

THE
Voice
of Business



The 4th Annual Fairfield-Suisun
Chamber of Commerce

Buzz
Awards



Sandy Person
Citizen of the Year

IN THIS ISSUE



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2017 Buzz Awards

The Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce honors the businesses and people who make a difference in our communities.

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The Voice of Business for Fairfield and Suisun City, California

1111 Webster St., Fairfield, CA 94533
707.425.4625 | Fax: 707.425.0826



Debi Tavey
President/CEO
Debi@fairfieldsuisunchamber.com



Melissa Manry
Director of Operations
Melissa@fairfieldsuisunchamber.com



Tonya Dretzka
Director of Membership
Tonya@fairfieldsuisunchamber.com



The Path Forward

In his final Voice of Business column last quarter, outgoing chamber chairman Steve Huddleston summarized the tremendous progress the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce made in last year on some tough issues facing our business community. He also outlined items still on our future organizational "Let's Do This" list. These items included the following:

- Continuing to find ways to bring together people in our local businesses;
- Growing our membership to more than 600;
- Being a true voice of business, through our Advocacy Council, as we connect with local, state and national decision makers who can help our businesses grow; and
- Developing a strong succession plan to ensure future strong leadership on the chamber Board of Directors.

As your new chairman, my job has been made considerably easier because I am the beneficiary of the strong progress we have made under Steve's capable and energetic leadership. So, in this initial column, I would first like to acknowledge Steve's outstanding service to the Fairfield-Suisun business community and thank him for his leadership that has given us such a solid foundation going forward.

As we all know, the future always seems to arrive sooner than we expect, and I don't want us to lose any of the momentum Steve has helped us generate. So, in this initial column, I'd like to share a few thoughts about how we can advance our four "Let's Do This" items and add a few of my own thoughts about additional areas I see the chamber addressing in the coming year.

First with regard to the four items on our list, I think it is important to remember that implemental progress is the key. I see all four of these items as important ongoing goals for the future. They most likely will not be accomplished in the coming year, but we need to keep them in mind, develop specific strategies to attain them, and make sure we track our progress toward their achievement.

As you know, my business experience has been in the financial arena, and I see our movement toward realizing the chamber's business goals in the same way as all track our personal and business financial progress. To achieve our mission, we develop strategic, long-term goals for the future. Then it is imperative to regularly

monitor and report progress toward those goals and adjust our course, when necessary.

In a talk I gave recently, at our Buzz Awards, I spoke of my view of the chamber's role as a catalyst for job and business growth and its mandate to fulfill a dual role of influencing economic growth in our communities and facilitating local business success. To do so, we must be proactive, not reactive. Through the work of many of you, as well as the work of our internal Advocacy Council and dedicated chamber staff, we have enhanced the chamber's credibility in government affairs. We are already engaged in talking and listening to our legislators and community influencers about 2017 and 2018 agendas and priorities and adding our considerable influence to ensure the implementation of public policies that positively impact our businesses.

Challenging community issues such as taxation, workforce development, infrastructure, environmental issues, health care, schools, economic growth, diversity and homelessness confront us in the coming year. Addressing them will require a clear understanding of what's possible and what is not; a commitment to working together to make decisions that have fair and equitable outcomes, not just for our own special interests but for the greater good of the community as a whole; and the willingness to compromise and achieve consensus. At the Buzz Awards, I issued a challenge to all of us to work toward creating partnerships that amplify our voice and influence and help promote Fairfield-Suisun as the business-friendly Bay Area/State Capital region. There's no time to waste. The future will be here before we know it.

I am proud to be part of the Travis Credit Union team, where our "Awesome Cause" differentiates us from other financial institutions. I am also proud to assume the awesome responsibility to help lead the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce and help it prosper and grow.

Thank you for your confidence in me; I look forward to working with all of you for our mutual success.

