



Your Economic Development Connection

ECONOMIC NEWS

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Representing the communities of San Luis Obispo County

Meritt Electronics:

Local company is successful "model" for international trade

By Robin S. Dudley

Tucked inconspicuously within a small industrial complex on Tank Farm Road, the modest, one-room office and adjoining warehouse of San Luis Obispo-based Meritt Electronics has no exterior signage, a simple glass door marked only with the suite number, and an unlisted phone number. Not exactly the expected corporate "digs" for a successful inventor and worldwide distributor of a product boasting over \$200 million in annual sales. Company founder and President Ron Meritt explains, "Our product's distribution is global. The (Central Coast) economy has little effect on our business. So we really don't need local visibility like other companies."



Likewise, Meritt's casual, understated demeanor doesn't fit the typical profile for a world-renowned entrepreneur, sought-after speaker and the featured subject of recent cover stories by both Forbes and Entrepreneur Magazines.

But Meritt Electronics isn't just your typical "high-tech" success story. It's actually the three-part entrepreneurial journey of a man, an idea and the creation of an international business model. It's also a testimonial showing it's never too late to change lanes in life, take a risk or use your skills to help others succeed.

Part 1: Ron Merritt - Corporate Refugee to Accidental Entrepreneur

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Management from the University of Phoenix, Meritt worked for over 25-years in various companies overseas, beginning as a field engineer and rapidly graduating to senior management positions. He eventually moved to San Luis Obispo, joining Italian-owned SAES Pure Gas as Director of Customer Service.

Then in 1998 at the age of 44, Ron Meritt was laid off, repeating a pattern he'd seen during his 20-years of corporate life. "Hired by companies to set up their service and management processes (taking 3-1/2 to 5 years), I'd eventually work myself out of a job," says Meritt. With no comparable jobs in San Luis Obispo, and faced with having to move his family, Meritt decided to take a "leap of faith" into entrepreneurship – turning a simple contraption he designed to keep his kids entertained while on family road trips into a business.

Meritt's idea was an all-in-one portable TV/VCR video entertainment system with a cloth-and-strap bag that attached to headrests in a car. With a patent for the straps and carrying case, and a prototype financed personally using a \$100,000 home-equity loan, he set out to develop, produce and market his new invention – the "Video Traveler."

But Meritt's prototype and first attempt to find a distributor failed. Retailer Fry's Electronics

sent him back to the drawing board, citing it took too long to install. To keep costs down, Meritt went to his previous contacts in Korea, returning with a greatly improved unit that could be installed in any vehicle in under one minute. It also had new, unique features like "digital anti-skip," outlets for up to three monitors, and a price tag significantly lower than any similar product on the market.

However, his money was running out. So to gain more exposure for his invention, Meritt signed up to exhibit at a Special Equipment Market Association (SEMA) tradeshow. By chance, he got a prime location when another long-time exhibitor suddenly backed out. The visibility worked. According to Meritt, "All the big guys saw my invention with its low cost and went nuts!"

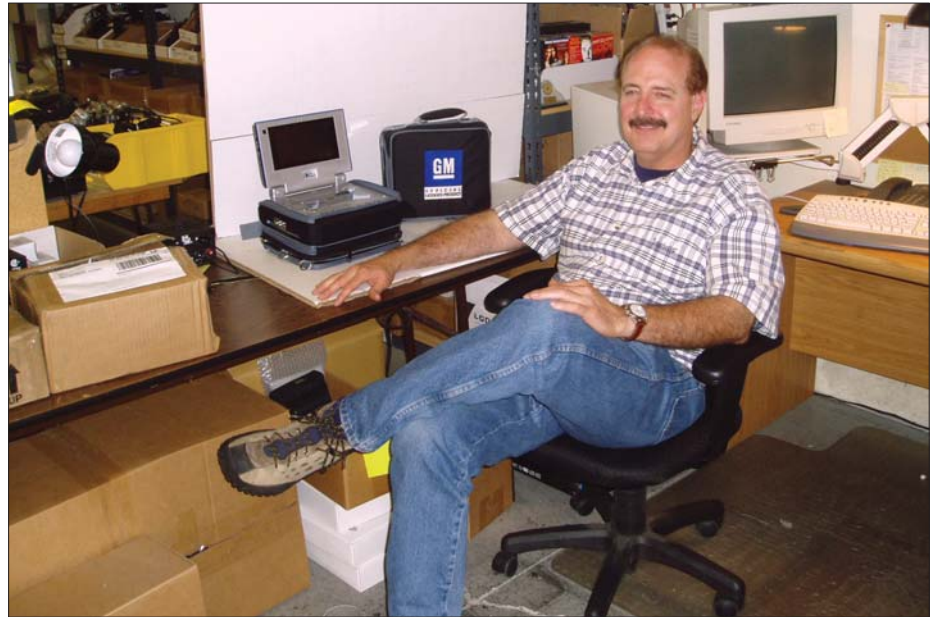
Part 2: Meritt Electronics - Idea to Global Domination.

