



# THE CHAMBER CONNECTION

A bimonthly newsletter of the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, Visitor & Convention Bureau, and Economic Development Commission

May 2015

## Chamber Expands Educational Resources for Business

By Glenn Morris, ACE, Chamber CEO

Improving how we operate is an ongoing requirement for all businesses. Working smarter won't necessarily help us avoid working harder, but it will position us for better outcomes. One way to improve business operations is to provide ongoing educational opportunities for business owners and employees.

One of the challenges to meeting is the fact that most businesses are so busy that freeing up the time to attend a course often just doesn't happen. We all know we should and we know we'd benefit from doing so, but the press of the here and now too often trumps.

The Chamber is pleased to offer a new resource that can help. Through a new partnership with Coggno, the fastest growing online training marketplace in the world, the Chamber is excited to provide members with access to a comprehensive online training marketplace. Through a cloud-based Learning Management System, Coggno delivers a one-stop resource to meet education and training needs for businesses of all shapes and sizes.



**Glenn Morris**  
Chamber Chief  
Executive Officer

Whether you are looking for compliance training for multiple employees, or continuing education for individuals, this new resource will give you access to most up-to-date selection of courses in the widest range of topics. Santa Maria Valley businesses can now access thousands of courses on topics ranging from safety to software, leadership to sales, and human resources to marketing. Courses are self-paced, on demand, many with certificates,

and are distributed online to each employees' computer via a free Learning Management System where you can track and view reporting.

We invite you to begin exploring this new resource to find ways that your business can get smarter! Visit the Chamber's website and select the link for Online Training Resources under the Business Services menu (<http://santamaria.com/business-services/online-training-resources/>). We welcome your feedback about this and other services the Chamber can provide to help your business grow.

## Welcome New Members!

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce was pleased to welcome the following businesses as new members during the months of March and April. We appreciate their vote of confidence in our ability to add value to their business and to create a strong local economy together!

- **Allstate Insurance Francisco L. Soto Agency**  
Francisco Soto  
110 S. Lincoln St., Ste 104, Santa Maria  
(805) 349-9141  
<http://agents.allstate.com/francisco-leon-soto-santa-maria-ca.html>
- **Bob's Well Bread**  
Bob Oswaks  
550 Bell St., Los Alamos  
(805) 344-3000  
[www.bobswellbread.com](http://www.bobswellbread.com)
- **Chris' Country Properties**  
Chris Aleto  
824 S. Broadway, Santa Maria  
(805) 361-0122  
[christinealeto@comcast.net](mailto:christinealeto@comcast.net)
- **cnagy Wines**  
Clarissa Nagy  
145 S. Gray St., Ste 103, Orcutt  
(805) 286-7228  
[www.nagywines.com](http://www.nagywines.com)
- **Coast Valley Substance Abuse Treatment Center**  
Chuck Madson  
1125 E. Clark Avenue, Suite A-2, Santa Maria  
(805) 739-1512  
<http://coastvalleysatc.com/>
- **CORE Winery**  
Becky Core  
105 W. Clark Avenue, Orcutt  
(805) 937-1600  
[www.corewine.com](http://www.corewine.com)
- **Freshcrete**  
Gareth Kelly  
4027 Santa Fe Road, San Luis Obispo  
(805) 471-0553  
[www.santamariaconcrete.com](http://www.santamariaconcrete.com)
- **Happy Dayz Classic Diner & Car Hop**  
Glynda Dias  
603 E. Main St., Santa Maria  
(805) 925-5556
- **John's Plumbing Company**  
John Childers  
P O Box 6959, Santa Maria  
(805) 925-6002
- **LMC Consulting Services**  
Lugdy Cueva  
P O Box 1580, Santa Maria  
(805) 345-7034  
[lmcconsultingservices.weebly.com](http://lmcconsultingservices.weebly.com)
- **Ms. Cardel Planner & Event Design**  
Susana Cardel  
2255 S. Broadway, Ste 14, Santa Maria  
(805) 260-4792  
[www.mscardel.com](http://www.mscardel.com)
- **Niya Restaurant, Inc**  
David Christison  
205 E. Clark Ave, Orcutt  
(805) 332-3065  
<http://niyarestaurant.com>
- **Shred 2 You**  
Petra Hernandez  
2315 Meredith Lane, Ste D, Santa Maria  
(805) 310-9720  
[www.shred2you.com](http://www.shred2you.com)
- **Smile Santa Maria Dental**  
Sean Nolan  
2528 S Broadway, Ste C, Santa Maria  
(805) 925-2628  
[www.smilesantamaria.com](http://www.smilesantamaria.com)
- **Softec**  
Bob Dumouchel  
191 S. Oak Park Blvd, Suite 7, Grover Beach  
(805) 481-0118  
[www.softec.org](http://www.softec.org)
- **Stimulus Marketing Inc.**  
Donna Polizzi  
Orcutt  
(805) 934-5884  
<http://www.stimmark.com>
- **Sula Mediterranean Kitchen & Bar**  
Sally Elias  
510 S. Broadway, Santa Maria  
(805) 928-5510  
[www.facebook.com/SulaMedKitchen](http://www.facebook.com/SulaMedKitchen)
- **TechXpress**  
Tim Snyder  
710 Fiero Lane, Ste 14, San Luis Obispo  
(805) 541-4400  
[www.techxpress.net](http://www.techxpress.net)
- **Tres Hermanas Vineyard & Winery**  
Paulette Teixeira  
9660 Foxen Canyon Rd, Santa Maria  
(805) 937-8451  
[www.treshermanaswinery.com](http://www.treshermanaswinery.com)
- **US Home Realty**  
Jose Uriarte  
Santa Maria  
(805) 602-6907  
[www.facebook.com/gatewaypropertiescentralcoast](http://www.facebook.com/gatewaypropertiescentralcoast)

