

THE
Voice
of **Business**

The 5th Annual Fairfield-Suisun
Chamber of Commerce

Buzz
Awards



Sheila McCabe
K.I. JONES AWARD

IN THIS issue



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2018 Buzz Awards

The Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce honors the businesses and people who make a difference in our communities.

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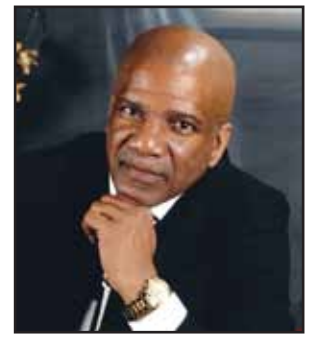
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I'm Ready to Get Started as Your New Chairman

My name is Charles McCullar and I'm very honored to be your Chairman of the Board of Directors for our chamber for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Many of you may not know me, so let me introduce myself. I am the co-owner of Front2Back Designs with my wife, Dionne. Most folks know me as "Dionne's husband" or the "back of Front2Back Designs," long-running joke. I have been a member of the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber since 2003. I also served as an Ambassador for seven years, before becoming Chief Ambassador for three and a half years; hereafter, nominated for Ambassador of the Year for 2016. I've also served on the Board of Directors since 2016.

I have many tasks during my year as Board Chair, but my priority is to continue on the path that the chamber has been on for the past few years. We will continue maximizing our success with community partners, such as the Fairfield- Suisun, Travis and Vacaville Unified School Districts, the partnership with Travis Air Force Base, the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee (TRAFC), Solano County Office of Education, City of Fairfield, City of Suisun City, Solano County, Fairfield Main Street Association, North Texas Street Business Association and the Small Business Development Center. This partnership has created programs like Inspire Dreams Start Now, Inspire Dreams Move Forward, Work Ready Certification, A Hand Up Not a Hand Out, Leadership Today and Travis Regional Armed Forces, which only makes us stronger as a community. Our business has been personally involved with Inspire Dreams Start Now and Work Ready Certification for several years. If you have never participated in either, it is very humbling to mentor our future, knowing you had a small part to play in their future.

I also intend to make sure we live up to the Mission of the Chamber: "To improve the local economic base through active advocacy and programs to assist our members."

As well as following our Vision: "The Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce is an energetic and visionary organization in our region. We are committed to building a more prosperous community with equality for all. Every business in our region should be a member of this vital organization."

Last year, a survey was sent to the membership, wanting to know what our membership needs were. From your feedback, we learned our membership wanted the chamber to provide better business relationships, assistance to connect them with city resources, advocate as it relates to business at the local, state and federal government levels, and increased opportunities for networking.

Keeping in alignment with our Mission, Vision (and membership needs), I have several goals I want to focus on. One of which is increasing business education, training, as well as increasing our marketing so our members (and non-members) know the value in joining our chamber. Over the next year, I'd like to challenge each member of the chamber to bring in one new member.

We began providing seminars to assist business with social media training and internet security, which plays a key role in sustaining any business. Also, if you've yet to attend our monthly Lunch Mobs, you're missing out on a delicious opportunity to dine at our local food establishments and network with other members of our community. You spoke, we listened! We are allowing you more

Continued on Page 26

chairman's club sponsors



calendar

AUGUST

7
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

8
WED

CHAMBER LUNCH MOB

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Vinny & Rosie's, 603 Main St., Suisun City. All are welcome, no RSVP required.

9
THU

JOINT MIXER WITH VACAVILLE CHAMBER

5:30 to 7 p.m., Heretic Brewing Company, 1052 Horizon Drive, Suite B, Fairfield.

13
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

14
TUE

ADVOCACY COUNCIL MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

18
SAT

VIP WINE, FOOD AND BREW

3 to 6 p.m., during the 27th Annual Tomato Festival, 601 Texas St., Fairfield. \$45/person OR \$50 online/at the door. www.fairfieldsuisunchamber.com.

20
MON

TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE

Noon to 1 p.m., Fuddruckers, 1750 Travis Blvd., Fairfield

28
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

29
WED

CHAMBER 101: DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHAMBER BENEFITS?

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

SEPTEMBER

4
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

10
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

11
TUE

ADVOCACY COUNCIL MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

8
WED

CHAMBER LUNCH MOB

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Alejandro's Taqueria, 936 Texas St., Fairfield. All are welcome, no RSVP required.

SEPTEMBER, CONTINUED

14
THU

JOINT MIXER WITH HISPANIC CHAMBER

5:30 to 7 p.m., Fairfield Chevrolet Subaru, 2501 Martin Road, Fairfield.

17
MON

TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE

Noon to 1 p.m., Fuddruckers, 1750 Travis Blvd., Fairfield

25
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

26
WED

CHAMBER 101: DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHAMBER BENEFITS?

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

OCTOBER

2
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

4
THU

JOINT MIXER WITH VACAVILLE CHAMBER

5:30 to 7 p.m., Fox Real Estate Group & the Vacaville Opera House, Vacaville Town Square, Vacaville.

8
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

9
TUE

ADVOCACY COUNCIL MEETING

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

10
WED

CHAMBER LUNCH MOB

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saffron Indian Cuisine & Bar, 739 Texas St., Fairfield. All are welcome, no RSVP required.

15
MON

TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE

Noon to 1 p.m., Fuddruckers, 1750 Travis Blvd., Fairfield

23
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.

31
WED

CHAMBER 101: DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHAMBER BENEFITS?

8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, 1111 Webster St.