With instant success but a lack of capital, Meritt realized he couldn't manufacture enough units to meet the demand. He signed a deal with Steel Horse, a manufacturer of auto entertainment systems, to produce the Video Traveler and handle larger retailers, paying Meritt a 5% royalty. Meritt Electronics would sell to smaller chains and mail-order clients. Sales of the \$400-to-\$600 device took off.

However, in 2000 troubles set in. Steel Horse was on shaky financial ground, even as it sold \$5 million worth of Video Travelers. Meanwhile, as the product gained in popularity, other manufacturers (like entertainment industry giant Audiovox) began copying the idea. When Steel Horse and Meritt Electronics had a falling out over who was responsible for defending the patent against infringement, the two companies parted ways, and Meritt found a new business partner: Nissho Iwai – a \$68 billion trading company. They helped Meritt settle the lawsuit, challenge the other companies that infringed on his patents, and regain market share by leveraging off their sheer size and strength. Nissho Iwai now sells the Video Traveler to big automotive companies and retailers like General Motors, Daimler-Chrysler, Best Buy, Target, and Sam's Club. Meritt Electronics gets royalties, the rights to sell the device in stores with fewer than 20 locations, a monthly consulting contract and a warranty-processing deal that brings in \$120,000 to \$240,000 a year.

Meritt Electronics has also been able to increase their business an average of five-times annually using e-commerce. They expanded their domestic wholesale and direct-sales customer base by actually cutting back on advertising spending. Using press releases and multiple small paid advertisements (versus a few large, expensive advertisements), they lure customers to their website, then strategically "tell their story."

E-commerce has also allowed cost-effective expansion into more international markets, includ-



Ron Meritt in his office with his invention, the "video-traveler."

ing Europe, China, Korea, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia.

Finally, while using local subcontractors whenever possible, Meritt has reduced costs over 50% by sourcing parts internationally, using suppliers in foreign countries, and locating and introducing new technology and products that were not available in the U.S.

Part 3: "The Meritt Model" - Life Cycles to Leveraging Lessons

Now at age 50, Meritt knows that every product has a life cycle. With the market becoming saturated, his company is currently ramping down its Video Traveler operations and restructuring – preparing for a new phase of entrepreneurial (ad)venture. He is now parlaying his experience by helping others launch inventions. "It's just a natural progression," he says. "This is letting me take my knowledge to the next level."

Meritt's original "Video in a Bag" idea not only developed into a successful company, but also became the model for a business tool that can take almost any product from prototype to global distribution. Appropriately called "The Meritt Model," he now seeks out inventors to finance, and takes their inventions through the design, prototype and engineering process. Then he outsources the manufacturing, marketing and packaging. When royalty checks start coming in, Meritt gets his initial investment back (usually around \$30 to \$200 thousand) then splits the royalties with the inventor 50/50. Since he only charges for "hard expenses" but not his time, and assumes all the risk (the inventor owes nothing if it doesn't work out), it's a great opportunity for new inventors.

Meritt Electronics – soon to be renamed "Meritt International" to give a broader corpo-

rate "umbrella" for expansion – plans to help launch 6 to 10 new products in 2004. This includes a revolutionary new environmental invention by Meritt himself. (To be formally announced soon!)

He also volunteers his time speaking at career conferences, to Cal Poly's MBA and Engineering students, and even to aspiring young inventors at local middle schools, talking to them about "real world" business issues, like a lack of finances, lawsuits, and getting crushed by "Big Business."

Summarizing his biggest lessons so far, Meritt says:

1. Use e-commerce as a strategic tool to grow your business,
2. If you're challenged by a company 100 times your size, find a company that is 1,000 times your size to be your partner!
3. Learn to minimize financial risks
4. Every product has a natural life cycle.
5. Learn when to get in, and when to recognize when it's time to get out

While he confesses to having had some serious anxiety about starting out on his own, Meritt notes that not trying to do everything himself helped allay his fears during the start-up phase. "Align yourself with other people and do your homework," he says. "Get coaching from other people—including your attorney—to cover your bases."

Good advice. And good luck, Ron Meritt, on this next phase of your "journey."

Ron Meritt is married with two children. A self-proclaimed "nut about fast cars, motorcycles, boats and the high tech gadgets that go with them," he enjoys sports and "just spending time" with his teen-age sons. For more information about Meritt Electronics or the Video Traveler, visit www.videotraveler.com.

President's Report



Ray Johnson,
EVC President

Jobs and the Economy

As the political season heats up, we'll be hearing more discussion on the economy and jobs. One side will point to the growing economy, the other to the lack of job recovery. While political rhetoric is just that – political – there is a fundamental shift in the world economy that requires serious thought and planning. In recent weeks several national magazines have addressed the changes in the world jobs picture.

