

THRIVE!

COACHELLA VALLEY

iHUB FIRM CAN
REDUCE YOUR
WATER BILLS

How to Attract
and Retain
Young Talent

FREE MONEY
FOR COLLEGE!

Monthly
Business and
Education
Programs
PAGE 43

Jaime Kowal,
entrepreneur

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Health Care As It Should Be

THRIVE!

COACHELLA VALLEY



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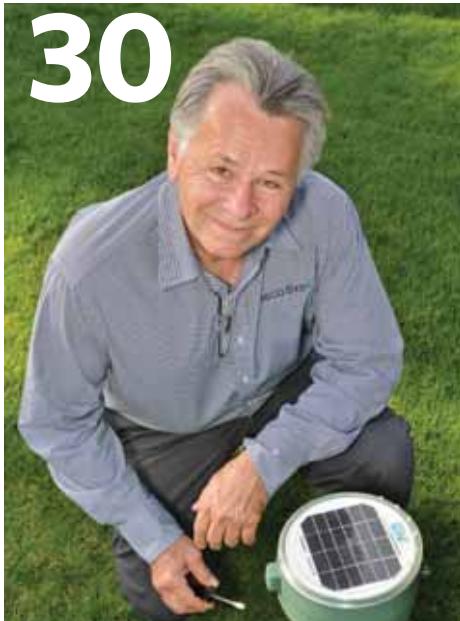
Dan Schawbel's keynote speech made local business owners sit up and take note.

43 At Your Service

Free programs and services of the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership



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30

Clockwise from top: Brothers Gerry and Casey Washack found creative ways to engage locals and drive business at Next Level Fitness; SecoSys CEO Hank McCarrick got a push from the Coachella Valley iHub to make his product market ready; SunUp Energy workers comprise just a portion of the many newly created iHub jobs.



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Jessica Hatch Brooks, CONTROLLER

DESERT SUN MEDIA GROUP

Steven Henke, MARKETING MANAGER

Maru Almazan, CREATIVE SERVICES MANAGER

Mark Winkler, PRESIDENT/PUBLISHER

LOCALLABS

info@locallabs.com

Kathryn Swartz, EDITOR

Isaac Harrell, DESIGNER

WRITERS

Ken Alan

Ellen Paris

Carolyn Patten

PHOTOGRAPHERS

David A. Lee, david@leevaillancourt.com

ABOUT THE COVER: Small business owner Jamie Kowal has found success in the Coachella Valley with boutique hotel The Amado.

No one seemed surprised when Dr. John Husing gave the Coachella Valley economy a "B-" in his report card-style review and forecast at the recent Coachella Valley Economic Summit. Many key indicators, particularly the local employment rate, suggest that our region has not only recovered from the recession, but also begun setting new benchmarks for progress.

The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership has been feeling the momentum all along at its business incubator (the Coachella Valley iHub), as well as its Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center and Spanish-language LanzaTech business and technology workshops. This edition of *Thrive! Coachella Valley* underscores a few success stories, such as the iHub creating 100 new jobs, as well as opportunities, such as access to higher education and business support.

We're particularly proud of the Coachella Valley iHub and the Palm Springs Accelerator Campus, where innovators in the fields of high-tech, renewable energy, health and medicine, and digital media turn their ideas into products. The 22 companies in the program needed less than three of their projected five years to create its first 100 jobs (see page 12). Husing estimates that 80 startups will create about 3,500 jobs in the iHub's first 20 years. In "SecoSys an Overnight Success" (page 30), we share the story of an iHub company that has introduced impressive water conservation technology.

CVEP also helps businesses through its SBDC and LanzaTech program, which offer small business workshops all year in addition to free one-on-one coaching and services. "How to Be Creative in Business" (page 20) is based on a SBDC Fireside Chat workshop.

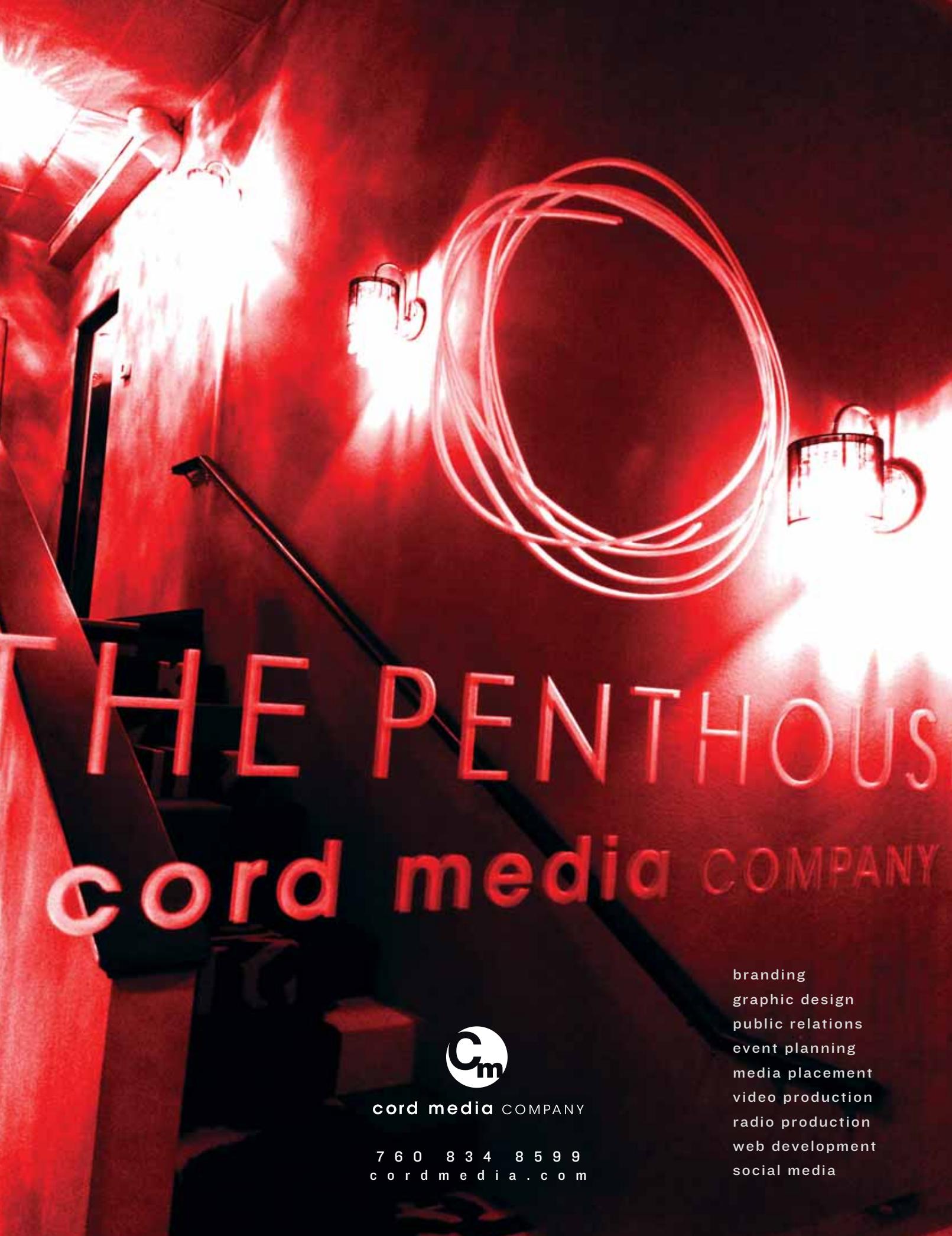
CVEP's Free Money for College campaign is under way, promoting scholarships for low-income residents (page 24). Education is the gateway to higher-wage jobs and curbing the cycle of poverty. In the largely Hispanic eastern Coachella Valley, almost half (46 percent) of all children ages 5 and younger live in poverty, and only 10 percent of Hispanic residents have earned an associate's or a bachelor's degree, compared to 30 percent of all Coachella Valley residents.

We encourage you to become a part of the Coachella Valley's success story. Visit us at www.cvep.com to learn more about how to engage.

Joe Wallace, Interim CEO/President

Managing Director, **Coachella Valley iHub**

Chief Innovation Officer, **Coachella Valley Economic Partnership**



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U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Jay Williams (right) joined John Raymond (left), City of Palm Springs director of community and economic development, and Joe Wallace, CVEP chief innovation officer, for a tour of the Coachella Valley iHub.

COACHELLA VALLEY IHUB COMMERCE OFFICIAL TOURS INNOVATION HUB

The Coachella Valley iHub hosted U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Jay Williams for a morning tour of the business incubator and the new Health & Medical Innovation Center at the iHub's Palm Springs Accelerator Campus. Williams was in Southern California touring innovation hubs, which President Obama champions when talking about economic development. Joe Wallace, CVEP chief innovation officer, briefed the undersecretary on the history and operations of the Coachella Valley iHub before touring the incubator office and the Accelerator Campus and speaking with the entrepreneurs behind hipS-sister, SunUp, Solaris, and Sac-Tec.

BRIGHT MINDS POWER IHUB VIDEO

Entrepreneurs across key local industry sectors appear in a new video showcasing the Coachella Valley iHub and Palm Springs Accelerator Campus. The video, produced by CVEP, explains how the business incubator selects and coaches businesses in strategic planning, proof of concept, financing, product development, and market strategy. The iHub currently works with 22 companies in the fields of healthcare, high-tech/advanced manufacturing, renewable energy and digital media. CVEP will use the video to recruit entrepreneurs and funders into the program.

IHUB WINS AQMD AWARD

The South Coast Air Quality Management District selected the Coachella Valley iHub as a 2014 Clean Air Award Winner in the category of Model Community Achievement. The award was presented in October at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LANZATECH HONORS ENTREPRENEURS

Three small business owners received entrepreneurship awards at the annual Coachella Valley LanzaTech Latino Business Mixer at Sol Sports Restaurant in Coachella. Fanny Ramirez (Fanny Wrapper), Felix Barajas (Eco Green Supply), and Alejandra Chavez-Montez (Alexandra Cleaning Service) accepted awards in front of almost 200 fellow business owners. The program included a presentation by

Manuel Martinez, an entrepreneur and former president of SCORE Los Angeles, who helped guests sharpen their networking skills. LanzaTech also recognized its sponsors — Telemundo 15, La Poderosa 96.7 FM, and Dr. Christopher V. Flores — all supporters of the Latino business community. LanzaTech is the Spanish-language consulting and workshop program produced by CVEP and the Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center. LanzaTech assists Latino-owned small business with access to capital, sales and marketing strategy, human resources, and more.



