’s — a spin on both the original Take 3 and Des’ catering business.

Washington, known affectionately as the “Grumpy Burger Lady,” said the reboot has been in the works for years since the original Take 3 Burger closed its doors in 2020.

As opposed to many businesses at the time, Take 3 Burgers did not close solely due to financial reasons. Brian decided to focus more time on his construction contracting business.

“We closed at the end of 2020,” Washington said. “It wasn’t a bad year for us; we were doing a program called ‘Spreading Burger Joy.’ By the end of the year we were ready to just kind of put a pin in it. We had planned to reopen, but I think it was more tempting for my dad to stay in construction at that time.”

In the interim, Washington kept her passion for burgers alive through Grumpy Burger Lady’s — a catering and pop-up business started after the closure of Take 3 Burgers.

She said reopening the storefront at 1230 Fulton St. will finally give a home to the name she’s come to be known by in Downtown Fresno.

Washington, who jokingly said “I’m really grumpy!” said that the Instagram name was more of a joke originally. It eventually stuck.

“That was kind of where it came from,” she said. “People are like, ‘You’re not grumpy,’ and I’ll be like, ‘It’s more of a warning...you don’t want to make me grumpy.’” And customers will hopefully leave their grumpiness at the door this Sunday, Dec. 15, with the restaurant’s grand opening and ribbon cutting at 11 a.m. Fans of Take 3 Burgers will recognize the bright and vibrant design, featuring the artwork of a local muralist.

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Sports | Page 24

friendly, affordable options for our community.”

One thing that separates the Grizzlies from their competitors is the atmosphere at home games. From inning one to nine, Chukchansi Park has various ways to keep fans entertained throughout the game.

“We have a ton of hardcore baseball fans come to our games, but we also have a lot of fans who just come to enjoy a night out at the ballpark,” Bravo said. “We are heavily focused on the entertainment value at the ballpark, the skits that Parker is doing out on the field, or any of our two hosts running around the stands. We really want to make this feel entertaining and like an experience from the moment you park to the moment you leave at the end of the night.”

Fresno State

The Fresno State athletic program underwent significant changes in 2024, which is essentially the start of a new era.

Three long-time program faces departed after former athletic director Terry Tumey and basketball coach Justin Hutson were both fired in the spring and legendary Fresno State football coach Jeff Tedford officially stepped away from coaching due to health concerns.

New athletic director Garrett Klassy and basketball coach Vance Walberg joined the program. After an inconsistent year under interim head coach Tim Skipper, Fresno State football hired Matt Entz as its next head coach.

All three hires came from outside of Fresno State. Klassy served as the deputy athletic director at the University of Houston.

“This is honestly the greatest day of my professional career,” Klassy said at his introductory press conference.

Walberg is no stranger to the Central Valley, having spent 21 years across two tenures at Clovis West High School. During those 21 years, Walberg put together an impressive and fitting 559-104 record. He also spent four years at Fresno City College, going 133-11.

Entz, the newest addition to the Bulldog family, comes to Fresno State after spending a season as the University of Southern California’s linebackers coach. Prior to his one-year stint with the Trojans, Entz spent 10 years at the University of North Dakota State.

The first five years were as the team’s defensive coordinator, and the other five were as head coach. In his five years as head coach, the Bison went a combined 60-11 and won two FCS national championships.

CV Fuego

The end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 appeared promising for Central Valley Fuego FC, with the team hiring Jermaine Jones, a hero of the United States men’s national team who scored a goal in the 2014 FIFA World Cup against Portugal.

However, not much went right for the Fuego once the season got underway in March.

On the field, the team finished tied for last place in USL League One with only five wins in 21 games.

While the product on the field wasn’t pleasant, the drama off the field was even worse.

Towards the end of the season, Jones was suspended for the rest of 2024 and was placed on probation for 2025. The Athletic, the sports department of The New York Times, released an article highlighting some of the problems from Jones’ potentially lone year as coach.

Shortly after the season concluded, the Fuego announced that they had parted ways with USL League One on Nov. 14. No announcement of plans has been made since.



Dylan Gonzales | Writer can be reached at: 490-3448 or e-mail [dylan@thebusinessjournal.com](mailto:dylan@thebusinessjournal.com)

Photo contributed | The Fresno Grizzlies lead their California League in attendance with more than 256,000 people passing through the turnstiles at Chukchansi Park.



Image contributed | After an inconsistent year under interim head coach Tim Skipper, Fresno State football hired Matt Entz as its next head coach.