U.S. News & World Report (3/8/04) asked the question: Are we in a "two-track economy" – one where corporations do well, but workers do poorly? The fulcrum point for the debate is what some business analysts are calling "off shoring" – the transfer of U.S. jobs overseas. While U.S. companies are profiting from the lower labor costs, many workers are seeing their employment possibilities go away. This is one of the tangible effects of a global economy. It is reported that Reuters News Agency plans on hiring six journalists in Bangalore, India to cover 3,000 American companies. Smart Company (April 2004) interviewed numerous high-tech

workers who have trained their foreign replacements just before their jobs were shipped off shore. We have a couple of choices. We can ring our hands that this job transfer is taking place and bemoan the fact that whole segments of certain industries are being sent off shore, or we can step back and determine what we can do to replace those lost jobs. There are choices.

Business Week (3/1/04) makes the point that the outsourcing of many high-tech jobs has greatly reduce the cost of computer hardware and software, which translates to more and more people becoming involved in the high-tech revolution. This in turn opens up new fields, such as the management of a world-wide network of programmers. There is a growing need for people to consult with companies on designing and integrating high-tech solutions into their companies. There is a need for business analysts who can determine the needs of a business or industry and turn that into "spec" sheets for programmers.

One area that requires effort in the U.S. is access to broadband Internet service. Both Japan and Ko-

rea have made that a national priority. These countries have much faster broadband access: (20-26 mps to our 3 mps. 10-20 mps service won't be available to most U.S. consumers for 3 to 6 years.) In South Korea, 75% of the households are connected to broadband. In the U.S. 18% are connected, although up to 89% could connect if the services made sense. We need to make this a national priority. We also need to determine how to effectively use these services to enhance our economy. Korea's broadband activity reached \$4.6 billion in 2002. We live in an area with good broadband infrastructure.

We need to explore ways to exploit those advantages and bring about new jobs in the process. We need to wake up to the fact that many of the earlier high-tech jobs have gone overseas, like the manufacturing jobs before them. We then need to determine what fits and what works, and start developing new opportunities in those areas. The EVC will be exploring new opportunities using broadband services.

Issue highlights:

Chairman's Report	2
Business Resources	2
Lender's Corner	2
Intentional Trade Course Graduates	2
EVC Executive Committee . . .	3
Cuesta College SBDC	3
Sponsors	4

Chairman's Report

Business to Business spending: Take a closer look

By Missie P. Hobson

I recently participated in a presentation to business and civic leaders about Diablo Canyon's local economic impact. The program offered the kind of information you might expect – the number and types of jobs generated at Diablo; our plant payroll and the dollars paid in property taxes. But plant officials went beyond the predictable data and offered a glimpse into an intriguing part of the local economic mix: the value of business-to-business transactions made on the central coast. We struck a chord of keen interest with this topic, and I thought it worth pursuing.

PG&E's core business of generating power and providing it to consumers is well understood. What may not be as visible is the fact that in doing so at Diablo Canyon, PG&E spends \$300 million in the local community. We purchase hardware to maintain the plant; gardening and security services, and groceries to keep our cafeteria in operation. We contract for hotel rooms during outage; we pay for signs and gas and office supplies and engineering services. And while our spending is high because of the size of what we do, these kinds of transactions are part of every business in SLO County.

Any of us who are part of the local economic engine – whether private sector, nonprofit

or government – support our operations by doing business with each other. During uneven economic times that are still righting themselves in California, business-to-business activity is a tool to keep even closer in mind and work harder to promote. Doing business with each other is a relatively simple way to help recharge our local economy. Take a moment to consider what you spend in a year to keep your operation going – from paying for the space you occupy to computers and software, lunches and dinners, day to day janitorial...the paper for copy machines, coffee for coffee makers, envelopes and printer cartridges; landscaping and phones, security systems and insurance.

While each of us may be painfully aware of the cost of operating our own business, we tend to overlook the collective economic strength we're pumping into the local economy. The EVC is eager to get a better sense of just how strong the value of business-to-business transactions is in SLO County. We'd like to hear from you about the goods and services you buy locally and the dollars in play here on the Central Coast. The more the EVC can really understand our local business infrastructure and how dollars move about the county, the better we can target our services for success.

We all recognize the power of local spending. Not only do we



Missie P. Hobson, EVC Board Chairman

help keep our colleagues in business, but we also boost our own communities by generating retail sales taxes for our communities. Parks and police and fire protection, street improvements and open space that are so key to our quality of life are all supported by sales taxes. It seems simple enough: do business here at home and help keep home the way we like it.

