

May 22, 2006

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson

Last Friday morning I attended the graduation ceremony of our second granddaughter from the College of Social Sciences at CSUF. It was an impressive event. That same afternoon I was privileged to attend the ribbon cutting of the new Juvenile Justice facility for Fresno County. Most memorable was the testimony of Carissa Phelps. She described her life as a homeless twelve old when she was in an out of Juvenile Hall. She even attempted suicide when she was fourteen. Thanks to a caring Correctional Officer and an “extra step” teacher from the County Office of Education she turned her life around. She is now working on two advanced degrees at UCLA. As we attend graduation parties among our families and friends this season, it behooves us to remember those graduates who have survived personal hardships that most of us can only imagine. May our efforts as part of this Business Council help those whose names we shall never know but whose hearts we shall forever touch.

A Celebration of Business Excellence

Every year the crowd gets bigger and the applause gets louder. This year’s Excellence in Business Awards sponsored by The Fresno Bee in partnership with business organizations was rich with the passion of entrepreneurs, the love of family and the humor of those who came of age long before political correctness reached the radar screen. The Honorable Robert Oliver, Fresno’s favorite MC, did his usual outstanding job of helping us know the winners so that we could celebrate along with them. Congratulations to The Specialty Crop Company, Self-Help Enterprises, County Bank, Family Health Care Network, ADCO Manufacturing, Agriculture & Priority Pollutants Laboratory, Inc., Dirk Poeschel Development Services, The Charles McMurray Company, Nelson’s Ace Hardware, and Jack Stone.

Willingness Is Not A Verb—Chamber’s Review of Public Safety Services

Bravo and thank you to the Fresno Chamber for calling the question on consolidation. They enlisted the help of Management Partners to do an analysis and provide specific recommendations for moving forward. This is no longer just about the long history of failed attempts at consolidation, whether in full or functional. After 9/11, law enforcement organizations have simply become outmoded. Plus, technology has created possibilities unavailable before. The report includes twelve specific recommendations ranging from leadership and timeframes to the integration of specific functional areas. Like smoke, crime and effective prevention efforts know no political boundaries. We are one community, interdependent with limited resources. Reports sit on the shelf when there is a lack of stewardship, no commitment to outcomes, an inability to collaborate and cross boundaries, a lack of art of the possible thinking, facts are ignored in decision making, people are unwilling to speak their current truth, conflicts remain unresolved, deficits instead of assets are the focus and those with a conflict of interest use power to prevail. A special thanks to Sam Geil for stepping up to lead.

Economic Engine of the San Joaquin Valley—Fresno Unified Rises to the Occasion

When Superintendent Mike Hanson and his team of leaders presented the budget investments for 2006/2007, he made an important point. Fresno Unified is an economic engine for our Valley. The district touches over 100,000 people directly or indirectly as students, families, staff and neighborhoods. The team delivered a powerful, customized plan to balance the investments, target improvement, standardize expectations and accountability and coordinate the delivery of services and programs. The plan embraces the reality that academic success requires both cognitive and social/emotional support. It also recognizes that coaching is critical to life long learning and the implementation of best practices. Kudos to the board, staff, parents and community members who are playing a role in the accelerating transformation of FUSD.

As For the Parties Being More Important Than the People...

The primary was over, the ballots were printed and the gubernatorial election was in sight. The press uncovered evidence that one of the candidates was a sexual predator. He stepped out of the race much to the glee of the other party who thought they would win by default. Common Cause went to the Supreme Court and argued that elections are for the people, not just the political parties. Common Cause prevailed, new ballots were printed and the runner up in the primary won the election. *“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*