



# RANCHO CIELO

## Impact Report 2023



The Rancho Cielo team celebrates after winning first place overall at the OCSD in October, 2023.

### In this Issue

Message From the CEO

Student Spotlights

Veggie Box & BBQ  
Fundraiser

Sponsor Thank You

Impact Report

Solar Power Project

Jazz at the Ranch  
Concert Series

Monterey County Gives!

Friday Night Dinners  
& RESY

Save the Date:  
2024 Culinary Round Up

## A Monumental Year

This has been an incredible year at Rancho Cielo, from our largest graduating class and record-breaking enrollment to our monumental win of the first Orange County Sustainability Decathlon (OCSD), where our Construction & Sustainable Design Academy students faced top university teams worldwide in an international homebuilding competition.

We were the only high school competing. Rancho Cielo took home five first-place awards and three second-place awards in the competition's ten contests, making us first place overall. The win teaches our construction students that hard work, perseverance and teamwork pay off. It also shows them that it takes a community to be successful. We are thankful to all those who contributed and mentored our students throughout the 18 months, sharing their expertise and whatever else was needed to complete the home.

A special thanks to our founder, Judge John Phillips; architect Thomas Rettenwender, EcoLogic Architects founder; Bill Hayward, Hayward Lumber and Hayward Healthy Homes CEO; Pete Scudder, Scudder Roofing and Solar president and competition committee chair; Ed Bennett, Rancho Cielo construction instructor; and Joseph DeRuosi, Jr., Rancho Cielo's Director of Career and Technical Education.

In August, we broke ground on our new solar project. A big thanks to Scudder Solar and Don Chapin for partnering with us on the construction and installation and Congressman Jimmy Panetta, whose legislative support was critical to making this concept a reality. It's an essential step toward net-zero energy for Rancho Cielo that will significantly reduce our cost of electricity and provide our Ag Technology & Mechatronics students with hands-on solar installation experience. Our commitment to clean energy is another example of giving students a chance to be a part of doing good for the world.

As the holidays approach, I hope you will consider investing in our students and Rancho Cielo. Our annual report provides a snapshot of our community and the impact we're making. Your contribution will help us continue to provide life-changing programs and experiences for our youth, giving them hope and opportunities to build skills and transform their lives.

Chris Devers  
CEO





# Student Spotlights

## Graduate Susie Nicole Fernandez is an Inspiration

When Salinas native Susie Nicole Fernandez first discovered Rancho Cielo in 2019, the timing couldn't have been better. Facing challenges at home and school during her teenage years, her self-confidence diminished to an all-time low when she dropped out during her sophomore year to care for her younger brothers. Rancho Cielo offered Fernandez, by then a single mother, a beacon of hope. Now, she could pursue her high school diploma, follow her passion for culinary arts and be an example to her 9-year-old daughter, Jyzelle.

Over the four years she studied at Rancho Cielo and the Drummond Culinary Academy, Fernandez poured her heart into her studies, bolstered by the DCA team's encouragement and support. She graduated earlier this year with her diploma and culinary certificate, and according to DCA Program Director Mark Bruszer, Fernandez was one of the best students they've had.

She currently works in special events at the Corral de Tierra Country Club and plans to continue her education at Monterey Peninsula College next year. Fernandez is also actively involved with Jyzelle's travel softball team.

"Rancho Cielo is a place to go if you are struggling to continue school or have dropped out and want to go back," Fernandez said. "The support from the staff is incredible. They believe in you and push you to achieve."



*Recent Rancho Cielo grad and burgeoning chef, Susie Nicole Fernandez, with her 9-year-old daughter, Jyzelle.*

## Celebrating Our Award-Winning Construction Students

In an exciting end to an 18-month project, a team of 38 Construction & Sustainable Design Academy students won first place overall in the Orange County Sustainability Decathlon, an international homebuilding competition. The group was represented at the OCSD by a core team of 11, including current students Kevin Cacho, Jesus Camacho, Severiano De Jesus, Bryan Garcia, Juan Jimenez, Andrew Mares, Julieta Mendoza-Alba, Ivan Rivas and Benito Zavala Jr. and Construction & Sustainable Design Academy graduate assistants Ezequiel Rodriguez, Edgar Carrasco and Josue Cisneros.

