



COUNTY OF MONTEREY

CAO Weekly Report

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SPECIALREPORT



A Salinas kindergarten student casts her mock ballot as part of an Elections outreach program.

County Notes

The Veterans Resource Center in the King City library is looking for veterans to share their experiences for posterity.

Spread the word. <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/library/veterans/>

Voter Education Goes International, For Youth

Our Elections Department continually seeks out new opportunities to educate and inform. The Department's most recent efforts touched students here at home and from around the globe.

Last month, the Elections Department welcomed a visit from students at the Naval Postgraduate School. These students - representing more than 15 countries - are taking part in a seminar course on U.S. political and social dynamics. The presentation provided by Elections staff touched on the functions of the Elections Office, how elections are administered, inherent checks and balances, voting systems and security.

Visits from international students are not new, just one of the many components of the Department's year-long outreach and education efforts. The students were impressed with the numerous procedures in place and the variety and depth of checks and balances involved to ensure the transparency and accuracy.



Registrar of Voters Claudio Valenzuela explains the vote tabulating system.

Students of all ages are touched by election outreach. Studies show that young people who have positive experiences with the democratic process early on are more likely to become life-long participants in the process, which is why Elections staff make a special effort to engage youth early and often!

Last month, the Department presented the concept of voting to a kindergarten class at Lincoln Elementary School in Salinas. The class received a presentation on the importance of voting, and to make it fun, a mock election was held. The ballot question focused on something very important to the class: the all-important decision of a Friday snack. They would have to vote: grapes or popsicles? After an open discussion and much deliberation on the pros and cons of each option, popsicles won by a landslide!



Student designed 'Vote' buttons.

Kindergarten teacher Claude Constant notes the significance of this type of education at this young age.

"It is good for the students to see how important their voice is in making decisions and to understand that's how a democracy works," she says.

The students also had a homework assignment working with their parents to identify why voting is important. The students were tasked with designing a "Vote" button and completing the sentence "Vote because..." One student-parent collaboration responded, "Vote because it can make a difference and it allows you to express your opinion".

Elections will be busy with outreach in the coming months including a brand new high school outreach competition which coincides with the state designated High School Voter Education Weeks in April. If you would like a presentation at your child's school or for a community organization, please contact Greta Arevalo, Elections Outreach and Civic Engagement Program Manager, at (831) 796-1478.

Government Center Staff Trained to Save Lives

It happens often without warning, and when it does, every moment counts. For county employees at the Government Center in Salinas, you now have a lifeline.

The same “Heartsaver” grant which is placing Automatic External Defibrillators in county offices also provides critical CPR-First Aid training. In total, 18 employees will receive this training.

Most recently, six employees at the Government Center were selected to receive the HeartSaver CPR First Aid training. There was a great interest in the program, so a drawing was held and six lucky staff members were selected. Some have already received their training.

The idea is to have two well-trained staff on each floor of the building. Melanie Showalter has completed her training. She says she enjoyed it and thinks everyone should be able to perform CPR.

“Standing by helplessly would be horrible,” she says. “At least knowing how to help may give someone a better chance of survival.”

The next phase of this HeartSaver project is training for county staff on new AED machines which are being placed in the Government Center, the Life Foundation Building and Schilling Place. A training session on how to use these machines which guide a Good Samaritan through the process of applying an electric shock in the event of a cardiac emergency took place on Friday, March 17th and more trainings are planned.



Edward Arias (left) and Melanie Showalter (right) of the Assessor's Office are two of six employees in the Government Center who will be trained in CPR and First Aid. Also completing training but not pictured are Erika Rivera, Auditor-Controller's Office and Mariana Errahebi from Public Defender.

Jimenez Earns Outstanding Woman Recognition

Each year, the Monterey County Commission on the Status of Women honor women from across the county who make a difference in our community. Among those selected this year is one of the County's own.

Diana Jimenez has worked in the Department of Social Services for more than 20 years and currently serves as the Adult, Aging, and CalWORKs Employment Services Deputy Director. It is a job that is a perfect fit for her dedication to helping families, but barely scratches the surface of her life's work.

Mirroring her 20 years of service at DSS is 20 years of volunteering and serving on many local boards, committees and commissions dealing with a wide variety of local needs: from recreation to substance abuse, from housing health, from juvenile justice to equal opportunity.



Diana Jimenez.

“Diana is so deserving of this recognition as an Outstanding Woman in Monterey County,” says Director of Social Services Elliott Robinson. “In her work, she has done incredible things to help parents on CalWORKs find work and overcome barriers which can put their families at risk. In her community, she is a tireless advocate for fairness and equity. As someone with deep roots in our community, Diana is a role model for all youth – particularly for the strong young women who are tomorrow’s leaders!”

The commission looks for honorees who will inspire young women and girls. Jimenez is an ideal candidate.

She is a graduate of Hartnell Community College and CSUMB, where she earned a BA in Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Growing up, Diana worked as a field laborer and packing shed worker along with her parents and siblings. She dropped out of high school at age 15 to help her parents make ends meet. Her work today is inspired by her experience witnessing the effects of poverty first hand. She has a strong compassion for families who struggle economically, socially, and educationally.

“I was very surprised to be one of the 10 women selected for this award,” says Jimenez. “I’m both very honored and humbled as I know there are countless deserving women who make a difference and who matter to their families, neighbors and communities.”

Jimenez and other honorees will receive their awards on Sunday, March 19th at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey.