End of an Era: Randy Closes Snack Bar to Retire

Friday, July 27th at 2 pm marked the end of an era for a member of the county family. Randy Henson, who has managed Randy’s Snack Bar and served county and court employees and neighboring businesses for 36 years, closed the doors to his shop for the last time.

For many, Randy was the friendly face at his eponymous snack bar, but his
‘backstory’ is one of determination to overcome obstacles and carve out a life of which to be proud.

For those who did not know, Randy Henson is visually impaired. Fortunately, as a young man he was able to take advantage of a training program through the Department of Rehabilitation which trains, licenses and places graduates in vending businesses on federal and other government properties. In 1982, at age 22 and with a county contract in hand, he opened the doors to Henson’s Snack Bar in the Monterey County House. In 1996, then CAO Ernie Morishita invited Randy to set up shop in the West Wing of the Courthouse.

“The County was moving some operations and departments to Salinas at that time,” says Henson. “Ernie was a regular at the snack bar and convinced me to move as well.”

Randy’s Snack Bar moved into a small space but it was always busy as folks queued up for drinks, snacks, sandwiches and camaraderie.

When the East-West Wing closed in 2006, he moved to the modular buildings along with the District Attorney who also exited the East West Wing.

Sadly he says, business has changed dramatically over the last 12 years. Foot traffic slowed after moving from the West Wing plus the changing business landscape, new requirements and expenses have taken a toll.

“When I started, I could get 99% of my stock delivered, but now many suppliers want large minimum orders which doesn’t fit my size operation,” explains Henson. “That means I need employees to pick up supplies, an added expense from being a ‘one-man operation.’ Plus, over the last few years there has been increased competition, more small food operations establishing themselves around the county offices.”

While the East-West Wing will reopen, Randy decided it was time to close the register and enjoy retirement.

Are there favorite experiences or stories over the last 36 years? He says it’s hard to choose, that he has made so many wonderful relationships over the decades.
Was there a favorite person who came through the snack bar line that comes to mind? Well, there is one: Joe Panetta. He says they bonded over being 49er fans while Joe worked at the District Attorney’s Office years ago.

While you won’t see Randy behind the counter anymore, you will find him at Monterey Lanes where he bowls in a league and coaches. An avid bowler, he isn’t ready to share his secrets but does say he carries small, powerful binoculars to check what pins are standing during a game.

Thank you, Randy, for being part of the County family all these years. May all your games be ‘clean’ with plenty of ‘six packs’ and ‘golden turkey!’

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ITD Staffers Featured at International Tech Conferences

Monterey County’s ranks are filled with excellent employees and recently, Information Technology Department staff members had their turn to shine.

ITD has been hard at work transforming County infrastructure and applications to improve services provided to departments; a transformation that is good for County workers, residents, businesses and visitors.

The work done on these projects is being recognized and the staff involved were tapped to share their success stories recently at several tech conferences with international attendance.

Presentations were made at conferences in San Francisco, Las Vegas and Anaheim. Attendance at these conferences ranged from 4,000 to 40,000! Check out the list of employees who have presented at these cutting-edge conferences. You can also see a photo of them ‘in action’ at the conference and their presentation slides. Very enlightening to see how the programs are implemented that we use at the touch of a button.

Applications Division Manager Paresh Patel says ITD staff is encouraged to both innovate and share their knowledge.

“ITD Director Eric Chatham understands the importance of training as it relates to employees' performance and job satisfaction. He wants them to grow outside their comfort zone and to be
innovative,” says Patel. “I am always looking for opportunities for employees to continue learning and develop additional skills by either speaking at conferences or taking formal training.”

ITD staff also shares knowledge here at home. Recently, Chief Information Security Officer Dan Kern helped guide a forum focused on cyber security and privacy for the Monterey County Free Libraries Community Matters series of community forums. All who have taken his security trainings know he makes learning fun with those great hacking demos.

Congratulations to ITD staff for representing Monterey County to the tech world.

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Natividad Shares Disaster Preparedness

Natividad Hospital showed it is ready if a disaster strikes and wants you to be ready too.

Natividad hosted its first disaster preparedness fair last week. “When Disasters Happen...Having It All Together,” was held in the parking lot outside the hospital’s Emergency Room and was open to the public. There were informational booths from agencies such as police, fire, sheriff, ambulance providers and the Red Cross. Also featured was the hospital’s disaster triage tent.

When a disaster strikes, we wouldn’t think about whether the local hospital would be prepared to assist those in need, we would expect it to be ready. Natividad takes that expectation to heart and actively participates in community wide disaster preparedness through the Monterey County Hospital Preparedness and more.

“Natividad has drilled for its ‘15 ’til 50’ program: 15 minutes until the ER gets 50 patients at once,”
says Dr. Craig Walls, Natividad’s Chief Medical Officer. “When victims arrive at Natividad, they’d be triaged into one of three groups based on urgency: immediate, delayed and minor.”

We should all be able to sustain ourselves for at least 72 hours after a major disaster. If you would like to find out more about disaster preparedness and how to create your own preparedness kit, check out these websites:

The American Red Cross
Monterey County Office of Emergency Services

Natividad’s Chief Medical Officer shows the radios available should phones or the internet fail during a disaster. (Photo courtesy of Joe Szydlowski, The Californian.)