SBA chief Maria Contreras-Sweet and U.S. Rep. Raul Ruiz tour the Coachella Valley iHub with Managing Director Joe Wallace.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SBA CHIEF ADDRESSES BUSINESS OWNERS, TOURS IHUB

Maria Contreras-Sweet, administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, spoke and answered questions from local business owners at a luncheon at Desert Willow Golf Resort in Palm Desert. The cabinet member founded the first Latino-formed commercial bank in California in more than 35 years and focused on providing access to capital and counseling to small- and mid-size businesses in Los Angeles. Her visit, in collaboration with U.S. Rep. Raul Ruiz, underscores federal interest in the innovation hub program, a concept Obama endorsed when he spoke about it last spring in North Carolina. In 2014, the U.S. Economic Development Administration awarded a \$784,769 grant to CVEP to renovate four buildings at the iHub's Palm Springs Accelerator Campus. Following the luncheon, Contreras-Sweet toured the Coachella Valley iHub and Palm Springs Accelerator Campus and met with local business owners to assess how they access and benefit from SBA services.



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The new www.cvep.com brings a valuable resource to Coachella Valley.

COMMUNICATIONS

VISIT THE NEW CVEP.COM

CVEP has re-launched its website, www.cvep.com, offering entrepreneurs, small business owners, and education and civic leaders a bright new resource. The site unifies all CVEP business and workforce development programs, including the Coachella Valley iHub and Palm Springs Accelerator Campus, Workforce Excellence, Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center, LanzaTech, Renewable Energy Roundtable, and more. The site also offers background on CVEP's history, mission, board and investors; the Coachella Valley Economic Blueprint; the Workforce/Jobs Model; and other economic vitality initiatives.

WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

VIDEO PROMOTES COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

A new CVEP video showcases how local schools and businesses collaborate to provide students with life-changing career explorations, career academies, work-based learning (including job shadows and internships), scholarships and support. A key tool in promoting the Regional Plan for College and Career Readiness, the video, which was funded by the James Irvine Foundation and premiered at the Coachella Valley Economic Summit in October, becomes an integral tool to attract businesses to the program. Visit www.cvep.com and click on Workforce to view the video and download our brochure.

KAISER GRANT SUPPORTS HEALTHCARE PATHWAYS

Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, Riverside has approved a \$15,000 contribution to produce videos promoting career pathways in the healthcare field. The intent is to introduce students to different careers in healthcare and steer them to high school career academies and work-based learning

opportunities in the Coachella Valley. The video will be available in English and Spanish and distributed in a variety of media throughout the region. Each will feature students, teachers, and health and medical professionals demonstrating how students can explore healthcare careers

in the classroom and in the professional setting. CVEP will partner on the project with Desert Regional Medical Center, JFK Memorial Hospital, Eisenhower Medical Center, Desert Health Care District, Kaiser Permanente, and the region's three unified school districts.

COACHELLA VALLEY IHUB

CVEP EXEC'S WIN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD

The Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship awarded CVEP President/CEO Tom Flavin and Chief Innovation Officer Joe Wallace a 2014 Spirit of the Entrepreneur Award at a black-tie gala at the Riverside Convention Center. They won in the Supporter of Entrepreneurship category for "outstanding entrepreneurial leadership and accomplishments" at the Coachella Valley iHub. CVEP operates the iHub and the Palm Springs Accelerator Campus, an incubator for businesses in renewable energy, healthcare, advanced technology, and digital media. CVEP also operates the Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center.

The Spirit of the Entrepreneur Awards program, founded in 2003, recognizes the accomplishments of the Inland Empire's top entrepreneurial business leaders.

"This honor was the culmination of a three-year effort by our team, which has also garnered a Clean Air Award from the South Coast Air Quality Management District and was one of only 18 incubation centers nationwide invited last month to join the National Renewable Energy Laboratory/Wells Fargo IN2 program," Wallace says. "These independently judged awards have validated the vision and courage of the City of Palm Springs, which led the effort to fund and establish the Coachella Valley iHub, and reinforces the economic impact that it will have as the program continues to expand and assist entrepreneurs."

The Spirit of the Entrepreneur Award presented to Flavin and Wallace was the first given in the Support of Entrepreneurship category since Mike Napoli of Tech Coast Angels won it in 2010. Napoli nominated the CVEP executives for this year's award.

The Coachella Valley had one other award winner: Angela Janus of ShareKitchen, a culinary business incubator in Cathedral City, won in the Social Entrepreneur category.



Joe Wallace accepts the Spirit of the Entrepreneur Awards at a black-tie gala at the Riverside Convention Center.

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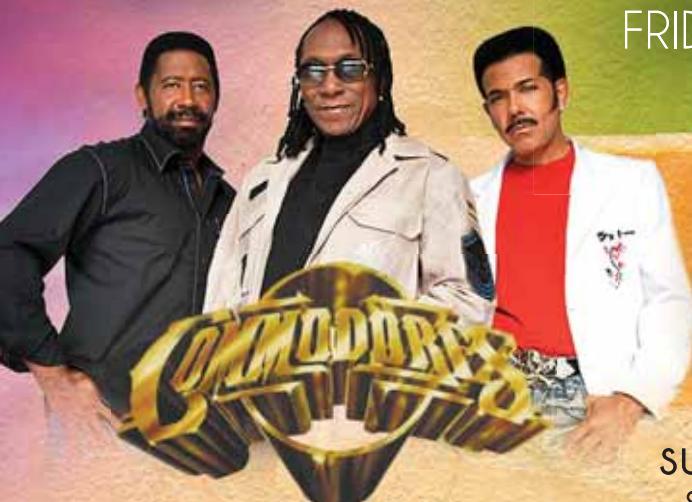
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7:00PM



BRETT ELDREDGE
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7:30PM



ANDY GRAMMER
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20
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7:30PM

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FEB. 11

Fireside Chat: Forecasting Industry Trends: Why Orange is the New Black
 7:30 a.m., UCR Palm Desert

FEB. 11

Free Money for College (FAFSA) fundraiser
 6 p.m., Toscana Country Club, Indian Wells

FEB. 12

Healthcare Industry Council
 3:30 p.m., UCR Palm Desert

FEB. 19

Renewable Energy Roundtable
 7:30 a.m., UCR Palm Desert

FEB. 19

LanzaTech: Les Vendedes o Dejas que te Vendan, featuring Manuel Martinez
 6 p.m., UCR Palm Desert

FEB. 24

Business Start Basics
 9:30 a.m., CVEP/Rabobank Regional Business Center, Palm Springs

FEB. 24

Arts, Media & Entertainment Industry Council
 3:30 p.m., UCR Palm Desert

MARCH 11

Fireside Chat: Empowering Employees/Growing Your Own
 7:30 a.m., UCR Palm Desert

MARCH 19

Lanza Tech: Fracaso y Exito en Facebook
 6 p.m., UCR Palm Desert

MARCH 31

Business Start Basics
 9:30 a.m., CVEP/Rabobank Regional Business Center, Palm Springs

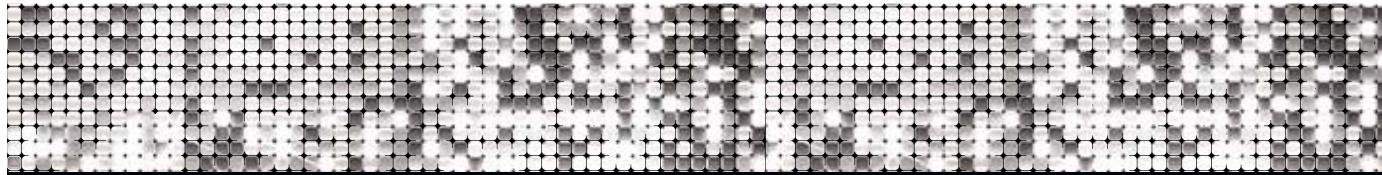
University of California, Riverside's Palm Desert Graduate Center is located at 75080 Frank Sinatra Drive in Palm Desert.

The CVEP/Rabobank Regional Business Center is located at 3111 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way in Palm Springs.

For more information, call 760-340-1575.



Clayton Baldwin, Ryan Cressler and Hugh Van Horn



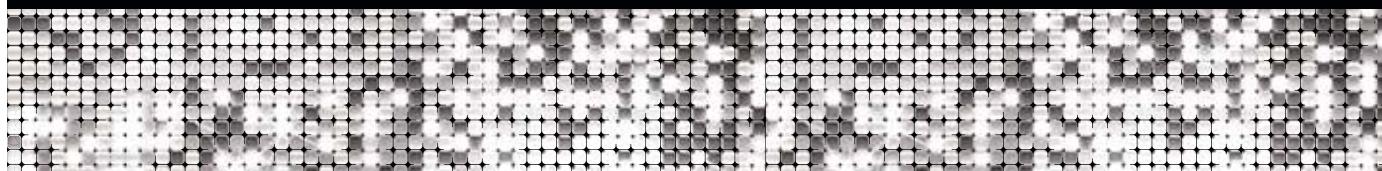
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Desert Regional Heart Lab

offers technology to treat AFib

Desert Regional Medical Center is the first hospital in the Coachella Valley to install a robotic technology to treat atrial fibrillation — a heart disorder that affects approximately 3 million Americans each year.

This common heart disorder occurs when electrical signals in the heart become irregular, causing the heart's upper chamber to beat out of rhythm. Atrial fibrillation requires immediate medical attention because it could lead to a life-threatening stroke.

