

DECEMBER 19, 2005

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson

Whether we call it CHRISTmas day or a HOLIDay, this is the time of year we come together to rededicate ourselves to our mission. It is fitting that we take time to meditate about all of those who are giving so much in our noble journey. I applaud our CEO, Deb Nankivell, and our many members who have accepted the challenge of searching for and scaling the lofty peaks of collaboration, understanding and commitment. These outstanding leaders are our “sherpas” to a better tomorrow. Our Business Council has become a nationally recognized leader in the revitalization of our regional economic and social environment. At no time of the year is this effort more meaningful. This is my last weekly contribution to our Bulletin. In the spirit of this Holy Season, I leave you with the moving words etched in granite on President Ronald Reagan’s headstone:

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“I Know In My Heart That Man Is Good. That What Is Right Will Always Eventually Triumph. And There Is Purpose And Worth To Each And Every Life”

Looking Back

As we look back over the ending year, it’s easy to see how the day by day steps of implementation are adding up to substantial changes. The RJI has over 550 businesses working in nine clusters to raise standards, increase prosperity and increase jobs. Fresno Unified’s once bleak future now is a story about righting itself, aligning behind five key goals and welcoming assistance from the outside. For those who have met new Superintendent Mike Hanson, you know we have earned the type of leader we need for a dramatic turnaround. I say earned because Supt. Hanson has noted that he came because he read the Choosing Our Future report and knew that the community had taken responsibility for the school district. ReadFresno, which evolved from the CRI retreat where “every child proficient in reading by 3rd grade” was ranked #1 in importance, is gaining momentum everyday. When you learn that some states predict prison beds based upon reading levels at grade three, the significance of intervening at this stage is compelling. The difference to society between children empowered to learn for a lifetime and those who head down the road of crime and incarceration cannot be adequately measured. The Central Valley Incubator and the Lyles Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation continue day by day to increase skills, fuel innovation, and shift the culture to one that embraces change and adapts and innovates in all the sectors. The arts and cultural groups, the nonprofits, the faith based groups and just about any other cluster that comes to mind are figuring out how to collaborate and achieve levels of success that isolated efforts could never reach.

Looking Ahead

In the works is the next edition of New Valley Times. This time the focus will be on measuring progress and celebrating what is happening. There will also be evaluation to insure that we are always open to refining strategies and taking the next best step. The Steering Committee for the Measure C Reauthorization is finishing up its work and what started out as a pretty fragmented, bunch of singly focused folks has evolved into a community of people who understand and respect one another’s view points and are inches away from consensus on what is one of the most critical issues for our future prosperity and quality of life. The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley is our platform to determine our future. Work teams are addressing every facet of the economy, workforce, educational system, environment and infrastructure. We have the opportunity to insure that government at all levels works for us, not simply subsidizes symptoms of dysfunction or frustrates efforts to innovate. The RJI, Fresno Unified, ReadFresno, Operation Clean Air, the Incubator and a myriad of other efforts are all about partnerships and trust. All are collaboratives led by volunteers. A wise friend told me the other day that a program led by government staff is bureaucracy and collaborative efforts led by volunteers is democracy. Government cannot effectively do for us what we must do for ourselves. In Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley, “We the People” have stepped up to chart our own future and it’s looking brighter every day.

New Year’s Resolution—Determine the nexus between your highest level skills and your passion and find a way to engage. There is a role for everyone.