

Biz Briefs

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The University of California Merced Small Business Development Center (SBDC) started meeting with small business entrepreneurs beginning April 30 at the Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC) "Creekside Center" to provide information on how the SBDC business consultants can help you in the growth and development of your small business. A UC Merced SBDC business consultant will be available for appointments at the EVC on May 15, May 28, June 11 and June 25. During the SBDC visit, entrepreneurs, startup companies and even seasoned firms can confidentially discuss and review business strategies. For more information on the UC Merced SBDC Regional Network, visit <http://sbdc.ucmerced.edu> or dial UCM-SBDC.

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The Jewish Community Center (JCC) of San Luis Obispo has named Lauren M. Bandari as the new JCCSLO Director.

Among her responsibilities is coordinating JCC programming and working to achieve its mission of reaching out to the San Luis Obispo County community at large. Bandari is committed to enriching her community and sees the many opportunities the JCC has in SLO County. For more information, the JCCSLO can be reached online at www.jccslo.com.

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The San Luis Obispo Association of Realtors has presented a \$25,000 check to the San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund. The contribution came from California Association of Realtors' Housing Affordability Fund (HAF). The funds will be used exclusively to finance affordable housing projects in San Luis Obispo County. HAF is a statewide fund that supports various activities that promote and create affordable housing. This contribution marked the second time the San Luis Obispo Association of Realtors sponsored an HAF application for the HTF. Additional information on the Housing Trust Fund is available online at www.slocht.org.

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A team of nurses at Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center has been recognized for its

multi-disciplinary approach to significantly reduce the use of foley catheters at the hospital by ADVANCE for Nurses magazine, a national nursing trade publication. At the end of 2006 it was noted there was a reasonably high rate of foley catheter utilization at Sierra Vista, which could have been contributing to urinary tract infections. The nursing team set about developing a set of

solutions involving physicians, nursing staff and support. Only five nursing teams were recognized by Advance. The judging panel had representation from nurses throughout the country.

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The Rotary Club of Pismo Beach Five Cities has honored 14 San Luis Obispo County nonprofits with \$10,000 in grants during their annual charitable giving campaign. More than 50 Rotary Club members were on hand to present the funds April 21 at the Pelican Point Restaurant in Pismo Beach. The funds were collected through the club's annual "Summer Sizzle" Fundraiser, hosted at Edwards Barn in Nipomo last July. All Pismo Beach Rotary Club members were involved in the nomination and selection process and contributed to supporting the organizations. For more information about the Pismo Beach Five Cities Rotary Club or Rotary International, visit www.pismoeachrotary.com.

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Fair Trade SLO invites the public to celebrate World Fair Trade Day on May 9 by coming to view the location of its upcoming non-profit fair trade store. From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 862 Monterey Street in downtown San Luis Obispo, a recycled jewelry sale, a preview of Fair Trade artisans, and children's reflections on hope for the world will be presented. At 2 p.m., Zette Harbour, a traditional storyteller whose stories have been aired on NPR, will perform multicultural stories. For more information, call 546-3478 or email info@slovillages.com.

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Las Ventanas Ranch reports a surprising upswing in sales since opening for business last summer. Seventeen of the first 28 released custom home sites are now sold or are in escrow. At a time when other developments are in financial difficulty, Las Ventanas Ranch continues to attract buyers, in part because the project is known for its sustainable practices. Goats are now being used to manage grass and brush, limiting the fuel load; and cattle have been brought back to the pastures to help strengthen the natural infrastructure of the ranch. Las Ventanas Ranch offers 11, two to three acre parcels on land protected by a permanent open space agreement. For more information, call 489-0446 or visit www.lasventanasranch.com.

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Digital West Networks Inc. recently celebrated 10 years of providing IT infrastructure and data services to San Luis Obispo County. In 1999 the company's founder and CEO, Tim Williams, a Cal Poly grad, recognized a need for these services and set about providing support for local businesses and set about meeting the demand. The company is now planning data storage expansion to 10 times its current size. For more information on Digital West, call 781-9378

Only Human Cut My Pay? No Way. Yes, Way.

By Betsey Nash



hours a week.

Still part of longer answer: And check to see if your hours are being reduced. As if you would want to be paid less for working just as hard. Is the owner now coming in to cover some shifts? Even without the salary threshold being

A general manager called me the other day to ask if the owner of his company could just walk up and tell him his pay was cut. No discussion, no warning, just boom! In my proudest HR style I replied: "It depends."

Short answer: Yes. It can be a unilateral decision. They made you an offer that you accepted when you were hired, and they are actually making you a new offer now. You can choose it or not. Not probably means you are no longer employed, but you might be able to negotiate. If you think the owner can't live without you, take a deep breath and think again, and then get your ducks in a row before you try to convince him. And remember, as nice as he has been to you for the last 5 years, he really doesn't care about your mortgage and kid's tuition as much as he cares about saving his business. How can you help him do that?

Longer answer: Maybe. (Isn't HR a great field?) If you are an exempt employee, that is, not subject to the wage and hour laws like breaks and overtime – and as a general manager I would fully expect that you are – check to be sure your new salary doesn't drop you below twice the minimum wage. If your salary goes below \$35,360.00 a year, then you are probably losing your exemption. That means you may be an hourly employee, no longer paid by performance but by the hour. Now you have to take rest breaks and a meal break and clock in and clock out, and you get paid overtime if it should ever happen that you work more than 8 hours a day or 40

crossed, changing your hours may change your classification as well. Are you dropping below the full time threshold – and so, no longer qualify for benefits? You'd better find out all of these details before you make a decision whether to stay or go. And if you discuss this with the owner he may decide he can't afford to make the changes after all. Especially if you start getting paid overtime.

By the way, if the owner tries to lower your pay retroactively: "Hi Joe, we've just finished our taxes and realize we need to cut back, so effective the start of the last pay period, we are reducing your salary by 20 percent." When you pick yourself up off the floor tell him "No way!" No fair.

By the way, that general manager who called me the other day decided to turn down the salary reduction and move on: shocking his boss, to say the least. He'll be staying on as a consultant until either his replacement is hired and trained or business picks up again. That felt like a win-win to me. But it depends. ◆

Betsey Nash, SPHR is a Senior Certified Human Resources Professional with over 25 years experience in HR and management. She doesn't look it, does she? She provides HR assistance and training to all sorts of businesses, from San Diego to Seattle, through United Staffing Associates, in San Luis Obispo. She is the 2009 President of the Human Resources Association of the Central Coast.