The role of business-to-business spending has never been more important in maintaining our economic health than it is right now. Let other businesses know what you can offer to help them in their operation. From the smallest service provider to large industries, there is an opportunity to let potential customers know what's available right here at home. SLO County's economy succeeds by growing existing businesses and organizations, and by doing business with each other, buying local as much as possible and understanding and appreciating the many ways we create economic vitality on the Central Coast.

Business Resources

Business Resource Guide

By Pat MacCasland

As a business in San Luis Obispo County, have you tried to find obscure, unique or just ordinary information on business assistance? Did you need to search high and low? Were you able to find what you wanted? Are you looking for information now? SBA 504 Loans, on-line classrooms, business counseling, recycling incentives, programs for energy efficiency, pollution control tax exempt financing, other business assistance or expansion information is available in one place - the EVC Business Resource Guide; the best and most comprehensive book to use for San Luis Obispo County.

The new and updated edition of the EVC Business Resource Guide is currently being compiled for publication in time for introduction at the EVC's Annual Event, May 20th, 7:30 am, Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo.

The EVC Business Resource Guide is a comprehensive look at the

Local, State and Federal resources available to businesses in San Luis Obispo County. New this year is a glossary of financial terms that may help you more efficiently interact with and provide information to your financial institution. (You may even understand what they are talking about.) You will receive a copy of this resource when you attend the EVC's Annual Event, or you can request one directly from the EVC. In addition, copies of the EVC Business Resource Guide will be provided to all Chambers of Commerce in San Luis Obispo County, the Small Business Development Center, Women's Economic Ventures and your City Economic Development Offices.



Pat MacCasland EVC Vice President Business Development



Vendor Opportunities

Join our Vendor Information List for the opportunities offered by PG&E/Diablo Canyon and Regional Government Entities.

When they look for new vendors or send out RFPs, be "in the know" as part of our contact list.

Contact Ray Johnson at the EVC
788-2014 or rjohnson@sloevc.org

LENDER'S CORNER

Financing your small business



By David Mooklar, EVC Loan Administrator

So, you have decided to start your own business. Now how do you put the money together to make it happen? First, what does your business plan tell you that you need for capital? The type of business you start will determine how much money you will need. Will your new business have to carry a lot of inventory and extend credit to your customers? A restaurant will require a lot of equipment and other fixed assets but not much inventory. Retail and wholesale businesses might require inventory and the offering of terms.

Now that you have an idea of what you need in the way of start-up capital, where will it come from? How much will come from equity, and how much from debt? Equity comes from the personal savings and investments of the business owners, while debt comes from lenders such as banks. Equity can come from home equity, stocks, savings accounts or other assets that can be turned into cash.

Sources of equity can include relatives, friends or maybe an interested investor. Be sure that your business has a good chance of success before you tap your friends and relatives because you want your friends to remain friends and your relatives to still invite you to family get-togethers.

Banks are a source of financing for small businesses, but usually hesitate to lend to a new business with no track record that shows an ability to repay a loan. This is where the EVC's lending programs might help with a guarantee or a micro-loan to get a business started. Call the EVC for details.

Finding alternative financing takes determination, ingenuity and hard work as most capital used by small businesses to startup is from non-traditional sources such as those that we have already mentioned in this article.

Here are a few ways to maximize your funds:

- Control your cash flow: Spend money only on what you need, not on what you want.
- Watch your inventory: Make sure what you are buying will sell.
- Use the terms offered by your suppliers.
- Develop a relationship with your banker: Bankers are more comfortable lending money to people they know and trust.

It is not always easy to get started in business, but if you have the drive and passion, it can be done. Remember, nobody is going to have the same interest in your business as you do.

For more information, call David Mooklar at the EVC office: 805-788-2015



Note: Casey Appell, Senior Vice President, Lending, of First Bank of San Luis Obispo has joined the EVC Loan Committee.

EVC International Trade Course #3 Graduates

Fifteen participants recently graduated from the EVC's International Trade Course. (See picture below.) Started with a grant from Pacific Gas & Electric, the course is currently sponsored by the Center for International Trade Development and the Small Business Development Center. Graduates were from local companies as well as individuals who wanted to enhance their job skills.

The next 10-week course is scheduled to start in September 2004. If you are interested in more information or in attending this course, please contact Patricia MacCasland, VP Business Development at the Economic Vitality Corporation 805-788-2014 or patricia@sloevc.org.



International Trade Course graduates pictured above: Ray Bowman (Instructor), Rob Wiley (Zymax), James Farag (Guayaki), Jesper Neilson (Zymax), Diane August (Dioptrics), Frank Junko (Rantec), Lex Stockton (Rantec), Henry Venter, Heinz Huebner Not Pictured: Frank Capito (Dioptrics), Casey Appell (First Bank), Josh Jacobson (J. Carroll Corp), John Culpepper (Zymax), Elizabeth Johnson, Pam Abrahams (Rustica Gifts), and Gregory Pobst

CREATING JOBS IN THE NEW ECONOMY

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MAY 20, 2004
7:30 TO 10:00 AM
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SAN LUIS OBISPO

For additional information or registration, please contact Patricia MacCasland, VP Business Development at (805) 781-2014 or patricia@sloevc.org or refer to our website: www.sloevc.org.

