

STATE OF THE COUNTY 2012

A New Day for Stanislaus County

Chairman Bill O'Brien

Presented January 31, 2012

Good morning to my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, Supervisors Chiesa, Withrow, Monteith and DeMartini, to Chief Executive Officer Monica Nino and County Counsel Jack Doering, all of our County department heads, all of our County employees and to those who are here in the Chambers and to those watching on television or online. It's good to see everyone here today.

What a different world it is since I stood before you in 2007 when I presented the State of the County address. In 2007 I said "I have seen that each year brings new issues and new challenges. You can never plan for them all; but you must be ready to respond to them all." I had no idea what was ahead of us.

Little did I realize the course of events that would transpire since that time, and how it would affect the world and national economy, and the impact it would have on our own Stanislaus County residents. That speech has turned into an interesting snapshot in light of the changes that have since taken place.

The last five years have been a time where hope has at times run thin. We've been the epicenter of a national foreclosure crisis, unemployment is high and corporate downsizings and business closures have plagued us and the valley. It's been a time of economic struggle and emotional pain, not just for our County residents, but for our County employees.

It's been a time of significant change and personal sacrifice.

But I tell you today that I believe hope is now returning; that the promise of a new opportunity can be ignited in us, and that there is a reality of a new day that has arrived for Stanislaus County.

Times are still going to be rough and our journey will have setbacks, but I believe we can have hope in our future as we move forward together.

Our new day looks different.

It's not a day of returning to the old. Rather, it's a day of change. It's not a day of finding our way back. Rather, it's a day of moving our way forward.

LOOKING BACK

In 2007, the speech I gave was filled with great initiative, and it came with a desire to improve the quality of service that government provides to the public. It highlighted significant events, great accomplishments and ambitious projects for the future. It was also a call for better and more effective government.

In 2007, I highlighted numerous natural disasters that had just impacted our County including floods, the heat disaster and a 30,000 acre wildfire. We greatly relied on our Office of Emergency Services for coordinated and timely responses to these emergencies. Five years later, that same Office of Emergency Services has been consolidated into the Modesto Regional Fire Authority, a new regional organization formed in an effort to streamline government operations in a more cost-effective manner. This has been an extremely challenging effort to meld three organizations into one, but it was a necessary move in light of resources.

In 2007, I relayed we had started the County water summits – bringing together 25 different water distributors to share information and to begin coordinating efforts where possible. It was here former Supervisor Jeff Grover planted the seed of creating a recycled water program similar to one used in the Monterey Peninsula. The County is now a participant in and strong supporter of the North Valley Regional Recycled Water Program, a highly ambitious project which will some day deliver nearly 33,000 acre-feet of recycled water each year to farmers in the drought-impacted west side of the County. This project will put fallow agricultural land back into production and help uplift our vital agricultural economy.

I also discussed the Gateway Parcel of the Tuolumne River Regional Park which was about to break ground. Downtown river areas are treasured by any city in this country and we have a jewel less than one mile from this building. That's why we are part of a partnership with the cities of Modesto and Ceres to improve this gem that is currently in the rough. Today, the parcel has begun to develop with approximately 30-acres of riparian habitat restoration along the river, grading of the outdoor seating area and fields, and significant site preparation for future pedestrian trails.

We were nearing completion of construction of the Gallo Center for the Arts and would soon celebrate this stunning achievement of bringing a world-class performing arts center through a public-private partnership right here in Stanislaus County.

The Latino Emergency Council had just been formed as a community partnership. Today, the Council continues to thrive and has developed into a 501 (C) (3) nonprofit organization. This grass roots organization has assisted the County's Office of Emergency Services in responding to every significant disaster incident that has occurred since its inception through its leadership role in the Latino community. These volunteers are passionate about reaching out and helping others.

In 2007, we were beginning to hold public meetings on the North County Corridor project and applying for desperately needed Federally Qualified Health Center Look-alike status for our County medical clinics. Today, the North County Corridor project is moving forward with great momentum and has been narrowed down to two alternative road alignments. And we did receive the FQHC Look-alike designation for our clinics – a designation that has drastically cut our losses in providing healthcare for the underserved and helped to preserve more than 210,000 medical office visits each year.

These are just a few examples of the ground we covered since 2007.