## Renewing Members

- Advantage Property Management
- Air Pollution Control District
- American Legion Post 534
- Ammo-Wear Jewelry
- Apex Auto Glass and Tinting
- Atlas Copco Mafi-Trench Company LLC
- Benedetti & Associates
- Best Buy
- BFGC-IBI Group Architecture Planning
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Maria Valley
- Buckboard Motor Lodge
- Budget Car & Truck Rental
- Byron Vineyard & Winery
- CA State Retired Teachers Assoc
- Ca' Del Grevino Cafe' & Wine Bar
- Cal-Coast Refrigeration / Modern Air
- California Strawberry Commission
- CALSTAR
- Caring Hands Elderly Services
- Carpets Unlimited Colortile
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)
- Center for Employment Training
- Central Coast Jet Center
- Central Coast Pathology
- Central Coast Printing
- Central Coast Rescue Mission
- City Motors Collision Center
- Clark Center Association
- Coastal Ag
- Coastal Business Finance
- Coastal Valley Soccer Club
- Community Action Commission
- Costa De Oro Winery
- Country Oaks Apartments
- Country Oaks Care Center
- County of Santa Barbara Public Works Dept.
- DB Specialty Farms
- Deckers
- Diane Alleman-Stevens
- Driscoll Strawberry Assoc.
- Earth Systems Pacific
- Econcept Marketing Solutions
- Edward Jones - Jefferson Ledgerwood
- El Pueblo Restaurant
- Fletcher-Cross & Assoc.
- G.A. Hancock Properties
- GEMCare Health Plan/Physicians Choice
- Glad A Way Gardens, Inc.
- Graphics LTD
- Habitat For Humanity-Northern SB County
- Hesperian Masonic Lodge #264
- Hitching Post Of Casmalia
- Hub 81
- J.R. Barto Heating/Air-Conditioning/Sheet Metal Inc.
- J.W. Snipes Foundation, Inc.
- Jack Boysen
- Jersey Mike's Subs
- Jiffy Lube
- La Cuesta Farming
- LaVista Apartments of Santa Maria
- Maria's Cre-Asian Diner
- Matthew P. Lane, DDS
- McDermott & Apkarian, LLP
- McKibben Enterprises
- Mega 97.1
- Mooncatcher Communications
- Moss Levy & Hartzheim
- New Hope Baptist Church
- Nipomo Swapmeet & Mini Storage
- Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
- Pacific Pride Foundation
- PACIFIC WESTERN BANK
- PCPA - Pacific Conservatory Theatre
- Peppertree Chevron
- Presqu'ile Winery
- R W Scott Construction Co., Inc.
- Rabobank, N.A.
- Redeemer Church
- Reeder, Gilman & Associates
- Roland Miller, DC
- Rotary Club of Santa Maria (Noontime)
- Royal Family KIDS of Santa Maria
- S. Lombardi & Associates
- Santa Maria Arts Council
- Santa Maria Breakfast Rotary Club
- Santa Maria Country Club
- Santa Maria Fairpark
- Santa Maria Men's Club
- Santa Maria Philharmonic Society
- Santa Maria Sun
- Santa Maria Sunrises Lions Club International
- Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, Inc.
- Santa Maria Wisdom Center
- Santa Maria Women's Network
- Self Storage of Santa Maria
- Semplice
- SMOOTH, Inc.
- Southern California Gas Co.
- St Claire Apartments
- Staples & Associates
- Staples, Inc.
- State Farm Insurance - Donna Randolph
- Streater Pipe & Supply
- Tetra Tech, Inc.
- Thai Hut Restaurant
- The Cloud Company
- The Great American Melodrama
- The Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Center
- The Market
- The Murray Group - Morgan Stanley
- The Okonite Company
- Tileco Distributors, Inc.
- Tognazzini Beverage Services
- Urban Planning Concepts
- USAF Recruiting Service
- VAFB - 30 FSS/FSR
- Verdin Marketing
- WalMart #2507
- Western Aeromedical Consortium
- Westgate Courtyards
- Westside Building Materials - Santa Maria
- Wilshire Foundation/Best Care CC Home Health
- Windset Farms
- Woodland Leishman & Associates
- Workforce Resource Center