Nav Khanna

Chairman, Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce

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Navnett Khanna

Travis Credit Union
P.O. Box 2069
Vacaville, CA 95696
707-449-4000
nkhanna@traviscu.org



CHAIR ELECT



Charles McCullar

Front2Back Designs
2401 Waterman Blvd., Suite 4A
Fairfield, CA 94533
707-421-1831
charles@front2backdesigns.com

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR



Steve Huddleston

NorthBay Healthcare
1300 Gateway Blvd.
Fairfield, CA 94533
707-628-3617
shuddleston@northbay.org

VICE CHAIR



Andrea Garcia

Touro University of California
1310 Club Drive
Vallejo CA 94592
707-638-5272
andrea.garcia@tu.edu

VICE CHAIR



Anand Patel

Fairfield Conference &
Visitors Bureau
1000 Webster St., Suite A
Fairfield, CA 94533
707-399-2445
anand@visitfairfieldca.com

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calendar

AUGUST

1
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING
8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

10
THU

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS MIXER
5:30 to 7 p.m., Rockville Terrace Senior Living,
4705 Mangels Blvd., Fairfield

14
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING
9 to 10 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

16
WED

**SUMMER SERIES SOCIAL MEDIA CLUB -
BEST PRACTICES**
4 to 6 p.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St. Cost: \$20

19
THU

VIP WINE, FOOD AND BREW
3 to 6 p.m., Solano County Events Center, 601 Texas St., Fairfield

21
MON

**TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES
COMMITTEE**
Noon to 1 p.m., Delta Breeze Club, Travis Air Force Base

22
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

SEPTEMBER

5
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING
8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

11
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING
9 to 10 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

13
WED

CONSTRUCTION CONNECT
4 to 6 p.m., Pacific Supply, 3630 Ritchie Road, Fairfield

10
THU

JOINT MIXER WITH HISPANIC CHAMBER
5:30 to 7 p.m., Salvation Army Kroc Center,
586 E. Wigeon Way, Suisun City

18
MON

**TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES
COMMITTEE**
Noon to 1:00 p.m., Delta Breeze Club, Travis Air Force Base

26
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

OCTOBER

3
TUE

AMBASSADOR COMMITTEE MEETING
8 to 9 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

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5
THU

JOINT MIXER WITH VACAVILLE CHAMBER
5:30 to 7 p.m., Town Square, Downtown Vacaville

16
MON

TRAFIC EXECUTIVE MEETING
9 to 10 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
1111 Webster St.

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23
MON

**TRAVIS REGIONAL ARMED FORCES
COMMITTEE**
Noon to 1:15 p.m., Delta Breeze Club, Travis Air Force Base

24
TUE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
8:30 to 9:30 a.m., Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce,
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Sandy Person
Citizen of the Year

The 4th Annual Fairfield-Suisun
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Buzz Awards



Sandy Person

Citizen OF THE YEAR

ALL STORIES BY BRIANNA BOYD



If you have spent any time with her over the past 25 years, you already know Sandy Person is the Solano Economic Development Corporation's own Energizer Bunny.

She has been a volunteer with the nonprofit since 1989 and became a member of its leadership team in 1999. As the president since 2011, Person heads all efforts of the organization dedicated to the economic growth of Solano County, and works closely with hundreds of stakeholders from government, business, industry and education in this region and beyond. She has been instrumental in the "Moving Solano Forward" initiatives, which she describes as the "capstone" to all of these efforts.

All this work does not even touch on her community involvement in Solano County as both a volunteer and Solano EDC representative. Person is one of just a handful of individuals to ever receive the "Golden Bear" Award at Travis Air Force Base, and has been named a Woman of the Year not once, but twice, by Congressman John Garamendi (2016) and Senator Lois Wolk (2012).

While she is humble when discussing her own accomplishments, her contributions to Solano County have not gone unnoticed. Person is the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce's 2017 Citizen of the Year.

"I'm so thankful for this incredible recognition and for every opportunity that has been extended to me in my career," she said. "What a privilege it has all been. I feel so fortunate to have been able to meet all the people I've met. At the end of the day, it has always been about those relationships built along the way."

"I'm so thankful for this incredible recognition and for every opportunity that has been extended to me in my career. What a privilege it has all been. I feel so fortunate to have been able to meet all the people I've met."

— SANDY PERSON



Buzz Awards



This honor comes as Person is about to close a significant chapter in her professional life. She plans to step down as president of the Solano EDC by the end of the year. She has been a part of the organization for so long she jokes she's part of the building's wallpaper. It will certainly be an adjustment to no longer work there.

She's not quite sure what her future holds and she is OK with that.

All her life, she said, moments of happenstance have occurred at pivotal moments that have led her to where she is today. She has no doubt a new opportunity will present itself when the time is right.

"My biggest life moments have been those that have found me," she said with a laugh. "I have this zany character trait in that I'm curious and I often say 'yes' without knowing what I've said yes to. That means I'm often in over my head but you have to move fast to catch up with opportunities that present themselves.

