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THE BUZZ

RECENT POSTS

Read more at www.mcweekly.com/news

JAIL BABY...Tami Huntsman, the jailed woman accused in the murder of two children and the torture of a girl late last year, is pregnant. Sources say she was pregnant when arrested; the identity of the father remains unknown.

DIRTY COPS...King City will pay \$1.2 million to settle a class-action lawsuit filed in 2014 on behalf of people whose cars were allegedly towed and impounded under false pretenses as part of a scheme at the **King City Police Department**. The city estimates "well in excess" of 200 people were victims of the towing scheme, according to the settlement documents.

BANK ROLLED...Wells Fargo Bank presented a \$47,500 check to Salinas' **Agriculture and Land Based Training Association**, an unusually large corporate gift for the nonprofit organic farming education hub and incubator.

UPENDING CONVENTION...Two months into the \$50 million remodel of the **Monterey Conference Center**, the makeover is falling behind schedule due to far more asbestos being in the building than was anticipated. As a result, instead of the staggered opening of different areas over this year and next, the city and the developer might target a grand opening of the entire facility in late 2016.

GOLDEN STATE...Monterey City Manager **Mike McCarthy** and Mayor **Clyde Roberson** were both bullish in their respective "state of the city" addresses Feb. 18, with McCarthy noting a \$1.6 million surplus after two consecutive record years of tourism revenue.

BURNT OUT...A month before a fire destroyed the **Dick Bruhn** building, the county **District Attorney** began investigating possible illegal removal and dumping of asbestos from the now-destroyed Oldtown Salinas building. The investigation began after concerns were raised by the **Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District**. In other Bruhn building news, officials say despite the fact workers with keys to the building were inside when the fire broke out, the multi-day blaze was not started intentionally—or by humans.

WHO'S IN TOWN?

The \$2.3 billion hospital-ity industry in Monterey County is some 23,000 employees strong. They're repped by the **Monterey County Hospitality Association**, an influential trade association fighting for a desalination plant (water rationing could spell doom for hotels) and widening **Highway 156** (to minimize traffic jams at peak tourist times). This week they throw a black-tie gala and honor two hospitality heavyweights: The Hospitality Professional of the Year award goes to **Janine Chicourrat**, GM of **Portola Hotel and Spa**, and a lifetime achievement award goes to **Lawson Little**, former pro golfer and **Quail Lodge** president.

6pm Friday Feb. 26. Portola Hotel, 2 Portola Plaza, Monterey. \$150. 626-8636, www.mcha.net.

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

Evoking Shel Silverstein, a reader wonders why the sidewalk on General Jim Moore Boulevard runs through Seaside and ends in Del Rey Oaks. DRO City Manager Daniel Dawson reports it ends along with water, recycled water and other underground utilities because those projects were completed with federal Fort Ord grant monies. The next FORA-funded capital improvement project will be South Boundary Road (where the sidewalk ends); bike lanes, sidewalks and utilities will also be installed. Groundbreaking is expected in early 2017.

OVERHEARD

“I agree with a lot of the things Donald Trump says, but I wouldn't have him over for dinner.”

An Iowa tourist talking to locals from the front porch of his Pacific Grove vacation rental.

GOOD WEEK / BAD WEEK

GOOD: \$3.17 million was raised for local nonprofits in the 2015 Monterey County Gives! campaign. Two nonprofits won another \$2,500 each with Ingenuity Awards announced Feb. 25. **Loaves, Fishes & Computers** in Salinas provides free or low-cost computers and tech support. Their Big Idea is to distribute 99 dual-language (Spanish-English) computers to low-income families. Meanwhile, **Gathering for Women-Monterey** provides homeless and at-risk women with food and services, operating a day center out of the **Unitarian Universalist Church** and a food pantry for anyone in the **Diocese of Monterey's** archive building. They want a dedicated space for both. Gives! is a special project of the *Weekly's* donor-advised fund at the **Community Foundation for Monterey County** and the **Monterey Peninsula Foundation**.

BAD: After a year of fighting for the right to operate her taco truck, **El Volcan**, on **Cannery Row**, **Berenice Gonzalez Contrera** of Salinas finally took the hint that neither local businesses nor the city of Monterey want her or her delicious food there. She withdrew her application for a long-term vending permit on Feb. 16. With city staff recommending that **Monterey City Council** deny the permit and only two City Council members (**Alan Haffa** and **Timothy Barrett**) sympathetic to her cause, the permit likely wouldn't have been granted anyway. It concludes a year of Gonzalez Contrera lobbying on her own behalf, despite numerous roadblocks. Numerous Cannery Row merchants spoke against her pursuit. Now she's giving up on the process, making it a bad week for diversity of merchants and food offerings.

THE WEEKLY TALLY

40,597

Solar installation jobs in California in 2015, 29 percent growth over 2014. There were more than 75,000 jobs in the industry in California,

including sales and distribution. Source: *California Solar Energy Industries Association*

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