"The OCSD project made me more confident in my speaking skills because I get very nervous when presenting. It was such an awesome opportunity," said Mendoza-Alba, who has been encouraging other young women to join RC's construction program. "It was truly a life-changing experience," Carrasco said. "Now, I will take my skills to the construction management program at Hartnell."

They were the only high school students and vocational school competing against university teams across the United States, England and China. "We were on for 12 straight days," instructor Ed Bennett said. "If they weren't working, they were doing their schoolwork."

Most of them had no construction knowledge before the competition, and they accepted the challenge. You can say persistence is in their—and Rancho Cielo's—DNA. "For them to come through, this [win] is for them," Bennett added.



*Several members of the OCSD team stand in front of their award-winning home, Nexus\_01, at the Orange County Fairgrounds.*

### Board of Directors

Janine Chicourrat, Chair  
Jesse Lopez, Vice Chair  
Mike Zimmerman, Treasurer  
Lorri Koster, Secretary  
Gregory Ahn  
Luis Alvarez

Patrick Amaris  
Mike Avila  
Susan Black  
Lance Buckeldee  
Don Chapin  
Jeff Cook

Jacqueline Cruz  
Walt Duflock  
Bill Hayward  
Dr. Shyam Kamath  
Jamie Kitz  
Clement Miller

Judge John M. Phillips  
Chris Devers, CEO  
**Emeritus**  
Ted Balestreri  
Bert Cutino, CEC, AAC, HOF, WCMC  
Joanne Taylor



## Monterey County Honors Rancho Cielo Students

On Nov. 7, 2023, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors presented a resolution honoring the students who worked tirelessly for over a year to design and construct Nexus\_01, the award-winning home that embodies the OCSD mission to “motivate a new generation of leaders to design, develop, demonstrate and deploy housing solutions that will accelerate California’s continuing progress in sustainability, as well as a commitment to promoting a culture of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that values and celebrates the contributions of every student, employee and stakeholder involved in the initiative.”

Seven of the 38 students who built the home stood proudly alongside sponsors/mentors Pete Scudder and Bill Hayward and Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers, along with Rancho Cielo staff, including Career Technical Education Director Joe DeRuosi, CTE Instructor for Construction & Sustainable Design Academy Ed Bennett and CTE Program Coordinator Christopher Almarez.



*The Monterey County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to honor our students' OCSD win.*

## 2023 Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser is a Homerun



*300 volunteers assisted with the Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser, making it the most successful yet.*

With over 14,000 veggie boxes and over 2,000 barbecue lunches sold, 2023 marked Rancho Cielo’s most successful Veggie Box and BBQ Fundraiser.

“This is our biggest year yet,” Fundraiser Chair Mike Costa said. “People from the Salinas Valley, Monterey Peninsula, Santa Cruz County, San Benito County—everyone came together.”

Folks from one of the San Francisco 49ers’ employee resource groups, Latinx Empowerment, Advancement & Development (L.E.A.D), made up some of the 300 volunteers.

“This is a great opportunity to have our staff come out and impact the community that loves our organization, and we can show a little love back,” San Francisco 49ers Fan Engagement Senior Manager Nick Clarke said.

Salinas Mayor Kimbley Craig, who also volunteered, added, “Something like Veggie Boxes at Rancho Cielo shows the level of commitment within our community to helping local nonprofits. It gives you a

little glimpse into what our field workers work with. It’s also important to remember that agriculture is the backbone of our community.”

This year, the annual fundraiser partnered with Boys and Girls Club of Monterey County, Food Bank for Monterey County, Salvation Army Salinas and Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County, making it an all-inclusive community undertaking.

