



# Around Tulare County

DELIVERING INFORMATION ABOUT TULARE COUNTY

NOVEMBER 2017

## Faced with Our New Fiscal Reality



As an employer, the County of Tulare offers a wide range of salaries and benefits to its employees. The Total Compensation packages we offer reflect the County's commitment to invest in our staff who are our most valuable assets in delivering efficient and effective public services.

It is important to understand what exactly Total Compensation is comprised of - it's not just the salary and wages reflected in your paycheck.

A Total Employee Compensation package includes various benefits. For the County of Tulare, these added benefits include: health insurance, vision and dental insurance, bilingual pay incentives, car allowances, the sick leave buyback program, retirement plans, and other additional contributions made by the County.

Each benefit program has a cost to the County and a value to our employees who utilize them.

As an example, in the FY 2017/18 Budget, the County will pay out \$270 Million in employee salaries. In addition,

staff will receive another \$84 Million in benefits – health, retirement, and other pay incentives.

On top of that, the County as an employer must also provide additional contributions to its employees that vary in cost year to year ranging from \$16 - \$23 Million. Additional County contributions include sick leave, life insurance, long term disability, defined contribution match, tuition reimbursement, workers compensation and others.

Although you may not see the value of these benefits listed on your paycheck, they are a significant portion of your Total Compensation package.

One major component of County employee's total compensation is the benefit of a retirement plan. All County full-time employees become a member of the Tulare County Employees Retirement System. Both the employee and the County contribute, and pay into this system.

Currently, we are faced with a new reality: unfunded liability in our County retirement system. It has grown drastically in recent years.

As of June 30, 2017, Tulare County's unfunded liability is \$344 Million, an increase of over \$100 Million from the liability as of June 30, 2016. The primary reason for this increase is the decision to reduce the County's assumed rate of return from 7.60% to

7.25% based on recommendations to the Retirement Board.

Consequently, both the employer (County of Tulare) and the employee's contributions into the retirement system will rise. We estimate these increases will be 6% for the County and 1% for our employees.

As the discretionary revenues in Tulare County's general fund continue to be obligated to cover these increases, future Boards of Supervisors will have to make some difficult decisions related to the allocation of dollars.

Will money be allocated to increase salaries? Cover increasing health insurance costs? Pay down the unfunded liability in the retirement system?

As Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, I can assure you, government efficiency and fiscal responsibility remain a top priority of the Board that I serve on. I am hopeful that some of the efforts undertaken by this administration will adequately prepare the County for a sustainable future that lies ahead.

Pete Vander Poel,  
District Two  
Tulare County Board of  
Supervisors

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## County Receives Award for Foxtrot Fire App



The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) awarded Tulare County with a 2017 Challenge Award honoring the work of the Information Communications & Technology and County Fire Departments in the development of the Foxtrot Fire App.

The CSAC Challenge Award program seeks to honor the most innovative ways of doing business across all county service areas in California. CSAC received a record 288 entries for this year's Challenge Awards and Tulare County was awarded one of the program's top honors in

the area of Government Finance, Administration and Technology.

Project Foxtrot Fire App is a digital mobile app that allows the Tulare County Fire Department to access an essential database of geographical information previously collected by individual site visits and recorded in notebooks by hand.

With the Foxtrot Fire App, firefighters today can use the application that relies on Geographical Information System (GIS) data to augment existing data. This allows firefighters to access vital information while on route to an emergency call and better plan for the necessary emergency response.

In addition, firefighters can better implement coordination planning, staffing needs and any necessary equipment. The app also allows for approximately 4,000 Tulare County homes to be remotely evaluated for fire

protection and prevention status bringing a whole new level of public safety to the area.

By using existing GIS data rather than individual site visits, the Foxtrot Fire App has saved Tulare County more than 1,000 work hours. This could not have been done without a large amount of time, energy and dedication from TCiCT and TC Fire whose excellent teamwork made this app possible.

"The app is a perfect example of how local governments can use innovation and collaboration between departments to provide safety and effective program delivery to all County residents," stated Graham Knaus. Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Member Services at CSAC who presented the Challenge Award during the October 31 Board of Supervisors Meeting.

The Foxtrot Fire App was developed collaboratively by Matt Sanders (TCiCT), Mark Clark (TCiCT), Division Chief Jeff McLaughlin (TCFD), and Fire Battalion Chief Kevin Riggi (TCFD).

## Stockings for Senior Citizens Drive Needs You!

More than 300 homebound senior citizens, who often do not have friends and family visit them during the holidays, receive a stocking filled with donated cold-weather comfort items during the annual Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging (K/T AAA) Stockings for Senior Citizens drive.

"This holiday event complements Senior Day in the Park, which encourages

our seniors to get out and about," said Jamie Sharma, Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency's Manager for Aging Services.

Community members can help by donating cold-weather comfort items such as slippers, socks, gloves, scarves, beanies, and lap blankets. Volunteers then visit the senior citizens and deliver the stockings filled with gifts. For donation drop-off locations, please call Bonnie

Quiroz at (559) 623-2877.

This annual event is made possible by collaborative partnerships, including: Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging, Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Friends of Tulare County, CSET, Visalia Senior Housing Inc., and many others.

The Stockings for Seniors drive ends November 30.