## GROUND BREAKING • GRAND OPENING • RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONIES



Ribbon Cutting

**Craft Kitchen of Casa Dumetz Wines/Babi's Beer Emporium**  
388 Bell Street, Los Alamos



Ribbon Cutting

**Marian Regional Medical Center**  
1400 E. Church Street  
Santa Maria



Ribbon Cutting

**Allstate Insurance Francisco L. Soto Agency**  
110 S. Lincoln Street, Ste 104  
Santa Maria



Ribbon Cutting

**Cold Stone Creamery**  
4869 S. Bradley Road, Ste#113  
Orcutt



Ribbon Cutting

**SCORE San Luis Obispo**  
429 E. Main Street  
Santa Maria (MIYB spaces)



Ribbon Cutting

**Chris' Country Properties**  
824 S. Broadway  
Santa Maria



Ribbon Cutting

**Casa Bonita Furniture**  
500 West Main Street  
Santa Maria





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### 2014-2015 OFFICERS

#### Chairman of the Board

Tim Ritchie  
Home Motors

#### Chairman Elect/Treasurer

Eddie Murray  
The Murray Group - Morgan Stanley

#### Vice Chairman

Cameron Stephens  
SM Tire

#### Vice Chairman

Ed Carcarey  
Mega 97.1

#### Past Chairman

Donna Randolph  
State Farm Insurance

### Board of Directors

Dr. Ray Arensdorf  
Arensdorf Chiropractic

Trent Benedetti  
Benedetti & Associates

Donna Cross  
Next Day Signs

Jean-Luc Garon  
Historic Santa Maria Inn

Peggy Greer  
Santa Barbara County Education

George Majoue  
Knights of Columbus

Dan Pankratz  
One Way Board Shop

Hugh Rafferty  
CoastHills Federal Credit Union

Tim Rooney  
Rooney's Irish Pub

Debi Testa  
Testa Catering

John Tunnell  
Tunnell Roofing

Erika Weber  
VTC Enterprises

Dr. Kevin Walthers  
Allan Hancock College

Tim Woodbury  
Woody's Butcher Block

The ChamberConnection is the official bimonthly publication of the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, 614 S Broadway, Santa Maria, CA 93454-5111, (805) 925-2403. Send corrections or good news submissions to chambernews@santamaria.com

# Connecting to our Members



### Member Connection debuted in April to meet Members' Needs and Provide Added Content

We want to give our members as many opportunities to promote as possible. To that end, we have added another offering: Member Connection. This piece is a digital email that is sent to all chamber reps every other Friday. The email contains advertisements exclusive to members as well as additional tips, offerings, or other content from the Chamber you likely won't find anywhere else. If you are a member of our Chamber you should already be receiving this email. If you are not, and would like to subscribe, you may do so from our facebook page (fb.com/SMVCC) or by emailing your request to chambernews@santamaria.com. If you are interested in advertising in an upcoming issue, also contact us at this email address. Ads



**Marcy Maretti**  
Marketing &  
Communications Manager

can click through to your website or link of choice, and analytics on your ad performance are furnished upon request. We hope you enjoy this added member benefit!

### Help us improve with your feedback

It is our goal to provide our members with all of the content, opportunities, and resources that will serve them best. We hope that our latest offerings such as our revamped website, app tools, digital newsletters,

this print newsletter, and more have been meeting those needs. We are still working to fine tune all of our marketing efforts be it in print, email, social media, etc. To do the best job possible, we need your feedback!

Please take a brief moment to visit this link and provide your opinion. It is a very short survey but will be invaluable to us. To take the survey, type this link into your browser: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N3935HX>



## Customer Service 101

As we continue to move through these challenging economic times, beating out your competition for potential customers/guests is undoubtedly one of your biggest challenges, no matter what type of business you have.

How can you beat online competition when customers can find the lowest prices, for almost anything, online or at discount/big box stores?

