

May 26, 2008

Start It Up: Fresno's \$250,00 Entrepreneur Challenge

Embracing innovation as both a culture and a tool is having an impact in every sector in Fresno. Thanks to the steady pulse of the **Lyles Center** and **Central Valley Business Incubator**, the energy swirling around the community is raising expectations and performance. A current project—**Start It Up**—invites innovators from across the country to compete for \$100,000 in cash and \$150,000 of in-kind services to start their business in Fresno. Ten finalists will offer up their plan at the Saroyan Theater October 2 and 3 and the winner will be announced at the Bulldog football game on October 4. For details go to www.fresnostartup.com

Building Neighborhoods That Thrive

The Southeast Growth Area (SEGA) provides an opportunity to use a much more sophisticated thought process to create new neighborhoods. Rather than looking through one lens, the SEGA planning process will think in terms of quality of life, water, the economy, transportation, air quality, energy and sustainability. The **City of Fresno** wisely enlisted the help of an internationally regarded firm, **Calthorpe Associates**, to guide the work. To learn more about alternative urban designs and take part in planning the future, come to the SEGA workshop on Tuesday, June 10 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM at the Fresno Convention Center, New Exhibit Hall. There will be free parking behind the Saroyan (SW corner of N and Inyo). For more information call 621-8003 or email trai.her@fresno.gov. Fresno County is expected to grow by one million people by 2050, mostly in the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area. We have a choice—we can be intentional or allow the depletion of water resources, worsening of air quality and loss of valuable farmland.

Worlds Apart, Futures Together—Mayoral Forum June 12

According to the **Brookings Institute**, concentrated poverty exacts multiple costs on individuals and society. These costs come in the form of: reduced private-sector investment and local job opportunities; increased prices for the poor; higher levels of crime; negative impacts on mental and physical health; low-quality neighborhood schools; and heavy burdens on local governments that induce out-migration of middle-class households. Together, these factors combine to limit the life chances and quality of life available to residents of high-poverty neighborhoods. In its 2005 report on concentrated urban poverty, Fresno ranked first, ahead New Orleans before Katrina captured the world's attention. The City, County and schools working together could have a tremendous impact on the conditions that give rise to poverty and create barriers to escaping it. On June 12, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Saroyan Theater, a diverse group of organizations is hosting a forum to ask the mayoral candidates what they will do to address these issues.

Teamed for Success

Shared frameworks, a common language and the inspiration to persevere are all necessary ingredients to sustain transformation efforts. Leaders at **Fresno Unified** are using the work of **Robert Fritz** as they work to create structures to support the important work of the schools. A system can have all the ingredients needed to succeed, but without a comprehensive plan and effective leadership, the energy dissipates like an orchestra without a score and a conductor. As a community, many organizations and individuals are engaged in a network aimed at diversifying and strengthening the economy, creating a built and natural environment that supports prosperity and a high quality of life, and insuring that the systems intended to support human development are optimally aligned. To accelerate and bring the work to scale will require greater engagement and collaboration. Fritz's book, **The Pat of Least Resistance for Managers: Designing Organizations to Succeed**, provides rich insights and specific tools to help us.