Have a program you want to highlight? Please send suggestions to:

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

## Employee Spotlight - Diana L. Mendez



**Name:** Diana L. Mendez

**Title:** Deputy County Counsel

**Years of Service:** 6

**Duties:** I'm an attorney on the Labor and Employment Team. My team handles labor and employment legal issues for the County and is general counsel to the Justice Agencies (Sheriff, Probation, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Child Support), Health and Human Services Agency, and Human Resources and Development.

The issues that come up vary from day to day which keeps my job very interesting.

**Family?** Husband Carlos; Parents live in Visalia; Sister and Brother in Law live in San Francisco.

**Hobbies Clubs/Organizations?** I enjoy traveling abroad. I've had the opportunity to travel to France, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Morocco, Bali, Canada, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

I also enjoy volunteering when I have the chance. I've coached for the Tulare County High School Mock Trial competition and have tutored for the Literacy Center at the Tulare County Library. I highly encourage people to volunteer with the Literacy Center. It takes as little as one hour per week and you're able to help a fellow Tulare County resident with valuable skills.

**What is your most rewarding experience as a County employee?**

The most rewarding is helping our clients find answers to their questions. Our clients don't call to see how we're doing or to talk about their weekend. They call because they have an issue which they need help resolving. It's very rewarding when I'm able to help our clients resolve their issues in a way that benefits all involved.

**Please tell us something other employees might not know about you?**

I grew up in Visalia and was a summer youth worker with RMA when I was in high school. I worked with the office assistant staff, I answered phones, and did low level data entry.

**Where is your favorite place to visit in Tulare County?**

My favorite is going to Sequoia National Park and then having a late lunch in Three Rivers.



## County Hosts Homeless Summit

Bringing together prominent experts with local stakeholders eager to make an impact, the first-ever Tulare County Homeless Summit was held the morning of October 25 at the Wyndham Hotel in Visalia.

Sponsored by the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, the summit offered panels on both local activities and best practices to inform the public of countywide efforts to address homelessness, a topic of increasing concern to a wide range of stakeholders in Tulare County.

Keynote presenter Dr. Joe Colletti, executive director of the Hub for Urban Initiatives, opened the event with a historical perspective of national efforts to address homelessness, urging local practitioners to adopt or modify strategies that reflect best practices and current funding trends.

Comprising a panel of representatives from local organizations, the Visalia Rescue Mission, the Kings/Tulare Homeless Alliance, and Kings View Behavioral Health provided an overview of ongoing local efforts to address homelessness.

Though offering an impressive array of services, including temporary shelters, targeted outreach, and coordinated countywide counts of individuals experiencing homelessness, local panelists acknowledged the need and desire to improve efforts and overcome the many challenges encountered by their programs.

Providing examples of innovative and successful strategies for addressing homelessness, a Best Practices panel featured speakers from a diverse set of jurisdictions. The City of Albuquerque, the

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Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, the Yuba County Administrator, and the community service organization St. Martin's HopeWorks comprised this panel, providing guidance for stakeholders in Tulare County to incorporate into future efforts.

Strategies highlighted during the discussion included Yuba County's "14Forward," a temporary "tiny houses"- type shelter composed of Tuff Sheds and offering supportive services; and "There's a Better Way," an outreach program connecting individuals experiencing homelessness with temporary work opportunities and related services.

Following an extended question and answer session featuring the panelists, Supervisor Amy Shuklian, chair of the Tulare County Task Force on Homelessness, reminded attendees that all stakeholders can have a role in the efforts to address homelessness.

Moving forward, the task force plans to incorporate the lessons learned from the homeless summit into countywide strategies to reduce homelessness.

**Earlimart Park Grand Opening - Dec. 3**



**2:00 P.M.**

**Adjacent to Earlimart Elementary School  
192 S. Church Road in Earlimart**

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors and Earlimart School District partnered together to obtain state park funding to construct Earlimart Neighborhood Park using a \$2.2 million Prop. 84 grant from the California Natural Resources Agency through California State Parks, \$115,000 from the Earlimart School District and approximately \$600,000 in additional County funding. Join us to celebrate the much-anticipated Earlimart Neighborhood Park!

**Come preview the park and enjoy food, fun and festivities!**

**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 Carrie Monteiro.

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**UPCOMING COUNTY ACTIVITIES, DEADLINES, EVENTS, AND MEETINGS**

<b>Event/Meeting: (Date/Time)</b>	<b>More Information:</b>
Board of Supervisors Meeting: 9:00 a.m. December 5, December 12, December 16 <b>No Meeting: November 21, November 28</b>	(559) 636-5000
Tulare County Planning Commission: 9:00 a.m. December 13	(559) 624-7000
Tulare County Water Commission: 3:00 p.m. No December Meeting	(559) 636-5000
Tulare County Youth Commission: 3:00 p.m. No December Meeting	(559) 636-5000

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[Facebook.com/CountyofTulare](https://www.facebook.com/CountyofTulare) and [@CountyofTulare](https://twitter.com/CountyofTulare)**



**Places to Go Play:** The Tulare Historical Museum preserves and showcases the history of the City of Tulare. In addition, the museum features holdings such as an art glass collection and has 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 the Tulare Historical Museum and other places to "Go Play" in Tulare County at [www.tularecountymap.com](http://www.tularecountymap.com).