# 2023 Veggie Box & BBQ Sponsors - Thank You!

## PRESENTING SPONSORS



MIKE & KIM  
COSTA FAMILY



Driscoll's  
Only the Finest Berries™



## EVENT SPONSORS



## RANCHER SPONSORS



## TRAIL BOSS SPONSORS



## POSSE SPONSORS

ROSELLA & GARY FRANSCIONI • J. GIBBONS & ASSOCIATES, INC. • SUSIE AND STAN BRUSA



## WRANGLER SPONSORS

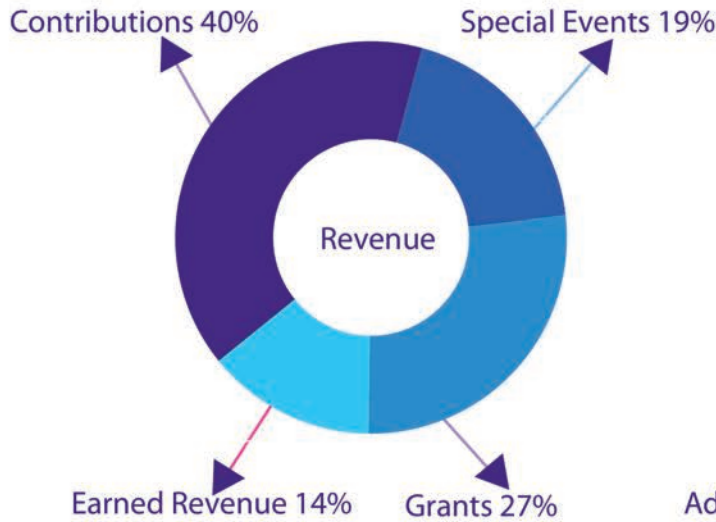
A & R FRESH, LLC | BANKERS CASINO | BIANCHI, KASAVAN & POPE, LLP | CARBON ROBOTICS | COAST AUTOMOTIVE WAREHOUSE, INC.  
CSC OF SALINAS | DENHAM PLASTICS | CANDI DEPAUW | FARMERS INSURANCE/CECILIA KENNEDY AGENCY  
INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, INC. | JACOBI CREATIVE | LEAVITT CENTRAL COAST INSURANCE SERVICES  
PACIFIC VALLEY BANK | REFCO FARMS | SAMBRAILO PACKAGING | SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BANK | SCHOLL & COMPANY, LLP  
SHERMAN'S APOTHECARY | SMITH & ENRIGHT LANDSCAPING, INC. | SOUTH COUNTY TIRE OF GREENFIELD  
STAR MARKET | TORO PETROLEUM CORP.



