



# Around Tulare County

Delivering Information about Tulare County - December 2009

## Supervisor's Message: County Works to Improve Efficiency



As my first year serving on the Tulare County Board of Supervisors draws to a close, I am proud of the steps our Board has taken to improve the efficiency in government. Especially during difficult economic times, it is increasingly important that we as Tulare County employees continue to improve our service to homeowners, landowners, businesses and constituents.

An example of these efforts took place earlier this week when the Board approved the Tulare County Resource Management Agency improving the process of obtaining a special use permit. There used to be a multiple step process to obtain and pay for this permit, however, a one step "cost recovery" process will now be created. Once fully implemented, this improved procedure will make it easier

for people applying for these permits by decreasing the processing time and reducing overall costs to both the County and the applicants.

On another front, Tulare County is in the process of creating a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) with Fresno County, the San Joaquin Valley Insurance Authority (SJVIA), which will provide medical and health benefit programs to County employees. Premiums paid by employees for medical prescriptions and vision benefits are likely to go down through the SJVIA.

During the years from 2006-2009, there were annual increases to premiums paid for medical coverage. Had the County not created this authority, there would have been another increase of 4.1% for each employee over the next year. However, by joining the SJVIA, it is anticipated that there will not be a premium increase on medical benefits this fiscal year.

From my perspective, another way of improving the efficiency of government is

through training and education. I was pleased to help coordinate Government 101: Special Districts, a training session for elected board members serving Districts (Community Service Districts, Water Districts, Memorial Districts, etc.) throughout the County. Topics covered included the Brown Act, Public Records Act, Proposition 218, conflicts of interest, and overall boardsmanship. As a result of this session, I believe the people of Tulare County will be better served by their elected leaders and boards.

Lastly, please feel free to contact the Board with any questions or suggestions. We are all here to help. As a board, we will continue to work towards improved efficiency, customer service and improving the function of local government.

Pete Vander Poel, District Two  
Tulare County Board of Supervisors

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## Newspaper Honored for 30 Years of Service at BOS Meeting

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors honored the Valley Voice Newspaper at its November 30 meeting.

The Valley Voice Newspaper has been in continuous publication since November 1, 1979. During this time the newspaper has grown from a

monthly publication with a press run of 18,000 copies into a weekly publication that has multiple sections.

At the meeting, the Board of Supervisors praised the Valley Voice for offering timely, informative, and well-balanced coverage of issues

pertaining to the San Joaquin Valley and Tulare County.

Pictured to the right, Valley Voice Publisher Rick Elkins attended the Board of Supervisors meeting to accept a proclamation presented by Chairman of the Board Phil Cox.



Rick Elkins (left) and Supervisor Phil Cox (right)

## Around Tulare County

### County Supports Youth with Holiday Toy Drive

**BRIGHTEN A CHILD'S  
WINTER SKY!**  
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES (CWS)  
2009 CHILDREN'S TOY DRIVE

"THE SWELL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT WE RECEIVE EACH YEAR ALLOWS US TO CREATE A BRIGHTER HOLIDAY FOR THE CHILDREN WITHIN OUR CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, MANY OF WHICH ARE IN FOSTER OR GROUP HOMES," RENEE SMYLIE, HHSA DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

The Tulare County Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Friends of Tulare County are happy to announce their annual "Brighten a Child's Winter Sky" toy drive kick off. CWS and Friends of Tulare County will begin collecting toys and will continue to accept donations through Friday, December 11.

The CWS Toy Drive has been honored to receive generous community support and donations in past years, and looks forward to working with the community again this year to make many children's upcoming holidays bright. The Toy Drive was inspired by the great work that Visalia Harley Davidson and the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) has done for years with their Annual Toy Run, and is proud to call Visalia Harley Davidson and H.O.G. partners in providing a brighter holiday for thousands of children.

"It is such a privilege to work with local businesses like Visalia Harley Davidson, and groups like Harley Owners Group," said Renee Smylie,

Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency Deputy Director of Child Welfare Services. "The swell of community support we receive each year allows us to create a brighter holiday for the children within our Child Welfare System, many of which are in foster or group homes."

Foster and group homes receive monetary allowances to aide them in providing the very basic of necessities such as clothing and food as the holidays near. It can, however, be difficult to stretch that allowance to include additional costs, particularly when hard times are upon us, as we are all experiencing the current economic downturn. The CWS Toy Drive aims to provide at least one new gift to each child in the program, which in total averages over 1,500 participants.