"Life is a lifelong education," she added. "I've had epic failures and I've been fortunate enough to survive them and build on them. I was headstrong and bullheaded and I had to learn through my life experiences."

Person grew up in San Diego in the '60s and '70s, formative and dynamic years for young people, particularly women. The rules were changing, she remembered, and women did not have a defined path to follow. The world, she said, really felt like her oyster.

A dedicated scholar, Person finished high school in 1971 – a year earlier than the rest of her class – and went on to enroll at an area community college. She was applying for a job at a restaurant when she began talking to a customer sitting at the counter.

"One thing led to another and he offered me a job as a laborer in his real estate development company," she said. "Saying 'yes' to that was my birth into the world of real estate development. Minimum wage was \$1.50 at the time and he was willing to pay my friend and I \$3 an hour – we thought we hit the gold mine!"

Over the course of the next decade came a series of other "serendipitous moments," where she said yes to a chance that would ultimately change her life. She earned her real estate license at 20 – a rarity for a woman at that time – and began working in leasing, property management and investment real estate with Century 21.

When the market fell in the early 1980s, Person took what she



Sandy Person became a "Golden Bear" in 2010.

described as a leap of faith and accepted a job with City Colleges of Chicago, teaching real estate courses to U.S. Navy members on board the USS Gompers naval ship. She was one of just 200 women on a vessel of 1,200 traveling Japan and Asia. She was the only civilian female and taught real estate courses for the Programs Afloat College Education. It was in one of those classes she met her husband, Jack, stationed at the time on the USS Gompers.

"You have to seize those opportunities in front of you," Person said. "And the truth is, those decisions came without any hesitation. You look back afterward and you think, 'What was I thinking?' because you are taking yourself so far out of your comfort zone. If I hadn't said yes to the Navy quest, who knows, maybe my life would not have turned out as interesting. But the Navy is how I met my husband, and how I got to Solano County."

Jack was later reassigned to Mare Island in Vallejo. Sandy eventually moved to Solano County as well and the two married in 1990. They have two sons, Tanner, 25, and Sean, 22.

The family resides in Vacaville but Person has long considered the entire county her home, in large part because of her work with the Solano EDC.

"Solano has been such an amazing place to learn about, become a champion of, and raise our kids," Person said. "The quality of life here is incredible."

She started off as a member and volunteer at the EDC in 1987 – when it was still known by its acronym, SEDCORP – and was named to the board of directors in 1991. She recalls it was a very exciting period for the county.

“At the time, Genentech was coming to Vacaville and this organization had a big hand in that,” Person recalled. “Business parks were blossoming and starting to grow. It was a huge time of growth in Solano’s history. We were the affordable alternative to the Bay Area and that still holds true today.”

Person went from one of the organization’s most active volunteers to a paid staff member in 1999 when she accepted the position of marketing director. In 2002, she was the interim president for a year before the EDC hired Mike Ammann. She then served as vice president under Ammann’s leadership until his departure in 2011, when she took over the reigns of the organization.

“This job has offered an incredible platform for meeting fascinating people and being introduced to a vast array of exciting projects,” Person said. “It has also been a great opportunity to learn so much about Solano County and Northern California and what makes a community tick. It has been such a gift to sit in this seat.

“Solano County is a land rich in assets and diversity and yet, has a proven track record of teamwork and working together to develop solutions to many of the challenges we face,” she added. “This collaborative spirit is a crucial component of our economic vitality. It’s so important for us to work together as a team.”

When asked what accomplishment over the past two decades she

is most proud of, she points to the relationship with Travis Air Force Base, the county’s largest employer and economic driver. She has vigorously participated in the Honorary Commander program and became a “Golden Bear” in 2010. She is also Chair of the Travis Community Consortium and is a long-standing member of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee.

“Travis is such an integral part of Solano County’s economy and community pride,” she said. “We have such an amazing group of people and how they serve our country and their families and our communities is so special. I’m in awe of their work ethic, their professional capacity and their sense of servitude to our country. The fact that Solano EDC allowed me professionally to work with them was icing on the cake. It served a personal enrichment that has far exceeded anything I ever gained professionally.”

And whenever that next serendipitous moment occurs, and Person is asked to take the leap on a new professional journey, she hopes her involvement at Travis and other area organizations can continue.