Meet the EVC Executive Committee

Missie Pires Hobson
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Missie Hobson

Missie Pires Hobson brings many years of experience in broadcast media, governmental and public relations to her professional and community-service endeavors. She joined Pacific Gas & Electric Company in 1983, after 11 years in broadcast television. Missie has been the Director of Governmental and Public Relations for Pacific Gas & Electric Company since 1997, serving as the external relations leader for San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. She is also a member of several community organizations. In addition to serving as Board Chair for the Economic Vitality Corporation of San Luis Obispo County, she sits on the Board of Directors for both the California Mid-State Fair and the Cuesta College Foundation.

Missie is the recipient of numerous awards including the Distinguished Service Award from the local chapter of the Association of California School Administrators, honoring her for her unique and continued support of educational programs in the community. She earned an AA degree from Shasta College and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Redlands. Her husband Larry is with the San Luis Obispo County District Attorney's Office. They have a daughter, Lacey (19) and a son, Matt (14). The Hobson family resides in San Luis Obispo.

Matt Fortier
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Matt Fortier

"I believe we live in the most beautiful place in California, not only because of San Luis Obispo County's physical attributes but also the people and the communities. I could not imagine a better environment to raise my two girls, and I'm thankful for each day I spend here. I believe and am committed to the mission of the Economic Vitality Corporation and any organization charged with enhancing the business opportunities available here."

Matt Fortier, President of the San Luis Obispo County Division of Fidelity National Title, has worked in the Title Insurance and Real Estate field since 1981. Prior to moving to San Luis Obispo to take over this division in 1995, he was the Operations Manager for the Santa Barbara County Division of Fidelity National Title. Matt earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Marketing from Cal State Bakersfield, and holds a California Real Estate License.

In addition to being Vice-Chair of the EVC, Matt is also a member of the Rotary Club of San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.

Matt and his wife of 20 years, Mary, have lived in San Luis Obispo with their two daughters (ages 13 and 15) since 1995. In his spare time, Matt enjoys participating in triathlons, snowboarding/skiing, golfing (as a member of San Luis Obispo Country Club since 1995), tennis and baseball.

Bradford M. Hair
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Brad Hair

Brad Hair brings his professionalism to the position of Treasurer of the EVC. Having served in this position for several years, he provides his expertise in the review of financials, budgets, audits and tax returns.

Brad graduated from Cal Poly State University with a concentration in Accountancy. He was named the outstanding alumni for the Cal Poly College of Business in 1991. After several years in Santa Ana with the firm of Arthur Young and Company as a Certified Public Accountant, he returned to San Luis Obispo to join the firm of Glenn, Burdette, Phillips & Bryson where he is Vice President and Director in charge of the audit department.

Brad is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accounts, and past President of the Central Coast Chapter. He is also a member of the California Association of School Business Officials and the Cal Poly College of Business Community Advisory Council. In addition, he serves as Treasurer of the San Luis Obispo High School "Black and Gold" Club and the Central Rehab Clinic of San Luis Obispo.

Brad and his wife Nancy, a teacher at Flamson Middle School, have 6 children. Three of their children are currently in college, another is a graduate of Cal Poly and the youngest is in high school. In his spare time, Brad enjoys surfing, snowboarding, motorcycle riding and mountain bike racing.



Pat Mullen

Pat Mullen
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Pat Mullen represents Duke Energy and its Morro Bay Power Plant on the EVC Board of Directors, and currently serves as Secretary. Pat has been an integral part of the EVC Board for five years, serving as Vice Chair, Chair as well as a previous term as Secretary.

Prior to joining Duke Energy in 2001, Pat worked as a government and public affairs representative for Pacific Gas & Electric Company for 11 years, both in San Luis Obispo County and Northern California. His background also includes production management with Frito Lay, Inc. and he was the Central Coast Representative for Congressman Bill Thomas from 1982 to 1986. Pat holds both a Bachelor's degree and an MBA from Cal Poly State University - San Luis Obispo.

Pat's other civic involvement includes serving on the Board of Directors of the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce, Business Partners Chair of the YMCA fundraising campaign and a member of the Rotary Club of San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.

A twenty-year San Luis Obispo County resident, Pat spends his personal time with his wife Laura, and their three children Paige, Michael and Anna at their San Luis Obispo home, or at one of the many activities that accompany three children: school, sports and family vacations.