Form 5500 Filers

Department of Labor Form 5500 filers - ranked by number of active employees for 2023; if tied by number of active employees for 2022

	Company	County	Active Employees			Type of Business
			2023	2022	2021	
1	<b>Tachi Yokut Tribe</b> 17225 Jersey Avenue, Lemoore, Calif. 93245 559-924-6565	Kings	1,232	1,180	1,453	Executive Offices
2	<b>Chukchansi Economic Development Authority</b> P.O. Box 1716, Coarsegold, Calif. 93614 559-256-1320	Madera	1,110	1,223	1,800	Casino Hotels
3	<b>Central Valley Meat CO.</b> 10431 8 3/4 Avenue, Hanford, Calif. 93230 559-583-9624	Kings	836	804	764	Animal (except Poultry) Slaughtering
4	<b>Hall Management Corp.</b> 759 S. Madera Avenue, Kerman, Calif. 93630-1744 559-846-7360	Fresno	631	736	928	Cotton Ginning
5	<b>Educational Employees Credit Union</b> 2222 W. Shaw Avenue, Fresno, Calif. 93711 559-437-7709	Fresno	569	525	532	Credit Unions
6	<b>Avenal Community Health Center</b> P. O Box 580, Lemoore, Calif. 93245 559-925-8800	Kings	464	471	405	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)
7	<b>Holland NUT Company</b> 2725 S Sycamore Ave, Kerman, Calif. 93630 559-846-9377	Fresno	345	339	348	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
8	<b>Spacetel LLC</b> 4762 W Jennifer Ave - Ste 107, Fresno, Calif. 93722 559-547-9040	Fresno	281	382	WND	All Other Personal Services
9	<b>Derrel's Mini Storage, Inc.</b> 3265 W. Ashlan Ave., Fresno, Calif. 93722 559-224-9900	Fresno	261	260	228	Lessors of Miniwarehouses and Self-Storage Units
10	<b>Wawona Packing Company, LLC</b> 7700 N. Palm, Fresno, Calif. 93711 559-528-4699	Fresno	243	1,171	1,286	Potato Farming
11	<b>GAR Bennett LLC</b> 8246 S. Crawford Ave, Reedley, Calif. 93654 559-638-6311	Fresno	226	298	270	Cotton Ginning
12	<b>Wakefield Farms, LLP</b> 20799 Road 132, Tulare, Calif. 93274 557-686-0245	Tulare	219	197	165	Dairy Cattle and Milk Production
13	<b>Valley Children's Specialty Medical Group, Inc.</b> 9300 Valley Children's Place, Madera, Calif. 93636 559-353-5700	Madera	218	242	499	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)
14	<b>Candor Ags, Inc.</b> 141 East Cambridge Avenue, Fresno, Calif. 93704 559-475-5430	Fresno	210	223	223	General Line Grocery Merchant Wholesalers
15	<b>Voltage Multipliers, Inc.</b> 8711 W. Roosevelt Ave., Visalia, Calif. 93291 559-651-1402	Tulare	197	200	206	Fiber Optic Cable Manufacturing
16	<b>Hinds Hospice</b> 2490 W. Shaw Ave., Fresno, Calif. 93711 559-248-8591	Fresno	193	155	149	All Other Outpatient Care Centers
17	<b>Jacobo Farm Services</b> 19388 Excelsior Ave., Riverdale, Calif. 93656 559-922-0488	Fresno	180	264	312	Cotton Ginning
18	<b>Wiebe Farms, Inc.</b> 42204 Road 52, Reedley, Calif. 93654 559-638-6861	Fresno	169	100	69	Apple Orchards
19	<b>Pacific Choice Brands, LLC</b> 4667 E. Date Avenue, Fresno, Calif. 93725 559-476-3575	Fresno	168	191	161	Frozen Fruit, Juice, and Vegetable Manufacturing
20	<b>ADCO Manufacturing</b> 2170 Academy Ave., Sanger, Calif. 93657-3795 559-875-5563	Fresno	161	167	160	Food Product Machinery Manufacturing