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The 5th Annual Fairfield-Suisun
Chamber of Commerce

Buzz Awards



K.I. Jones

AWARD



Sheila McCabe



BY BRIANNA BOYD

When Sheila McCabe was put in charge of community engagement for the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District four years ago, she knew from the start she had to think outside the box.

She was the first person to be hired as the executive director of administrative services and community engagement, and the school board tasked her with the responsibility of serving as a liaison between the schools and the community.

“It was the board’s desire for the district to be more engaged with the community,” she remembers. “I remember thinking to myself, ‘what does this job really mean?’ I didn’t have a model to follow. And as I was pondering that, I realized that one of the challenges in education is too often you think of partnering as a way of asking for funds. In order to have the impact the board wanted this position to have, it had to be different.”

In the three years she served in the role,



McCabe, now the district's assistant superintendent of educational services, jumped head first into the local

community, partnering with the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber as well as small and large businesses to find opportunities for children and the schools.

"We really began thinking about the goals we all wanted to accomplish and how they could align with the needs of our schools and the district," she said. "Once it got out that I was the 'connector,' I'd have organizations call me and we'd develop joint projects. I'd hear about the project they were trying to accomplish, then connect them with the school that was the best fit. Then, the organizations and site leaders would take it and do amazing things for the kids."

Those three years were some of the most rewarding in her career as an educator, and her dedication did not go unnoticed. McCabe was honored with the chamber's K.I. Jones Award at the Buzz Awards in May. Her family surprised her onstage when her name was called.

"It was a complete surprise," she said. "We were there to honor our Educator of the Year and as Monte (Hoover) was describing who was receiving this award, nothing he was saying was making me think it was me. When my picture popped up, I turned and looked at our superintendent and was like – 'that's me!' And the next thing I see is my family coming out. It was such a nice surprise and for them to be able to keep it all quiet – that's amazing!"

McCabe has deep roots in Solano County. She grew up on her family's property outside of Dixon and still lives there today with her husband, Lloyd. Her family raised cattle, and she was very involved with 4-H and FFA as she was growing up. As a teenager, she was the Solano County Farm Bureau Queen and was a regional reporter for FFA.

After graduating from UC Davis, she accepted an agriculture teaching position in Southern California. She thought she'd be a teacher her entire career but soon began moving on to leadership positions, first as a student body adviser and then as an assistant principal. She eventually moved back to Northern California, where she worked at Vanden High School for 11 years, as an assistant principal and principal, before she was hired to be Fairfield-Suisun's director of secondary education in 2009.

Prior to joining the Fairfield-Suisun school district nine years ago, most of McCabe's community work centered in Dixon. But that changed as she became more involved with the Fairfield-Suisun business community.

“
Every job you go into, you learn something, and all the people I've been able to meet – they have all had such a profound impact on me.”

SHEILA McCABE

"It was all about boots on the ground, rolling up your sleeves, talking about common interests, and getting those partnerships and projects set up," she said. "One of the best things that ever happened to me was being able to do that job for three years before moving into the position I am in now. Every job you go into, you learn something, and all the people I've been able to meet – they have all had such a profound impact on me. And as I moved into educational services, I took that knowledge that our work in the community is so important."

There were so many projects and partnerships it is hard for McCabe to pick her favorites. She describes the district's partnership with Liberty Church as a "model." Liberty Church wanted to give back to the schools but never knew who to contact. McCabe initially reached out because the Public Safety Academy needed temporary parking space. Once they realized the shared interests, McCabe connected them with the right school sites, and the church adopted three schools, providing mentors for students and special breakfasts for teachers.

Another partnership emerged from McCabe and Superintendent Kris Corey's service as Honorary Commanders with Travis Air Force Base. McCabe, an honorary commander with the Band of the Golden West, helped coordinate a one-week annual summer STEM camp for sixth- and seventh-graders at Vandenberg Air Force Base. There are around 40 students who participate in this free camp every year, and it is incredibly popular with the children.

She also fondly remembers the first time she walked into the chamber of commerce. The district was hiring 100 new teachers, and she wanted to help them connect with the local business community. With help from chamber staff, gift bags were put together with coupons to area businesses.

That partnership between the school district and chamber has only grown in recent years, especially with the success of Inspire: Dreams Start Now. McCabe was on the original committee and is now part of the team coordinating the high school component.

"The opportunity to impact kids, there is nothing that beats that," she said. "I just love what I do."

The 5th Annual Fairfield-Suisun
Chamber of Commerce

Buzz Awards



Business OF THE YEAR



Gillespie's Abbey Carpet & Floor



Monte Hoover, Tempest Hoover and Craig Hoover.

BY BRIANNA BOYD

If the walls of a business could talk, the stories Gillespie's Abbey Carpet & Floor could tell!

Almost 45 years ago, brothers Monte and Craig Hoover started their first jobs when their parents, Russ and Charlene, took over the carpet and furniture cleaning business. Monte, 17 at the time, cleaned carpets “the old-fashioned way,” while younger brother Craig, 15, and discovering he was a “hands-on, fix-it kid,” swept the floors, painted and played more than a few practical jokes on his brother.

These days, they are still cleaning carpets – and installing them too – but now it is as president and vice-president of Gillespie's, one of the most beloved locally owned companies in Fairfield.



Gillespie's Abbey Carpet & Floor, the chamber's Fairfield Business of the Year, has seen its own share of growth and changes in the past four decades

but the heart of the company has remained the same. Family and community have – and always will be – the touchstones for the business.

“Your paycheck is one thing, but the return you get from being involved and making a difference, whether it is with your time or a donation, that return is invaluable,” said Tempest Hoover, Craig’s daughter and Gillespie’s showroom manager. “I’ve really discovered that in recent years, watching what the whole family does and seeing the respect people have for our business and for my dad, my uncle and my grandparents. Those are the moments that remind me why we’ve been here as long as we have.”