EXCELLENT. CUSTOMER. SERVICE.

Nothing is more powerful than a friendly, helpful and knowledgeable sales person/customer service representative who wants to assist customers in making the best choice possible in their buying decision. What do people do when they receive really good service or really bad service?

Talk about it... to everyone they know.

Word-of-mouth referrals are the best kind you could possibly get. Customers are excited to spread the word when they experience something great (the opposite is also true, so keep reading). Give your staff members attainable goals and guidance in becoming the best they can be in building and keeping business.

The following information is based on Tourism Week materials I received many years ago (many thanks to the U.S. Travel Association), which remains more relevant than ever, today.

### What Kind of Employees Do You Have?

- Do your employees realize the value of customer service as it pertains to your business and our city's economy?
- Are your employees courteous and hospitable at all times to guests, customers and colleagues?
- Do your employees have a working knowledge of your business and the services you provide? Are they aware of who your competition is?
- Can your employees answer customer questions clearly and accurately? If they don't know the answer, do they quickly ask a colleague for assistance?
- Are your employees well-trained and happily performing their jobs to the best of their abilities?
- Do they know that giving the best service will immeasurably profit your business, the Santa Maria Valley, and ultimately, themselves?
- If all of your answers are YES, heartiest congratulations to you!
- If you said No to any of these questions, consider giving your people in-house training or possibly sending them to a customer service seminar. I promise it will pay off!

### Food for Thought: Remember Me?

**I'm the person** who goes into a restaurant, sits down and waits patiently while the waiters and waitresses do everything except take my order.

**I'm the person** who goes into a department store and stands quietly while the sales clerks stock shelves, dust the counters or finish their little chit-chats with each other.

**I'm the person** who telephones to place an order, am placed on hold, then is completely forgotten about.

**I'm the person** who drives up to the full-service pump at a service station and has to ask to get my windows cleaned and my oil checked.

Yes, you may say that I'm a nice person because I don't get upset or complain about the discourtesy, thoughtlessness, and inconsideration that I'm subjected to merely because I want to spend my money with you.

I want you to know, however, that **I'm also a person who never comes back.**

**It amuses me that you spend thousands of dollars in advertising every year to get me into your businesses when I was there in the first place. Wouldn't it have been smarter just to give me a little service and show me a little common courtesy while I was there so that you could keep me from going somewhere else?**

### Be a Sidewalk Ambassador: Welcome a Visitor!

- Ask if you can help when a guest or customer appears lost or hesitant.
- Take time to give accurate and specific directions.
- Speak slowly and distinctly – but don't shout – when assisting a foreign guest or customer.
- Be enthusiastic and well-informed about your services and how you can best help your customer.
- Be friendly. Be helpful. Be hospitable.
- Smile!!! Even if you're just on the telephone – it comes through, believe me.
- Some guests'/customers' most lasting memory of your business and the Santa Maria Valley may be YOU!
- Sometimes you are the only representative your customer will meet. Make it count!
- You never know who you are speaking to... they may be just the person to bring a lot of business your way, so impress them with excellent customer service.
- People talk. If you offer great customer service, they will be more than happy to refer your business to everyone they know. But remember the opposite is true as well. The most damaging thing someone can do to your business is to spread the word about their negative experience with you.

### First and Lasting Impressions

Getting to know your customer better

One of the most controllable features that differentiates your product from the competition is the level of service you and your employees provide. The key to great customer service is built upon a foundation of prompt and courteous service. One-on-one relationship building is based on creating a dependent relationship between you and your customers; one customer at a time. You want your customers to think and say, "It's so easy here, why would I go someplace else?" Why does a patron like a particular bartender or wait-person, week after week? Because they know their customer – they have a relationship that

works.

Front-line staff are your eyes and ears – the window to your customer.

While specific techniques can be taught, customer service is more of a spirit where responsibility and care for the customer is reflected in the attitude of the employee. Enthusiasm needs to be rewarded while laziness is strongly discouraged. Reward positive behavior by employees through peer recognition, occasional monetary incentives and compensation and never forget to offer a personal thank you for a job well done.

Complaints are not problems, they are opportunities.

Find the solution to problems and improve your business. Recognizing legitimate complaints is the first step and most important step in strengthening your business. Remember, most people are too polite to complain in public, others are intimidated by voicing their opinion. The few that do complain may be speaking for a much larger group that you would have known about. Thank them for their input.

Learning through communication

A good exercise is to have staff and management share the "best" and "worst" experiences regarding customer service they have had at other businesses. This can open the door to discuss situations where staff could have effortlessly enhanced a customer's "average" experience at your operation.

