

**March 17, 2008**

**Message From the Chair Emeritus**

One of the challenges in composing this piece each week is finding a way to effectively depict the scope of FBC activities and their impact. At a meeting last week, **Doug Davidian** put his brush to the canvas! Discussing our dedication to moving this region from “Good to Great by Inspiring Action”, he explained how everything is related to ***Community Engagement***. Besides membership in this Council, our members are deeply involved in serving other widely diversified non-profit and public service organizations throughout this Valley. “***Understanding the interconnectivity***” (Doug’s words also) of their dedication is the easel supporting the panoramic changes we are witnessing all about us. Do you get the picture?

**Regional Jobs Initiative Annual Meeting---March 28 from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.—Exhibit Hall**

The theme of the “last” RJI annual meeting of its 5 year run is aptly themed, “Transforming Our Community—Launching the Next Phase.” This multi-organizational, comprehensive effort counts hundreds of participants and an exponentially increasing pile of results. While once an at will collaborative running alongside traditional approaches, the RJI strategy is now embedded as a new operating system. Value based and aimed at linking, aligning and leveraging community resources, we are committed to building a vibrant economy and increasing per capita income. What does the future hold? Come and learn how leaders in three spheres of work—economic development, infrastructure development and human development—are working together to transform the community. We are shifting from symptom relief to root cause elimination. Every community and every person has the ingredients for greatness. The challenge is discovering the recipe and having the courage to follow it. Change is hard. The alternative is harder.

**Fresno Unified—The Barn Raising Continues**

Stark contrasts allow us to see clearly. For those who intervened at Fresno Unified, it was exhilarating to see the changes taking place in the district. Thank you to the Chamber for hosting a State of Education Luncheon so that the broader community could learn first hand about the ongoing transformation. We collectively allowed our largest school district to deteriorate to such a level the state threatened a take over. Rather than point fingers or give up, the community stepped up to support those in the district who were willing to take on a difficult challenge. Infusing a broken culture with enthusiasm, discipline and a heroic work ethic requires people who believe that everyone has the capacity to improve. Fresno is rich these people; we simply needed to connect and work together. As the community continues to wrap around the district, rebuild neighborhoods, and connect adults to the tools they need to succeed, FUSD will become a high performing district and its graduates will join those already engaged in the work to create a vibrant economy and quality community.

**The Concord Has Landed in Fresno—Dan Doyle (Central Valley Community Bank)**

The **Maddy Institute** recently hosted a Town Hall forum on the nation’s finances by the Concord Coalition. The speakers included: **David Walker**, Comptroller General for the United States; **Alice Rivlin**, Former OMB Director under President Clinton, **Alison Fraser**, Director at the The Heritage Foundation; and, **Harry Zeeve**, Director, The Concord Coalition. This distinguished group is visiting 30 cities across the country as part of “a Fiscal Wake –Up Call” Tour. These diverse organizations are united in their message—future generations will suffer if we don’t address national budget issues. Currently, 42% of the national budget is comprised of Social Security and Medicare. Promises made to the aging population cannot be met based on revenue projections. We must challenge candidates and elected officials to fix the systemic problems. The Concord Coalition considers Fresno a key region and our practice of promoting collaboration and stewardship central to a solution. For more information go to [www.confordcoalition.org](http://www.confordcoalition.org).