Inside one of Tempest’s desk drawers is a black-and-white photo of her as a 1-year-old with her grandmother at Gillespie’s old location on North Texas Street. A few years after that photo was taken, Gillespie’s moved to its current location on Chadbourne Road. Tempest can remember playing

“ Even after 35 years of installing, I still love to go out and get dirty. ”

CRAIG GILLESPIE

hide-and-seek between carpet samples and area rugs with her brother, Bryce, while all the adults in her family worked.

“When I was younger, I saw this place as the business my family worked for,” she said. “But now, when I see how involved we are and I talk to our customers, I can’t even put into words how valuable it all is. It’s something you can’t even begin to understand as a child. I feel honored to be a part of it all.”

Russ and Charlene Hoover, now retired and living in Oregon, purchased Gillespie’s from original owners Bernard and Marcy Gillespie. Bernard opened the business on Texas Street in 1934. Although it is now best known for flooring sales and installation, originally, it focused on cleaning, primarily fire and water restoration.

Both of the older Hoover brothers have strong memories of the Gillespies. Craig, now the carpet installation manager, remembers Marcy Gillespie as a headstrong woman, who was not afraid to tell the teen he was pushing the broom wrong.

“I actually trained under Bernard Gillespie for six months,” Monte said. “He was 75 at the time and his ways were all tried-and-true old ways. I remember having many discussions with him about the new technology I was hearing about in the industry and he’d tell me, ‘this new technology doesn’t work. I know this works and this is the way we’re going to continue to do it.’ I remember all of that real well because we used to get into it, and he’d look at me like, ‘you don’t know what you’re talking about, kid.’”

One of the many things the brothers appreciated about their dad was Russ Hoover gave his sons room to discover new methods and learn from mistakes.

“He was very forward-looking,” Monte said. “Even back then, the thing my dad really stressed was always being the leader in new technology and taking on new methods. We were one of the first in the area to do steam cleaning. We were also one of the first companies in the area to start utilizing computers and to have a website, developed by Russ Hoover himself. We still carry that culture with us.”

Just a few months after taking over Gillespie’s, the Hoovers joined the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Com-

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merce. They celebrated their ribbon cutting in September 1975. The newspaper clipping from that day is framed and displayed in their showroom.

Meanwhile, in the back of their warehouse is a sign with a quote from Charlene Hoover's father – "How you treat your customers today will impact how many customers you have in the future." It is a mantra the family has lived by all of these years.

Monte, Craig and youngest brother Steve all worked at Gillespie's through their high school and college years. Monte and Craig were in their late 20s and early 30s when they realized the long-term career opportunities in front of them.

When Gillespie's began offering carpet installation in the 1980s, Craig found his niche and, with business growing exponentially, "I knew they couldn't live without me. As they say, I know the business from the floor up."

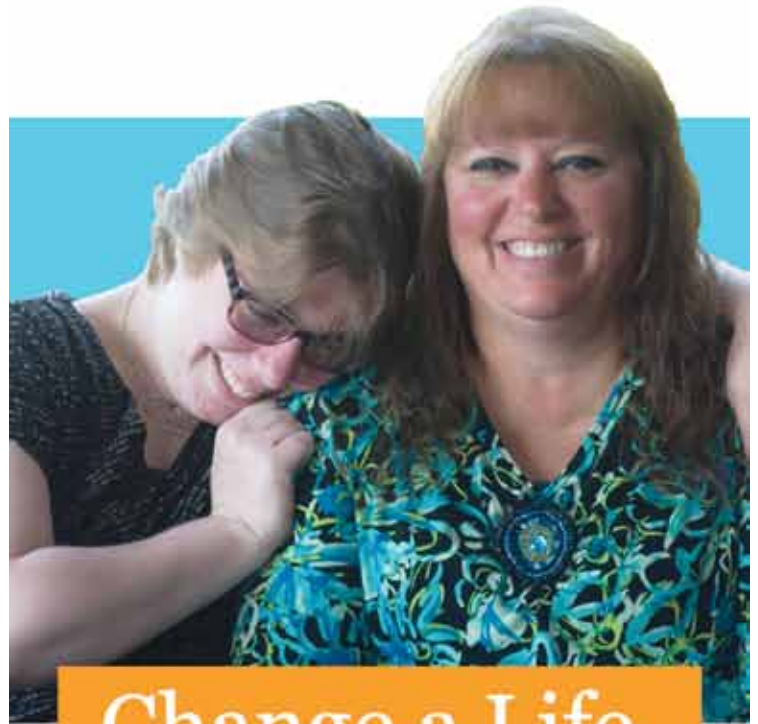
"Even after 35 years of installing, I still love to go out and get dirty," he added with a laugh. "When I got off the floor and came into the shop full-time, it almost felt like a demotion because it was such a change of life for me. Even now, I still go out and troubleshoot and help the guys out. And when we are done, it's a joy to see people super happy with what they chose."

Over the years, well over a dozen Hoover family members and extended family members have worked at Gillespie's. Today, of the 15 employees and various sub-contractors, six are part of the Hoover family, including both of Craig's children, Tempest and Bryce. Many of the company's employees have been with them for years, making them all an extended family, Tempest added.

"I have so many memories here," she said. "I can remember doing our 75th Anniversary mailers and my tongue was raw from licking all the envelopes and stamps. I can remember my grandpa always carrying the emery boards in his shirt pocket, and now, Monte does the same thing. He's sounding more and more like him every day.