**GUEST VIEW**  
By Dan Walters |  
CalMatters Commentary

# California’s housing crisis has gotten worse, not better, over the last 30 years

The Public Policy Institute of California, a think tank that conducts vigorous and objective research into vital state issues, is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a series of retrospective reports. Housing, or the chronic lack thereof, is arguably the most important of those issues, since it lies at the core of so many of California’s existential challenges. They include the nation’s highest levels of homelessness and poverty, a yawning gap in generational wealth, and the outflow of people and jobs to other states with more abundant and less expensive housing. Unfortunately Public Policy Institute researchers Hans Johnson and Eric McGhee could find little progress over the past three decades, writing, “While California’s housing market has undergone tremendous changes over the years, with some aspects worsening in the last decade, the central problem — high housing costs — remains the same. “As California’s population has increased, more housing units have been built — yet housing costs

and rent increases have outpaced building,” they add. Since 1990 the state has added 3.6 million homes, up 33%, and 9.4 million residents, up 31% as of last January. California’s median home values grew 56%, from \$456,000 to \$753,000, and rents rose from \$1,300 to \$1,800. In California housing values are still more than twice the national average and rents are about 50% higher. Such high housing costs spawn other socioeconomic issues, the researchers continued, to wit: - California has the nation’s second lowest rate of home ownership, behind New York, and home ownership is particularly scant among young adults, and Blacks and Latinos of any age. “The bursting of the housing bubble that led to the Great Recession in 2008 hurt homeownership for Californians of all races and ethnicities, but African Americans and Latinos were more affected,” the study says. - High housing costs cause many Californians to be financially burdened. “The share of renters who are stressed — paying over half their income in rental costs — is

considerably higher here than in other states,” Johnson and McGhee found. “Not surprisingly, housing stress most affects lower-income Californians, who are generally already in the cheapest rental units and cannot move to escape the burden.” - Housing stress in California has been growing fastest among middle-class families; “one in six middle-class renters in California are now spending over half their income on housing.” - High costs are a major factor in the homelessness crisis. The federal government estimates that California’s homeless population increased by 47% from 2007 to 2023, while the state’s overall population grew by just 7%, and “the vast majority of Californians experiencing homelessness are unsheltered; the state accounts for almost half of the nation’s unsheltered homeless population.” - High costs drive people to other states, with the highest outflows occurring when the cost differentials are the greatest, and “this net outflow has been highest among precisely the lower- and middle-income

Californians who have been hit hardest by the cost crisis.” - Finally, the wealth gap between those who own homes and those who don’t has widened, with more than a million Californians becoming millionaires who “reflect the state’s past more than its future; they are far older and more likely to be white than the typical Californian. For many of them, this equity may be a key piece of their retirement plans. But these higher values do make it more challenging for younger Californians of modest means to buy into their first home.” Although saturated with negativity, the housing study offers a potential silver lining in that California’s population has leveled out and if demand weakens, it might be possible “that robust housing growth will put a dent in the state’s housing shortage.”

*CalMatters is a public interest journalism venture committed to explaining how California’s state Capitol works and why it matters. For more stories by Dan Walters, go to CalMatters.org.*

## Poway school district disciplined for using tax dollars to campaign for tax hike



The Fair Political Practices Commission voted Nov. 21 to penalize a school district for violating state law by using taxpayer dollars to advocate for a bond measure on the March 2020 ballot. Poway Unified School District, which operates 41 schools in the San Diego area and serves approximately 35,000 students, placed a \$448 million general obligation bond on the ballot to finance school facility maintenance. The bond, Measure P, would have been repaid through a property tax of \$30 per \$100,000 of assessed value, but was rejected by voters. The FPPC found that the school district distributed mailers and assembled a PowerPoint presentation that “unambiguously urged the passage of Measure P.” The FPPC found that the district had

costs totaling \$35,209 in campaign filings that urged residents to support Measure P but failed to register as an independent expenditure committee. The bulk of these expenditures were dedicated to distributing 60,000 copies of mailers at the public expense, costing taxpayers \$34,506. “The tenor of the communication is urgent and reflects the pressing need for improvements,” according to a stipulated agreement approved by the FPPC. “The communication positively associates the proposed measure with the benefits for students and the community. The mailer stresses long-term benefits for students’ educational success and safety and strongly implies that they can only be achieved with the passage of Measure P.” The FPPC also found that “the timing of the mailer being within 6 months of the March 2020 ballot intimately ties them together” and “suggests a strategic attempt to align the proposed benefits