My point in reviewing these projects is this: many times we don't look back and appreciate the work that has been done. While looking to the future is a necessary

element of leadership, we cannot afford to ignore the past. And we must celebrate our recent past in light of the odds that had been stacked against us.

A TIME OF CHALLENGE

To say these past four years have been extremely difficult is a supreme understatement. We lost 1,000 positions in our Stanislaus County government. Some departments have 50% less staff than they had four years ago. Yet, our staff continues to press forward on significant projects. They have not quit, but rather they have turned these major changes into an opportunity to reconfigure how the public is served. They've not given up and they are doing some amazing work, and I want to acknowledge each of our County employees for what they do on a daily basis.

We can choose to find strength in these times of challenge or we can choose to be defeated. I have seen our employees choose to move forward together, encouraging one another and supporting one another, even in the midst of struggle.

And many of these struggles will continue.

Our property tax base is starting to stabilize, but its return will be slow over a long period of time. We will be faced with managing our County finances with far less tax base to fund our budget. On a more uplifting note, sales tax has recently shown some promise of growth, but it also linked with the uncertainty of our national economy.

Many of our financial struggles do not come of our own choosing, but rather from a State government that continues to show signs of dysfunction.

Stanislaus County government is a legal subdivision of the State. Our destiny is tied to the State by the California Constitution. We are subject to its laws, regulations, actions and decisions. And we desperately need relief. If you would indulge me for a few examples of the challenges we face.

In 2011, there were 725 new laws that took effect in California. In 2010 there were 696. This year, there are 745 new laws on the books including regulation of tanning beds, recycling rights for renters and caffeinated beer. Elected officials in Sacramento are continuing to add thousands and thousands and thousands of new laws that become an enormous collective weight on Californians and a crushing burden on local government. I'm not saying that all new laws are bad laws - a number of them can be good. But let's be honest and let's get real about how much of this is truly out of control nonsense. We're tied as a County to a runaway horse that is pulling us in the wrong direction. We need relief from excessive State laws, and it starts with cutting the number of bills that are passed and it includes considering local financial impacts on any new legislation.

We will closely watch not just the implementation of Realignment Phase I, but also Realignment Phase II. We are already concerned about Phase I, as our volumes of parolees and inmates well-exceed State projections. Without a guaranteed State funding source, this project is destined to put all California counties at significant risk, whether through insufficient funding for caseloads, or cuts to funding due to State budget problems.

Regulatory burden is another issue facing our County. Just this year, with the passage of Cap and Trade by the State Air Resources Board, that decision alone will be projected to cost the recycled energy facility million of dollars into the future. Proposed changes in stormwater regulations, definitions of solid waste, diversion credits, and commercial recycling are all areas at risk for increased costs to County residents based on decisions of State agencies – and these are only a few examples. Too often, State agencies are passing regulations that can have significant financial impact on local government, sometimes without the appearance of concern for local impacts.

Our County budget is tied to the State. If the State needs money, and we all know they need money, they take from County government. One way they do it is through what they call payment deferrals. It's really a nice way of saying, they stop paying us for providing services they mandate us to provide. I'm not certain if there is a legal term for

someone who forces someone to provide a service, and then refuses to pay them for the service. And then they turn around and force them to do it over and over again, without paying them. Basically, we provide State services and they are supposed to pay us for providing those services, but then they withhold the money and sometimes never pay us back. Stanislaus County is still owed millions and millions of dollars from the State for program deferrals; some of the money is owed from nearly ten years ago. It's morally wrong and it's something none of us would do, but the State does it to us on an ongoing basis.

Another cost reduction tool the State uses is to reduce specific program funding for the County - most of the funding is already less than the County's costs - but then continue to require the County to provide the service. The County can't discontinue the service, it just has to operate with less-than-full funding and make up the shortfall from the County budget. These cuts can run the full gamut from physical health and mental health services, to social services programs and property tax collection. More and more people need services while the funding shrinks, placing the burden on our County residents who bear the brunt of local cuts.