Learning through education

Ensure that your front-line staff knows our community and is able to refer customers to other businesses whose services they might also need. Create a reference list of resources or provide training at staff meetings.

Don't forget basic skills of hospitality

Make the guest/customer feel wanted

- Look enthusiastic
- Greet with a warm smile
- Make friendly eye contact
- Be well groomed
- Stand and move with poise
- Leave your "bad attitude" at home

Greeting People

- Offer a friendly hello
- Extend a pleasant compliment
- Listen to their requests, listen and learn
- Remember names
- Be diplomatic
- Use a gentle tone of voice
- End on an optimistic note

Help Solve Problems

- Listen
- Sympathize
- Speak calmly
- Offer options
- The visitors is always right

Express Pride in Your Region

- Visit your local attractions, learn about them, know where they are located and when they are open
- Display visitor information
- Think like a hometown fan

Effective Responses:

Instead of

I don't know...

No...

That's not my job...

You're right – this stinks...

You want it by when?

Calm down...

I'm busy right now...

Call me back...

Try this...

I'll find out

What I can do is

This is who can best help you

I understand your concern/problem

I'll try my best

I'm sorry

I'll be right with you

I will call you back





# Santa Maria ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



**Dave Cross**  
Director,  
Economic Development

The EDC's recently concluded Business Confidence Survey provides a good indication of how our local businesses are doing today. It confirms what we are seeing in regard to our local economy: the economy is growing slowly but steadily, businesses are improving, retail sales continue to improve, and many companies are looking to hire over the next 12 months.

It also provides an element of caution. While the vast majority of businesses have improved, a few have not. It also indicates that we need to continue training our workforce to meet our local needs.

In answer to the question, "How was business for your company compared to the prior year?" nearly 60% noted improvement. Less than 10% said business had gotten worse.

In response to the question, "How do you see your workforce over the next 12 months?" over 40% of the 240 responders said "Probably Hiring". That number is significant. The survey is a sample of about 10% of the number of businesses, so that means that a lot of businesses will be looking to hire.

So, if businesses are looking to hire, what industries are they in? Using filters that are available through the EDC, the survey shows "construction" as being the number one sector looking to hire, followed by "retail sales", "financial and banks", and then "manufacturing". Those are the sectors that job seekers should take note of. Construction naturally increases as more projects are approved and started.

It is also notable that the construction industry indicates "lack of a trained work force" as being a major concern. This indicates that there should be greater opportunities to train people in construction related fields, such as building, roofing, electrical, plumbing and associated work.

Manufacturing was the second highest sector that noted "lack of a trained workforce" as a concern. Allan Hancock College has developed a curriculum geared specifically toward the needs of local manufacturers. Robert Mabry, Associate Professor of Machining and Manufacturing Technology and Project Director of the Central Coast Manufacturing Initiative (CCMI), leads this highly successful program. Finding additional resources and funding to further expand this program would be extremely beneficial for our workforce and industry.

As far as the size of businesses who responded, the EDC's filters show that those looking to hire are all sizes, from very small to over 100. In addition, the improved economy seems to be lifting all sized companies.

Very small businesses (1-10 employees), however, have some specific issues that disproportionately affect them. These include a lack of funding options. It is harder for a business this size to qualify for the loan they need to expand with the economy after surviving the recession. For example, a very small company may not have a financial track record over

today for them either. Before the housing bubble burst and the recession hit, using home equity as collateral for a business loan was very common. Today, that collateral is often not there.

Because American entrepreneurs are the most innovative in the world, they have embraced options around this, including crowd funding and recruiting angel investors.

According to the survey, another factor that impacts businesses, small and large, is overregulation. While we have little say in laws that impact employers and businesses that are imposed by the State or Federal Government, we DO have a say in local regulation. As an example, zoning laws which were developed 20 or more years ago can be updated to reflect new business models and changes in the way business is conducted. Most cities and counties are due a review of these ordinances. As many commercial brokers have realized, it is becoming harder to fit businesses into these narrowly defined ordinances, resulting in added difficulty in opening, expanding and growing businesses.

The City of Santa Maria's Community Development Department has taken the initiative of working to find ways to make Conditional Use Permits easier to obtain through administrative approval and streamlining the process. This is welcome and commendable. Taking it a step further, there should also be time taken to review and update the zoning ordinances themselves, so that businesses are regulated based on the needs of today and not how they were before the turn of the century when the zoning laws were put into place.