“Change is good,” she said, “and I’m open to new opportunities. It’s time to discover and explore. I don’t know what my next move is but I feel so blessed with all the experience I have had here at the EDC that I only hope my next move is as enriching.”



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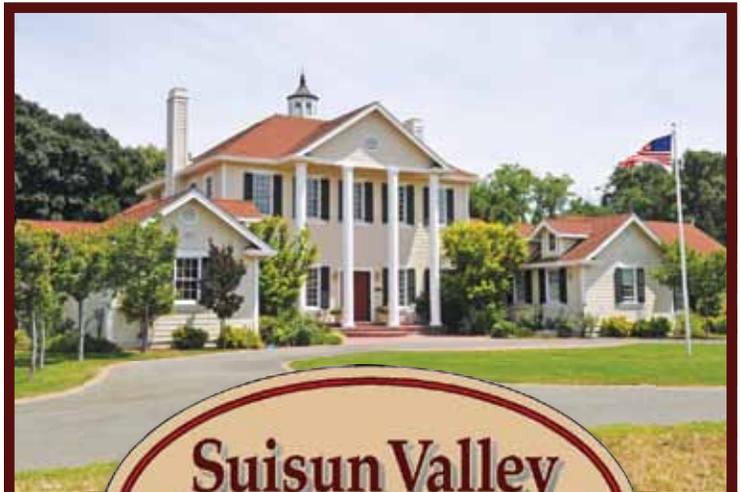
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Tempest Hoover works for her family's Fairfield business, Gillespie's Abbey Carpet and Floor.

Tempest Hoover

Ambassador OF THE YEAR

W

hat a whirlwind the past three years have been for the chamber's Ambassador of the Year, Tempest "Tempe" Hoover.

After graduating from University of California, Berkeley, Hoover found herself returning to her Solano County roots in 2013 when she accepted a job offer from her uncle, Monte, to work for her family's Fairfield business, Gillespie's Abbey Carpet and Floor.

She never imagined then just how involved she would become in the community – and the chamber of commerce – in a few short years.

This month, Hoover will take over the reigns of the chamber ambassador committee from current Chief Ambassador Sandy Stelter. Hoover has served as the Chief Ambassador-Elect for the past year.

Receiving Ambassador of the Year was a huge surprise, she said, and also a great honor, because the award comes from the ambassadors themselves.

"It's extremely humbling," she said. "To be nominated alongside Jocelyn (von Strong) and Stephanie (Knight), who are two strong women in business and our community, is equally as humbling and special as receiving the award itself. It means a lot to me to get the award as I am moving into my year as chief ambassador. Being selected by the ambassadors for this award means they trust me to be a good leader for our committee."

When Monte Hoover hired his niece to be Gillespie's showroom manager, he stressed the importance of community involvement, specifically, the chamber's ambassador program. Hoover had previously been involved in student government and a college

sorority, and Monte recognized the signs of an emerging community leader.

"He wanted to guide me on paths that would open opportunities for me as an emerging leader in the community, as well as opportunities for our company to get out more and be more involved," she remembered. "It is also a testament to our family's values. My grandfather's commitment to the community was passed down to all of us."

Although she did not know much about the local chamber or business community at the time, Hoover jumped head-first into the ambassador program – and has not slowed down since. Today, in addition to her work with the ambassador committee, she is also very active in Soroptimist International, serving as the second vice president and overseeing fundraising activities.

As the Chief-elect, Hoover has been instrumental in revamping the ambassador program. She created a more interactive training for new ambassadors and implemented the Ambassador of the Month program and the "Second to Celebrate" introductions at the beginning of every committee meeting. She is going to continue looking at new ideas for the ambassador program and hopes to draw in even more participation from the business community in 2017-18.

"We're going to have such a great year," she said. "The group is growing, and when we have new people who join and you pair that with the people who have been a part of the ambassador group for a long time, you have a strong foundation as well as that new excitement, new energy, new ideas. We have a really strong team in our ambassador committee and I'm excited for what we can accomplish in the next year."



FaraLee Wright

Teacher OF THE YEAR



An Armijo High School economics teacher who over the years has helped more than 800 seniors receive financial literacy certificates is being honored as the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber's 2017 Teacher of the Year.

FaraLee Wright has been a champion for First Northern Bank's EVERFI Financial Literacy program since it was first introduced to the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District in 2011. An economics teacher at Armijo since 2008, Wright recognized immediately the need for the program, which is designed to teach young adults vital financial knowledge prior to their graduation.

