Goats Are Baaaack on Fire Prevention Duty

They don’t wear uniforms or drive trucks, but the goats now at work in north Monterey County are fighting fires for the community in their own way. You see, they have a need - a need for weeds.

The goats have been around the county before and are back working in the Oak Hills area as part of a joint project with property owners in this special district and the Resource Management Agency to reduce fire fuels and help control invasive plants.

The latest goat detail arrived June 26th, bringing 300 critters for the job.
The herd has been moving through sections of the Oak Hills community and will be leaving for their next location after munching their way through 36 acres of open space.

In this area filled with oaks, chaparral and grasses, the goats do a better job of getting rid of vegetation than mechanical mowers. Goats also gobble up poison oak and help raise tree canopies. They also do the job for less. Mowing the targeted area would cost around $36,000. Renting these goats gets the job done for about $23,000 and they are fun to watch.

The goats are transported in a semi-truck and have a herder and dogs who tend the massive flock.

Bryan Flores, RMA – Special Districts, who is the coordinator of this effort, says there is great cooperation between the Oak Hills Community Association and Special Districts and he’d like to give a shout out to Oak Hills Community Association President Alex Rouch who has been a ‘boots on the ground’ community liaison for this project, keeping RMA apprised of any goat situations, meeting with the herder daily, coordinating getting the goats moved from property to property in the area including cross-road moves which can be very complex.

If you are in the Oak Hills area, you can visit the goats but watch out for the electric fence which protects them.
Natividad Offers Wall of Hope Exhibit

The next time you are at Natividad, perhaps for the Farmer’s Market, make a detour to the front lobby to see a special exhibit, the Wall of Hope.

The Wall of Hope is a 24-panel traveling display featuring moving stories and photos of people whose lives have been affected by organ, eye and tissue donation. It will be at the hospital through July 27th. Stop in anytime during regular lobby hours, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. daily.

Did you know that more than 400 people are awaiting a life-saving organ transplant in Monterey County? One donor can save the lives of up to eight people and a tissue donor can heal more than 75 others.

Natividad has seen the number of organ recipients at the hospital increase by 40 percent in recent years.

The Wall of Hope is organized by Donor Network West, the federally designated organ and tissue recovery organization for Northern California and Nevada. Anyone can register as a donor at https://www.donornetworkwest.org/ or at the DMV.

Manny González Says Goodbye but Continues Public Service

He will be leaving, but won’t be far away. Assistant CAO Manny González will continue his lifelong commitment to public service, taking the top position at the Housing Authority.

González came to the County in 2013, serving as an Assistant CAO with a focus on Criminal Justice, Human Resources, Health and Social Services. Libraries and the Elections Department also fell under his wing.
He talks about why public services has always had such an appeal.

**Q. You came to Monterey County in 2013 with many years of public service behind you. What has kept you engaged in public service for so long?**

A. I will complete 39 years of public service in August. Two reasons come to mind on why I have been a public servant: to give a voice to those community members often not represented in government and I always wanted to improve the services that government provides.

**Q. Are there people or experiences that are highlights of your time here at the County?**

A. One highlight was being able to lead the Governing for Racial Equity work within the County. Another would be meeting, working with and helping community members from throughout the county. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with elected and appointed officials, community organizations and staff.

**Q. Your new position is with the Monterey County Housing Authority. People may not know that you have experience in this area. What are you looking forward to about this new position?**

A. I was on my way to retiring but saw another great opportunity to serve this community. I had experience as the Housing Director for the City of Phoenix for over 6 1/2 years. I thoroughly enjoyed providing safe, decent, low income and affordable housing to families there. That is what my intent will be as the New Executive Director of the Housing Authority.

Those who worked with González appreciate what he brought to the County and wish him well.

"Manny has been a huge support for my Department! We have sought his advice on numerous issues and always received well thought out responses. My staff will miss Manny’s BBQ skills at our annual Little Hat BBQ, but he and Deb have earned a lifetime free pass to the event!"

- Marcia Parsons, Probation

"In the short time Manny was one of the Assistant County Administrators, he made significant and meaningful contributions to our county and I have no doubt we will continue to realize the benefits of these contributions for many years to come."

- Claudio Valenzuela, Elections

"Manny has been a great “go to” person, always and made time for me, no matter how busy he was."

- Jody Holtzworth, Child Support Services

"Manny has been a great colleague in the Administrative Office and will be missed as a friend and team-member. The Housing Authority to lucky to have recruited such great leadership."

- Lew Bauman, CAO
González has been a steadfast and dedicated supporter of County programs, activities and events, whether it was to celebrate achievements, honor staff or lend an expert hand at the grill. He was such a fixture at County events that photos had to be checked to limit his appearance in this newsletter. With no more need for rules, here is your own page Manny.

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Photo by Linda Hevern