



Volume 25

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18 COMPLETE CITIZENS IN THE KNOW: At the Nov. 3 City Council meeting, participants who completed the City's first, "Citizens in the Know Program" were presented with Certificates of Completion by Council members. "Citizens in the Know" is designed to provide an educational opportunity for citizens through interaction with local government officials and staff. The Program began on Wednesday, Oct. 1, and ran for five consecutive Wednesdays, concluding on Saturday, Nov. 1, with a tour of the city with City Manager Steve Salomon. Areas covered included: Introduction to City Government; Administrative Services and Budget 101; Community Development/Housing and Economic Development/Public Works; Parks and Recreation; and Public Safety. The program concluded on Saturday, Nov. 2, with a tour of the City given by the City Manager. Twenty-three individuals applied for and were accepted, and 18 completed the program. Those individuals are: Paul Fry, general manager, Visalia Fox Theater; Rey Montero, tax preparer, H&R Block; Olivia Velasquez, instructional consultant support technician, Tulare County Office of Education; Renee Prescott, real estate appraiser, The Hopper Company; Maria Helm, broker associate, All Estates Realtors; Maile Melkonian, self-employed in commercial property; Chris Crawford, civil engineer, Lane Engineers, Inc.; Brian Newton, retired elementary school teacher; Richard Leigh, retired, part-time agriculture sampler; Fred Weber, partner, Forrester, Weber & Associates, LLC; Judi Pirnstill, owner, Winners Circle Realty; Stanley Bennett, president, Cal & Stan Inc.; Micah Escobedo, team member, Target; Slade Childers, farm loan program technician, USDA-Farm Service Agency; Milton S. "Stan" Beal, retired; Michelle M. Cox, hemo-dialysis technician, DaVita Dialysis; Bob Grieb, retired school teacher; and Danielle Evenson, benefits counselor, Kaweah Delta Medical Center.

GANG TASK FORCE EFFORTS 'ON TARGET': The efforts of the Multi-Agency Gang Intervention Task Force married well with a "Best Practices Model" by the U.S. Department of Justice which addresses community gang problems across the country. In August, 2006, the Task Force came together to work in a focused collaborative effort to reduce gang participation and violence. Since it was formed, good headway has been made in addressing this problem. Visalia has seen a reduction in gang-related violence over the last year. Homicides are down 20 percent, deadly weapon assaults are down 25 percent, and drive-by shootings are down 30 percent, Police Chief Carden told City Council members at the Nov. 3 work session. A comparative analysis of the efforts of the City of Visalia and the Multi-Agency Gang Intervention Taskforce in regard to the suggested "best practices" model provided by the U.S. Department of Justice shows many of the local efforts mirror those in the model. In his remarks to the City Council, Chief Carden highlighted five strategies key to a successful best practices model and utilized by the Task Force. They are: 1) Community mobilization and involvement of local citizens; 2) suppression using formal and informal social control procedures; 3) organizational change and development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective of available, potential resources; 4) the development of a variety of specific education, training and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth, and; 5) social intervention of youth-serving agencies to reach out to these youth.

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BATTLE OF THE BADGES BLOOD DRIVE: Mark your calendars for the 7th annual South Valley Battle of the Badges Blood Drive through Tuesday, Nov. 11, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Central California Blood Center, 1515 S. Mooney Blvd., in Visalia. Donors will receive a commemorative T-shirt and donor reward coupons.

SOUTH VALLEY CITIES COLLABORATE ON ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION: The Visalia City Coach Route 12 now provides Exeter and Farmersville residents with alternative transportation to grocery and commercial shopping. Until recently, bus passengers have only had one bus option to get to and from the City of Visalia—Route 9. Route 12 offers an alternative route to Mooney Boulevard. “We’re happy to work with the cities of Farmersville and Exeter to increase public transportation service,” said Monty Cox, Transit Manager for the City of Visalia. Route 12 begins in downtown Exeter, heads west on Visalia Road through Farmersville and drops off on Mooney Boulevard near Packwood Creek Shopping Center. It runs Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monthly passes are \$30 and can be purchased at the Visalia Transit Center, Exeter Pick ‘n Go and Mercado Sol Del Valle in Farmersville. New passengers can take advantage of the “HOP” program which allows them to receive half off their monthly passes (\$15 each) for six months. For more information on this new route, contact the City of Visalia Transit Department at 713-4750.

TV VIEWERS GEAR UP FOR CONVERSION TO ALL-DIGITAL TELEVISION: After Feb. 17, 2009, full-power television stations will broadcast in digital only. Digital broadcasting allows stations to offer improved picture and sound quality and is more efficient than analog. A digital television (a TV with an internal digital tuner) will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air programming after February, 17, 2009. If you have an analog television, you will need a digital to analog converter box to continue to watch broadcast television on that set. A converter box will also enable you to see any additional multicast programming that your local stations are offering. To help consumers with the DTV transition, the Government established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. Every U.S. household is eligible to receive up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes. The coupons may only be used for eligible converter boxes sold at participating consumer electronic retailers, and the coupons must be used at the time of purchase. A one-time cost of \$40 to \$70 each is estimated for the digital-to-analog converter boxes. For information on the coupon program, visit www.dtv2009.gov.

PARKS & RECREATION--WEEKEND EVENTS: November 8th will boast three big events. First, wake up early to participate in the “3rd Annual Veterans Day Run & Walk”. This healthy & affordable event will take place at Plaza Park with registration beginning at 7 a.m. This event features a 5K & 10K Run, and a 5K Walk and a Kids Fun Run walk. For more details, call 713-4365. The Second Big event of the day is the Treasure Hunters Stop & Shop event, which will mix the unique treasures of a garage sale with a series of arts & craft booths. The event will take place at Recreation Park/ Anthony Community Center from the hours of 8:00-11:00am. Each person is sure to find a treasure worth searching for. So whether you join us as a vendor or a shopper, this is sure to be a memorable experience. For more information call Juan Mendoza at 713-4461. Lastly, Adults 21 years and older are invited to travel with us through the Madera Wine Country. Cost is \$40 each and includes a fun day of wine and food sampling. For more information on how to “book” your spot, contact Terry Romero at 713-4483.

TRANSIT RIDERSHIP NUMBERS UP: Transit ridership for September was up over 20% on Fixed Routes, and total year-to-date ridership is up 15.3%. A total of 130,422 passengers, 17.6 per hour, rode on the fixed routes in September, compared to 108,555, 16.7 an hour, in September, 2007. Ridership on the Farmersville/Exeter Route 9 was up 23.6% in September, from 7,011 in 2007 to 8,667 in 2008. Ridership on this route was up 20.8% from 22,661 in 2007 to 27,384 in 2008.

BUILDING PERMITS DROP—LOWEST LEVELS IN DECADE: The numbers of building permits issued continued their steady decline since April. Statistics through October 2008 are at their lowest levels in all of 2000, said City Manager Steve Salomon. The total number of permits was down 19% year to date for 2008 with 3,410 permits issued compared to 4,220 for 2007. The total valuation of all permits was down 37%, from \$321,168,101 in 2007 to \$202,261,976. Historically, Salomon said 30 percent of the economy in Visalia is related to development.

SOME GOOD NEWS: BlueScope Steel North America has submitted plans to the city of Visalia for an expansion of its plant at 7440 Doe Avenue. “We are expanding our facility by 115,000 square feet to meet demand in the western region of North America. in order in anticipation of more work for our market in Western Canada,” said Scott K. Wilson, Operations Manager for BlueScope Buildings.

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