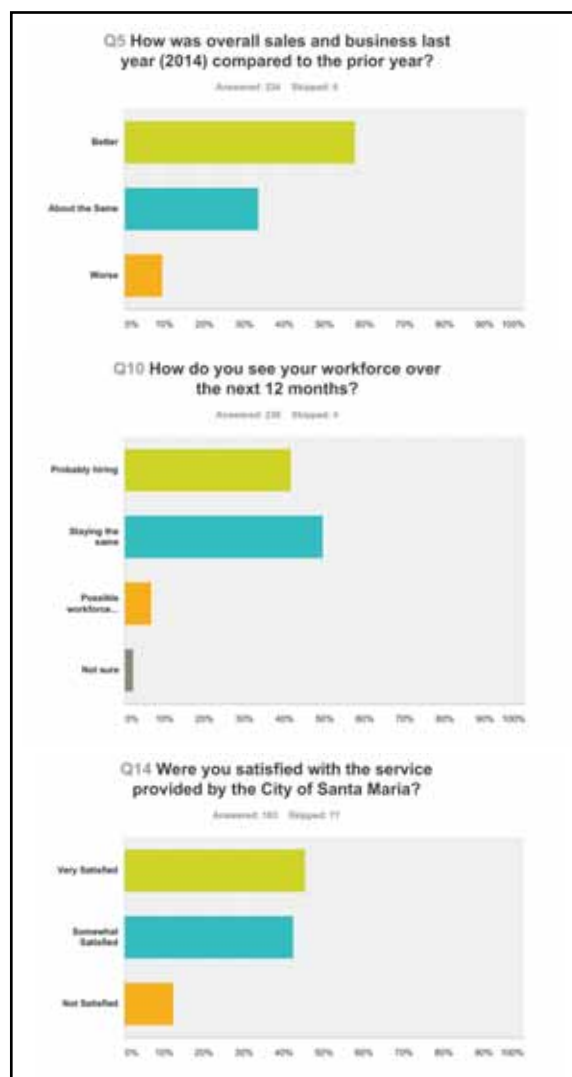
Overall, the City of Santa Maria got high marks from businesses that responded to the survey. In answering the question, "Were you satisfied with the service provided by the City of Santa Maria?" Over 45% were "very satisfied", while 42% were "somewhat satisfied", and only a small percentage, 12% were "not satisfied".

While there is great cause for optimism, the majority of business that responded to the survey are keeping a watchful eye on the economy. In fact, "the economy" is the one overall concern that cuts across all sizes, sectors and types.

After recessions in the past, the recoveries were clear and obvious, and there was no need to keep looking over one's shoulder. Today, while the economy continues to get stronger, there remains a residual element of uncertainty.

Thankfully, that element of uncertainty continues to get smaller, and optimism continues to climb.

The Business Confidence Survey is available at the Economic Development website, which can be accessed from the Chamber of Commerce page. Go to [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com) and click on "economic development" to reach the EDC's website.



the last three to four years to qualify for the loan they need. But the fact that they survived and are ready to expand again says a lot about them! Now as the orders for their products increase, they need the capital to purchase stock materials, equipment and invest in manpower.

In the past, there was more local control from financial institutions to approve loans, and they were easier to qualify for. Changes have tightened up these controls, but it has the unintended consequence of affecting small businesses.

In the case of entrepreneurs and start-ups, traditional forms of funding are not as available

## Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce

# MANUFACTURERS TOURS AND FORUMS

Manufacturers Tours and Forums are usually held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30 am, however this can occasionally change for special events. There was no Manufacturers meeting in April to accommodate the Vandenberg Air Force base Small Business Outreach Event in Santa Maria.

So far in 2015, these successful tours have included: Images Screen Printing, Lineage Logistics, a presentation by the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, and an overview of the benefits of Employee Owned Businesses through Employee Owned Stock Ownership Plans (ESOP).

Next Tour:

Tuesday, May 26, 2015 - 7:30 a.m.

The new Santa Maria Police Department building 1111 W. Betteravia Road, Santa Maria

The new 70,000 square foot Police Department building is nearing completion. It promises to be a modern, state-of-the-art facility and will be the new headquarters for the Santa Maria Police Department. In addition to local law enforcement, the facility will also provide some economic development options. First, the new communication towers and equipment will make Santa Maria the hub for communications on the Central Coast. Agencies from all over the region will have the option of using Santa Maria's modern equipment. Second, it closes the fiber loop within the City of Santa Maria and provides the potential for future business use. Third, it will have space to provide electronic storage and back-up capability for businesses to lease at a reasonable cost.

This tour is limited!

No cost, but you must RSVP to [register@santamaria.com](mailto:register@santamaria.com)

Or call: (805) 925-2403 x812

ALSO, SAVE THE DATE:

Industry Appreciation Luncheon

Wednesday, July 8 - 11:30

Santa Maria Elks Lodge #1538

### Vandenberg Air Force Base Outreach Event

The Vandenberg Air Force Base Small Business Outreach event in Santa Maria, held at the Santa Maria Fairpark on April 15, provided an opportunity for companies to learn how to do business with Vandenberg and the government. It also provided networking opportunities with government agencies and companies already tied in with Vandenberg.