The new technology — called Stereotaxis Robotic Navigation — enhances a cardiologist's ability to navigate precisely and to treat the problem cells that are causing the heart's electrical system to misfire.

Persons with atrial fibrillation are five times more likely to have a stroke. In some cases, atrial fibrillation can cause chest discomfort, but some people may not experience any symptoms. The likelihood that someone will have atrial fibrillation increases with age.

"Among the senior population, the percentage of people with atrial fibrillation can be as high as 8 to 10 percent, and that's a significant number," said Dr. Hetal Bhakta, MD, a cardiologist with Desert Regional Medical Center who specializes in electrophysiology, the treatment of heart rhythm disorders. "A lot of the episodes are silent, so these patients don't know they have atrial fibrillation."

Alternative to Medications

Medications may be prescribed to prevent blood clots or control heart rate in those with atrial fibrillation. Cardioversion, another treatment option, can be recommended to shock the heart back to a normal rhythm by delivering a jolt of electricity to the heart. However, if these efforts are not



Desert Regional Medical Center is the first in the Coachella Valley to offer Stereotaxis Robotic Navigation.

successful, a procedure called cardiac ablation may be warranted.

During catheter ablation, a cardiologist inserts a thin flexible tube called a catheter into the blood vessel of the groin, arm or neck. A wire inside that catheter is connected to a special machine that can generate radiofrequency energy at its tip. Using sophisticated imaging technology, the cardiologist can navigate to the places on the heart that are causing the electrical signals to misfire. The radiofrequency energy heats the problem cells and deactivates them. Electrical signals can then move normally through the heart and a regular rhythm can be restored.

Desert Regional Medical Center installed the Stereotaxis navigation equipment to make the ablation procedures easier for physicians to perform and more accurate for patients. Rather than push a catheter manually through a patient's blood vessels, with Stereotaxis navigation, the cardiologist can steer the catheter remotely while watching its progress on a high-definition computer screen. Powerful magnets lock onto the tip of the catheter and allow it to be steered. This provides

excellent precision and safety, as well as reduces the use of radiation exposure because the physician needs to take fewer X-ray pictures than manual ablation methods would require. According to a recent study, Stereotaxis technology is 10 times less likely to injure a patient than manual treatments that do not use robotic navigation, and requires approximately one-third less time exposed to radiation.

"Manual ablation is like trying to paint a canvas on a small fishing boat in the middle of the ocean with all the waves, compared with painting that same canvas on a steady cruise ship," Dr. Bhakta said. "The painting will be better in the more stable environment. Similarly, the magnetic navigation allows for a more stable catheter position which results in better lesion delivery, which ensures the circuits are fully cut."

Atrial fibrillation ablation may be a more effective treatment than medications. However, as with any procedure, there are risks associated with atrial fibrillation ablation. For more information on this technology, go to www.desertregional.com/afib, or call 800-491-4990 for a referral to a specialist.

— Shari Berg

The First

100



SunUp Energy has created more than 25
jobs since joining CVHub last summer.

COACHELLA VALLEY INNOVATION HUB ACHIEVES JOB CREATION GOAL AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

BY KEN ALAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID A. LEE





The SunUp Energy team discusses installation progress.

Job creation doesn't happen instantly, at least not in most economic climates. In 2014, Inland Empire economist Dr. John E. Husing projected that the Coachella Valley iHub, the business incubator operated by the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, would create 105 new jobs by 2017 — an aggressive target, but not one that was shrugged off as impossible.

In fact, the number became something of a challenge, and one that businesses at the iHub and the Palm Springs Accelerator Campus have exceeded.

That's right: The first 100 jobs have already been created in the Coachella Valley—more than two years ahead of schedule.

According to Husing's projections, the CViHub will create more than 3,500 direct jobs across 81 surviving startups during the next 20 years (and potentially faster if the pace of 2014 continues).

The CViHub is one of 16 in the California, and the only one with an accelerator campus. "California's iHubs are trying to attract entrepreneurs who might not otherwise find their path into entrepreneurship," says Joe Wallace, managing director of the CViHub and chief innovation officer of CVEP. "In terms of numbers of companies, we're way in the lead [compared to other iHubs in the state]. We've done very well in attracting funds to the start-

ups with more than 6 million investor dollars to date being deployed into equity positions in CViHub companies. None of it has come from an angel fund or a venture capitalist. It has come from individual people."

The lack of venture capital is due to funds being more selective and having investment criteria that are for more advanced businesses, according to Wallace. "The biggest angel fund in the country is the Tech Coast Angels," he says. "They're in here all the time. I can send our companies there to pitch their business plans but at the end of the day, the decisions to invest are in the hands of the individuals who make up the angel groups. About 700 companies a year upload the pitch deck to their website but only around 20 are going to get funded. They're cherry-picking the cherries, but as the golden rule states, he who has the gold makes the rules."

The objective of the CViHub is to mentor businesses that create higher-skill, higher-wage jobs in an economy now dominated by low-wage industries. Almost a third of Coachella Valley workers earn less than \$25,000 per year, and 82 percent of children in the Palm Springs Unified School District are served meals under the National School Lunch Program. The numbers are about the same in the valley's other two school districts.

Earlier this year, Husing completed an

economic impact study and forecast for the CViHub that targets jobs that pay an average of \$48,900, the threshold of what most economists consider a "middle-class wage."

The median wage target of about \$23.50 per hour is ambitious, considering startups typically have limited capital and cash flow constraints. The Husing study also characterized about half of the valley's labor force as being "marginally educated," lacking the skills that command better wages. Still, the jobs being created at the CViHub are paying better than the typical service sector wage. "The lowest number I've heard is in the \$15 to \$16 dollar an hour range," Wallace says. "The highest I've heard is \$30 to \$35 per hour."

Sonia Kanner, whose company manufactures an attractive yet functional alternative to the familiar fanny pack called hipS-sister, pays her staff salaries that range from \$30,000 to \$80,000.

"What CViHub has provided for me is basically the tools and the structure to build a business," Kanner says. "Having that support, having the resources, having the mentorship, having other entrepreneurs around me really, really gave me the confidence to make it happen."

"The business started in January 2013 with just me and one other person," she continues. "Now hipS-sister has grown to nine

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The first 100 jobs created at the CViHub are a mix of white- and blue-collar positions.

full-time people. This doesn't include additional employment created for outsourced services like marketing, commissioned sales reps and legal counsel.

SunUp Energy has created 18 hourly jobs for solar water heater installers since joining the CViHub last summer. "We're very active with [CVEP's] workforce development and we work closely with College of the Desert, which has special programs for solar, so we often hire students who have gone through that program," says Shari Randall, marketing and human resources executive.

Entry-level jobs at SunUp pay about \$13 per hour, but wages quickly rise to \$16 or even \$22 per hour as workers gain more experience.

The CViHub does not fund startups or pay salaries to entrepreneurs, Wallace says. Companies accepted into the program receive workspace, basic office resources like telephones and photocopiers, and access to a wide variety of management consulting resources. "A lot of the entrepreneurs don't take a paycheck," he says. Then [they have some success] and they'll pay themselves a lump sum when their business can afford it. The founders are not always on their own payroll."

While the focus of startups for the CViHub is on renewable energy and other

enabling technologies, Wallace likes to see applications that are blending creative arts with technology. "Taking things that are from the realm of dreams into the realistic manifestation of commercial products is what I really like to see coming in," he says.

One company, Pocial, blends social networking with opinion polling in subjective contests. Another, Post Modern, combines a hardware kiosk used at marketing events, trade shows and retail outlets with an Internet platform for engagement through social media. SecoSys (see page 30) provides a solution to control and manage household water systems. "They won the silver award at the World's Best Technology Conference last year," Wallace beams. "They've gone from two people with an idea to a company with a proven concept and a market and is valued at \$2.2 million in the last 18 months. That is a massive consumer-based product that has the potential to be a giant company."

Indy Power Systems is another CViHub standout. "They just got their fourth patent approval notification. They're in energy management and storage. They're doing an off-grid project near Yellowstone in partnership with Toyota that should be wrapping up soon. They are already in negotiations for another project that is much larger in scope. As you start seeing electric grid stabilization

achieved affordably with energy storage, they're well positioned for significant growth and financial success"