Sandy Lubin
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Sandy Lubin

Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, **Sandy Lubin**, joined the Naval Reserves, serving two years of active duty. After returning home, he joined the Bank of America in their Senior Management Training Program. He later moved on to Union Bank where he became Vice President. In 1989, after over 14 years with Union and several more as President/CEO of Brentwood Bank, he moved with his family to the Central Coast to run the new Central Coast National Bank. During a very busy banking career, he graduated from Pepperdine University with a BA degree in Business Administration.

In 1992, Sandy and his wife Cindi purchased the Credit Bureau of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, which rapidly expanded to become the largest locally-owned Credit Bureau between Santa Cruz and Los Angeles. Located in Grover Beach, the full-service agency offers collections, automated credit reports, residential credit reports and Desktop Underwriting for Fannie Mae, with other expansion plans in the works.

Sandy's list of community involvement is impressive: Immediate Past President of the EVC Board; Council Member for the City of Arroyo Grande; Past President of the Pismo Beach-Five Cities Rotary Club; President of the Arroyo Grande Chamber of Commerce, Treasurer of the SLO YMCA, Chair of the AG Planning Commission, a Mason and a Shriner. He is also a member of the Foot Printers Board of Directors, the Arroyo Grande Police Advisory Commission, the Arroyo Grande Parks & Recreation Commission and the City Economic Development Commission, as well as many other community groups.

Sandy and Cindi live in Arroyo Grande. Their 2 children, daughter Cherise and son Russ are both married and have children of their own.

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The Cuesta College Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The Cuesta College Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is part of a nationwide network of business technical assistance providers funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and started by an act of Congress in 1980. The Cuesta College SBDC joined the network in 1999, and is part of the UC Merced SBDC Network.

The SBDC offers a number of services to the existing and pre-venture small business community of San Luis Obispo County:

- **One-on-one Consulting** – This is the primary mission of the SBDC to provide no out-of-pocket cost business technical assistance in the areas of start-up, marketing, business planning, developing financial projections and cash flow statements, loan packaging assistance, e-commerce and other important items facing the business owner.
- **Training** – The SBDC offers a menu of classes and workshops to help answer the various questions that face small businesses. In the upcoming months the SBDC will offer classes in Customer Service, Funding Options for Small Business, How to Buy Advertising, How to Contract with the Federal Government, and interactive sessions in developing Competitive Strategies for Small Business.
- **Small Business Success Sessions** – This six-week, eighteen-hour course will assist both existing and start-up businesses develop a comprehensive business plan that can be used to start or operate a business and to seek funding. A one-hour orientation for the training sessions that will start in May will be offered on April 15, 21 and 29.
- **Business Information Center (BIC)** – Working in cooperation with the SBA and Mission Community Services Corporation, the SBDC hosts a resource center complete with state-of-the-art computers, DSL Internet access, books and videos that are available to businesses and residents who are looking to start or enhance their business. There is no fee to use the BIC.
- **Mystery Shopper Program** – For a fee, the SBDC will send shoppers out to a business to see how they come across to the customer; a "how are you doing" review. The shoppers are customized to the business needs. A report is issued with recommendations for improvement (if a weakness is discovered).

The SBDC partners with the Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC) to deliver training in International Trade. In addition, the SBDC assists the EVC by providing help to those applying for loan funds administered by EVC. It partners with SCORE to develop programs for the Spanish speaking population. The SBDC is a service provider to the low-income population to assist in job creation via self-employment for the County of San Luis Obispo and the cities of Atascadero, Arroyo Grande and Grover Beach.



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New Sponsors for the EVC



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www.unocal.com

Unocal has been an economic force on the central coast for over 100 years, but the company today is different than it was a century ago. Where Unocal once had active oil operations – oil drilling, refining, tank farms and distribution, present day efforts are focused only on concluding local activities in a responsible way. Unocal is working aggressively to remediate – or clean up – sites where former operations have left petroleum products behind. Virtually all of Unocal's US remediation work is handled out of the SLO offices, where the company has assembled a team of industry leaders to assist with various projects.

The company is committed to using clean up methods that best address individual sites without creating environmental harm. Some of the most promising work is being done at the former Guadalupe oilfield, where experts from Unocal and Cal Poly's Environmental Biotechnology Institute are working collaboratively to determine the ability of plants to biodegrade petroleum products. Other sites being remediated include the former tank farms in Avila Beach and San Luis Obispo as well as residential, commercial and agricultural sump sites in the Santa Maria Valley.



Heritage Oaks Bank
Mitch Massey
805-544-7200 ext 105
171 Niblick Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446
www.heritageoaksbank.com

Heritage Oaks Bank is fully supportive of the EVC's mission to foster growth among existing area businesses as well as attracting new businesses to the community. The EVC is an important factor in attracting, retaining, financing, expanding, training and advocating the needs of county businesses. Heritage Oaks Bank looks forward to being a part of this vital process.

Heritage Oaks Bank's "Seven Extraordinary Reasons"

WE believe in extraordinary service to our clients, and to our community.