The financial literacy class, which features nine computer-based interactive modules, is offered every semester at Armijo. Lessons include the differences between a credit card and debit card, the importance of saving money, loans, insurance and tips for preparing for emergencies and retirement.

"EVERFI considers her a power teacher, as she certifies over 100 students a year," said Superintendent Kris Corey.

This past school year, Wright had four sections of financial literacy each semester and certified 216 seniors. One thing about the class she particularly enjoys is seeing students taking their lessons



FaraLee Wright, bottom center, is an economics teacher at Armijo High School.

and work home with them to share with their parents and family.

"So far, I've been able to help over 800 Armijo seniors finish the program and several hundred more almost finish the program," Wright said. "This allows them to begin their financial lives with information and confidence.

"I am so proud of these students," she added. "They have all worked so hard. These are not easy modules on the computer. They are in such better shape now because of this program. These kids are ready to go."



Monte Hoover runs his family's Fairfield business, Gillespie's Abbey Carpet and Floor.

K.I. *Monte Hoover* Jones

A W A R D

N

ow that his six-year term on the chamber's board of directors has come to an end, Monte Hoover was expecting a relatively low-key night at the Buzz Awards.

Unlike prior years, he was not presenting an award, nor was he being introduced as a chamber board member. His plan for the night was to sit and enjoy the show with his wife, Sharon, by his side.

But his friends had other plans for him. Hoover was awarded the K.I. Jones Award, honoring him for his years of dedication to the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce.

"I've always looked at the list of leaders who have been recognized with this award and they are the ones who have inspired me to be involved because they are the people who really, really believe in this community," Hoover said. "They're being recognized because they care, they care about the community and what we all want – to do what we can to make it a better place to live, work, and play."

Ensuring the community is the best it can be for all its citizens, especially children, has been a driving force in Hoover's adult life and it is reflected in his involvement in Fairfield, Suisun City and Vacaville.

Although he was raised in Vacaville and continues to live there today, his family's business, Gillespie's Abbey Carpet & Floor, is rooted in Fairfield. The Hoover family took over ownership 40 years ago and they joined the chamber not long after. Hoover has been an employee since he was 17 years old and in charge of cleaning carpets and furniture.

Hoover remembers that as a teen and young adult, he did not intend to build his career in the family business. But as he matured and gained education and experience, he found his passion in helping his customers "turn their interior design dream into a reality."

While he did occasionally attend mixers and events in those earlier years, it wasn't until about 10 years ago that Hoover really became involved in the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber. He started off as

an ambassador and joined the board six years ago.

"It has given me the opportunity to know my community better," Hoover said. "I've been able to get to know the shakers and movers and understand some of the strengths and weaknesses in our own community. By joining the board, I've been able to work with the chamber to address and hopefully improve on those weaknesses.

"We have a very diverse board that represents the diversity of our business community and our community as a whole," he added. "My platform for years has been the 4 C's of Connect, Communicate, Collaborate and do it Consistently, and the chamber is connected and collaborating with more individuals and organizations than ever before."

Over the past decade, Hoover has had a hand in so many committees, events and organizations in Fairfield/Suisun that the Fairfield Main Street Association has dubbed him the "Voice of Fairfield." Hoover is the Master of Ceremonies for the Independence Day and Veterans Day parades and also oversees the stages for the Fairfield Tomato Festival. He is the past chair of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee and is in the middle of his second 'tour' as an honorary commander with Travis Air Force Base. Hoover has been a volunteer or committee member for just about every major chamber event in recent years and he is on the advisory counsel for the Public Safety Academy.

"One of the most enjoyable things for me is MC'ing the parades," Hoover said. "I have a lot of fun doing it and I get the best seat in the house. I love to talk and interact with people and I like to make people happy. It really all boils down to helping to make our community a better place to live, work, and play."

So what is next for Hoover now that he is no longer a chamber board member? That question, at least for now, remains unanswered.

"I can say for certain I'm not going anywhere," he said with a laugh. "I'm having way too much fun. I love our community.

"It is time to start a new journey, and politics may be a part of it. You can say, it's to be continued..."

Child Haven

Nonprofit OF THE YEAR

M

ost nonprofits would be ecstatic to see their clientele list grow.