And speaking of cuts, I must reference the County's redevelopment program. Stanislaus County has carefully and thoughtfully used redevelopment funds to support only vitally important priorities. This was a result of careful planning and the desire to meet the needs of our unincorporated communities. Our projects helped build infrastructure in underserved areas and improved the quality of life of our residents. We've been very strategic in pursuing only those projects which can bring some of the greatest good to our local communities. We've used our funds to connect residents to sanitary sewer service in the Shackelford and Bret Hart areas, developed storm drains in the communities of Salida, Keyes and Empire, helped fund an important water study in the Monterey Park Tract, provided needed funding for rehabilitation of a water distribution system in Crows Landing and implemented affordable housing programs for people in serious need. Our plans were to continue on this path of building critical infrastructure in underserved areas. Redevelopment is now being wiped out as a tool for County's to use, and it is unknown

how we will be able to address these community needs in the future. At first it appeared there might be hope for saving redevelopment, but it appears the book is closing for this era.

The next game from Sacramento is the charade of passing bills that are called “funded mandates,” which is really hard to say with a straight face. These are bills which will cost the County money because they require the County to do specific tasks to implement the bill. Oftentimes, these are pet projects of legislators and probably shouldn’t be passed in the first place. The bills are written so the State budget does not fund our local costs associated with the bill, but they include in the bill a provision allowing the County to charge a new fee in order to recover our costs. If the County does not impose the new fee on its residents, the County eats the costs associated with the bill. It is morally wrong, but again, they’ve figured out a way to legally pass the costs onto local government.

And finally, we need relief from the Negative Bailout we continue to provide to the State. The County forfeits more than \$3 million every year to the State of California as a result of the so-called negative bailout that was created as a result of legislation related to the passage of Proposition 13. We have lost more than \$60 million in money transferred out of the County’s treasury as a result of this problem, and it is another example of how the State can pass new laws regarding tanning beds, but is unable to fix this problem that directly impacts every resident of our County. No one in Sacramento disputes this problem is an unintended consequence of the legislation, yet it has gone unfixed for 30 years and elected officials outside of our County have little or no interest in it. I personally want to thank our local Assemblymembers and Senators in Sacramento for their ongoing effort to influence a fix to this problem in the midst of an unreceptive Sacramento environment. They continue to fight passionately for this issue, and I am greatly appreciative.

We’ve gotten so used to these money grabs by the State, we almost forget to mention them anymore. It’s become a way of life we can’t control. We now operate in a new and

very different framework – less revenue and fewer employees. None of us like this new reality, but it is our new reality – it is our new day. And we must be strong as we face it.

We believe and have committed ourselves to the idea our Board of Supervisors must be resolute to lead with creativity, strength and vision. More than ever, we as the Board have a responsibility to be leaders.

We've been elected to lead. We've not been elected to push the responsibility for our decisions onto others. Leaders in Sacramento can make decisions and then pass the problems to local government to try and fix. We can't do that, and we won't do that. This is not the time for turf battles and personal politics. Passing your problem for someone else to fix is not leadership, it's avoidance, and it sends a message that elected officials aren't responsible or accountable for their actions. This is not the philosophy of responsible government.

The Board of Supervisors made some extremely difficult decisions over the past five years. We've probably faced some of the most difficult policy decisions in recent history. But now, more than ever, is the time for accountability. It's the opportunity for elected leaders to step up to provide vision and direction. It's not a time to pass the buck and play politics. Our community problems are too big and the impacts too significant.

We have championed using partnerships – regional partnerships and public-private partnerships – and we have taken a lead role in pursuing these. And we will continue to pursue these. Projects like the Gallo Center for the Arts and the Regional Water Safety Training Center in Empire weren't the end of our partnering efforts, even though the economy plummeted into its deep recession.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

We must not be afraid of creativity and innovation in government. We've shown these concepts can be the impetus and backbone of our partnerships. We've taken steps in reorganizing County services and departments, and we'll continue to find new ways to do

the public's business. I want to call upon our innovative staff to continue to explore opportunities for consolidation where it is appropriate, whether with other agencies, or consolidation of departments and programs within our own organization. We will continue to be bold and unafraid to look for new ways to streamline government and maximize taxpayer dollars.

Our decision to regionalize fire services was very bold. It was a very difficult decision for many reasons and extremely difficult to implement. But it was the right decision. The Modesto Regional Fire Authority has been one of the most challenging projects this Board has tackled bringing Stanislaus County, the City of Modesto and the Salida Fire Protection District into a brand new agency. Three different governing bodies molded into one, three different payroll systems, three different sets of policies and procedures, three labor agreements . . . and the list goes on. And while the road has been rough getting here - and there still are challenges to overcome - we feel this project will bring significant benefit to our local community.