WE remember each day how our organization has grown, and we thank our clients every day for their support.

WE believe that in order to retain our current clients and gain new clients, we must re-earn their trust everyday by excelling in every way.

WE believe loyalty adds consistency to our lives.

WE believe that every client we help to achieve their potential helps us achieve our potential as a TEAM.

WE believe success is the direct result of clear, cooperative positive thinking.

WE are Two Banks, and One Team working every day to achieve success for our clients and ourselves.



Exiis Corporation
David M. Streb
PO Box 2323

Paso Robles, CA 93447
805-237-2324
www.exiis.net

Exiis Corporation is a full-service network management and technical support firm specializing in the design, deployment, integration and security of solid, safe computer systems. Located in San Luis Obispo, the company has provided technical peace of mind to businesses nationwide since 1998.

Exiis' experienced and knowledgeable Microsoft Certified Professionals and Systems Engineers maintain servers, workstations and network devices using the most current technologies. Providing real-time monitoring with their proprietary Remote Network Operations Center, they offer network administration, change and configuration management, and applications services with 24/7 support over the Internet. A full suite of network security offerings is also available, specifically designed to meet the unique, complex needs of each customer. For information about Exiis Corporation and additional services they provide, visit www.exiis.net.

"I feel the EVC provides a very good service to the community. In many cases, small business owners need advice, assistance, and most importantly—leadership—when they have reached a point requiring experience. The EVC becomes an important business partner, contributing to the growth of an entrepreneur."



Poor Richard's Press

Poor Richards Press
805-489-6844
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www.poorrichards.com

Our mission is to provide communication solutions on paper...on time and within budget.

Poor Richard's Press is the foremost commercial printing company on the Central Coast. We have 5 stores: Paso Robles, Atascadero, San Luis Obispo, Arroyo Grande and Santa Maria. Our multiple locations allow us to provide the EVC with a great resource for attracting new businesses.

Poor Richard's Press specializes in high quality digital and offset printing. In business since 1971, we understand the needs of the Central Coast business community. We have tailored our company to meet those needs, whether they are simple reproduction services, books, catalogs, brochures, manuals, forms or complex short run color printing. In addition, we specialize in "personalized" printing for narrowly targeted direct-mail pieces. Every Poor Richard's location has the state-of-the-art equipment required to meet your needs.

We pride ourselves on exceptional customer service. We have ongoing training for all our employees in order to maintain the highest level of service available on the Central Coast. Our continued pursuit of excellence has earned us a place in the top 25 "Quick Printers" in the country, according to American Printer Magazine.

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center
Tenet HealthSystem

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center
Gary Stokes, CEO
(805) 546-7600, fax (805) 596-7515
1010 Murray Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405
www.sierravistaregional.com

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center is a 201-bed full service facility. A

healthcare leader in San Luis Obispo County since 1959, we have over 900 employees and volunteers who work closely with our affiliated medical staff of more than 400 physicians to provide innovative healthcare in all patient areas. These include adult services; medical/surgical; DOU/ICU; maternal/child services including perinatology, NICU and pediatrics; emergency medicine; cardiology; oncology; and general surgery. The hospital also offers advanced equipment for neurosurgery and cardiovascular surgery and has a fully equipped CVICU.

Twin Cities Regional Medical Center
Tenet HealthSystem

Twin Cities Community Hospital

Richard D. Lyons, CEO
(805) 434-4545, fax (805) 434-2913
1100 Las Tablas Road, Templeton, CA 93465
www.twincitieshospital.com

Twin Cities Community Hospital is an 84-bed, general medical/surgical acute care facility. We are equipped with up-to-date technology and offer services for emergency medicine, orthopedics, obstetrics/gynecology, nuclear medicine, physical and respiratory therapy, cardiology, radiology and intensive care. Twin Cities Hospital's services continue to expand with our current multi-million dollar expansion plan. The master site plan calls for the construction of 60,000 square-feet of patient care area that includes increasing the OB, ER, ICU and Definitive Observation Unit capacity, as well as the addition of a 20,000 square-foot Administrative Services building and 4,000 square-foot support services building.

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center and Twin Cities Community Hospital are a part of Tenet California.

EVC Sponsors

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County of San Luis Obispo
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San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau
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Bronze Level \$500*

Didi Reynoso
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Garbagemen's Association.
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The EVC would like to thank the following sponsors for supporting us at the Silver Level on a long-term basis.

ANDRE, MORRIS & BUTTERY
A PROFESSIONAL LAW CORPORATION

Andre, Morris & Buttery, a professional law corporation

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Santa Maria Office:
805-937-1400; 805-937-1444 fax

Founded in San Luis Obispo in 1948, Andre, Morris & Buttery has earned a reputation as a law firm of integrity, professionalism and dedication to its clients. With offices in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, we take pride in providing the highest quality legal representation and personal service to businesses and individuals, not only on the Central Coast of California but also throughout the United States.