At Fairfield's Child Haven, Executive

Director Jane Johnson is proud her dedicated and trained staff is able to serve more children than ever before in their 33-year history. But it also fills her with sadness.

"We have too many," she said simply when asked how many clients the nonprofit organization serves. "We unfortunately treat more than 600 children a year."

Child Haven, Inc. provides intensive therapeutic mental health and developmental services for children and their families with the belief that early intervention, education and targeted professional services help children to heal and their families to thrive.

"They come to us because of abuse, neglect, trauma and behavioral issues," Johnson said, noting that many of the children have also been exposed to some type of violence. "One thing that is unique about Child Haven is that because our staff is so diverse in their education and training, we work together as a team on every child to determine the best treatment course for them. We don't have a one size fits all for our children because every child and their family has a unique situation."

Their client list includes children and teens up to 18 years of age from throughout Solano County. If a client is in foster care and about to transition out of the system, they can receive services from Child Haven until they are 21 years old.



Child Haven's dedicated and trained staff treat more than 600 children a year.

Johnson oversees an impressive team of therapists, intervention specialists, family support specialists and clinical support staff. There are also four doctors on staff – three clinical psychologists and one developmental psychologist. Training under those doctors are college students completing one and two-year internship programs. Child Haven is one of just a handful of organizations in California that provides this type of training with children.

"Our staff does great work," Johnson said. "They are the best. They are all dedicated to continuing their education and getting more skills and knowledge to be at the top of the game. We put a lot of emphasis into training.

"Everyone works together for each child," she added. "Depending

Buzz Awards



on the child's needs, we may have developmental work, behavioral work and there will definitely be some type of psychotherapy. There is also a lot of parent education and family therapy. All these components together is what builds the core of the services for the child."

Other services include art therapy, parent-child interaction therapy, supervised visitation and court-ordered services. Child Haven has partners county-wide – from the courts and child protective services to the teachers in area schools – they work with regularly to best treat each child and their family.

Child Haven firmly believes that by incorporating the families of traumatized children into treatment, the child's healing process has more immediate results and long-term benefits. That support system at home is vital, Johnson said. Children with strong family support are typically with Child Haven for four months. If a child receives services beyond a year, it is often because there are challenges in the family dynamics and home life.

"A child that has a strong family support system is going to

“ **A child that has a strong family support system is going to improve so much quicker. . . . They have to be treated with the whole family in mind.** ”

— JANE JOHNSON

improve so much quicker," Johnson said. "You can't just treat a child in isolation. They have to be treated with the whole family in mind. When a child experiences trauma, that trauma often kills off neurons in their brain. That's why it is so important to get therapy quickly because you want the child to develop fully and it's more difficult to do that if they don't have the support at home.

"The trauma of abuse, the trauma of watching a parent die in front of you, the trauma of a difficult divorce – that stays with them forever, and you need to give the child and their family tools to help them work through that."

Learn more about Child Haven at child-haven.org.



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Servpro of Fairfield Business OF THE YEAR: FAIRFIELD

W

hen people first meet the team at Servpro of Fairfield, it is often on one of the most chaotic and stressful days of their lives.

Servpro specializes in residential and commercial restoration and cleaning services. In the Fairfield area, they are most often contacted following a flood in a home caused by a leaking appliance, an overflowing bathtub or broken pipes.

"It's the worst day of their lives and we go out there with our team and we show them what we're capable of," said Kelly McLean, a partner in the Fairfield business with his wife, Sherry McLean, and Tom Swain. "We take it over for them. Our tagline is, 'Like it never even happened' and that's what we do for them."

The average cleanup job for floods or minor fires typically requires three to four days and in that time, the Servpro workers – who do just about anything and everything such as removing cabinetry, furniture and sheetrock and then putting everything back together again – do their best to make customers feel calm and at ease.

"Our techs that go out there are all blue-collar workers," Sherry McLean said. "We tell them when they go out to take pride in what they do. You have someone who has had this terrible loss, they are distraught and don't know what's going on and you are there to help them through it. At the end of the day, it's very rewarding for them, to be able to help."

Kelly and Sherry McLean opened the Servpro of Fairfield location eight years ago, one year after they experienced a sewer pipe break in their own home.

"I woke up at 3 a.m. ankle deep in sewer water, not knowing what to do," Sherry McLean remembered. "We worked with a Servpro in



Lake County and from that very first phone call, they put me at ease and told me what to do and what to expect. Kelly was so impressed with how they treated us that he started looking into the franchise and voilà, here we are."