"I had always loved interior design," she added. "I never thought of it as a practical career, but it was under my nose this entire time."

Unlike her brother, who has been working the trade since he was a teenager, Tempest did not plan to join the family business. She went to school at UC Berkley and lived in the Bay Area. She returned home to take the position at Gillespie's.



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But do not think for a moment it was handed to her. Monte invited her into the shop for a two-hour interview – “he has known me for my entire life, 23 years at the time, what more do you have to ask?” - before he offered her the job.

“I wanted to bring her on to increase our own community involvement,” Monte said. “I have said many times and continue to say, our business is only as healthy as the community we’re providing products and services to and it’s important to us to make sure our community is healthy because in return, our business will be too.”

Although they have been involved in the community for decades, that passion for service was really brought to the forefront in the last 10 years. Monte’s extensive involvement includes multiple terms on the Fairfield-Suisun chamber’s board of directors, the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee board, the Public Safety Academy, Travis Air Force Base’s Honorary Commander program, and many

more. The Fairfield Main Street Association has nicknamed him the “Voice of Fairfield” as he MC’s all of the parades. And then there is Tempest, a member of Soroptimist International, the chair of the chamber’s ambassador committee, and a founding member of a young professionals network group.

“One of the things I try to stress to people is that even if you don’t have the financial resources to support organizations, they always need volunteers, those boots on the ground,” Monte said. “I actually believe that’s a more humbling, rewarding experience.”

After four decades in business, the Hoovers often look toward the future and what may be in store. Both brothers can’t help but imagine retirement down the line, and they know whenever that time comes, the business is in good hands.

“Tempe’s very enthusiastic about moving forward and learning all she can, and that’s very special,” Craig said. “I see our future – and I see my retirement too, with a big boat heading to Alaska for the summer. I’ll be Captain Craig while Tempe’s working and sending me money. Can you see it?”

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Buzz Awards

Suisun City

Business

OF THE YEAR



SK Creative Arts

BY BRIANNA BOYD

Moments before her name was called as Suisun City's Business of the Year, Stephanie Knight of SK Creative Arts was doing what she has done at every Buzz Awards since the show's creation in 2013 – working the production booth.

Knight produces the Buzz Awards every year. She puts together the slideshow and music that plays, as well as the end credits. She helps to ensure the ceremony goes off without a hitch and traditionally, she knows the winners ahead of time.

This year, with Knight as a nominee, she and Fairfield-Suisun chamber staff had to be a little creative. She created slides for each Suisun City business nominee and with help from her husband, Jeff, the winner's slide was added moments before the ceremony started without Knight knowing. When her name and image flashed on the screen, she was shocked.

"I remember as I was walking up, I knew what I wanted to say, but I completely forgot because I was still in show management mode," she said with a laugh. "I didn't really have the chance to think much about winning until after the show was done. Then, I was super humbled and kind of blown away, because I'm one of the 'little guys,' I'm a one-person business. I would never have thought that I would be





honed right alongside some of the large, difference-maker businesses. It blows me away.”

Knight, who opened her SK Creative Arts in 2013, specializes in graphic design, branding and video services. She may be a one-woman show – she often jokes her cat, Cranberry, and dog, Thurston, both always present in her home office, are her creative inspiration – but her work and community involvement reach throughout Solano County.

Altogether, she has over 100 clients, most based in Solano County. She is a member of the Fairfield-Suisun, Vacaville and American Canyon Chambers of Commerce, and received the Best of Graphic Design award in the Vacaville Reporter’s ‘Best Of’ Awards in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

“For me, the best part of my job is when I do a design for someone and their response is, ‘wow, that is exactly what I was thinking – it’s like you read my mind, but better,’” Knight said. “It’s very satisfying when I can help someone’s ideas become a reality.”

She has been an active member of the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce since she opened her own business. She became an ambassador in 2015 and this year is the

committee’s Chief-Elect.

“It’s a great way to pitch in and be an active part of the chamber,” Knight said. “Seeing how the ambassadors work at a mixer is like watching a well-oiled machine.”

Being a part of the chamber has also given her the opportunity to build camaraderie and friendships with other business owners. She also enjoys working with chamber staff on design projects. She created the Fairfield-Suisun Cityopoloy Board in 2014, and does graphics for events and mixers.

Knight is also involved in Inspire: Dreams Start Now, an annual interactive career fair at the KROC Center for all eighth- graders in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District. She has had a booth at the fair since it began three years ago, and this is her second year on the committee.

She wanted to become more involved because she felt she could bring an entrepreneurial perspective to the fair.

“I want to be able to introduce entrepreneurship to kids as an option for a career,” she said. “I knew I wanted to be a business owner before I was 12 years old. My parents owned a rental store in Phoenix and I used to wait on customers in my roller skates. I’d plan pretend events with all the party rental stuff. I’d plan pretend weddings for 1,200 people. I even designed the invitations! I knew even then that I wanted to be a business owner, but I didn’t know then that was entrepreneurship.

“When I talk to the eighth-graders who come to my booth, I tell them I’m a graphic designer but I work for myself and I’m able to set my own hours and choose who I work with,” she added. “In the last few years, I’ve seen kids get really excited. I’ve even been invited to speak at Green Valley Middle School and Matt Garcia, and I’ve had a few high school students ask to interview me about how they can incorporate entrepreneurship into their future.”

Many do not realize this, but a big reason SK Creative Arts is even around today is because Knight broke her leg in 2012. Facing a one-year recovery at home, Knight did a quick graphic design job for a friend. It was like a light bulb went off, she said. She realized she had been sitting behind someone else’s desk for years providing these services – maybe it was time to sit behind her own desk.