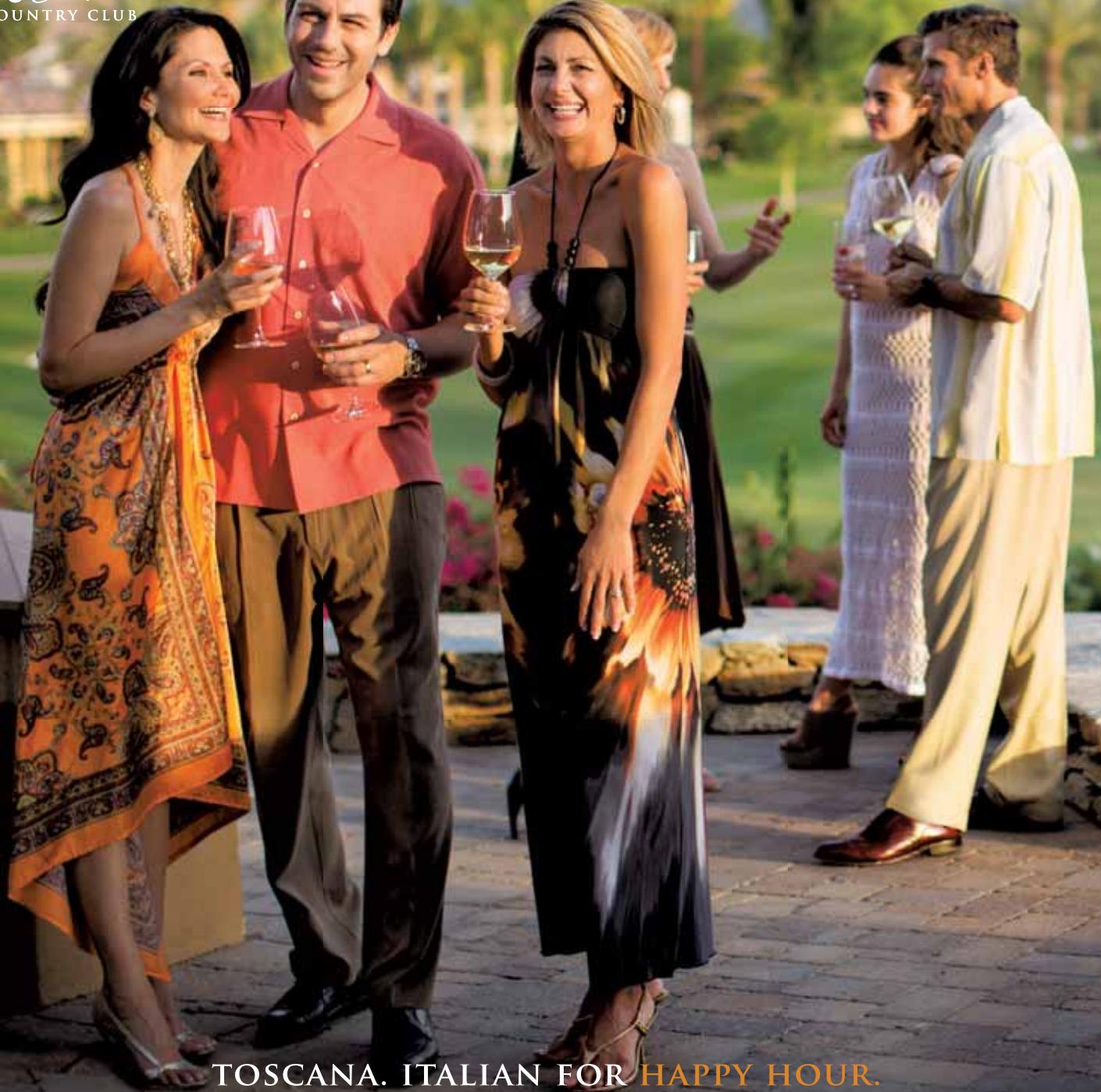
At the CViHub Accelerator Campus, a cluster of seven buildings on 3.5 acres adjacent to the Palm Springs International Airport, startups transition from an office to small-scale manufacturing. Firms at the facility can take advantage of international trade incentives offered by its Foreign Trade Zone designation.

Entrepreneurs in the CViHub are already tapping into the skilled workers being trained through the CVEP Career Pathways pipeline. Upon entering high school, students can enroll in a career academy, such as Desert Hot Springs High School's Renewable Energy Academy of Learning (REAL), which is specifically designed to prepare a future workforce for one of the targeted iHub sectors.

Although it's unlikely that the next Apple or Google will incubate in the CViHub, "If we've got a multibillion-dollar company in here, I don't know it, and the guy that started the company doesn't know it either. That doesn't mean it won't happen," Wallace says. "A better target is to create a whole lot of companies that are between \$25 million and \$100 million a year. Every company in the CViHub so far has an aggressive entrepreneur with a zealous belief in their business and a desire for large-scale success behind it."

In addition to direct job creation, by 2036 the iHub program forecasts the creation of an additional 1,500 indirect jobs, with \$2 billion in payroll and more than \$7 billion in sales. Businesses rooted in manufacturing and technology will also support a year-round economy. Additionally the mentoring of 81 graduating companies will create a need for approximately 1.5 million square feet of commercial real estate along with the infrastructure to support the efforts, yielding benefits to the local real estate and construction industries that have long depended exclusively on residential projects.

The CViHub and Palm Springs Accelerator Campus are ahead of schedule for attracting entrepreneurs and creating jobs. "With the continued support for the vision that started in the Palm Springs City Hall in 2010, the future of the region is certainly looking bright and prosperous," Wallace says. ■



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(2010-2020)

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Median salary in the Inland Empire
(First quarter 2013)

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Job growth in the Inland Empire
(2010-2020)

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Median salary in the Inland Empire
(First quarter 2013)

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How to Be Creative in Business

Almost everybody in business agrees they need to be creative in their work, but precious few can tell you exactly what that means. Or, if they do know, they might lack the time and freedom to stretch in those out-of-the-box directions.

So the Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center made "creativity in business" the topic of a recent Fireside Chat, a workshop series where entrepreneurs and industry experts discuss topics relevant to owning and operating a business in the Coachella Valley. The workshops take place on the second Wednesday of every month, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m., at the UC Riverside Palm Desert campus.

Creativity is problem-solving and vital to businesses of all kinds, the panelists at the Fireside Chat agreed. With so many technological advances and ever-increasing competition in the marketplace, creativity can be your business's elevating and distinguishing quality, freeing you to try new ways of doing things. Creative environments foster innovation. Innovation leads to

progress. And progress leads to success.

Although some people have innate creative talents, you need only take stock of your own thoughts and experiences to use associative thinking to draw creative ideas.

The Fireside Chat session featured a panel consisting of photographer Jaime Kowal, who owns The Amado hotel and co-owns Ernest Coffee and Bootlegger Tiki in Palm Springs, and Casey and Gerry Washack, owners of Next Level Fitness in Palm Desert and founders of a program called Fit in 42.

Jaime Kowal: Be Authentic

Kowal, 35, a Canadian who vacationed in Palm Springs and never left, parlayed her professional skills into the design of her five-unit boutique hotel. "I think about composition and color," she says, noting that she designed the property with natural materials and with sustainability in mind. "It's intuitive for me. You have to be true to who you are rather than try to fit some model in a textbook. People want authenticity."

Kowal curated the selection of original

THINK OF IT AS A FRESH TWIST ON PROBLEM-SOLVING, EXPERTS SAY

BY STEVEN BILLER
PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID A. LEE

artwork and custom furnishings throughout the chic property. Her clients, many of which appreciate midcentury modern architecture and design, appreciate the vibe she has created at The Amado.

She held that philosophy when she teamed with local designer Chris Pardo to open Ernest Coffee and Bootlegger Tiki, where she used grass cloth and other materials that pay homage to the history of the property, which was Don the Beachcomber's tiki restaurant in the 1950s. The original tiki torches remain standing outside the front door.

"We wanted a design-driven atmosphere for our community to enjoy high-quality coffee and craft cocktails," Kowal says. "It's a vibrant space for people to come together and have a great time."

Her approach to creative problem solving, she says, is an intuitive process:

- Identify the problem
- Play in the incubation period. "Get lost in thoughts and ideas."
- Execute
- Review



Jamie Kowal, owner of The Amado, came to Palm Springs on vacation — and never left.



The Washacks, owners of Next Level Fitness, believe that creating a community is key to a successful business.

Washacks: Create Community

The Washacks also bank on community-building. They could sell gym memberships like many other companies, but they sell more than fitness. They're selling an entire way of living — and building a community of like-minded people.

"We want to make customers feel like they're a part of something," Gerry Washack says. "When people walk through my doors, I want them smiling and laughing right away.

I want them happy all the time. It's about experience. This is their place. It's great when you hear them talking about 'we' and 'us.' To do that, we have to create an experience. If you're kind and caring, people will come. The other people become their gym family. People care about that."

Casey Washack adds that creativity doesn't mean "creating something out of the blue." "It's knowing where your customer is," he says, querying the audience to shout out

everything they know about the cable TV character Homer Simpson (*The Simpsons*). "You probably know more about a cartoon character than you know about your clients—their preferences, where they hang out, where you're likely to reach them with a message."

Kowal and the Washacks challenged the Fireside Chat audience members to open their mind, suspend assumptions and fears, and prepare for risk-taking and uncertainty. Then the creativity will begin to flow. ■



Nachhattar S. Chandi, Chief Executive Officer

"Our company is chiefly a labor of love. The twenty years we have been working in the gas station/fast food industry have been a constant learning experience.

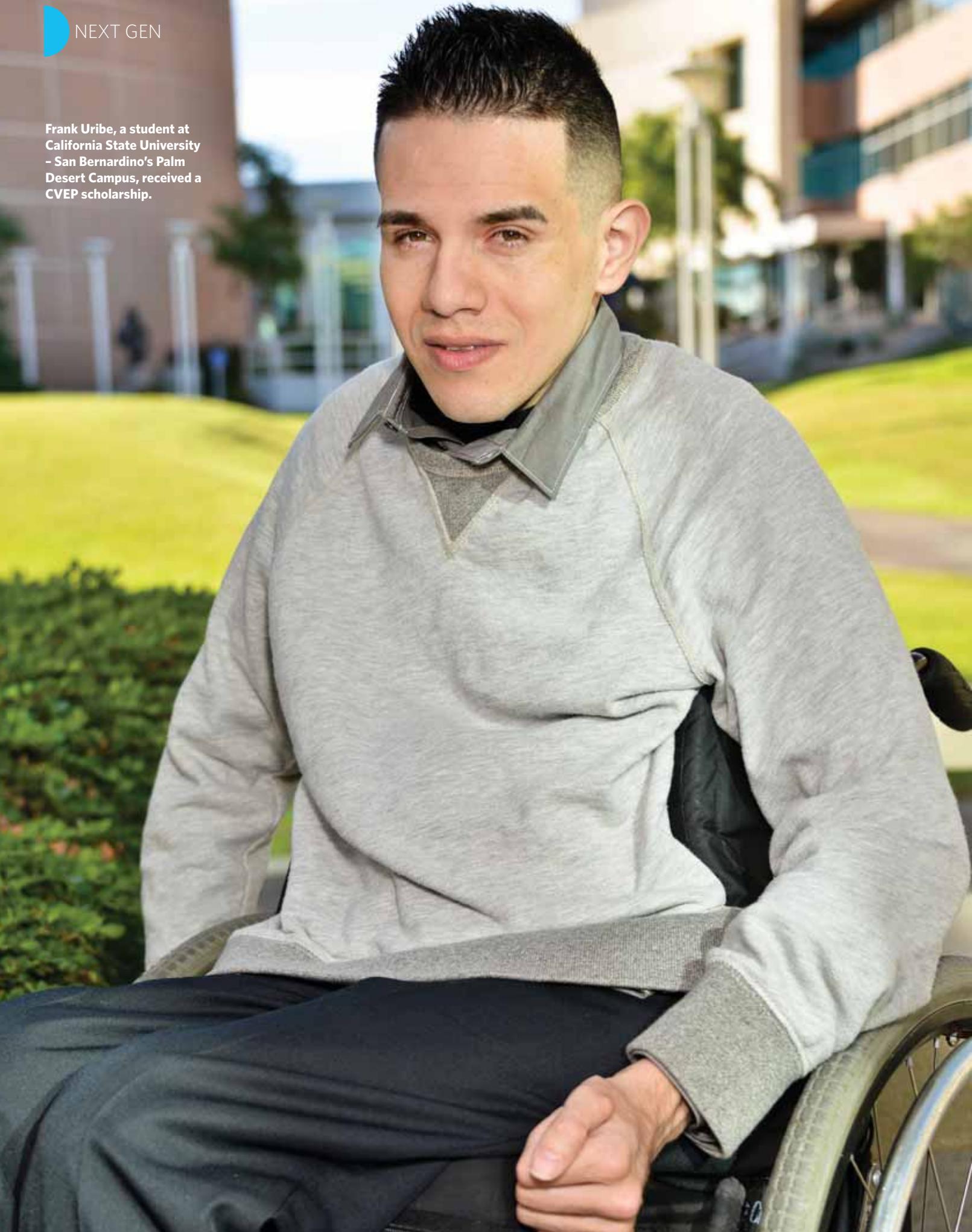
We hope to become an engine of prosperity through every city that welcomes us, for the city at large but primarily for the residents. The goods and services that we provide are hopefully an answer to the needs of that area, and our ability to stay in business will be governed by how efficiently we are able to provide those.