This was the 4th year that the event was sponsored and hosted by the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, and it has grown in size each year. The event had close to 400 attendees overall with 65 tables of vendors, agencies and VAFB procurement departments.



Business representatives, many from outside of the area, were provided informational presentations from agencies and small business experts. This included a briefing from Lt. Colonel Amy Harshner, 30th Contractors Squadron, and Tina Mercer Mirich, Director of Small Business Programs on Vandenberg. It also included information from Thomas Scheu from the Small Business Administration, Jeff Cuskey from the Procurement Technical Assistance Center, Frank Campo regarding services for Veterans, Lugdy Cueva, LMC Consulting Services, and William Osgood from CFR and Associates.

The outreach event also included a display table filled Convention Center, where 65 businesses and agencies displayed their products and services.

### Veterans Academy

The Chamber and its Economic Development Department are proud to sponsor the Veterans Academy, connecting local Veterans, who have served to protect and defend our nation, with local employers.



Organized by Luciano Santini and Jean Nicolas from the Employment Development Department and hosted by Allan Hancock College, the academy helps Veterans to improve their job seeking skills and update their resume to land a job. The success rate is outstanding, with many local employers stepping up to the plate to provide employment for the men and women who have served.

Nearly 30 Veterans attended the academy, which concluded on May 8 with an employer's panel. They were provided with expert guidance throughout the 5 day event.

### Other Economic Development Activities

The Chamber's Economic Development Department works across the board with programs, agencies, brokers and representatives to attract new businesses, help existing businesses, provide information as requested, and coordinate with City Departments to promote economic development in the Santa Maria Valley. This mission continues on a day-to-day basis.

### How the EDC can assist your business

The Chamber, through the Economic Development Department, provides zoning and city information, business start-up guidance, and help with overcoming hurdles and impasses.



**GUEST COMMENTARY**



**Terri Strickland**  
The Hitching Post Restaurant

## Businesses Need to Stand up to Predatory Lawsuits

Our family's restaurant, The Hitching Post, was one of about 100 businesses on the Central Coast that was sued in 2004 by serial litigant Jarek Molski, for supposed ADA violations. At the time, he had approximately 400 lawsuits filed in Federal Court against California small businesses. These suits are merely legalized extortion and do nothing to make access better for the disabled. Their sole purpose is to extract money from businesses. We chose not to pay, and their frivolous lawsuit was eventually thrown out by the courts. For us it was a matter of principle, but we understand why 99.5% of defendants settle out of court. It is just too costly to fight.

At about the same time, the Mandarin Touch Restaurant in Solvang also chose to fight. Not only did the federal judge throw the case out, he also prohibited Mr. Molski from further filing lawsuits in federal court. Unfortunately, this hasn't stopped him from using the state court system, or stopped any of those other serial litigants wreaking havoc on small businesses in California. These other litigants have continued this assault, most recently in Santa Maria, Morro Bay, Cambria and Atascadero just this year.

So, what can be done? A group called Californians Against Lawsuit Abuse (CALA) have been leading the charge in getting a bill passed by the State Legislature to stop these abuses. For the first time in 10 years, there are currently two bills being considered in a bipartisan manner that actually have the potential to pass.

AB 52 (Gray: D-Merced) seeks to improve access for disabled customers and limit frivolous litigation against businesses for construction-related accessibility claims by providing an opportunity for the businesses to timely resolve any potential violations. Similarly, AB 54 (Olsen: R-Modesto) would improve provide businesses with 60-days to fix an access issue when it is identified.

CALA's website is <http://sickoflawsuits.org/>. They have great information, you can contact your state representatives directly from their site and you may voice your support of these bills. Our local Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the state and other local Chambers to to inform and educate their members and the state legislators.

Because of the importance of this legislation, sharing this information with family, friends and other business owners should be of the highest priority for all of us. It is time for small business to stand up for ourselves. If we don't, who will?

Chamber Note: Members who want additional information, including sample letters, can visit [www.calchamber.com/advocacy](http://www.calchamber.com/advocacy) and use the Research Tools function to search for these specific bills.

