County, Staff Mark Women’s History Month

They were pioneers in the early days of Monterey County and are still breaking ground today.

Monterey County Supervisors and staff celebrated the contributions of women both past and present at special events marking Women’s History Day and International Women’s Day.

At the Board of Supervisors meeting this week, a special ceremony included an informative talk by local historian Meg Clovis about some of the many women who shaped Monterey County’s history, from early days to modern times. Women such as the county’s first librarian, Anne Haddon, who came...
to the county in 1913 to create its library system, Mary Chapa, a social worker who improved the lives of south county school children in the 1960’s and 70’s and Mae Johnson, the first female principal of Monterey High School in 1987.

Dionne Ybarra, Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, gave a first-of-its-kind, “Report on The Status of Women in Monterey County Leadership.” The report findings included a snapshot of the statistics of women in Monterey County who currently serve as state/federal officials, mayors, supervisors, school board members, police chiefs, city managers, county commissioners and department directors.

Wrapping up the Women’s History Month ceremony, Supervisors honored the County’s female executives for their professional contributions. You can watch the entire event here.

For Cristal Sanchez of the Probation Department, marking women’s accomplishments is personal.

Sanchez was invited to speak at Alisal High School’s International Women’s Day event which

Cristal Sanchez speaks at Alisal High School (right) along with colleagues from other law enforcement agencies (left).
Invites both parents and students to participate. The goal of the event is to recognize women’s achievements and encourage and support young women to continue their education.

Sanchez’s mother was a co-founder of the event and very active in the community; Cristal is pleased to be following in her footsteps.

“I grew up with a big family and my mother was the one that always gave advice to always do better,” explains Sanchez. “She always told us that women can do the same job as men and don’t let anyone tells us differently.”

In her speech, she talked about the challenges of being a woman in law enforcement and her volunteer efforts. Sanchez is a mentor for the Students Rising Above program which assists college seniors transitioning to employment in either probation or social work and she is very active supporting Special Olympics.

Two Openings a Joint Effort at Hospital

*Natividad Medical Center hosted a bit of a rare event last week, two facility openings on the same day.*

The celebrations acknowledged the combined effort of the hospital and the Health Department, resulting in the opening of the new Natividad Care Center and the expansion of the Laurel Pediatric Clinic, both on the Natividad campus. Ribbon cutting ceremonies for both events were held March 7th with festivities and guided tours provided.

The new Natividad Care Center is located in Building 400 on the hospital campus, the newly expanded clinic is in Building 200.

The Care Center, which was made possible in part by a grant of $2.4 million...
from the Central California Alliance for Health, has been in the works for about a year. It offers services currently offered by Natividad, but now in one convenient location. It features six cardiology rooms, mammography services, women's diagnostics, bone density exams, ultrasound scans and a cardiopulmonary area that will include echocardiogram, stress testing, electrocardiogram and pulmonary testing.

The expansion work at the existing Laurel Pediatric Clinic means it can now offer 27 treatment rooms as well as a health education classroom.

“Monterey County children are challenged with increasing rates of childhood obesity and diabetes,” says Natividad Administrator of Ambulatory Services Julie Edgcomb, who is thrilled with the expansion completion. “The clinic expansion has enabled us to hire three new physicians and we are now offering wellness groups and extended hours to our patients.”

Welcome Back: Henry Gonzales Takes the Reins as Agricultural Commissioner

There isn’t much about the agriculture industry Henry Gonzales doesn’t know about. He rose through the ranks: working in the fields in his youth, graduating from Fresno State then working at the Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office for 24 years.

He stepped away for ten years, to become Ag Commissioner in Ventura County, but is pleased to return to his roots in Monterey County as its first Latino Ag Commissioner.

Gonzales talks about this full circle experience and looks ahead to his new leadership position.

Q. Before you left the county in 2008, you had worked here for 24 years. How did those
experiences prepare you for your role in Ventura County?

A. During the 24 years I worked for the Office of the Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner, I was promoted six times. I started at the bottom of the agricultural inspector ranks and learned all the different laws, regulations, standards, quarantines, investigative techniques and the actions to take if a noncompliance was found. As I moved up to Deputy Agricultural Commissioner and Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, I learned supervision, management and administration of the programs. During this time, I earned an Executive Master's degree in Public Administration. Those skills helped me get the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner position and ultimately return to Monterey County as Agricultural Commissioner.

Q. How are the two counties different or similar regarding agriculture?

A. Monterey and Ventura Counties are similar in that both consist of coastal valleys and are part of the only Mediterranean type climate in the United States. Both counties produce a bounty of different crops in large part due to the ocean influence, progressively warming inland temperatures and mountain microclimates. Monterey and Ventura County are the first and second strawberry producing counties in the state. Both have an abundant supply of local water although both are dealing with saltwater intrusion. The similarities extend not only to the crops grown, but also many of the same growers farm in both counties.

The counties differ in population and in the amount of agricultural value each county produces. In short, Monterey has twice the amount of agriculture production at $4.25 billion annually and half the population of Ventura County. These differences create a significant difference in political dynamics that impact not only how we farm, but ultimately the success of farming.

Q. Did the time away give you a new perspective on agricultural issues here?

A. The past ten years have given me added perspective on agriculture here. The ag/urban issues I saw in Ventura County have given me a view of issues that Monterey can have in the future. Also, I have seen what may be good ways Monterey County can address some of the same ag/urban issues and put us in a better position for continued success.

Q. How will you spend your first few weeks back? Do you have projects or plans in mind you are interested in implementing?

A. The first few weeks and beyond I must spend most of my time listening to the many voices in Monterey County: from farmers to environmental...
interests, from department staff to the County Administration and Board of Supervisors, from farmworkers to members of the various communities. I must listen to what they have to tell me and how they see agriculture here in Monterey County.

I believe Monterey County is a great place to live and work. The agricultural industry here is among the best in the world - if not the best. Our department staff is highly educated, trained, experienced and motivated. I plan to build on top of my predecessor’s work. Our biggest challenge is to bridge the disconnect that now exists between agriculture and our urban population. Agriculture in Monterey County is not just our main economic engine, agriculture produces the crops that sustain us as human beings.