"We don't want these children to feel alone or forgotten this holiday season," says Smylie. "These children are in the system because of circumstances outside of their control, and it is vitally important that we help to make them

feel valued, cared for, and loved."

Donating to the CWS Toy Drive is as easy as visiting [www.tularehhsa.org](http://www.tularehhsa.org). Following the easy steps, you can choose the age and gender of the child for whom you would like to buy a gift. Print out the star with the child's information and attach the star to the unwrapped gift(s) you are donating and drop it off at one of the many donation locations.

With more than 30 donation drop-off locations throughout Tulare County, including Visalia, Woodlake, Dinuba, Lindsay, Porterville, and Tulare, donating a special toy for a deserving child couldn't be easier. Please note, for health and safety reasons; please no gifts or toys that promote violence or adult related themes. We ask that all donations are positive and age appropriate in nature.

For additional details on the CWS Toy Drive, the locations of specific drop-off sites, and how you can print a star to provide a toy for a specific little boy or girl, visit [www.tularehhsa.org](http://www.tularehhsa.org).

### Several County Departments to Close for Holidays

The following Tulare County departments will be closed from Dec. 23 to Dec. 31:

- Agricultural Commissioner
- Board of Supervisors Office
- Child Support
- Cooperative Extension
- County Administrative Office
- County Counsel
- Resource Management
- Agency Parks and Recreation Division

- Workforce Investment Board

The Human Resources and Development Department will be closed from Dec. 28 to Dec. 31.

County departments that are closed during the holidays are fulfilling a 40-hour furlough program approved by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors.

The furlough equates to a 1.9 percent salary reduction.

It is at the discretion of Tulare County departments and its employees as to when and how they implement the furlough program for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

All county departments will be open on Jan. 4.



## Employee Spotlight: Sue Gunderman



**Name:** Sue Gunderman  
**Title:** Sheriff's Department Secretary  
**Years of Service:** 15  
**Duties:** Administrative Assistant to the Sheriff and Undersheriff.  
**Family:** Married to Rick Gunderman for 15 years. Three step-daughters, three

grandchildren, two dogs, and three cats.

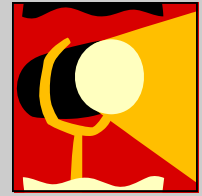
**Hobbies:** Cooking, gardening (I'm a student in the Horticulture Program at COS), golf, and photography.

**Sue on her most rewarding experience as a County employee:** Being support to the Sheriff and Undersheriff is rewarding in itself. But when people come into the Sheriff's Department because they don't know what else to do, it's very important to me to provide all of the assistance they might need.

**Something you might not**

**know about me:** When I was 21 I trained to be a professional bowler. I've been to bowling school and owned a pro shop at the Visalia Bowling Center. I've been a cake decorator at Bothof's Bakery and Baskin Robbins.

**Favorite place to visit in Tulare County:** "There's no place like home." I live in the original seat of the County known as Four Creeks, not too far from 'election tree.' There are so many places to walk and explore. You see birds and wildlife that you won't ever see in the city.



There are many County employees who are doing outstanding things for their community outside of their job.

Do you know a County employee who should be in the spotlight? Let us know at:

[newsletter@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:newsletter@co.tulare.ca.us)

## Program Spotlight: Neighborhood Accountability Board

The Tulare County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act Program needs volunteers. The Neighborhood Accountability Board, or NAB, is made possible through a partnership with the Tulare County Probation Department, Health and Human Services, District Attorney's Office and C-SET.

The overall objective of NAB is to assist youth to live respectfully in the community

and keep them out of the formal juvenile justice system. The primary role of NAB is to work with youth cited by law enforcement, making them accountable for the various law violations that they have committed against victims and the community.

If you are interested in increasing the safety of your neighborhood while at the same time improving the quality of life for youth who

reside in the community, then serving on the NAB is for you. Please be a part of our team and take the opportunity to reduce juvenile crime and enable youth in the community to succeed.

For more information and how to apply, contact the Restorative Justice Office at (559) 685-3395 and we will be happy to send you an application packet.



Want your program to be in the spotlight? Please send suggestions to:

[newsletter@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:newsletter@co.tulare.ca.us)

## Purchasing Department to Hold Sale at Surplus Store

Do you need to revamp your office with furniture, shelves, cabinets, or a flat screen computer monitor? Look no further than Tulare County's Surplus Store.