“But none of this would be possible without my biggest supporter, my husband Jeff,” she said. “We own three businesses and it’s great to know that whatever we are doing on any given day, that we can get in the boat and row in the same direction.”



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Nonprofit OF THE YEAR



Gone for Good

BY BRIANNA BOYD

'Good morning! Welcome to Gone for Good. How can I help you today?"

As a front desk receptionist at Gone for Good, the chamber's 2018 Nonprofit of the Year, Ashley Golden greets every visitor through the main doors with a big smile. Throughout the morning, the young 20-something with blue hair does clerical

work, passes out the mail, and makes copies for staff.

Watching her, a visitor would not realize Ashley is actually one of the 71 clients served by Fairfield's Gone for Good, a social enterprise of the United Cerebral Palsy of the North Bay that employs adults with developmental disabilities. She has been a part of Gone for Good since she graduated from Rodriguez High School in 2012 and she has learned a lot.

"It's almost like a challenge each and every day, you're learning how to overcome challenges for when you go out and get a real job," said Ashley, who hopes to return to Solano Community College for classes in the fall. "And I always have to remember to smile when someone walks through the door."

Gone for Good operates a comprehensive recycling and e-waste recycling center off Cordelia Road in Fairfield, as well as the UCP Thrift Store on Beck Avenue. The nonprofit also oversees recycling programs for several major employers in the area, as well as monthly community shred-a-thons in Fairfield and Vacaville. The Fairfield event is the last Saturday of the month





outside the county courthouse.

The organization prides itself on providing the most secure shredding in the industry, but what really sets Gone for Good apart is that their program was specifically developed to create jobs for adults with disabilities.

All of Gone for Good's employees are their clients. They range in age from 18 to 68, and all have intellectual disabilities that include cerebral palsy, autism, Down Syndrome and epilepsy. Every client is mandated to work at least one two-hour shift a week – where everyone, no matter their abilities, is paid the state minimum wage – with many opting to work multiple shifts throughout the week. Every client starts out in paper shredding, with opportunities to work in e-waste recycling, the thrift store, janitorial, or clerical. The four-hour shred-a-thon shifts are especially popular.

For most, this is their first paid job and an introduction to



the workforce.

“They take such pride in what they do, and we see that every day,” said Program Director Shane Clarkson, who has known many of his clients since they were children through his work with Solano County’s Special Olympics. “It’s amazing to see the light bulb going on when they get that feeling that, ‘hey, I’m doing something important in my life, I’m doing something meaningful.’ It’s awesome to watch.”

Bruce Mullenix, the sales manager for Gone for Good, organizes the community shredding events and works with businesses that utilize the recycling services. He drives the big truck – with employees inside – to pick up recycling from clients that include the City of Fairfield and Kaiser Permanente.

“Our employees do the whole process,” he said. “They disassemble the electronic waste, they take things apart, separate the raw materials. We try not to throw anything away. They work very hard.

“These are all people who have really big hearts,” he said. “They just want to have a job and contribute to the community, they just have a little more challenges to overcome. They need a helping hand, and that is what an organization like this does.”

There are three main components to the Gone for Good program – employment, education, and recreation. The non-profit is certified for adult education through Santa Rosa Community College, and classes on life and career skills are offered every week. These may include manners in the community, work ethics, conflict resolution, dealing with emotions, dress and hygiene, or cooking. Clients then incorporate what they have learned into their jobs at Gone for Good.

And of course, the group has fun. On a typical day, a client is at Gone for Good from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and staff members provide a balanced combination of work, education, and play. There is a very popular art program, with paintings displayed around the main office. There is also time for socializing and peer interaction. Staff

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members often utilize Gone for Good's large vans to take clients out in the community. On any given day, they may go grocery shopping, visit an area shopping center, have lunch at a local restaurant, or get an oil change at the mechanics.

"We also recently adopted Lee Bell Park here in Fairfield and we go there a lot," Clarkson said. "We're mandated to do it twice a year, but we go out at least once a week. These guys love to go there. They call it our park."

Other extra-curricular activities include camping trips with staff and a big carnival every summer. They are also looking forward to an upcoming trip to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom.

"They have the most welcoming and warm hearts," Clarkson said. "All they want is that dignity and respect and to be liked, and we provide that."

The ultimate goal is to prepare their clients to enter the workforce and Gone for Good has seen many success stories over the last eight years. They have seen employees go on into Community Integrated Employment, where they are assigned a 'Job Coach' while working a traditional job. Once they are ready, they transition to working on their own. Former clients have gone on to work at Wal-Mart, Sonic, Amazon, and Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, to name a few.

Jay Weston is the production coordinator for the paper shredding at Gone for Good. His employees affectionately call him, 'Uncle Jay'. Even with the moniker, 'Uncle Jay' is known for being firm. His employees are assigned to him for two-hour shifts, and he teaches them that in those hours, they need to be committed to their work and follow through on their duties.

"I don't let them get away with anything," he said. "I don't see their disabilities, I see the people. I tell them, 'how many times have you done this? You can do this! Don't use your disability as an excuse.'"

What he has witnessed at Gone for Good "has made my heart happy." He recently watched as a young woman, who has grown so much since becoming a client, counsel another peer and the interaction brought tears to his eyes.

"This has been the most rewarding experience of my life," Weston said. "My wife and I used to have our own business. I thought there could be nothing better, that I was living the American Dream. But then I started working here."

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Ambassador OF THE YEAR



Jocelyne von Strong

BY BRIANNA BOYD

As she walked on stage to accept the award for Ambassador of the Year, Jocelyne von Strong knew what she had to do.