We just celebrated the first year anniversary of our new Animal Shelter. Not only can we celebrate a new humane and safe place for our staff, the animals, and the public, but we have a unique partnership to provide a low-income, low cost spay neuter clinic and a new way of doing the public's business, with one joint agency instead of six separate public agencies. The County's partnership with the Cities of Modesto, Ceres, Patterson, Hughson and Waterford is model for efficiency and effectiveness in government.

This year, we have just celebrated the first anniversary of the Family Justice Center. This project is a public-private partnership targeted to help some of the most vulnerable victims of crimes – domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse. It took years to develop this partnership, but everyone had their eye on the vision to bring comprehensive and compassionate services to these victims. Now we have law enforcement investigators, District Attorney staff, crisis intervention counselors, legal assistance, nonprofit volunteers and much more under one roof, so victims no longer have to travel to multiple locations around the community to get care, while being forced to tell their

stories over and over again. It's a humane project in the most horrible of circumstances, and it was the right thing to do. And to those involved with this project, we celebrate their passion, and their work and the difference they are making.

We strongly support the efforts of our County's mayors who continue to press forward to develop a regional growth plan. This plan would establish expansion boundaries for each city and identify areas for agricultural preservation up to the year 2050. Having a plan like this is essential for wise infrastructure investment and responsible stewardship of our natural resources. We're proud to say the County has been an advocate of these efforts since the inception of the project.

We completed a highly complex County redistricting effort this year that was another outstanding partnership with a dedicated group of community volunteers. Our Ad Hoc Citizen Redistricting Advisory Committee teamed with Stanislaus County personnel to help create our new district boundaries which need to be adjusted every ten years according to California code. These individuals spent hundreds of hours studying, meeting with members of the public and working in a collaborative and respectful manner that should be an example statewide. The end result was a logical, well-crafted district map that best represents our community. Our thanks goes out to them.

Unique partnerships will continue to be necessary in order to provide services for our community. It is a difficult reality to consistently see that our community needs far exceed our government resources. In a budget crisis, every decision becomes a momentous decision that impacts the lives of those right here in our own neighborhoods. We are committed to creativity in order to meet needs.

One such project is the Valley Recovery Resources. Here is an example of people doing all the right things for all the right reasons. I was honored to personally champion this effort along with Patty Hill Thomas from the County's Chief Executive Office on the public side. But the real story is with a dedicated group of community volunteers who decided to make a real difference in our community. As many of you are aware, funding

for clean and sober living programs and other substance abuse programs has been dramatically reduced, while our community needs continue to grow. For the past few years, Stanislaus County has not been able to obtain all the State and Federal funds we could, because we could only afford to fund the minimum local match requirements for these programs—that means we had to leave money on the table that our community so desperately needed. Because of State funding issues, the County was forced to cut funding for several community facilities that provide clean and sober living services. Several community based programs closed and others were threatened. That’s when a group of passionate, dedicated and generous individuals came forward and donated their own money to begin a private fund raising effort to leverage those unused State and Federal Child Welfare dollars. If you are not aware, the Redwood Family Center was a facility that could house 25 women and their children, and it was operated by Interfaith Ministries. Not content to just let another clean and sober program close, that dedicated group of community volunteers, stepped forward with donated money in hand to work with the County to keep the facility open. These volunteers created a nonprofit called Valley Recovery Resources and they began to raise money. They raised more than \$159,000. The twist with this project was that the \$159,000 donation to the County was then leveraged by the County to get an additional \$3.3 million in federal and state money for local services. These volunteers raised enough money to purchase the Redwood Family Center and expand into a vacant County residential facility to create clean and sober living environments that can provide services for up to 40 families per month. Their generous donation also allowed for other programs to be restored –adding strength and hope to the much needed “safety net.” These programs are thriving today and I would like to thank all of the volunteers from the Valley Recovery Resources.

Last year, Chairman Monteith presented a vision and perspective in his State of the County address that was inspirational, motivational and right on the mark. He exhorted us to embrace the idea of volunteerism and the significant role it should play within government. I’m extremely pleased to announce last year there were more than 41,000 community volunteer hours of service with our Stanislaus County departments and programs. What an amazing number and what an amazing outpouring from the

community. Supervisor Monteith, thank you for your inspiration and the reminder to us all that community service is a vital part of who we are as a community and as a county. Animal services, our library system, health clinics, veterans services – and the list goes on – all are recipients of hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours of volunteer service. It is humbling to see how generous our community can be.