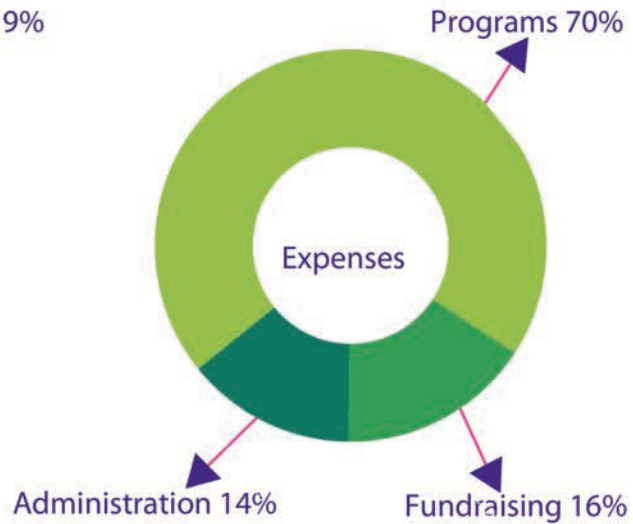
# Impact Report

## Revenue and Expenses Summaries: October 2022 - September 2023

### Operating Revenue

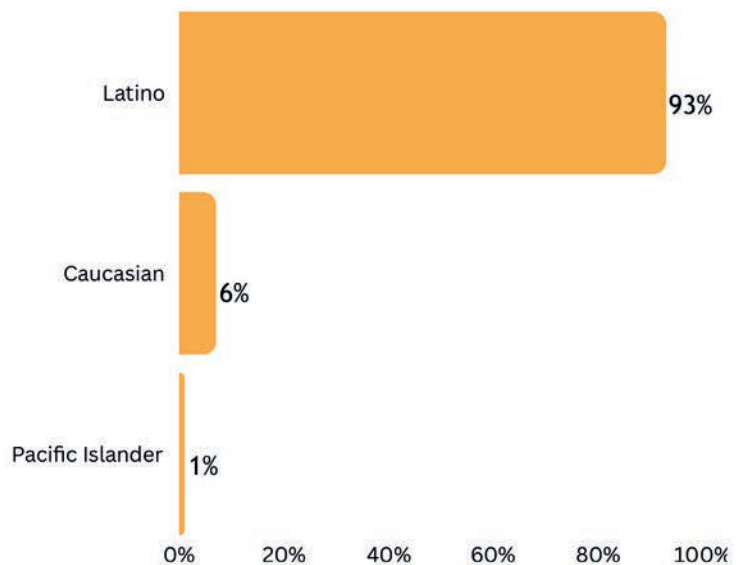
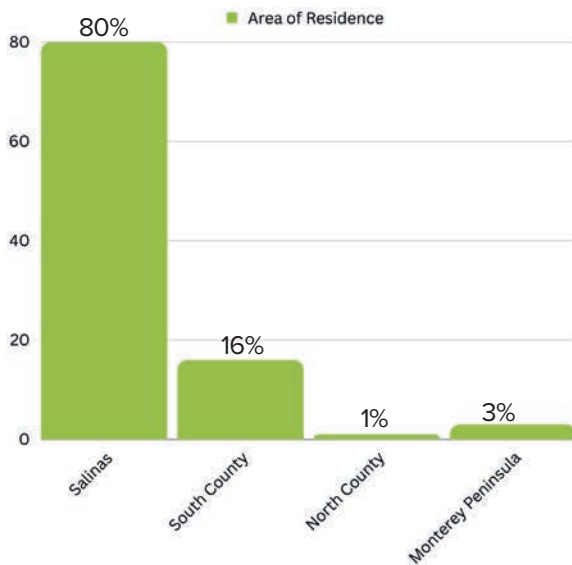


### Operating Expenses

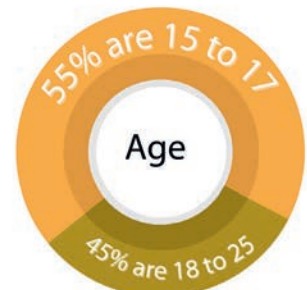


## Student Demographics 2023/24 School Year

### Rancho Cielo Serves Low-Income Youth From All Over Monterey County



- 7% of our students are homeless
- 15% of our students are adjudicated
- 30% of our students are English language learners
- 95% of our students are socioeconomically challenged





## Rancho Cielo's Solar Project Will Cut Costs and Teach



*Rancho Cielo's new 200-kilowatt system boasts 420 panels that cover 13,000 square feet, including the roof and ground mount system.*

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act funding, adding solar to the Rancho Cielo campus is becoming a reality. Congressman Jimmy Panetta, who helped author the historic bill, was onsite for the groundbreaking this August. "In that [IRA] act, there is this clean energy tax credit extended by Congress that allows Rancho Cielo to offset the cost of this project by 30%," Panetta said. Rancho Cielo Board Chair Janine Chicourrat encouraged the congressman to include the nonprofit rebate. The solar system costs \$650,000, with the rebate covering \$200,000. Rancho Cielo contracted Scudder Solar Energy Systems to install the new 200-kilowatt system—the 420 panels cover 13,000 square feet,

including the roof and ground mount system—and Don Chapin prepared the groundwork. The project builds on Rancho Cielo's dedication to going green, cuts energy costs for the campus, and teaches our students about clean energy. "We are honored to be part of the success of the students at Rancho Cielo," said Pete Scudder, President and Founder of Scudder Solar Energy Systems and Scudder Roofing.

Students can work with Scudder Solar to learn how solar systems work, helping install the solar panels and wiring. In the process, they will also see construction management in action, including working with outside agencies. Most importantly, they'll get firsthand problem-solving experience, par for the course in these complex projects. Learning to install solar is particularly valuable for Rancho Cielo's Ag Technology & Mechatronics students as demand increases for a workforce skilled in clean energy and sustainable construction technologies.

Once installed, it will significantly reduce the campus's \$100,000 annual electricity bill. In 25 years, it's estimated to save approximately \$3,000,000 in electricity costs. Completion is expected by the end of 2023.

## Jazz at the Ranch Hits All the Right Notes

"It was a fantastic evening of music, and I can't help but rave about the entire experience," Sonoma Valley Jazz Society President Janice King wrote in an unsolicited email. "I was impressed with the welcoming atmosphere and the attention to detail. The theater with the sunset was beautiful."