Our enterprise began as a single station and I believe thus far we have done well enough to prove that hard work and dedication are the keys to success."

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Frank Uribe, a student at California State University - San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus, received a CVEP scholarship.



A long-term Investment

The oldest of five Cathedral City boys, all first-generation Americans, Jesse Salas is poised to graduate from UC Irvine in June with a degree in biological sciences. With that under his belt, he'll jump into post-graduate classes in preparation for medical school at UC Riverside and, in a few years, he'll be back in the Coachella Valley working in health care.

He's exactly the type of student the Desert Healthcare District, in tandem with Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, is looking for this spring.

"With their help I've been able to have a scholarship for the past four years," Jesse says. "I really want to come back here to work because they're the ones that helped put me through school. I want to give back to my community. That's what I like about CVEP — they're investing in the community through students and their futures."

Jesse heard about the DHCD scholarship through his high school counselor, and was immediately interested in the \$5,000 per year award, which pays for tuition, books, fees and living expenses. "That's a substantial amount of money. There are a lot of scholarships that are just for a few hundred dollars and they require the same amount of work in the application process," he says.

Grants are also available for \$2,500 per year for students attending College of the Desert, and Jesse set his sights on being

the first in his family to go to a university to "set the example for my brothers."

Jeff, the next oldest child in the Salas family, who graduated from Cathedral City High School last spring and began his first semester at College of the Desert, says he paid close attention to his older brother's example.

"When my brother received a scholarship, that's when I first heard about the program," he says. "I started volunteering with CVEP programs and getting to know the people. The staff came to my school to do a scholarship presentation and they answered everything that anybody would ever have questions about."

The challenges Jeff faced included not knowing where he wanted to go to school and worrying about the overall cost. "I initially was really interested in this private school in Arizona but the price tag was just a bit too much," he says. "At 18, it's tough to really know what you want to do, but these people know what a scholarship means and they worked with me one-on-one to make sure I completed all the requirements for the scholarship application. I submitted the basic seniors scholarship package that everybody turns in to their high school, and CVEP was one of the scholarship possibilities that I selected."

"I tried to have money not be an issue, but in the end decided that for the quality of education and the price tag, COD is the best. At College of the Desert, the scholar-

CVEP SCHOLARSHIPS GIVE FIRST-GENERATION AMERICANS LIKE JESSE AND JEFF SALAS A PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

BY CAROLYN PATTEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID A. LEE



Frank Uribe (right), here studying with Gabriela Ruiz and Carla Cabrera, is one of many students to benefit from the CVEP scholarship program.

ship helps me pay for everything — books, tuition and everything else. I'm debt-free right now and I should be debt-free throughout the whole time."

With college costs taken care of, Jeff is studying to earn associate's degrees in business administration and economics. "I should graduate in the spring of 2016 and after that I'll be in the Cal State system," he says. "I have confidence in the Coachella Valley and I will likely continue my education at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert campus. I might go on to get my

MBA, and I'll definitely be working here after I graduate."

Delighted to have landed at College of the Desert with a full scholarship, Jeff says, "CVEP wants to help people who do not have normal opportunities to go to college. They give out scholarships that really mean something. This is our chance to live the American dream, to look far and beyond, and to really take a chance and make that happen. I would say to any student, college is so different from high school, so creative and so beautiful at the same time. In high school you're doing your homework and turning it in and doing it for the teacher. In college you're doing it for yourself and that is just the best thing ever."

"The money is out there. You just have to find it. Ask, ask, ask. Don't be afraid to ask anyone questions if you don't know how to do something. Knowledge is power, right?"

Cash for College

The Desert Healthcare District Health-care Professionals Scholarship Program works in partnership with CVEP to give scholarship help and student support to low-income Coachella Valley students embarking on a health care-related education at an accredited college or university in the United States. Scholarships are awarded for two years at a time, in the amount of \$2,500 per year for College of the Desert students and \$5,000 per year for undergraduates attending accredited colleges or universities.

CVEP also provides extensive support services and resources for students and their families.

For more information, as well as links to resources for additional financial aid for college, visit www.cvpts.com or call 760-340-1575. ■

Help send Coachella Valley students to college at the **Free Money for College (FAFSA) fundraiser** Feb. 11, 6-8 p.m. Toscana Country Club Tickets: \$100, www.CVEP.com

For Coachella Valley students: All you need to know about **FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE.**



The Coachella Valley Pathways to Success website, **WWW.CVPTS.COM**, is packed with information and resources for low-income students who want to attend college. For help navigating the website, workshops and one-on-one advice, students should talk with their high school counselors, who can make the connection with the Pathways to Success staff.



Important dates and deadlines:

All events are free.

JAN. 1, 2015

FAFSA / California College Financial Aid priority application submissions begin

www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=48



The **FAFSA** is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Students must complete this to be eligible for Cal Grants, Pathways to Success scholarships and a host of federal student aid programs, including the Pell Grants, which do not have to be repaid. The application is lengthy and time-consuming. To get ready for the process, go through these steps:

1. Get an email address

2. Get a Federal Student Aid PIN at

<https://pin.ed.gov/>. If you are a dependent, ask one of your parents to get this so they can sign the FAFSA for you.

3. Gather information and documents

- Your Social Security number
- Your driver's license, if you have one
- If you are not a U.S. citizen, your alien registration number or permanent resident card
- Your parents' or guardian's Social Security number and date of birth
- If your parents are divorced or separated, the month and year of their divorce or separation
- 2014 W-2 forms and other records of money earned.
- 2014 Federal income tax returns for you, your spouse if you are married, and your parents if you are a dependent. If you or your parents won't file taxes before the March FAFSA deadline, don't wait to file your FAFSA. File it based on estimated financial information, then come back after you have filed taxes and update your application. The Student Aid Commission won't accept late FAFSAs.
- Records of any untaxed income in 2014, such as Social Security, welfare or veteran's benefits.
- Bank statements for the past year
- Any business and investment information for the past year, including business and farm records, stocks, bonds and other investments

4. Make a list of colleges you want to apply to

You must list at least one college. You can list up to 10 schools on FAFSA on the Web or up to four schools on a paper FAFSA. You can add more schools to your FAFSA later. Schools you list on your FAFSA will automatically receive your FAFSA results electronically.

If you plan to list a California school, list it first.

5. Fill out the FAFSA worksheet

Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov and enter "worksheet" in the search field. This will take you to the current FAFSA on the Web worksheet. Print it out and complete it before you begin entering your information online.

AFTER YOUR FAFSA IS FILED:

1. Submit a Verified GPA (grade point average)

If you're hoping to get a Cal Grant, know how your school will submit your Verified GPA. If your high school or college won't be automatically submitting your Cal Grant GPA to the California Student Aid Commission, go to www.calgrants.org, print a verification form, get it certified by a school official and mail it yourself before the deadline.

2. File a Graduation Verification

All students attending a California college must also complete a Graduation Verification through the California Student Aid Commission WebGrants website, www.webgrants4students.org. Review the deadlines and make sure you complete this in time.

3. Review the Student Aid Report

Within three weeks after you submit the FAFSA, you'll receive a Student Aid Report (SAR), summarizing the FAFSA information you submitted. Look it over carefully and make any needed corrections on the website.

4. Review your Expected

Family Contribution (EFC)

On the front page of the SAR, you'll find a figure called the expected family contribution (EFC). The colleges you listed and the California Student Aid Commission will use this number to determine your financial aid award. If you've applied to and been accepted at a college or career school, the school will send you an electronic or paper aid offer, sometimes called an award letter, telling you how much aid you're eligible for at the school.

MARCH 2

CVEP Pathways to Success Scholarship & Leadership Program
application deadline www.pathways.cvscholars.com

MARCH 2

FAFSA / California College Financial Aid priority
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SECO SYS

SecoSys CEO Hank McCarrick credits
the Coachella Valley iHub for the push in
taking his company to the next level.

SecoSys an 'overnight success'

THE COACHELLA VALLEY IHUB MOVED THIS
WATER CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY FROM
"INTRIGUING" TO "PRETTY SPECTACULAR"

BY CAROLYN PATTEN

PHOTOS BY DAVID A. LEE

It took SecoSys CEO Hank McCarrick six years to become an "overnight success," and he credits the Coachella Valley iHub for the push that moved his innovative technology for water conservation from prototype to sales-ready production.