During these past few years, some of our difficult budget cuts came in the area of our County parks. Recreation is extremely important to the overall health of our County and people need places to enjoy nature and open spaces. We are blessed that our County has many beautiful parks and recreational areas. Unfortunately, some of our parks are suffering as a result of budget cuts. Laird Park in Grayson is a park that has needed repairs and maintenance, is decaying and was shut down as a result of the budget crisis. Answering the call to volunteerism, a group of community members led by West Side farmer Jon Maring has stepped forward and joined with Supervisor DeMartini to renovate Laird Park. More than \$100,000 in planned improvements are underway including drilling a well for water, installing automatic sprinkler systems, pruning trees, removing dangerous trees and replanting trees. An overgrown and abandoned regional park will now be revitalized and brought back to life by the efforts of these dedicated community volunteers. True leadership is not afraid of challenge.

I also want to recognize the dedicated community of Valley Home in the northeastern part of our County. Over the past five years, they've worked on a piece of land where the old Valley Home Community Center had been taken down and they have created the Valley Home Community Center Park. It was dedicated this past June. The park has become a gathering place for the whole community and was designed, built and landscaped entirely by community volunteers down to the last detail. It has a wonderful pavilion, is surrounded by Valley Oak trees and is a park that visibly shows the pride this community has.

The scope of the projects that have been implemented over the past year is monumental – fire services, animal services, the Family Justice Center – all done in the great recession.

Valley Recovery Services and Laird Park to name only a few, also echo these unique partnerships born out of very different circumstances and only made possible through extraordinary people with a commitment to serve.

These are the things that inspire us. These are the things that speak to our hearts and propel us forward to do great things in the midst of great struggle. And these are the things that build up our hope.

We see that hope in our young people. I strongly believe we have some amazing young people in our County, and they have an unbridled passion for the future. But sometimes the future is not as bright for some. They are challenged by bad examples in their homes or maybe they have just made bad choices on their own.

As a result, demands on our juvenile justice system are growing and we are one of the few counties our size without treatment type facilities for youthful offenders. It's a problem we wish we didn't have, but it is a harsh reality we live in. New facilities are incredibly expensive and our County could never afford to pay for it on our own. But in October of this past year, we broke ground on a new \$24 million, 47,000 square feet Juvenile Commitment Center that add 60-beds of housing and facilities that will support rehabilitation of our youthful offenders. Not only does the project add capacity, but it will also bring the opportunity for some of these young offenders to turn their lives around if they engage in the program opportunities it will offer. The facility will feature a vocational culinary program, classrooms and offer hope for young people in trouble in our County.

So how did we do it? Simply put, we have probably the best capital facilities team and the best Probation department in the State of California. Our County team worked tirelessly over a three-year period and put together a grant application that was the first one accepted and funded by the State under the Juvenile Accountability Facilities Program. And as of today, no other projects have even been approved by the State. Through our team's work we were awarded up to \$18 million in project funding, with the

remaining coming from local sources such as public facilities fees that had been previously collected. It was an amazing effort, and it is a project that could never have been done otherwise.

But our team wasn't finished.

Our adult jail system has struggled with aging facilities and insufficient capacity. On top of that, the State's realignment of public safety is directing more prisoners into our jail system. Our capital projects team, in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office, just completed an AB 900 State grant application that could provide up to \$80 million in funding for design and construction of two new 192-bed maximum security units, a 72-bed medical/mental health housing unit and a day reporting center. This grant would only require a 10% local match. This application is the largest in the history of our County and was another staggering, multi-year undertaking. These grants require an incredible level of detail and preparation and our team has been up to the challenge. We are expecting to hear in the spring as to whether this grant application was accepted by the State.

We are also developing plans for relocating the Sheriff's County Coroner's Facility to the former Medical Arts Building near downtown Modesto. The current facility space, equipment, and storage needs have not kept pace with current or future demands. Renovating the vacant building instead of constructing a new facility will save the County nearly \$6 million. The facility will also include the Sheriff's Remote Video Visitation to the Jails program, where prisoner visitation occurs via camera in a remote setting.