While their territory encompasses all of Fairfield and the nearby Hiddenbroke

neighborhood, the Fairfield office is always willing to help when a phone call comes in from out of the area, the McLeans said. Those calls for service may be in Northern California or out of state.

They have a permanent staff of 25 but that number has been as high as 80 if responding to an emergency situation, such as a hurricane, tropical storm or a fire that has impacted multiple homes and neighborhoods.

"If it is something big enough, it is considered a 'storm,'" Sherry McLean explained. "They then let us know how many men, how many trucks, how much equipment they need and we let them know what we can send. We all feel Servpro is the best at doing what we do so we do try to get out there and help everyone."

Locally, the business is also very involved in community organizations and events. Ray Erck, the sales and marketing manager, oversees the company's community involvement. The list is long and extensive and includes Opportunity House, the Boys and Girls Club, Mission Solano, local fire departments, the Rotary Club, several golf tournaments and the Fairfield-Suisun, Vacaville and Vallejo chambers of commerce.

"Giving back is our way of showing appreciation," Erck said. "It's not just from management either, my sales reps get directly involved in that community participation. This community has been very good to Servpro and we want to give back to them."



The Lessler Group

Business

OF THE YEAR: SUISUN



Steve Lessler considers himself a matchmaker of sorts.

As the owner and sole employee of Suisun City's Business of the Year, The Lessler Group, he spends his days traveling Solano County and connecting like-minded people and organizations with one another.

However, unlike a traditional matchmaker, Lessler's goal is not a love connection – it's a business connection.

"The Lessler Group is a business-to-business matchmaker," he said. "I advocate and network on behalf of all of my clients while also educating Solano County-based businesses that there are first-class service providers here locally that they can use. They do not have to leave the local business community to get all of their needs met. They can find everything they need, right here in Fairfield and Suisun."

Lessler can often be found taking his clients around Solano County to meet other businesses that could potentially utilize the services they provide. He initiates that connection and then the businesses build the partnerships with one another. It's a very rewarding opportunity for him, especially when he works with the smaller business owners.

"Truly, the small service providers that are owned by local people are the heart and soul of our business community," he said. "Larger businesses, like NorthBay Healthcare, are vital to the community as well but statistics show that most people work for small local businesses.

"I have found, by and large, it's the smaller, independent businesses that do the lion's share of community work. And no one is telling them to be involved. They are involved because they want to be and they know it's important."



Steve Lessler is the owner of The Lessler Group in Suisun City.

The 'matchmaker' business has proven to be very successful for Lessler. This past April, The Lessler Group celebrated its 16th anniversary in Suisun City. His first three clients – Kathy Parsons of Credit Bureau Associates, Rosa Phillips of Express Employment Professionals and Scott Reynolds of Reynolds Law, LLP – continue to utilize his services today.

"I think my clients appreciate my services because I'm effective at getting them in the door, to the decision-makers," he said. "I know a lot of people in Solano County."

Just look at his history in Solano County. Lessler moved to Fairfield in 1983 and his first step in community involvement came in 1988

when he served on Fairfield's Vision 2020 Task Force.

At the urging of then-Fairfield Mayor Gary Falati, Lessler soon volunteered to serve on the Fairfield Planning Commission. In addition to his four years on the planning commission and eight years on the Fairfield City Council, Lessler has served on the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer Board and the Solano Transportation Authority board, and was a founding member for both the Solano Community Foundation and The Salvation Army advisory board. He has been a member of the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber since 2001 and served on the board of directors from 2013-14. He is also a member of the Vacaville Chamber of Commerce and is very active in the Fairfield-Suisun Rotary Club.

"Through all of my involvement, I've developed a wide network of contacts and that became the genesis of The Lessler Group," he said. "I'm passionate about the local community thriving and unless we create business and employment opportunities here, talent will leave the area and money will leave the area. We need to keep both local."

City of Fairfield AND NorthBay Healthcare Best Partnership OF THE YEAR



What a difference a few years can make.

Back in 2013, Fairfield's Dana Drive, a small neighborhood off Pennsylvania Avenue, had 64 Part One crimes – the most severe of offenses – reported to police in one year.

In the first six months of 2017, that same neighborhood had only four calls for service to the Police Department. Two were related to domestic violence.