"In the six years I've been working on this, I think this is the third drought California has had," McCarrick says. "I come from a process control background, and it was clear that there was a need for real-time information on water use, as well as the ability to shut the water off immediately if there is a problem. Without that, water conservation is pretty much impossible to do well."

For years, McCarrick plugged away on developing a real-time water metering system that could deliver rich data and instant analytics, coupled with remote, cloud-based shut-off capabilities. Early in that process he was at a trade show in Las Vegas and met with Jimmy Carter, senior director of corporate field services for American Leak Detection, a Palm Springs-based company that is the industry leader in water leak detection systems.



SecoSys's real-time data can help customers reduce water consumption by 20 to 45 percent.

"I was intrigued with the opportunities," Carter says. "In the Coachella Valley we have a lot of snowbirds and their homes may be vacant for six to eight months of the year. Quick detection is crucial for water leaks."

Still, McCarrick needed to move his intriguing concept into a viable business model. Looking for help with finding funding and getting into the production cycle, McCarrick joined the Coachella Valley iHub in early fall 2013. "It's been an interesting ride," he says. "Right away the iHub sponsored us for the 2013 World's Best Technology Innovation Marketplace in San Diego."

A highly competitive venue designed to showcase "the largest collection of vetted and mentored companies and technologies emanating from top universities, labs, research institutions, and the private sector from across the country and around the globe," WBT brings market-ready tech companies together with investors and licensing scouts looking for the next big thing and ready to cut deals.

SecoSys won silver award in that competition, the only iHub company to place in the top three. With the award in hand, along with iHub's extensive coaching to refine the business model and overcome marketing and manufacturing hurdles, McCarrick's startup pulled off a successful pilot project, finalized secure funding, and had its first production run of solar-powered meters.

For the pilot project, a key step in proving that his technology was market-ready, McCarrick worked with American Leak Detection and Vintage Associates, one of the valley's largest landscape resource management companies, to provide data, analytics and shut-off technology for one of Vintage's customers that needed to significantly reduce water use. According to McCarrick, "With the real-time data we provided, the customer made adjustments in irrigation and planning, and reduced their water consumption by 45 percent."

As an unforeseen bonus, the Coachella Valley Water District gave the customer a rebate of \$750 for each irrigated acre — equal to half the cost of the system.

Because the SecoSys business model is business-to-business, McCarrick says his

company's initial focus will be on providing customized platforms for large-scale commercial, institutional, landscape and residential applications, such as golf courses, homeowner's associations and hospitals. And he will be working closely with American Leak Detection in marketing, sales and installation. "Companies like ALD are getting more and more pressure from their customers to provide conservation measures. What people have been doing is running around reading meters and trying to make decisions based on sparse data collection. This platform directly benefits their customers."

Noting that "70 percent of the insurance claims for homes are water related," Carter says the SecoSys automatic shutoff valve is a huge advantage for homeowners and insurance companies. "It's like having a smoke detector or fire alarm or burglar alarm. Hank demonstrated the product at the annual American Leak Detection international conference in Palm Springs in October and got a great response."

Carter says the savings, particularly on landscape application, are huge. "With a growing population, a lot of water districts are looking at how they're going to manage water consumption. If they can't meet the demand then construction comes to a standstill and that hurts the economy."

Next, Carter says, the two companies will install units around the valley "to set up some of the parameters and get this information out to our team members so they can sell the units and do the install." With 354 franchise operations in the U.S. and nine in three other countries, ALD currently services 110,000 municipalities, businesses and residences; giving the company potential for significant sales of the SecoSys units.

SecoSys has offices in Valley Center and will base its Coachella Valley sales team and other company operations in the iHub, where McCarrick says his experience has been "pretty spectacular." "They do a great job and I can attest to that. We wouldn't have been cultivated to the point of attracting investors and getting funded anywhere else. We'll be doing our initial launch in the valley. People will be hired because of this."

For more information about SecoSys, visit www.secosys.us or call 760-297-3004. ■



DID YOU KNOW?

- **Golf courses in the United States use more than 753 billion gallons of water each year. ******
- **One-third of all home insurance claims are water damage caused by leaks. *****
- **More than 60 percent of those could have been prevented or mitigated by leak detection. *****
- **Real-time water-use monitoring can reduce use by at least 20 percent. *****
- **Gov. Jerry Brown issued an executive order last April to strengthen California's ability to manage water and habitat effectively in drought conditions and called on all residents to redouble their efforts to conserve water. ****
- **California is aiming for a 20 percent reduction in water use across the board by 2020. ****
- **Producing 1 ton of grain requires 1,000 tons of water. ***
- **The global water consumption rate doubles every 20 years, a pace that is double the rate of population growth.***

**** Environmental Institute for Golf, 2013

*** American Leak Detection

** State of California

* Population Institute



Dan Schawbel speaks at the 2014 Coachella Valley Economic Summit.



Cracking the

Millennial Mystery

HOW TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST MILLENNIAL TALENT

BY ELLEN PARIS

All eyes were on speaker Dan Schawbel. Ears open and curiosity piqued, 800 of the Coachella Valley's most prominent business and community leaders sat rapt, taking in all of Schawbel's advice about the burgeoning workforce of 80 million strong that is unlike any that's come before: the millennials.

Schawbel, managing partner of Millennial Branding, a Generation Y research and consulting firm, brought his expertise on millennials (people born between 1980 and 2000) as the keynote speaker at the 2014 Coachella Valley Economic Summit in October. His opening statistics — millennials held 36 percent of jobs in 2014, a number that will increase to 46 percent by 2020 — proved how important millennials are to business as boomers retire.

And Coachella Valley employers are paying attention.

"I think Dan was spot on describing us," says Erin Scott, director of business development at Integrated Wealth Management in Palm Springs. At age 28, Scott is millennial employee. "What irks me is when people think we are lazy or not ambitious as a group."

Unambitious hardly describes Scott, who graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a bachelor's degree in English and earned a MBA from Pepperdine.

"People think [millennials] are entitled, narcissistic and not focused," Schawbel said at the summit. "Their potential employers picture them distracted with two different devices in hand from phones to tablets." As the audience laughingly agreed, Schawbel revealed this is only perception. "This group grew up with

technology and is used to being connected to their friends and to the world. Employers should embrace these skills."

Millennials also want jobs where they feel like they're giving back and feeling like their work makes a difference, Schawbel emphasized. Working for companies that support them in making an impact and a societal difference is a sought-after "benefit" for millennials.

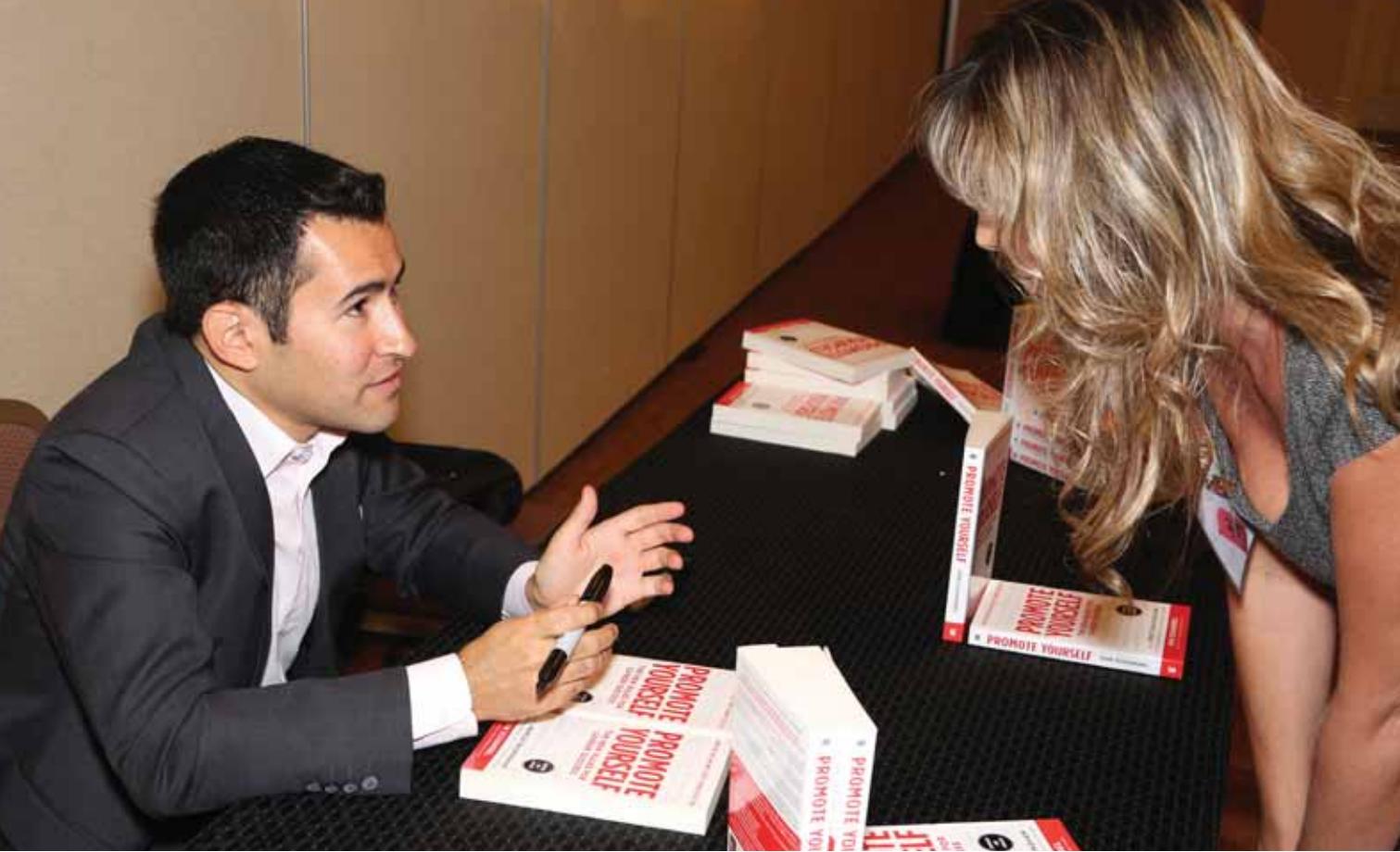
"We want to know how we are doing and the impact we are having on the community and the world," says Scott, who graduated three years ago from Leadership Coachella Valley and continues to serve on its Alumni Council. "Workplace flexibility is important. Having opportunities where your employer encourages you to be involved in the community is equally important. My employer supports me and I value it."