with the upcoming election to garner support.” The district also failed to report expenditures on a newspaper column that featured language advocating for the tax increase, a newsletter that urged support of Measure P, and a 143-slide PowerPoint presentation to residents that outlined talking points. “Many slides are titled ‘Why do we need a bond?’ and list arguments, photos, and charts that explain and support why Measure P is necessary,” the FPPC noted. “Other slides include ‘Talking Points’ that discuss reasons to support the bond. For example, the ‘Talking Points’ slides give the viewer ideas on how to support the bond on their ‘personal time.’ The presentation is not a fair presentation of the facts and is in no doubt argumentative.” The FPPC imposed a \$13,500 penalty against the school district for distributing prohibited campaign materials at public

expense, failing to disclose campaign advertisements, and failing to file a semi-annual campaign statement. The penalty was approved by a unanimous vote. The penalty assessed against the Poway Unified School District will be paid using tax dollars, and many observers have questioned whether these penalties curb bad actors’ behavior. Responding to a CalTax social media post regarding the FPPC decision, former state Senator Steve Glazer commented: “The public trust violations by this district were significant yet the penalties allowed under the law are completely inadequate.”

*Founded in 1926, the California Taxpayers Association is the state’s largest and oldest organization representing taxpayers. Established as a nonpartisan, non-profit research and advocacy association, CalTax has a dual mission to guard against unnecessary taxation and to promote government efficiency.*

## WEB POLL

### Should corporate executives consider heightened security after the UnitedHealthcare CEO killing?

The murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson has sparked intense interest online, with many lauding the possible suspect captured this week as a folk hero. It has also put a focus on the lengths corporations should go to protect their executives from threats. Exactly half of respondents to this week’s web poll think corporate executives should consider heightened security after the killing. Another 40% say extra security isn’t necessary and 10% are unsure. Twenty votes were cast.

**YES.....50%**  
**NOT NECESSARY.....40%**  
**NOT SURE.....10%**



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# MARTY MARTINEZ

OWNER/OPERATOR | TLG APPAREL

EDUCATION: FRESNO CITY COLLEGE | AGE: 51 | FAMILY: WIFE: KRYSTAL  
DAUGHTERS: MARISA (PREVIOUS MARRIAGE), AGE 22; KAYLEY, 12; KRYSTI, 10  
SON: KAMRON, 17



**What we do:**

We offer custom apparel, full embroidery, marketing signage, banners and much more

**What’s your history in the Central Valley?**

I was born and raised in Fresno. I graduated in 1992 from Clovis West High School continued my education at Fresno City College.

**Tell us more about TLG Apparel.**

TLG Apparel offers screen printing, embroidery, custom sublimated uniforms and much more. To really understand TLG Apparel and the impact we make around the world, I would have to include our family's belief that TLG Apparel is 100% God’s business, and I am really just the operator and salesman.

In 2014, we were days away from closing our business with zero accounts/clients, and one day my wife and I prayed over our business, and we proclaimed that TLG Apparel was now God’s business. With daily prayers and faith, within one week, we started to have accounts that we never knew. As projects were complete and before we delivered, we as a family would pray over every item and our clients. Before we meet with our clients on a daily basis, we pray over their business/organization, and we pray for their families. I would have to say that I believe we are the only business that has the opportunity to pray for our clients and competitors on a daily basis!

Our clients consist of organizations, businesses and schools around the world. We service organizations in Kenya, Moldova and India. Our clients are in New York, Florida, Washington and throughout California.

**What got you into the screen-printing business?**

My career was in the restaurant industry from 1993 to 2009. In 2009 I started screen printing as a hobby. In December of 2009, I took the leap of faith and started our business. I quit my corporate position in a restaurant chain and took a graveyard shift at Denny’s to build our screen-printing business during the day. After a year of 4-5 hours of sleep, screen printing and winning clients to our business, I went full time with TLG Apparel at the end of 2010.

**Who does TLG Apparel work with?**

Our clients consist of Central Unified, Fresno Unified and Golden Plains Unified, as well as organizations including Casa of Fresno, Promesa Behavioral Health, veteran organizations such as AREAA and more than 40 churches in the Central Valley.

**What’s does the future look like for TLG Apparel?**

As we continue to grow clients throughout the United States, our new venture is to build nationwide sports training facilities with TLG Apparel as the apparel provider. Of course, this concept is still in development and realistically will begin around 2027- 2028.

**Can you tell me a bit about Thanks with a Tree?**

Thanks With A Tree started in 2014 with delivering only 33 trees for two military units in Fresno. Now, in 2024, we just delivered almost 300 Christmas trees to 12 military units from Southern California, San Jose and here in the Fresno surrounding area. This year will take us past the mark of 1,800 trees we have provided for our soldiers and their families. Thanks With A Tree is a lot of work “hunting” for financial donations to

pay for the trees and a lot of work gathering the tree counts from the military units, but with the team effort of all our supporters, we enjoy gifting the trees every year.

