Monterey County Administrative Office
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County Departments Respond to Aid Community During Storm

A storm, with predicted strong winds and lots of rain, hit Monterey County on Thursday. And Monterey County departments were ready.

As predicted, heavy rains and strong winds took their toll on county communities. The Office of Emergency Services activated its Emergency Operations Center midday Thursday, which allowed coordination and information sharing among departments and outside agencies. Law Enforcement, Public Works, Logistics, Sheltering and Public Information sections worked through the day and late into the night to coordinate repair and safety efforts, keep storm information up to date and keep the public aware of closures and other dangerous conditions.

Of greatest concern to County departments was the Big Sur area, particularly Pfeiffer Ridge which was hit hard by fire last year. Those concerns were realized when rain and winds blew down the coast and stalled over the coastal mountain range, pouring rain onto
The National Weather Service reported winds up to 71 mph at Chews Ridge, which is at 5,000 foot elevation. The area lost power for a time, and one of the roads in the burn area had to be closed due to concerns about loose earth. Overnight, slides closed Highway 1 between Carmel and San Luis Obispo.

Another area of concern was the Carmel Lagoon, which began rising as waters from the Carmel River began to swell. Heavy equipment was brought in to ‘contour’ or lower the sandbar height which would allow the barrier to breach naturally rather than cutting a path for excess water. In high water situations, the lagoon barrier must be lowered or opened to prevent flooding into nearby homes.

Public Works crews were also called to numerous areas of the county with downed trees and flooding, closing nearly a dozen roads during the day. Emergency Services helped coordinate getting thousands of sand and sandbags for areas affected by flooding including a small neighborhood off Russell road where residents evacuated when a small creek overflowed. Work crews stayed on scene for many hours to stabilize the creek bank.

The Emergency Operations Center will continue to coordinate county storm recovery efforts and monitor the storm situation. You can find out the latest information online at http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/oes/

Health Department Women’s Conference Empowers

Ninety women attended the third annual Adelante Con Orgullo Mujer Inmigrante Conference (ACOMI) conference on Saturday, November 15th at Hartnell College. The conference, conducted entirely in Spanish, is designed specifically for immigrant women.

“ACOMI provides a unique opportunity for this underserved group to learn more about participating in community matters, civic engagement and its connection to community health and wellness,” says Erica Padilla-Chavez, Health Equity and Policy Manager for the Health Department. “There have been reports of conference attendees already volunteering for community events.”
The theme of this year’s conference was ‘Knowledge + Action = Power.’

Participants first heard from a panel of women talking about how they got involved with their community. The panel discussion was followed by workshops with topics ranging from housing, mental health to immigration reform.

Breaking into small groups, the participants then discussed those topics and provided the organizers with not only the problems they see, but possible solutions. These problems and their suggested solutions will be part of a conference proceedings publication, expected out after the first of the year.

An informational Health Fair was also a part of the ACOMI conference.

Another important aspect of the conference was giving participants encouragement and sharing opportunities to take action. Community agency representatives were available for the women to not only learn about the organization but how they can get involved.

The conference is a collaboration of the Health Department, Migrant Education, Hartnell College, the Arts Commission and others. Funding for this project was from The California Endowment and First Five.
The 9th annual juried exhibition at county government center is now in place for all to enjoy. Each year the theme is ‘Celebrating Monterey County.’ This year there were 25 artists featured and 50 artwork pieces chosen from more than 120 submissions. Among the artists featured in the exhibit are works by Mackenze Collins, Contracts Manager at Department of Social Services.

A reception for the new works was held December 2nd. Artists, county leaders, employees and the public were able to stroll through the building and enjoy the new works.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the county and the Arts Council for Monterey County which puts out a call to local artists, coordinates the jury process and has an expert curator hang all the pieces. Artwork on display includes oil and watercolor paintings as well a wide variety of photographic works, including several rare photographs of Cannery Row in the early 1970s. All of the art showcases the diverse beauty of the county.

On behalf of staff and public working and visiting the Government Center, the CAO noted...
during the reception how much staff look forward to the new artwork each year, and how we observe how drab the county building looks during the short period between removal of the previous year’s exhibition and when the new works are again displayed throughout the building.

Retiring Supervisor Lou Calcagno said he will always remember the first year of the exhibition, because he spotted a beautiful series of paintings depicting local fieldworkers. He bought the paintings and they have been a focal point in his Castroville office ever since. When he retires, he intends to donate them to the Castroville Library.