People in this generation needs to love what they do and feel valued while making an impact on society, he stressed.

Joe Pradetto, legislative assistant to the Fourth District County of Riverside Supervisor Jon Benoit, couldn't agree more. "As Dan said, millennials do want to make a difference and you see that working in politics," says the 2008 UC Riverside grad who earned his job after an internship and working on a campaign. "We want to have a meaningful role in a cause."

Beyond making employees feel community impact, Schawbel noted the importance of creating a culture to excite millennials while gaining trust and loyalty. "If, as a company, you are creating new jobs and diversifying the economy, millennials appreciate being an integral part of that effort," Schawbel noted.

Transparency is important to millennials, with Schawbel's research



Coachella Valley employers received tips on how to handle a growing Millennial workforce from Gen Y expert Dan Schawbel (left).

showing honesty is critical to more than 60 percent of millennials surveyed. The more you share, the more they trust you and want to work for you. They want a family-owned vibe even if working for a large company.

Most millennials must feel they are making an impact on your company, your customers and in the bigger picture: the world. "They are looking for why you are in business, and your ability to tell that story is the future of your business and your company," Schawbel deadpanned.

Millennials have been called the "job hopping" generation, only staying a few years at a company. Schawbel cited an Ernst & Young study that says replacing a millennial costs \$20,000. Schawbel advises employers to "cherish millennials who do stay in a job and reward them with your loyalty so they will rise to the top."

This advice hit home for Gregory Barton, a Palm Springs CPA who employs two millennials. "Since millennials change jobs every two years, Dan's talk got my interest in how do I stop that?" Barton says. "I realize I need to be focused on not only hiring and moving more millennials into management but also taking advantage of them as decision makers."

Forget the old annual employee reviews, Schawbel advises, urging managers instead to give millennials continual feedback, such as letting them know how they do in meetings. According to Schawbel, starting this feedback cycle early in their careers gives a payoff in higher retention rates. Because millennial parents have continually told them they are special, millennials react better hearing positive feedback before negative.

Daniel Farrar, general manager of the Ironwood Community Association at Ironwood Country Club, was encouraged by Schawbel's statement that millennials want mentorship from leaders in the workplace and feedback from those they look up to. "This fosters a relationship and builds trust among us that is critical for the success of our business," Farrar says.

Coachella Valley Economic Partnership's Workforce Excellence program starts these mentor relationships early through partnerships between businesses and schools to create career-specific programs. High school career academies throughout the region provide access to internships and job shadowing that foster mentoring through college and after graduation.

Millennials already in the workforce want to learn too, Schawbel says, suggesting that companies establish dedicated mentoring programs. Mentors should bring millennials into aspects of the business that aren't part of their job; this engages millennials. Mentorships shouldn't be viewed only as top down either. Millennials grew up with technology, so employers should use their expertise to encourage inter-generational mentoring. Set up win-win programs where millennials teach the boomers the latest in technology, Schawbel says.

To help a young employee feel valued, "Give your millennials the first shot when new jobs open," Schawbel says. "Show them the career path they can build at your company and the impact they can make long term working for you. If not they will bail when they receive a LinkedIn message on a more interesting job and company."

Switching jobs and career paths is part of the millennial's DNA. "Technology has enabled them to easily change jobs. Some get contacted numerous times a day by recruiters who search LinkedIn profiles for new hires," Schawbel confides. Keep your millennials by supporting them in gaining new skills, titles and professional certifi-

cations. "You must help direct them. They need to know what their life will look like if they stay with you," Schawbel adds.

Remember the image of the millennial with a device in each hand? About 63 percent of all millennials have college degrees and strong social networks, and many choose to work where they have friends. "They are hyper connected," Schawbel explains. "You want to have your millennial employees telling their friends about the great company they work for."

Hyper-connectivity is often a plus for internal communication, but can also be a boon for client driven businesses, too. Rod Vandenbos, founder and CEO of BuzzBox Beverages Inc., sells a true millennial product with a single-serve, natural cocktail in eco-friendly sustainable packaging.

"To attract and keep great employees, especially millennials, it's about how connected we are," he says. "Not only how well our employees are connected to others but how well we are connected to our employees and our customers."

"Forward-thinking companies offer the workplace flexibility and freedom that millennials embrace," Schawbel shared in explaining how to successfully recruit new workers. The freedom to work from home with flexible schedules can make the difference between a millennial choosing one company over another.

"I can be highly flexible since I have no restrictive 'corporate HR policy,'" says Carrie Babij, president of La Quinta-based Desert Insurance Solutions Inc. "You deliver results and I can accommodate

your lifestyle. It seems this would attract the millennial."

After hearing Schawbel, Doug Sears, general manager of the Hyatt Regency Indian Wells, spoke with his HR department. "I already knew about millennials but Dan made me think about a more deliberate effort to reach out to different generations in our workplace and identify where they all fall," Sears recalls. "Once we know the demographics we can do focus groups in each one on how they feel intergenerational communication that offer mentoring opportunities for both groups."

Although quirks of Gen Y remain somewhat of an enigma, one thing is certain: Coachella Valley business and community leaders are now better prepared to embrace the millennials. ■

WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW

Thrive! asked several Coachella Valley millennials what employers and managers need to know to hire and keep top-performing millennials?



KELLY MCLEAN

Kelly McLean, 29, graduated from UCLA as a communications major. Today she is vice president of operations for McLean Co. Rentals, her

family's long-time vacation rental business in Palm Springs.

"Keeping millennials happy involves more than just benefits and a paycheck," she says. "We care about the environment in our workplace. Is coming to work fun? That's important to us." McLean cites startups with pool tables and games available to employees as a plus.

"We all want to work where we feel valued, can grow and bring something to the table," she adds. "For me making a difference is implementing new branding and bringing new systems to the business and seeing our company expand."



GREG WALLIS

Greg Wallis is a millennial in transition. He's job hunting after managing Brian Nestande's congressional campaign. (Nestande lost to incumbent

Raul Ruiz). A political science and communications major from Cal Lutheran University, Wallis knows what he wants.

"As millennials we want to be in a position where we are continually adding value to the community," he insists. "I would make trade-offs jobwise to stay here in the Coachella Valley because it is a unique and close-knit community where I feel I can make a difference and truly serve people living here."

"As a young adult, it's easy to be overlooked," Wallis says. "That's why we like being in a position where our voice can be heard and has an impact."



JOE PRADETTA

Legislative assistant to Riverside County Fourth District Supervisor Jon Benoit, Pradetto, 28, is married with an 18-month-old

child. Pradetto is a 2008 UC Riverside grad who earned his job with Benoit after an internship and working on a campaign.

"Millennials who are achievers want to have an influence and a say in how the world operates," he contends. "Though for myself I would do whatever I had to take care of my family jobwise."

"Employers should know millennials really don't like voice mail," Pradetto says. "For the fastest response from a millennial, just text them. We respond quicker."



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JFK Memorial

aims to be among the top 100 hospitals

When Gary Honts, CEO and president of JFK Memorial Hospital, arrived in the Coachella Valley just over two years ago, he set a goal of making JFK one of the top 100 hospitals in the nation.

After reviewing the hospital's history, Honts knew he was up for the challenge.

His vision for the future of JFK encompasses a dedication to not only the patients who seek treatment at his facility, but also to the staff who provide that treatment.

During his short tenure thus far, Honts has incorporated the kind of changes that will help him to meet and exceed his goal of making JFK a top national hospital. One of the most important changes came from the top down with the development of a new management team. Honts wanted to ensure that his management team consisted of leaders who shared his passion for caring for patients in the Coachella Valley.

"What I was looking for was some deep experience in health care from executives who understood my vision," Honts said. "The common trait we all share is that we got into health care because we want to save peoples' lives. Patient care and serving the community is really why we're here."

With the creation of a new management team, Honts said the entire culture at the

hospital has changed to one where staff understands the higher expectations for performance and achievement that are associated with delivering quality patient care. Staff also understands that their needs matter, which has greatly improved moral among JFK's 600-plus employees. The daily visibility of upper management within the hospital has helped to bolster morale.

"I walk the halls and interact with patients and staff to get feedback, and to provide visibility and accessibility of administration," Honts said.

At least three times annually, Honts also hosts a town hall meeting where he provides staff with a status update, followed by a period of taking questions and listening to their concerns.

"If I can't respond immediately to their questions or concerns, I take notes and then get back to them quickly," Honts said.

As part of the enhanced patient care delivery system at JFK, daily "safety huddles" are held with the entire management and nursing leadership to discuss the status of the day. The topic depends on the kind of patients and conditions the hospital has encountered over the last 24 hours, as well as any health care initiatives in need of addressing.

"By doing this huddle, we're finding that we're hitting our core measures because we're prepared in advance for them," Honts said. "It's also opened up communication as part of that new culture we're creating here, and allows staff to feel like they can approach administration and their concerns will be taken seriously."

Another way JFK is improving patient care is through the way in which patients experience emergency services.

The ER sees roughly 37,000 visitors each year, Honts said, so improving the patient experience from initial wait time to the



Gary Honts, CEO and president of JFK Memorial Hospital

through-process is vital toward achieving his overall goal.

Many processes have been examined and updated to help reduce the down time patients often experience in an ER. Patients now can expect frequent updates from staff concerning waiting times, continued monitoring of vitals while waiting for treatment, and expedited services such as X-rays and lab work when required as part of the treatment process.

Honts recognizes that the health care industry is ever-changing, which he says is all the more reason for staff to remain accountable.

Ensuring consistency and high standards for every patient who walks through the door at JFK – combined with a positive attitude and passion for delivering top-notch service – is the key to making it happen.

