

April 7, 2008

**Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson**

The other day I was thinking about the fulfillment of the Fresno Business Council's vision of **Transforming This Region From Good to Great By Inspiring Others**. The immediate question became refining the definition of a "vision". Is it a vague pipe dream? Is it an esoteric academic concept? Is it just one more scribbling on a flip chart? Is it merely a power point eye grabber? Or is it a commitment of dedicated community stewards who deeply believe that by uniting under a noble purpose we can transform ourselves from the nation's western Appalachia into a region worthy of national acclaim for our collaborative acumen? Our vision is noble. Our vision is attainable. Our mission is inspiring others to pursue such a vision with us.

**Preparing Those Who Would Lead Us—The San Joaquin Political Academy**

Six years ago, leaders at the Chamber of Commerce decided to do something about the quality of elected leadership in the community. Still smarting from Operation Rezone and frustrated by partisan politics, **Stan Oken**, **Gordie Webster**, **Ruth Evans** and a handful of others put together the **San Joaquin Political Academy**. Their goal was to prepare those who seek to serve the community in a political office with the "skills and vision to address creatively the problems of the region." The Academy topics include ethics and issues, as well as, technical training needed for campaigns. At last week's graduation, **Stan Oken** provided a graduation speech that captured the shift going on in our community. As we are in the midst of an election cycle, the following points are timely:

"The Academy was formed to recruit and prepare individuals who will serve for the right reasons. We are looking for potential candidates who:

- Have already had their applause, are not looking for it,
- Have already made their mark in the community,
- Are not searching for power or the largest salary they have ever made,
- Are true statesmen who will not make statements that will turn people against each other.

The Academy teaches that public officials must have allegiance to voters, not special interests and that unfair negative campaigns are ripping away at the very foundation of our system."

This year's graduating class was both diverse and impressive. With the Academy in place, preparation for critical leadership responsibility has become a choice. For more information, go to [www.sjpoliticalacademy.com](http://www.sjpoliticalacademy.com).

**Water & Energy Innovation Showcase—May 1 at Piccadilly Inn, University**

Water and energy hold the keys to economic prosperity and quality of life across the globe. To celebrate the first anniversary of the **Claude Laval Water & Energy Technology (WET) Incubator**, there will be an Innovation Showcase beginning at 7:00 AM on May 1 at the Piccadilly Inn, University. The purpose of the event is to identify challenges and issues facing Californians and offer up potential paths forward with cutting-edge technology that world-class companies served by the WET Incubator are developing. **Tim Quinn**, executive director of the Association of California Water Agencies will keynote. His agency serves 450 local public water agencies that are responsible for nearly 90% of the water delivered in the state. For tickets call 559.278.4540 or email [lori@cvbi.org](mailto:lori@cvbi.org). The **Central Valley Business Incubator** (now has two sites) has worked with more than 3,400 entrepreneurs who have obtained more than \$14.5 million in capital and created 2,030 new jobs in Central California since its founding in 1996.

**Singing The Praises of An Unsung Hero**

Usually those who do the grinder work behind the scenes remain invisible. **Councilmember Larry Westerlund** made sure that one of our community treasures was not overlooked by asking the Offices of Alan Autry and the Fresno City Council to declare March 25, 2008 **Suzanne Bertz-Rosa** day. Suzanne has been the creative spark behind Creative Fresno, MindHub, the Boomerang Strategy, and countless websites for the RJI. Can one person make a difference? As Suzanne herself might say, “Rock on!”