From 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 12, the Surplus Store, located at 2500 W. Burrel Ave. in Visalia, will be holding the "Happenin' Holiday Sale."

The store offers office furni-

ture such as desks, chairs, file cabinets and tables. Also, the store sells office equipment such as computers, computer monitors, laptops, fax machines and much more.

Not looking for furniture of equipment for your office? The Surplus Store also offers low-cost clothing, watches, jewelry, cameras, and more.

If you are unable to make it to the Surplus Store's

"Happenin' Holiday Sale," it is generally open every Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The store is located on Burrel Ave. just west of the Tulare County Courthouse.

For more information, please call the Tulare County Purchasing Department at 559/636-5254.



## First Aid Training Pays Off for Employee



Janie Sustaita

**“I DIDN'T THINK AT ALL. I JUST HELPED HIM AND PERFORMED CPR BECAUSE IT WAS SO FRESH IN MY HEAD,” JANIE ON ADMINISTERING CPR**

As a code compliance officer with Tulare County's Resource Management Agency, Janie Sustaita's job is to assist people. Janie went above-and-beyond her job description on October 30 when she performed basic first aid on a resident who passed out at a funeral.

While attending the Oct. 30 funeral, Janie said she witnessed a man pass out in the parking lot.

“Everyone was gawking,” Janie said. “I ran over there and tried to talk to him. His eyes rolled back and he lost consciousness.”

Janie said she directed funeral attendees to call 9-1-1 and clear the area around the man. Another funeral attendee steadied the man's head while Janie started compressions.

Janie said after the man regained consciousness, she asked him questions and directed him to move his limbs until an ambulance could arrive.

Janie credits a Tulare County-sponsored CPR class she took just the day before as the reason why she was able to assist him.

When asked about what was going through her mind when she witnessed the man faint to the ground, Janie gave this response:

“I didn't think at all. I just helped him and performed CPR because it was so fresh in my head.”

Janie took the CPR/AED class as part of a pilot project that will place AED's (Automatic Difelibrillators) in county facilities. The devices are being donated by the Visalia Breakfast Rotary.

The placement of AED's requires that two county employees in each building are CPR/AED trained as a first responder.

Janie said she volunteered to be the CPR/AED trained employee for her department.

Debbie Vaughn, a CAO analyst spearheading the AED pilot project, said she is excited that the training paid immediate dividends, but wants to urge more county employees to participate in the program.

“It gives people the opportunity to be prepared to save another person's life,” Vaughn said. “Not only at work but in public.”

If you are a County employee who wants to participate in the AED program, call Debbie Vaughn at 559/636-5005 or email her at [dvaughn@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:dvaughn@co.tulare.ca.us).

### AROUND TULARE COUNTY

Around Tulare County is published once a month as a service to the public. Unless otherwise noted, articles are written by County staff. For additional information, contact Jed Chernabaeff or Jeff Forbes.

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### DECEMBER COUNTY ACTIVITIES, DEADLINES, EVENTS, MEETINGS

#### Meeting: (Date/Time)

Board of Supervisors' Meeting: Dec. 8, 15. 9 a.m.  
Tulare County Planning Commission: Dec. 16. 9 a.m.  
CPR & First Aid Training: Dec. 2, 9, 30. 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
New IHSS Provider Orientation: Dec. 4, 11, 18. 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  
L.A.F.C.O. Meeting: Dec. 9. 2 p.m.  
Last Day to pay 1st Installment on Secured Property Taxes. Dec. 10  
Last Day to file for homeowners and veterans' exemption to receive 80 percent of the exemption. Dec. 10  
T.C.A.G. Meeting: Dec. 14. 1 p.m.  
Tulare County Youth Commission: Dec. 14. 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.  
Tulare County Water Commission: DARK

#### More Information:

559/636-5000  
559/624-7000  
559/713-5026  
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559/636-5250  
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For more information, visit: [www.co.tulare.ca.us](http://www.co.tulare.ca.us) and click on “County Calendar”



**Places to Go Play:** The Tulare Historical Museum showcases the history of the City of Tulare. The museum features holdings such as an art glass collection and an entire wing devoted to military history, the Manuel Toledo Military Collection. The museum serves as a cultural center for the community, and also hosts a revolving collection of special exhibits. Learn more about other places in Tulare County to “Go Play” at [www.tularecountymap.com](http://www.tularecountymap.com).