



WE'RE GLAD  
YOU MADE  
IT!

The Monterey County  
Business Council

*welcomes you to the*

25th Anniversary

GALA

& ANNUAL ECONOMIC VITALITY AWARDS

COVID BUSINESS  
SURVIVAL AWARDS !!



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**Paul Farmer**, Chief Operations Officer

**Jenny McAdams**, Director of Operations

**Jesus Escutia**, Program Manager, Building Business Back

**Jose Luis Barajas**, Program Analyst, Building Business Back

**Mitchell Friedman**, Facilitator, Leadership Monterey County

**Victor Valdez**, Program Manager,  
Monterey Bay Procurement Technical Assistance Center

**Rhonda DeVito**, Procurement Counselor,  
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Chevron Corporation is one of the world's leading integrated energy companies. We believe affordable, reliable and ever-cleaner energy is essential to achieving a more prosperous and sustainable world. We are focused on lowering the carbon intensity in our operations and growing lower carbon businesses along with our traditional business lines.

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California Water Service (Cal Water) is the largest regulated American water utility west of the Mississippi River and the third largest in the country. Formed in 1926, the San Jose-based company serves approximately 2 million people through 494,500 service connections in 23 districts across the state.



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Kaiser Permanente's work in the community pairs funding with the expertise and commitment of our people and 75 years of experience as the nation's largest nonprofit integrated health system. Kaiser Permanente Northern California initiatives and partnerships are designed to address social needs and community conditions to improve health for all.

WE  
APPLAUD  
YOU!!

# SILVER SPONSORS

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## TABLE SPONSORS

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...AND THE  
AWARD GOES  
TO...



DRUM  
ROLL,  
PLEASE...



Small Business Innovation  
Stonies Taphouse & Bistro

Agriculture  
Braga Fresh

Higher Education & Research  
California State University, Monterey Bay

Hospitality & Tourism  
Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay

Health & Wellness  
Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas

Nonprofit  
Community Foundation for Monterey County

Creative & Technology  
Virus Geeks

Lifetime Achievement Award  
MaryAnn Leffel

WE  
SEE YOU!

THIS  
➔

LET'S SHOW  
SOME LOVE



# Small Business Innovation

## Stonies Taphouse & Bistro

As one of the first local businesses to pivot their business model to online to-go ordering and curbside pickup, Stonies Taphouse & Bistro demonstrated resilience and innovation during the pandemic.

To be a restaurateur takes resilience and innovation, in the best of times. The pandemic pushed those requirements to the limit.

Sergio Alejo, owner-operator of Stonies Taphouse & Bistro, has demonstrated he's got resilience, innovation, and the ability to thrive.

His business, located at 1366 South Main Street in Salinas, was one of the first local businesses to pivot to online to-go ordering and curbside pickup. That flexibility not only helped feed the community while they were sheltering in place, it also kept the eatery moving forward and his staff employed. It did more than keep the doors open: Thanks to that shift in their business plan, Stonies Taphouse & Bistro was able to expand its location during the pandemic.

Alejo is no stranger to adaptation: When his Original Stonies was outbid on a lease at Northridge Shopping Center, he reinvented and expanded the eatery into its current location in the former Zeph's One-Stop. The move, he told Edible Monterey Bay at the time, was both challenging and a blessing. These days, it's a gathering spot where locals can enjoy one of the area's largest selections of craft brews, firewood-smoked BBQ, burgers, Bavarian pretzels loaded with cheese, jalapenos and bacon, and more.



# Agriculture

## Braga Fresh

For three generations, Braga Fresh has been a constant in the agricultural industry, farming from the Salinas Valley to Yuma, mixing innovation with tradition to grow, process and ship fresh vegetables worldwide.

Braga Fresh led the way in getting — and keeping — its agricultural workforce vaccinated: From the onset of COVID, the safety of its team members and their families was priority #1. Early on, the company formed a COVID response team that worked round the clock and created close to 40 new COVID steward positions to sanitize touchpoints and implement hygiene and safety measures, from temperature checks in the field to thermal imaging cameras in the salad facilities, and brought in teams of nurses to guide and educate employees. The company implemented new food safety measures to increase social distancing, incorporated Plexiglass partitions, and redesigned how and where people worked while also allowing for interaction.

Today the vertically integrated company grows, harvests, and processes fresh vegetables and leafy greens through the Josie's Organics and Braga Farms brands, with more than 1,600 employees, a large organic and conventional land base, two processing facilities, and four shipping locations. A Blue Zone workplace, Braga Fresh also sets aside 10% of farmland to beneficial habitat and has the goal of being carbon neutral by 2025.





# Higher Education & Research

## California State University, Monterey Bay

In the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) demonstrated leadership through quick, effective adaptation in response to the global health threat. The university swiftly moved to limited campus operations to slow the spread of COVID-19, implementing safety protocols so as to continue providing high-quality education to students while protecting the health and safety of its community. Already a leader in online learning, CSUMB was better prepared than many institutions and successfully transitioned to virtual instruction. It expedited the reduction of its on-campus population while finding creative ways to address a wide range of student, faculty, and staff needs, from mental health support to food insecurity.

Taking a proactive response based on scientific evidence and the guidance of public health experts, CSUMB implemented new safety and social distancing practices, new ventilation systems, and walk-up COVID testing. Halfway through the spring semester of 2020, when the majority of the 3,600 students who traditionally live on campus were sent home for the remainder of the year, CSUMB found ways to provide housing security and support for those students who, for a variety of reasons, needed to remain on campus by moving them into individualized dorms.

The creation of a “virtual raft” helped keep the Otter community connected, with social media campaigns, video messages, virtual trivia nights, poetry slams and a range of other virtual events and activities designed to encourage and connect people. Go Otters!



**California State University**  
**MONTEREY BAY**



# Hospitality & Tourism

## Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay

Janine Chicourrat, Portola Hotel & Spa's Managing Director and Chair of the Monterey County Hospitality Association, spearheaded trailblazing initiatives with hospitality and nonprofit industry leaders. A proposal was created for the County of Monterey to help bring every sector of the community together to fight COVID-19. This work resulted in the creation of the COVID-19 Collaborative.

Once the vaccine was approved, the COVID-19 Collaborative worked together to ensure those hardest hit were prioritized to receive the vaccine first. It was here that hospitality and agriculture came together. As the spokesperson representing hospitality, Ms. Chicourrat spent countless hours participating in the Board of Supervisors meetings advocating that those hardest hit receive the vaccine first, and encouraging the Board of Supervisors fund the VIDA Community Health Worker Program.

Portola Hotel & Spa achieved the Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC) STAR™ accreditation, a gold standard for prepared facilities. Portola Hotel has proven practices and procedures at the property that meet the most stringent protocols for cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention. Portola Hotel continues to offer COVID-19 testing at the hotel to support a safe and healthy environment for staff, guests of the hotel, and the community.

Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay is California's premier family-friendly destination offering easy access to Monterey's most popular attractions. Leading the way as the Central Coast's first LEED® Certified hotel, Portola reflects unparalleled modern coastal luxury in downtown Monterey.



**PORTOLA HOTEL & SPA**  
AT MONTEREY BAY



# Health & Wellness

## Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas

Since its founding in 1980, Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas (CSVs) has been dedicated to providing access to quality comprehensive health care for men, women, and children, with a focus on families who work in the agricultural industry. That commitment to the farmworker community — deemed an essential workforce but one that was at disproportionately higher risk of contracting COVID-19 — was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic as it led community support efforts at a time when healthcare systems across the U.S. were undoubtedly placed under incredible constraints.

Through strategic collaboration, CSVs defied the odds by providing COVID-19 support to patients and those at highest risk of infection, developing strategies to meet the needs of its agricultural community in real-time, from making and distributing face masks for workers in the midst of a nationwide shortage to providing health education to workers in the field and sharing the best preventative measures to combat misinformation surrounding COVID-19.

CSVs – in partnership with the Grower-Shipper Association (GSA) of Central California and other key leaders – provided COVID-19 testing to maintain the local food supply running safely, and as the development and availability of vaccines increased, CSVs advocated for the county's farm workers to ensure that they joined doctors and other front-line workers in receiving the first round of COVID-19 vaccines.

Such partnerships allowed for the execution of mass vaccination clinics for farm workers. By protecting the front-line workers responsible for our nation's food supply, CSVs demonstrated that we could succeed even amid a global emergency by working with businesses, local agencies, and community leaders.



# Nonprofit

## Community Foundation for Monterey County

Monterey County faced enormous challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) led the philanthropic response, granting \$4.3 million to local nonprofits through its COVID-19 Relief Fund. Grants provided basic needs for vulnerable populations, operating support, prevention and recovery programming, and the mental health impacts of COVID-19. In addition, the Foundation attracted funding from outside partners to expand and sustain the invaluable VIDA Community Health Worker program. Initially funded by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors with \$4.9 million, the CFMC received grants from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Central California Alliance for Health, and Together Toward Health, a program of the Public Health Institute.

Community Foundation for Monterey County manages the VIDA program, meeting weekly with Community Health Workers (CHWs) who help provide resources to their communities. VIDA had a total of 396,000 interactions countywide. CHWs supported more than 100+ vaccine and testing clinics, provided 130,000 education materials and resources, and administered 21,000+ COVID-19 tests through the assistance and support of CFMC.

Community Foundation for Monterey County partnered with the California Department of Public Health to certify VIDA Community Health Workers for COVID-19 testing, arranged for testing in our most vulnerable communities during severe shortages, coordinated vaccination clinics to ensure countywide equitable access, and secured PPE and COVID-19 at-home tests to distribute throughout Monterey County, including schools. The CFMC also presented free webinars geared toward local small businesses that helped them navigate COVID-19 regulations.

