

August 29, 2005

Message from the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson

If there is one identifying theme as September prepares to greet us, it is the realization that our schools are beginning another year of providing a life-lasting education to our young people. We are witnessing an invigorating focus on the educational requirements of our students and the level at which our various systems are meeting them. The public has become rightfully indignant over failures and generously complimentary over successes. Despite ongoing funding difficulties, there is all about us a new aura of determination both within and without our educational community to improve the scholastic achievements of our youth. What for too long was an “us versus them” mentality is rapidly evolving into a “we” ambiance. To which our kids can only smile and say “it’s about time”!

OUR THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“A School Is A Building With Four Walls—With Tomorrow Inside”

Past Presidents to Honor Stebbins Dean—A Personal Tribute

In order to acknowledge the impact of the long time Chamber executive, Stebbins Dean, the past presidents are holding a reception on Thursday, September 8 at the Chamber—2331 Fresno Street—from 5 to 7:00 p.m. They have created a scholarship in his name to support Leadership Fresno, one of Stebbins’ priorities during his 1991-2003 tenure. On a personal note, when I started at the Business Council, Stebbins was at the Chamber and John Quiring led the Economic Development Corporation. As we had many crossover board members, we often compared notes and supported one another. Both Stebbins and John were gracious mentors and wonderful colleagues. I have no doubt that Stebbins would be thrilled about the renaissance happening in Fresno. His passion for politics, business and people had a big impact on our community. It is the people who touch our lives that help give it meaning.

Kern County’s Economic Strategy Similar to Regional Jobs Initiative

On April 5, 2005 the Kern County Board of Supervisors adopted a new strategy for economic development entitled “The Path to Sustainable Prosperity.” The themes and strategies are compatible with the Regional Jobs Initiative which will make leveraging and collaborating across the region easier as the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley moves forward. The Kern strategy laid out a number of rules for success including:

- Recognize that economic growth happens at a regional level and that solutions to the challenges of air, water, transportation and farmland preservation require broad-based solutions.
- Industry Clusters are the drivers of the economy. “A healthy economy has a diverse portfolio of competitive and newly emerging clusters.
- Build the local advantages that support clusters. “Building and adapting local advantages for clusters is the core of a sustainable and prosperous economy.”
- Collaborate to achieve ongoing economic growth. “High performing economies around the world have achieved their status because their communities, businesses and institutions have built a collaborative culture. A collaborative culture is an environment in which all stakeholders are open to change and are willing to negotiate trade-offs and constructive agreements with one another—they get things done, often in creative ways.”

Kern is focusing on seven industry clusters: value-added agriculture; logistics and warehousing; energy and chemicals; aerospace and defense; business & professional services and tourism, recreation & entertainment. The report is available on the County website at <http://www.co.kern.ca.us/econdev>