We offer our clients expertise in business and real estate transactions and counseling; environmental and land use law; employment law and counseling; estate planning, trusts and probate; and civil litigation and intellectual property. Each of our practice groups includes attorneys and staff expert in their area, all of whom take great pride in the quality of their work, striving to ensure that our service and work product meet the highest professional standards.

An experienced administrative staff supports the practice groups, and helps guarantee that the firm operates efficiently and cost effectively, utilizing the latest, best technology in providing services to our clients.

"Andre, Morris & Buttery is proud to be a consistent supporter of the EVC and its mission to further the economic development of the Central Coast."



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Barbich Longcrier Hooper & King is a regional accounting and consulting firm contributing to the economic personal well-being of our clients by providing state-of-the-art, quality and trusted professional services. We take a proprietary interest in the success of our clients, providing peace of mind that is rare in today's increasingly complex world.

We believe accountants should do more than file tax returns. Therefore, we are available for and encourage frequent meetings with your management team for consultation on financial matters. Our expertise assures that you will have the resources needed to handle any complex financial or tax issues you might face.

Our clients, located domestically and abroad, include individuals, agricultural companies, wineries, high technology companies, manufacturers, construction companies, and professional service companies. A few of the non-traditional accounting services we provide are employee benefits, management consulting and strategic planning, and business valuations.

Please visit us on the web at www.blhk.com if you would like to learn more about Barbich Longcrier Hooper & King or contact us at 805-541-2500.



California Space Authority
Andrea Seastrand
Executive Director
805-349-2633
andrea.seastrand@californiaspaceauthority.org
<http://www.californiaspaceauthority.org>
3201 Airpark Drive, Suite 204
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Governed by a statewide board of directors, The California Space Authority (CSA) is a nonprofit corporation representing the interests of California's diverse enterprise community in all three domains: commercial, civil and national security. Designated as the official Spaceport Authority for the State of California, (CSA) is a member-based "closely" association. Working closely with industry, government, workforce entities and academia, CSA strives to retain, grow and create CSA statewide space enterprise. Through

advocacy, infrastructure and technology development, space education/workforce support and other programs, CSA provides voice, visibility and competitive edge to California's statewide space enterprise community. California Space Authority



Cannon Associates
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364 Pacific Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

We believe that all boats rise with the tide. So, it makes complete sense that we support an organization whose sole purpose is to raise the tide. Whether it is supporting or commenting on issues that are critical to the economic vitality of the community, giving a leg up to entrepreneurs when others don't see their vision so clearly, or creating venues where businesses can promote their wares and learn how to better compete; the community has directly or indirectly benefited since the inception of the EVC.

Cannon Associates has been in this community since 1976. In that time, we've seen the town evolve. We now have a world class performing arts center as well as professional and community athletic facilities. We were fortunate to be involved in the design and construction of the community's first enclosed mall back in 1983. Now we're working to expand it in the second phase. This, along with other milestones, is a coming of age for San Luis Obispo. We are proud of this growth and proud to play a role in the continued growth and economic vitality of this community.

Cannon Associates is a multidisciplinary firm of engineers, planners, and surveyors. Our professional staff includes registered civil, mechanical, and structural engineers, certified land-use planners, and licensed land surveyors. We employ specialists in many areas including hydraulics and hydrology, permitting and compliance, and construction management. Since 1976 we have provided services to residential and commercial developers, schools and institutions, municipalities, military installations, telecommunica-

tions as well as to clients in the energy industry. With offices in San Luis Obispo and Bakersfield, Cannon Associates serves clients throughout California.

"Way to go EVC. We're with you all the way."



Coastal Business Finance
Brian Kearns
805-739-1665
President & CEO
b.kearns@cdc.org
www.cdc.org
930 South Broadway, Suite 101
Santa Maria, CA 93454

Coastal Business Finance (CBF), like 250 similar non-profit organizations throughout the country, is certified by The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide low, fixed rate financial support to small businesses. Chartered by the Federal Government as a Certified Development Corporation (CDC), this public purpose organization has been serving Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo's Counties as an SBA 504 loan provider for over twenty years. Coastal Business Finance is made up of individual members that represent business, banking, community organizations and government.

Coastal Business Finance was incorporated in 1980, certified by the SBA in 1983 as the Lompoc Local Development Corporation and later obtained regional certification. In 1987, the corporate name was changed to Central Coast Development Corporation. The CDC, whose area of operations has historically been San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, recently expanded to include the entire State of California.

The SBA 504 loan program provides up to 90% financing for the purchase or construction of owner-occupied real estate projects. Working in tandem with a bank on each project, Coastal Business Finance has worked with 198 businesses under this program, providing 71 million dollars in financing and creating or retaining 5,300 jobs.