# Chamber's New Member Orientation Breakfast Meeting Is a Thriving!



**Cara Martinez**  
Membership Manager

Another program we have implemented in 2015 for our new members is our A.C.T. Power Breakfast. Here we are nearly half way into the year and we've just completed our second, (quarterly) new member orientation and they both have had a great turn out! This new member orientation meeting is strategically designed to encourage our new members from the start to **A**ctivate the **C**hamber **T**ools they have been given by joining membership. The meeting begins with a complimentary "Power" breakfast, (including coffee of course) to get their juices flowing. They are given time to connect with each other by introducing themselves, their products and services and to pass out their literature. This is followed by an informal PowerPoint presentation given by Cara Martinez, Membership Manager discussing in detail each program and the benefits of it. She describes every networking opportunity the Chamber hosts each month on their behalf through our membership meetings and events. Cara also spends time getting them familiar with our website and our Chamber Master Member



Information Center, (MIC) program by demonstrating "how to" utilize the social feed and build their brochure to enhance their business listing's visibility on our website. She then demonstrates how to post events and "hot deals" to give them maximum visibility on our website. Q & A's are also welcomed during this entire time. The meeting concludes with drawings for a FREE Trade Show Booth, Annual Dinner passes and each member present is given a Chamber Connection pass which is good for one FREE registration to a meeting or luncheon of their choice. The BIG winners of the FREE Trade Show Booth were, Vicki Forman of Yoga for Mankind, LLC in January and Clarissa Nagy of cnagy Wines in April.

"What excites me the most about these orientations is that our new members are connecting with each other "from the start," learning together how take advantage of their membership benefits and after the meeting is over, a couple of hours later I see that these members are logged into the MIC uploading information on their listing as well as posting their events and hot deals. I believe one of the reasons the attendance at these meetings are so successful is because our members are eager to learn how to get the most out of their membership investment to help grow their business and I am passionate about helping them get there!" says Cara. The next A.C.T. Power Breakfast will be held in July for the new members from April, May and June.

### Featured Events

- **Salute to Volunteers**  
June 10, 12 - 1 pm  
\$20 per person or \$180 for a table  
Elks Lodge  
1309 N. Bradley Rd.,  
Santa Maria  
Registration closes 6/5  
RSVP to Register@SantaMaria.com
- **Salute to Industry**  
July 8, 12 - 1 pm  
\$20 per person  
Elks Lodge  
1309 N. Bradley Rd.,  
Santa Maria  
Registration closes 7/3  
RSVP to Register@SantaMaria.com
- **Business Trade Show**  
September 10, 3 - 7 p.m.  
Booths and sponsorships still available!  
SM Fairpark  
937 S. Thornburg, St., SM  
Book early, space is limited!  
Book now by emailing Register@SantaMaria.com
- **May 21 Mixer, 5-7 p.m.**  
Leadership Santa Maria Valley (@SMVCC)  
614 S. Broadway,  
Santa Maria.
- **June 18 Mixer, 5-7 p.m.**  
Smith's Alarms  
3634 Orcutt Rd.,  
Santa Maria
- **July 16 Mixer, 5 - 7 pm**  
Santa Maria Energy  
2811 Airpark Dr.,  
Santa Maria

### Ambassador of the Quarter

Ambassador of the Quarter,  
Jan-Mar 2015  
Sandra Sigala,  
KCOY

Ambassador of the Quarter Awards are based on attendance to Chamber sponsored events, efforts to encourage participation among other Chamber members, as well as reaching out to non-members.



JUNE 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Transportation Committee Veteran's Memorial Hall 12:00 pm	9	10 Membership Lunch - Salute to Volunteers Elks Lodge #1538 12:00 pm	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Executive Committee Chamber Office - 7:30 am Business Development Forum - Speaker TBD Fountain Pavilion Bldg Santa Maria Fairpark - 7:30 am	18 Santa Maria Merchants Committee MIYB Spaces 7:30 am Mixer Smith's Alarms 3634 Orcutt Road 5:00 pm	19	20
21	22 Board of Director's Meeting Radisson Hotel 11:30 am	23 Green Business Forum TBD Ambassador's Meeting The Market 12:00 pm	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JULY 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSED	4
5	6	7 VCB Marketing Series - Clarissa Nagy Riverbench Winery 9:00 am	8 Membership Lunch - Industry Appreciation Elks Lodge #1538 12:00 pm	9	10	11
12	13 Transportation Committee Veteran's Memorial Hall 12:00 pm	14	15 Business Development Forum - Business & Cyber Security Location TBD 11:30 am	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 Santa Maria Merchants Committee MIYB Spaces - 7:30 am Mixer Santa Maria Energy 2811 Airpark Drive 5:00 pm	23 Ambassador's Meeting Location TBD 12:00 pm	24 Economic Development Commission City Hall 8:00 am	25
26	27 Board of Director's Meeting Radisson Hotel 11:30 am	28	29	30	31	