The transformation on Dana Drive has been nothing short of astounding. And it likely would have never been possible without the partnership and support from several groups, most notably the City of Fairfield, NorthBay Healthcare and Dana Drive residents and property managers.

"This was a true community partnership," said Dawn LaBar, the special projects manager for the city of Fairfield, who also oversees the Quality of Life task force that was assigned to Dana Drive. "That's why I'm so proud of it."

For years, LaBar said, Dana Drive has been "notorious" in Fairfield for high crime, drugs and loitering. The neighborhood is located down the street from NorthBay and is all rental properties.

In 2013, when crime was at its peak, the city utilized Community Development Block Grant funds to install closed circuit cameras with the hope of deterring illegal activity.

"It wasn't enough though and crime didn't go down," LaBar said. "It helped us to be reactive but it didn't help us to be proactive. It could help us solve the crimes but we wanted to get to the point where we could prevent the crimes."

In fiscal year 2015-16, the city decided to take a more "holistic"



approach with Dana Drive, LaBar said, with the goal improving both safety and quality of life.

The city used more than \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to install additional cameras and license plate readers, cut back trees and improve street lighting. Police worked with property owners to get them in the Crime Free Multi-Housing program, which educates on how to screen tenants and improve the eviction process. NorthBay Healthcare hosted the training, which resulted in 13 of 14 property owners enrolled in the program.

A community meeting in November 2015 helped to get residents and partners energized to see a difference. The city closed the street for the event. NorthBay provided free flu shots and brought treats for the children. The city's Fun on the Run was there, as well as a fire truck and police motorcycle for the children. The city surveyed residents to learn what they thought would improve

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safety. Overwhelmingly, the response was something needed to be in place for children.

In the back of LaBar's mind, she knew one of the duplexes on the street belonged to NorthBay and it was vacant at the time. The hospital utilized it for storage.

"I went to (NorthBay's Vice President of Public Affairs and past Chamber board chairman) Steve Huddleston and said, 'If I bring you the right program, the right project, would you consider partnering with the city?' I was immediately thinking of The Leaven," LaBar said.

She spoke to The Leaven Executive Director Mark Lillis and before she could call Huddleston back, Lillis was on the phone with him. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations was soon approved.

NorthBay Healthcare provided a duplex on the corner of Dana Drive and B. Gale Wilson, maintenance costs and furnishings. The grant funds paid for remodeling. The Leaven center opened Aug. 8, 2016, with more than 100 people at the ribbon cutting.

"Many of these children are at-risk youth and now, instead of being initiated into gangs, they are being mentored," LaBar said. "You have people there who volunteer to help these kids who come from all walks of life. There is always somebody there you can relate to. It's a preventive mechanism to keep them from following in what are sometimes multi-generational footsteps of crime."

This is but one of many partnerships between the City of Fairfield and NorthBay Healthcare. Others include:

- The makeover of a neighborhood grocery store to add more healthy nutritional choices for shoppers and redesign the checkout area to promote healthy options;
- The Cinco K fun run in May each year, a collaboration of the Police Activities League, the Matt Garcia Youth Center and NorthBay Healthcare, whose sponsorship has raised more than \$200,000 for the community program over the past 10 years; and
- A host of NorthBay employees who are involved in committees and work groups that are addressing workforce development, educational opportunities and homelessness. ♦

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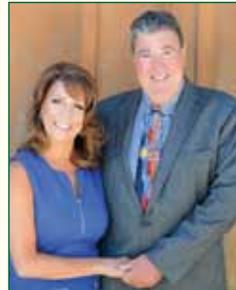
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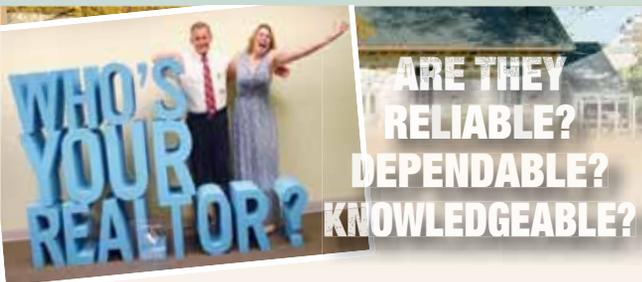
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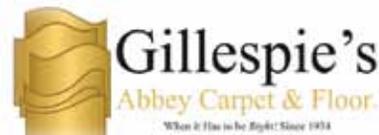
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