King's glowing email was in response to the final installment of Rancho Cielo's first-ever Jazz at the Ranch Concert Series on Oct. 6, 2023, featuring sultry Bay Area songstress Paula West, who filled the Sally Hughes Church Amphitheater with a tribute to Bob Dylan. Jazz at the Ranch Artistic Director Michael Jacobi—retired executive producer of Jazz on the Plazz in Los Gatos—planned six evenings featuring top-notch musicians, beginning with Tony Lindsay & the Soul Soldiers. The outfit delivered a solid set of jazz, soul and R&B favorites, including the Earth, Wind & Fire classic, "September." Monterey Jazz Festival Regional All-Star Band & Vocal Ensemble, Youth Orchestra Salinas (YOSAL), Grammy-nominated pianist Monty Alexander and guitar phenom Bruce Forman's Cow Bop performed on the other nights.

The six nights of live music also included food and drink that matched the quality of the performers. Throughout the series, there was everything from Stonies Taphouse & Bistro barbecue to Drummond Culinary Academy Founder Chef Bert Cutino's beloved Abalone Bisque to Star Market cheese; also, Folktale Winery & Vineyards wine, Other Brother Brewery beer and California Seltzer Company selections were poured.

All proceeds raised support Rancho Cielo's art education and mental health programs for students—there are three on-site therapists and three part-time therapists. A huge thank you to our generous sponsors, including Taylor Farms. We are pleased to announce Jazz at the Ranch will return in 2024.



*Grammy-nominated musician Monty Alexander performed one of the six stellar nights of music at the Jazz at the Ranch Concert Series.*



# Ranch News



MONTEREY COUNTY **GIVES!**

## DONATE TODAY!

Through December 31, 2023

**Rancho Cielo's Enrichment Programs Support the Holistic Development of Each Student**

Students can choose from beekeeping, dog care/training, bike mechanics/riding, horsemanship, gardening, fishing and art.

**THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE:**

Credit cards, IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD), WIRE & ACH or Stocks. Checks are payable to the Community Foundation for Monterey County or CFMC (please include Rancho Cielo in the memo line).

Attn: MCGives!, 2354 Garden Road, Monterey, CA 93940.

***If you need help, please contact the Community Foundation of Monterey County at 831.375.9712.***

## A Delicious Good Deed

**MAKING DINNER RESERVATIONS  
HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER!**

Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy now offers reservations through Resy for Friday Night Dinners!

With Resy, you can make online reservations 24-7, receive text confirmations and communicate with our culinary team in real-time. We aim to provide you with the highest level of hospitality.

Best of all, it's easy to use! Book through the Resy app, resy.com or [ranchocieloyc.org/dining-at-rancho-cielo](http://ranchocieloyc.org/dining-at-rancho-cielo). Feel free to call 831.444.3521 with any questions. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Open for dinner every Friday through June 7, 2024.

Seating times are at 5pm, 5:30pm, 6pm and 6:30pm.

Three-course Prix Fixe dinners are \$50 per person plus tax.

**'23**



**RESY**







# RANCHO CIELO

P.O. Box 6948  
Salinas, CA 93912  
[www.ranchocieloyc.org](http://www.ranchocieloyc.org)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PAID  
SALINAS, CA  
PERMIT NO. 29

save the Date



14TH ANNUAL  
CULINARY ROUND UP  
Sunday, February 25, 2024



831.444.3533  
[ranchocieloyc.org](http://ranchocieloyc.org)

## Get in Touch

### Dining Room Reservations & Events

Laura Nicola 831.444.3521  
[reservations@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:reservations@ranchocieloyc.org)

### Student Enrollment

Yoseline Garcia 831.444.2350  
[recruitment@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:recruitment@ranchocieloyc.org)

### Donations

Joanne Bravo 831.444.3530  
[giving@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:giving@ranchocieloyc.org)

### Volunteer Opportunities

Sandra Moore 831.444.3523  
[volunteer@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:volunteer@ranchocieloyc.org)

### Main Office

831.444.3533

## How to Give

[ranchocieloyc.org/donate](http://ranchocieloyc.org/donate)

831.444.3533

PO Box 6948, Salinas, CA 93912