The Community Foundation for Monterey County has strengthened communities for more than 75 years, with \$36 million granted in 2021 alone and more than \$270 million in cumulative grantmaking. Its impact will be felt throughout Monterey County for years to come.





# Creative & Technology

## Virus Geeks

Throughout all the stages of the pandemic, Virus Geeks has played an integral role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping Monterey County residents, employees, and visitors safe and informed.

Through a range of strategic partnerships, the privately held company was able to immediately deploy regional free mobile testing at locations throughout Monterey County, including Monterey Peninsula Regional Airport, Monterey Peninsula College, Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay, and other local locations. Virus Geeks offers multilingual client services and school site testing serving over 100,000 students across 200 California campuses.

As a data-driven bio-health technology company, Virus Geeks continues to develop health-centric initiatives to improve the quality of life through strategic partnerships across healthcare and biotechnology sectors. These partnerships help large populations gain access to molecular diagnostic testing and provide organizations with the technology to efficiently manage data.

Virus Geeks' swift response to setting up testing sites helped keep the spread of the highly contagious virus in check and invariably kept countless workplaces and businesses open. The company's readily accessible testing sites and quick-turnaround PCR tests also ensured that patients who did test positive could seek early treatment immediately.

# Lifetime Achievement Award

## MaryAnn Leffel

Honored for her decades-long work in the business community. MaryAnn is a founder of Monterey County Business Council and has served as an executive in the banking industry for 45 years. Her community work includes the Monterey Peninsula Airport District Board, she currently serves as chair of the Local Agency Formation Commission, and recently retired after 25 years on the Monterey County Workforce Development Board.



MaryAnn co-founded CSUMB's Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, Central Coast Broadband Consortium, Competitive Clusters Monterey County and Leadership Monterey County. Her past board positions include Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Volunteer Center of Monterey Peninsula, Leadership Monterey Peninsula, Monterey County Overall Economic Development Commission, Natividad Medical Center, Monterey County Agricultural Education and Monterey County Revolving Loan Fund. In addition, she has served on Meals on Wheels Monterey Peninsula, Interim, Inc., Monterey County Film Commission, Carmel Business Association, Old Monterey Business Association, United Way Monterey County, and the City of Seaside's Economic Development Commission.

MaryAnn was named California Chamber of Commerce Small Business Advocate of the Year in 2001 and Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 2012.

**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
SERVICE, MAL!!**







## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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Luis Alvarez, Alvarez Technology Group

Past Chairman of the Board:

Pete Scudder, Scudder Roofing and Solar

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# WHAT WE DO



[WWW.MCBC.BIZ](http://WWW.MCBC.BIZ)

Monterey County Business Council (MCBC) is a 501 (c)(6) membership-only organization comprised of professionals from business, government, and nonprofit sectors working together on countywide issues. Monterey County Business Council's mission is to forge cross-sector alliances to support the development of jobs and business opportunities throughout Monterey County. We provide programming to assist local business and advocacy to keep our economy thriving. MCBC takes great pride in being a strong voice for business in Monterey County.



[WWW.MONTEREYCOUNTYBUSINESS.COM](http://WWW.MONTEREYCOUNTYBUSINESS.COM)

The Building Business Back (BBB) program was established in partnership with the County of Monterey, to help local business owners access grants, loans, workshops, and other resources. BBB works collaboratively with numerous local business support organizations. Our staff is entirely bilingual, allowing us to offer services in English and Spanish. Building Business Back serves all businesses in Monterey County, with an emphasis on unincorporated areas, minority-owned, women-owned, and LGBTQ-owned businesses.



[WWW.MONTEREYBAYPTAC.COM](http://WWW.MONTEREYBAYPTAC.COM)

The Monterey Bay Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) serves 16 counties in California. The mission of the Monterey Bay PTAC is to assist businesses in obtaining local, state, and federal government contracts. This helps to generate employment and improve the general economic condition of the Central California region. Our PTAC team provides procurement technical assistance to help companies in selling their products or services to the appropriate government agency. Our PTAC counselors provide no-cost confidential counseling, education, and document preparation.



[WWW.LEADERSHIPMC.ORG](http://WWW.LEADERSHIPMC.ORG)

This 10-month, management level educational program (February to November) offers a comprehensive focus on economic drivers of Monterey County. Graduates take on many roles in the community including membership on nonprofit boards, participation on city and county boards and commissions, and public office. Leadership Monterey County builds awareness of local business, community issues, and encourages involvement to help shape the future of Monterey County.





MONTEREY COUNTY  
**BUSINESS  
COUNCIL**



[WWW.MCBC.BIZ](http://WWW.MCBC.BIZ)