After embracing Chief Ambassador Tempest Hoover, von Strong looked out at the crowd with her pink cellphone in hand.

"I've got to do a JT thing," she exclaimed, turning around and holding up her phone, "now you all got to smile."

The crowd cheered as von Strong snapped the selfie. That photo is now her Facebook profile picture and perfectly epitomizes von Strong's playful and fun personality.

"I figured, if this is my moment, I'm going to take it," von Strong said later. "You don't have many of those in life. You have to savor it."

A chamber ambassador for eight years, von Strong first became involved with the organization when she was with Little Wings Connection. She was fortunate, she said, to be able to continue that involvement even as her own career evolved. She went on to work as an outside sales representative for Servpro of Fairfield, then as the multimedia account representative for the Vacaville Reporter and now her current – and relatively new – position is as



Director of Sales for Catering for Fuddruckers. She represents Fuddruckers restaurants all over Northern California and is based in Fairfield.

"This is a little different from my other jobs but when it comes down to it, sales is sales," von Strong said. "I work in the restaurant too in the middle of the day during the lunch rush and I haven't worked in food service since my 20s, so it makes me feel like a kid again."

This new position also gives von Strong the

opportunity to have a more flexible schedule and increase her involvement in the community and chamber, something she is very grateful for.

"I love being involved," she said. "I've never been one to sit on the sidelines. When there are events or things going on, I want to be involved. I don't want to just attend. For me, I feel like I'm on the outside, and it's not as enjoyable if I'm not a part of it."

She loves being a part of the chamber of commerce and working the mixers every month. Of course she has a favorite role – registration – because it allows her to see and greet everyone who comes to a mixer.

Over the years, she has met a lot of people and made great friends. Often, her involvement in the chamber extends to her other roles in the community. She has volunteered with Relay For Life for 12 years now, and sees members of the business community at the event. Relay For Life is where she first met Fairfield Mayor Harry Price – she squirted him in the face with a water gun – and then she began seeing him at mixers.

"Even now, I still apologize and he looks at me and says, 'I

haven't forgotten,'" she said with a laugh. "It really does tie all the pieces together. I see so many different people at so many different things and it's great because if we ever need something, we can lean on each other and support one another."

Von Strong is also on the board of directors for The Salvation Army KROC Center, and is active with Vanden High School's Sober Grad Nite. Her youngest daughter, Sierra, will soon be a senior and von Strong and her husband, Tom, also volunteered for the program when their now grown children, Cody, Hunter, and Jonathan, graduated.

In her spare time, von Stong enjoys cycling. She biked 300 miles in June to raise money for childhood cancer, and she completed her first Metric Century, a 63-mile bike ride, in September 2017. She is also a certified spin instructor.

"I get grumpy when I don't cycle," she said with a chuckle. "I have to do it."

She enjoys promoting a body positive attitude, both in her everyday life and online.

"Remember, it's not about anyone else and what they think," she said. "It's about you and your health and what works for you. Never be afraid of who you are."

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Educator OF THE YEAR



Lot Col David Avery

BY BRIANNA BOYD

Lt. Col. David Avery is a humble man when it comes to discussing his recent recognition as the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber's Educator of the Year.

He insists that what he does as the Junior ROTC instructor at Fairfield High School is no different than any other JROTC teacher. His students, just like so many other cadets in the state, are as devoted to their community as they are to their academics. It is, after all, a vital component of the program.

But yet – it is undeniable that there is something about Avery and his leadership that sets him, and his 125 cadets, apart from others.

"While Col. Avery is a highly regarded teacher, his impact extends well beyond the walls of the classroom – he's a leader on the campus," said Kris Corey, superintendent of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District. "He has an amazing reputation in Fairfield-Suisun and Fairfield High School but what makes him so worthy of this



recognition is his impact on the community."

Avery first began serving this community 30 years ago. A Florida native, he was commissioned in the United States Air Force in 1986, and his first assignment the following year was as a C-5 pilot at Travis Air Force Base. He served as a pilot at Travis for three years before moving on to other Air Force bases in California, Delaware and Alabama. He returned to Travis and retired there in 2006,

after a 20-year career.

While he primarily flew planes, one of his assignments was a teaching position at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. He taught six-week sessions at Squadron Officers' School for Captains.

"I loved teaching so much that it stuck with me throughout the rest of my Air Force career," he said. "I always sort of knew I'd go back and try to teach again somehow.

"Then, right before I retired, I was thinking, 'what is next for me?' Going to the airlines is a normal path for many, but I enjoyed that teaching assignment so much that I decided to pursue that. The Junior ROTC program opened up at Fairfield High and it was serendipitous."

Between 8 percent and 10 percent of Fairfield High's student body is in Junior ROTC. Avery oversaw a group of 125 cadets for the 2017-18 school year. JROTC is an elective class a student can choose to take every year. Typically, half of the students enrolled are first-year cadets, but there are usually around 10 who have been in the program all four years. As seniors, these cadets are in ranked, leadership positions, coordinating community appearances, competitions and ceremonies.

The Fairfield High program consists of the Color Guard team, the Armed Drill team and the Sabre team. JROTC cadets volunteer hundreds of hours throughout the year in various community events and activities. They also attend sporting events and competitions with other JROTC schools in Sacramento and the Bay Area.

"It's important to remember there are 800-plus units just like us," Avery said. "Every instructor, when they are hired, is asked, 'are you ready for this commitment because this is what is expected. Your weekends, your weeknights, will be devoted to these extra-enrichment activities.'"

Often, Avery's wife, Karen, is there, too. They see firsthand the impact this program has on the teenagers.