— Shari Berg





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Farley knows interlocking pavers best

The Great Recession of 2008 crushed the livelihood of 170,000 small business owners nationwide between its onset and 2010, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Contractors were among the hardest hit, with many having no choice but to close up shop as business opportunities dried up.

Charissa Farley – affectionately known by locals as the Queen of Pavers – looks back on the Great Recession and breathes a sigh of relief for having come through it relatively intact. But it wasn't the luck of the draw that helped Farley Interlocking Pavers to weather the financial storm. It was Farley's willingness to reposition her business during the sluggish economy that ensured its survival.

"I'm not going to say we didn't struggle, because we did," said Farley. "We took some bad hits at the beginning of the recession and suffered some losses, but we still managed to pull through."

The only nationally certified company local to the Coachella Valley specializing exclusively in interlocking pavers, Farley's company elected to stick with what it knew during the recession instead of scrambling to offer customers a variety of services like some other contractors were doing in a bid for survival.

"The first thing we did when the recession hit was to evaluate who we are and decide if we wanted to expand on that," Farley said. "My strong suit is that I am technically competent in one area – interlocking pavers – and that is what I continued to stick with."

While Farley continued to stick with what she knew best, it didn't mean she



Charissa Farley's company specializes in interlocking pavers.

couldn't expand her offerings in the world of interconnected pavers. She partnered with manufacturers and created new products and technology for their niche service. They launched public awareness and education campaigns about interlocking pavers to help attract new customers.

They also tweaked their sales and marketing protocol to direct more consumers to their brand, which included expanding their coverage area beyond the Coachella Valley into all of Southern California. Today, they are continuing the expansion of their service area into parts of Nevada.

Another way Farley continues to spread the excellent reputation of her company is by making herself more visible in the communities in which Farley Interlocking Pavers serves. With more than 20 years in the industry, Farley

already is well known as the only woman in the nation who is an authorized contractor instructor in the Advanced Residential Paver Technician's course for the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute. Now, she also is known as the local businesswoman who cares about her community.

"I support charities in the communities we serve and I make appearances at events in the communities we serve," she said.

Farley plans to continue to be innovative in her area of expertise to further prosper and grow her business in both the good and bad economic times the future holds.

"It takes bulldog determination to propel your company into changing waters," she said. "I'm pretty excited right now. It's been a long time since I've seen so many opportunities." — Shari Berg

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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

COACHELLA VALLEY iHUB

The Coachella Valley iHub is a business incubator that helps entrepreneurs in renewable energy, advanced technology, healthcare, and digital media to launch their companies by providing office and production space, an intellectual and entrepreneurial environment, and a service support network. Businesses operate in the iHub, Palm Springs Accelerator Campus, Health & Medical Innovation Center, or off site.

Contact Joe Wallace, chief innovation officer, 760-340-1575, joe@cvep.com

RENEWABLE ENERGY ROUNDTABLE

The premier networking program for the clean energy and green technology set, the Renewable Energy Roundtable offers an opportunity to learn about initiatives and issues in the region and pitch your own business or ideas. The roundtable meets every third Thursday of the month at 7:30 a.m. at the UC Riverside Palm Desert Graduate Center at Frank Sinatra Drive and Cook Street.

EXECUTIVE COACHING

Coachella Valley Small Business Development Center, operated by CVEP, offers free,

confidential, one-on-one consulting to entrepreneurs who seek guidance on developing a business plan, planning strategy, preparing financial statements and projections for loans, accessing capital, developing a marketing/media plan, growing sales, overcoming obstacles in management and human resources, fine-tuning operations, integrating technology, achieving sustainability, buying and selling a business, and gaining information and advice about industry and local economic trends.

Contact Ezekiel Bonillas, vice president of entrepreneurship, 760-340-1575, ezekiel@cvep.com

FIRESIDE CHATS

Entrepreneurs and industry experts discuss topics relevant to owning and operating a business in the Coachella Valley on the second Wednesday of every month, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Contact Ezekiel Bonillas, vice president of entrepreneurship, 760-340-1575, ezekiel@cvep.com

ENTREPRENEUR GROWTH SERIES

This seminar series presents a straight-forward approach to topics relevant to business

operations, including management, finance, marketing, and sales. Each session offers an in-depth examination of how to gain efficiency, increase revenue, reduce expenses, understand legal issues, and much more.

Contact Ezekiel Bonillas, vice president of entrepreneurship, 760-340-1575, ezekiel@cvep.com

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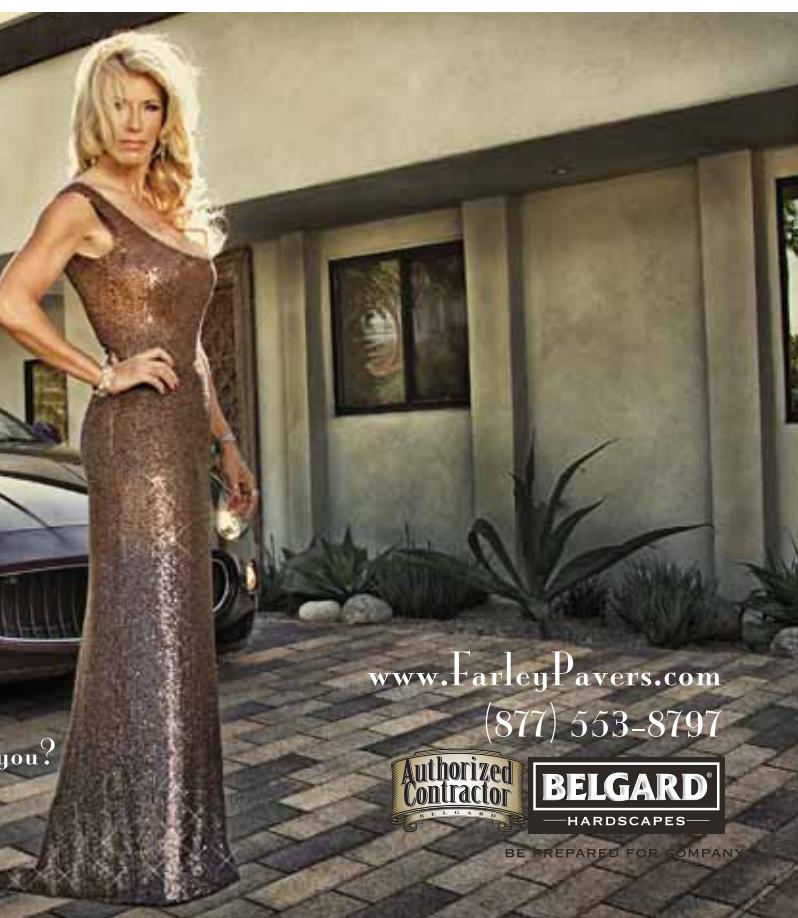
This small business development initiative offers free Spanish-language workshops and counseling. Consultants help clients develop business plans, prepare financial statements and projections for loans, access capital, develop marketing/media plans, grow sales, overcome obstacles in operations, integrate technology, achieve sustainability, and gain information and advice about industry and local economic trends. The goal of LanzaTech is to help Latino-owned small businesses increase sales, create jobs, and contribute to the region's economic vitality. Workshops take place on the third Thursday of each month at the UC Riverside Palm Desert campus. Visit www.cvlanzatech.com.

Contact Ezekiel Bonillas, vice president of entrepreneurship, 760-340-1575, ezekiel@cvep.com



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Contact 760-773-6507, email info@scorecv.org, or visit www.score.org

WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

The Coachella Valley Regional Plan for College and Career Readiness outlines how business and education will collaborate to develop, refine, and sustain career pathways for local students. The plan includes the following initiatives:

CAREER PATHWAYS

CVEP brings together business and education leaders to focus on K-12 career pathways programs, including high school career academies, which are three- to four-year programs around specific industries such as healthcare, digital arts, culinary arts, and renewable energy. Academy students take specialized career-themed courses in conjunction with their required academic classes.

Contact Kim McNulty, director of Next

Generation Learning, 760-452-8727, kim@cvep.com

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work-based learning connects classroom studies with student interests and career aspirations, personalizing high school education and providing experiential learning where students work alongside professionals. Experiences include career explorations, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and faculty externships at industry partner sites.

Contact Donna Sturgeon, director of work-based learning, 760-625-0118, donna@cvep.com

INDUSTRY COUNCILS

Education, business, community, and student partners review labor market information, assess workforce needs, and tailor career pathways to prepare local students for the workforce. CVEP currently facilitates three industry councils: Healthcare and Life Sciences; Advanced Technology; and Arts, Media, and Entertainment.

Contact Jacqui Tricco, industry council coordinator, 760-325-0084, jacqui@cvep.com

CVEP SCHOLARSHIPS

CVEP provides scholarships to students by matching scholarship funds with local nonprofits to increase college access and completion for low-income students.

Contact Ernie Rios, executive director of scholarships, 760-610-6116, ernie@cvep.com

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

CVEP links scholarship-giving organizations and student support systems in the Coachella Valley through a regional scholarship application network. In partnership with the College Access Foundation of California, CVEP provides matching funds to local organizations to increase college access and completion for low-income and underserved students. CVEP promotes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) — the most important application for students to be considered for free federal funding for college — and the Cal Grant, awarded to eligible college students attending California colleges and universities.

Contact Ernie Rios, executive director of scholarships, 760-610-6116, ernie@cvep.com



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Seated left to right: Dr. Steven Scheibel, MD, AAHIVS, Medical Director; Dr. Margaret Soh, DDS; Dr. Shubha Kerkar, MD, MACP, AAHIVS; Matt Moran, MSN, RN, PHN, ANP-BC, AAHIVS, Director of Nursing; Dr. Phyllis Ritchie, MD; Dr. David Hersh, MD, Psychiatrist, Director of Clinical and Behavioral Health Services...with just some of our clinical staff behind. (Photo by Dimitri Halkidis)

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In August 2013, About.com—a top 40 website attracting more than 86 million users monthly—included Desert AIDS Project in its list of “Top 20 HIV/AIDS Charities” for programs, fundraising, and complete financial transparency.

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