The scope of these projects is daunting, yet the commitment, persistence and hard work of County staff has been inspirational. We need to continue to honor our heroes within our family of employees like Deputy Nuno, who saved the life of a 7 year old boy, or Deputy Barnes, Amber Brown and Dispatcher Nunes for their heroic life saving actions at a Patterson accident, and we must never forget the ultimate sacrifice of Mary Donahou,

lost in the line of duty. We have lost many of our County Family members this year including Board of Supervisors field rep Sandy Hopp. They will be forever in our hearts.

Our County's economic development needs innovation as well.

The agricultural economy of Stanislaus County continues to be a priority for this Board and it is the lifeblood of our community. We are dependent on the thousands of jobs that are generated from our agricultural community. But we also know that agriculture alone will not provide the thousands of additional jobs needed to support our local economy. We have seen construction alone is not the answer. We know we need a diversified economic base. We need property with developed infrastructure that can be ready for a quick conversion for tenants. We need a bold vision that not only provides employment opportunity for the more than 35,000 already unemployed people in our County, but a vision that will create the thousands of jobs that will be needed into the future to support our population growth. We strongly believe the development of the Crows Landing property is essential for our economic prosperity. The right development of this property has the opportunity to generate thousands of permanent living wage jobs that are needed now and into the future. We will continue to closely monitor the development of the West Park project, looking for adherence to key timelines and of fulfillment of stated outcomes. We need jobs and we need them on a large scale and this Board is committed to bringing jobs to the Crows Landing facility.

Innovation also happens in ways that might not be so evident to the public. Our County staff has made incredible strides over this past year through the creation of a new, self-funded health insurance program for our employees. This program will provide employees with extensive access to health providers while potentially saving millions of dollars and providing greater access to cost information. Our budget team has once again received national recognition through the Government Finance Officers Association Award, the ninth year in a row to receive this prestigious accomplishment and one of only seven counties in the State. Our County employees worked creatively to perform a massive Oracle software upgrade that saved more than \$1 million. Most organizations

would need to contract with outside vendors to perform upgrades on this scale, but our staff pulled off what few organizations could. Our General Services Agency created a contract janitorial services agreement that is projected to save the county more than \$1 million over the next four years. And these are but a few areas that I can highlight.

These accomplishments are truly amazing and our staff is truly amazing. I tell you, hope is returning and the reality of a new day is here in Stanislaus County.

I'm proud of our employees. Every day they are working harder for the residents of our County. And our vision for this next year is to continue to meet our community's needs.

We will pave miles of roads, fix bridges and make sure our infrastructure is maintained. We will provide vaccinations to children and physician services for more than 200,000 people. We will help our veterans get the services and financial help they need, whether they are just returning from battle or having served 50 years ago. More than 300,000 riders will use County buses as their transportation source. We will be here when you call 9-1-1 or when you need a Sheriff's deputy. We'll even be here to send you a property tax bill and then collect and process your check.

We will do the thousands and thousands of things everyday that most people will never see.

We'll take care of foster children who feel abandoned. We'll make sure families receive child support checks. We'll help those who need it to get CalFresh assistance. Farmers will be helped, gas station pumps, restaurants and school cafeterias will be inspected and we'll be ready to respond if disaster strikes. And the list goes on.

And all of these things we will try to do a little better - to look at the services we provide in a new way and ask the question, "how can we be just a little better today?"

Our successes over this past year are many. We have needed to take the time to celebrate them and the people that have made them possible. And there will be many more successes, both big and small, in 2012.

And our new day in government, and it is a new day, will continue to get better as we move forward serving our community.

CONCLUSION

Over this past year, we as a Board have acted with sincere purpose and have attempted to balance compassion with prudence. We have engaged in vigorous discussion and debate, yet conducted ourselves with dignity. And we have acted to create the best possible policies in order to preserve vital services for our County residents in this time of great trial.

Leadership is not about being the most visible. It's not about being the loudest in the room or the most confrontational. It's about being committed to purpose and to service.

Leadership is about standing on your values and creating a vision for the future. It's about dealing with issues head-on and then walking a path of integrity; and then taking that path each day to inspire others to achieve their goals.

May we at Stanislaus County walk on that path of integrity. May our eyes be fixed upon a future filled with hope and opportunity in the reality of this new day. And may we continue to encourage one another to persevere in times of challenge and to see the hope of a brighter future together.

Thank you, and may God bless you and may God bless Stanislaus County.