"We go to multiple events with the Sacramento schools and I always tell our kids, meet at least five kids from other schools, find out the coolest thing going on at their school, and see if we can meet up with them again," he said. "I've taken kids from my program to many places that most people go to all the time, but they have never experienced. I want to make sure they have those opportunities. I have the bus! And if we have those connections, we will go."

Locally, the Fairfield High JROTC cadets have an incredible relationship with the residents of Paradise Valley Estates. Many of the senior citizens who live in the development are veterans, and Avery has invited them to be guest speakers in his class. One of those speakers,

retired Lt. Col Bill Getz, was a World War II pilot who has written six books. Getz and his wife, Vicki, funded the "Getz Ready Room" at Fairfield High for the JROTC cadets.

"He has come to our classroom many times and now I'm bringing the kids to his home for breakfast," Avery said. "He has so much memorabilia and so many stories to tell these kids. He is definitely very focused on the future. He tells the kids, 'I don't believe we were the Greatest Generation. I believe you are too.'"

The Paradise Valley residents are invited to the school's Sept. 11 and Pearl Harbor ceremonies every year, and cadets go to Paradise Valley every Veterans Day to present the colors. They also attend dinner with the veterans every couple of months. A retired Navy Captain, Chuck Smith, oversees the liaison program from Paradise Valley.

"I've got the best job because I get to be in the middle of all of it," Avery said. "I like to bring the community to my classroom and the classroom into the community as much as I can. And what is wonderful about all of this is that the retirees are so honestly, genuinely, interested in the kids. The kids see that someone other than their parents and their teachers are interested in them and their success."



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Best Partnership OF THE YEAR



Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District AND *Lystek Inc.*

BY BRIANNA BOYD

Did you know the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District treats an average of about 16 million gallons of water per day? That's enough water to fill a football field to a depth of 50 feet!

The sewer district's mission is to take its wastewater and transform it into clean, re-useable water. But as part of that process, biosolids from the wastewater are left behind.

"Management of biosolids is a critical aspect of treating sewage and like recycling water, we want to re-use biosolids by processing them into marketable agricultural products," said Greg Baatrup, the sewer district's general manager.

That is where Lystek International steps in. The Canadian-based company, with its United States headquarters in Fairfield, focuses on resource recovery and produces marketable end products out of the waste material delivered to them. The biosolids from the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District helps Lystek to create high-grade fertilizer that can be customized to meet the needs of local farmers.

"This is a public-private partnership that was started a little over two years ago," said Jim Dunbar, the general manager of Lystek's Fairfield plant. He



also serves as the company's manager of business development in the United States. "It was built on shared goals and a mutual vision for the future. One of the many things the sewer district was looking for was sustainability and renewability and those were all things that our company offered."

The two businesses were honored as the chamber's 2018 Partnership of the Year at the Buzz Awards in May.

The initial agreement was signed in 2015, Dunbar said, a year before the manufacturing facility opened its doors. Prior to Lystek's opening, the technology to do this type of work did not exist in California or anywhere in the United States.

The agreement grants Lystek virtually all of the sewer district's treated sludge for the next 20 years,

with an option to extend for another 10 years. It also eliminates the need for the sewer district to send its treated sludge to Potrero Hills Landfill.

“This program with Lystek provides a sustainable biosolids management solution for the residents and businesses in Fairfield and Suisun City,” Bastrup said.

“This partnership really validates the common goals that we share,” Dunbar said. “It also shows that when opportunities like this can’t be done by either the public sector or the private sector alone, you have to seize those opportunities for partnerships that will take the best of both sides and make it a very successful business venture. Partners mean you can’t do it by yourself.”

The fertilizer Lystek produces is sold to farmers and ranchers right here in Solano County. It’s very high in nutrients and organic matter, Dunbar explained, and is a great option for farmers who are looking to move away from synthetic and chemical fertilizers and use more organic products.

The Lystek company includes six plants in Canada and the one in Fairfield, with three new plants – two in Canada and one in Minnesota – opening in 2019.

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CHAMBER MEMBER Testimonials



"My business, American Pacific Mortgage, is in Solano County, with my offices located in Benicia. I have been partnering with Realtors here since 1982. In 2017 I was asked by Tonya Dretzka to join the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce. I was also invited to join the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee (TRAFAC). There could not have been a better time for me to step forward and serve all of

Solano County at a much higher level. As a new Honorary Commander at Travis AFB, I realized how important being connected to north county can be. Since joining the chamber, I have reconnected with old friends and made more new friends than can I can count. Attending the TRAFAC luncheons has introduced me to our military friends and local business owners in ways I could never have imagined. What an incredible group of professionals to be involved with. My personal life and my business have both prospered because of this relationship."

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"I love the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce! I live and work out of a Sacramento location, but my territory covers Fairfield, Napa, Benicia and Vallejo so I am in Fairfield every single day. I have met so many people and made so many great contacts to build my business - not to mention

all the fun I've had at Chamber events! I would highly recommend for any companies or individuals to join the Chamber in order to meet members of the community, share their message, and network with other businesses in the area. I would much rather do business with someone I know than a stranger, and the Chamber makes it easy to get to know people on a personal level. I am happy to have walked through the doors of 1111 Webster three years ago -

Tonya, Melissa, and Debi have been nothing short of fantastic in their support of the Fairfield and Suisun City communities, which I have been looking forward to being a part of for a long time!"