**How did your connection to veterans evolve over the years?**

The past three years sharing this tree event, we received suggestions to provide trees for our local veterans and we have been given donations from two veteran organizations this year.

**What’s your vision for Thanks with a Tree?**

Collaborating with four veteran organizations, we will plan to create fundraiser dinners and campaigns to intentionally extend this tree event to veterans in the Central Valley. Keep an eye out for Thanks With A Tree — great things are about to happen!

**What was your biggest failure and what did you learn from it?**

My biggest failure was not creating online stores to sell apparel or to sell clothing brands five years ago. Constantly learning from this industry, I have learned the costs and struggles of building this concept and have helped individuals start and manage with the same concept.

**What do you consider to be your biggest success and how have you tried to replicate it?**

My biggest success is my trust in the Lord and my faith in my family who continue to support me and TLG. We hope the sports training facilities will make an impact on athletes across the United States to improve their skills and passion in their sport and to provide a motivating, Godly environment.

**What was the best advice you ever received?**

Have a 1-year plan, 3-year plan and a 10-year plan — and read it every day. Most businesses create these plans but do not review them on a regular basis.

**What was your very first job and what did you learn from it?**

My first job was at a fast food restaurant in 1990. I learned so much about myself, my goals and that I/you have a choice to influence others in a positive way or negative way, and have a say in which way you choose to influence others.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

Spending time with my family from playing board games to taking trips to Morro Bay. Also, my son and I volunteer with ministries and churches in the community.

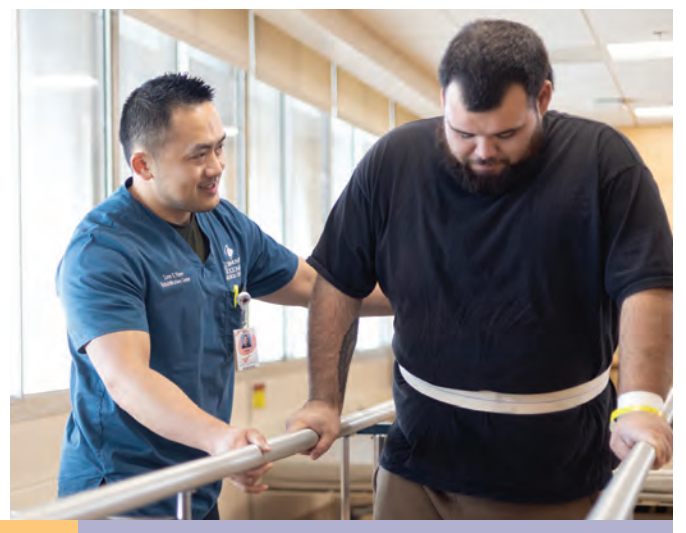
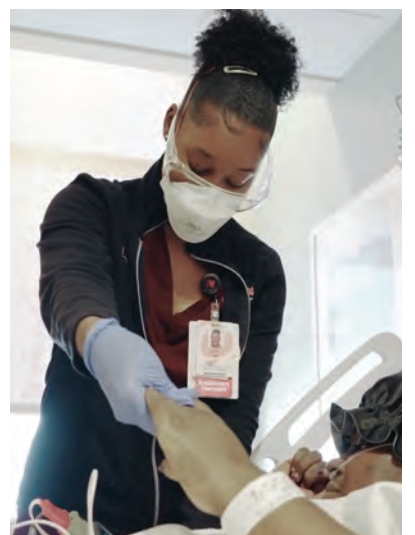
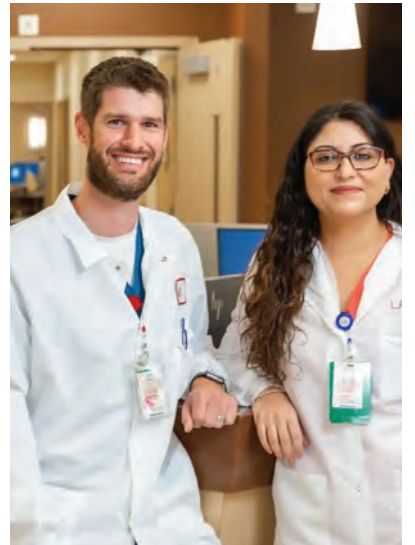




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