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"A few years ago when Tonya came by my office at Connections For Life in Vacaville, I was pleased to learn about what makes the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber unique. It's all about the personal connection. When I attend Chamber events, it feels good being welcomed and introduced to other Chamber members that I

haven't met yet. There is something about always being warmly greeted with a welcoming smile that makes you want to return. I've found resources to help handle my business needs, along with developing business relationships with great people throughout the region. While participating in the Leadership Today program, I had an opportunity to get to know Tonya, Debi and Melissa. Their enthusiasm and dedication toward promoting good business and community is encouraging. One of my favorite Chamber events has been the Lunch Mobs. What a great way to try out a variety of good local restaurants, while getting an opportunity to relax in the middle of a hectic day with interesting business people over good food. These are only a few of the reasons I love participating with the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce!"

EDIE THOMAS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONNECTIONS FOR LIFE

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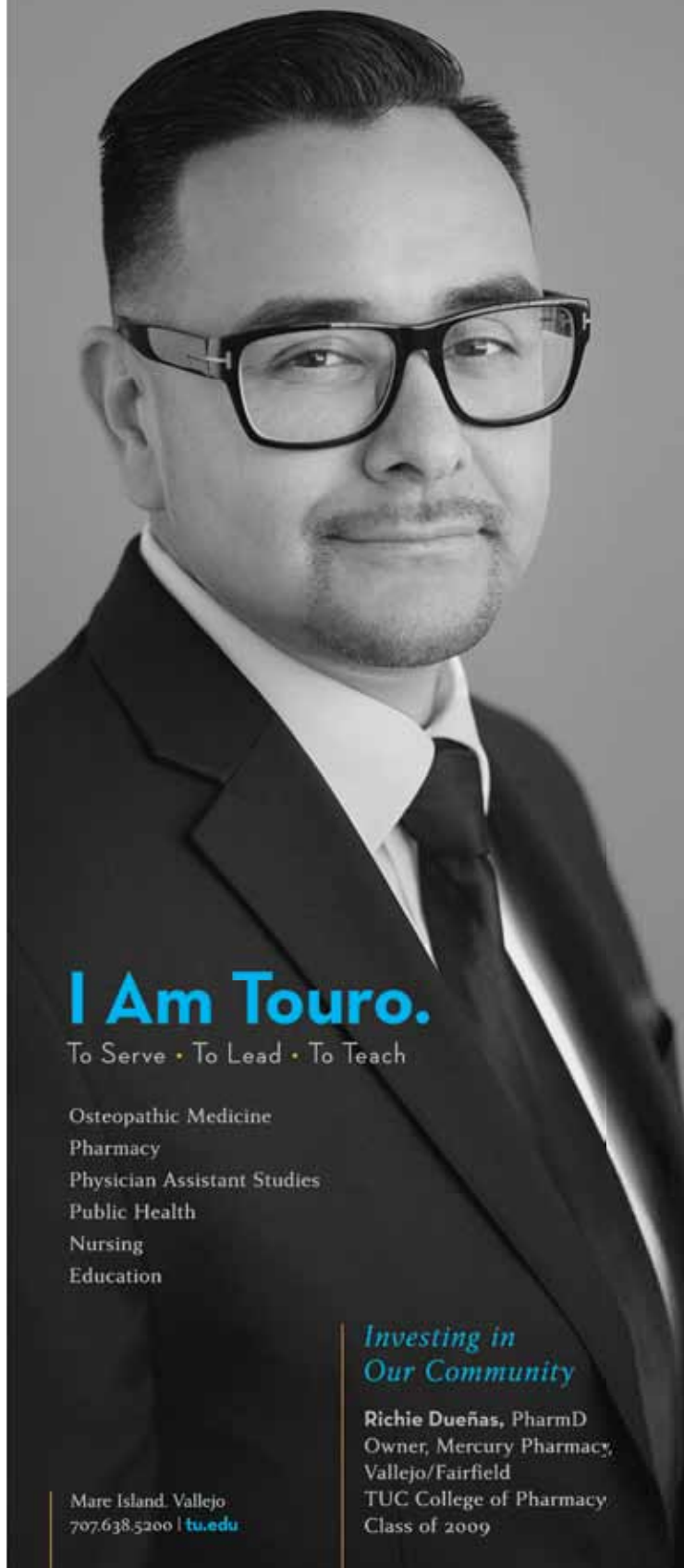
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Dental School: Columbia University School of Dental & Oral Surgery D.D.S., John F. Kennedy Medical Center (Residency), University of Southern California.

Affiliations: California Dental Association, American Dental Association, Napa/Solano Dental Society. Member of DOCS (Doctors of Conscious Sedation), Academy of General Dentistry, The American Academy of Implant Dentistry. Fellow at ICOI, International Congress of Oral Implantologists

1245 Travis Blvd., Suite C/D, Fairfield
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CHAIRMAN FROM PAGE 5

networking opportunities to meet members and non-members alike.

Getting involved with the chamber plays an important role in helping to sustain our community. There are numerous committees that need different perspectives to help us grow, such as TRAFAC, Advocacy Council and Ambassador's Committee, just to name a few.

The Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors are the hardest working members and volunteers, who have made a commitment to be the "good will" arm for our chamber. I want to personally thank our Ambassadors, as you've always been the backbone of the chamber and are a vital part of our growth and are true team players. If you want to know how to help the chamber and your business, join our Ambassador team.

In closing, I want to say thank you Nav Khanna for your leadership over the past year and the past chairs before you. Heartfelt acknowledgement to our CEO Debi Tavey, dedicated chamber staff Melissa Manry and Tonya Dreztko. Your long hours and commitment to our chamber have not gone unnoticed.

I challenge each of you to get involved and be a part of my journey this year, we can't make changes looking from the outside in (get involved).

Sincerely,

Charles E. McCullar Jr.

Chairman, Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce

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