



# RANCHO CIELO

## Summer 2023



*Pictured: Class of 2023*

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## Celebrating Our 2023 Graduates

On June 14, Rancho Cielo, in partnership with John Muir Charter Schools, honored 37 graduates with their high school diploma and certifications — making the class of 2023 the largest in our organization's history. Some of them will go to college, others to trade school, some will join the military and many will work to earn a living wage in the industry sectors they trained in at Rancho Cielo. All of them have a story filled with challenges and hardship that they have overcome to reach this moment; they have earned it, and it can never be taken away from them.

Research shows that the earning potential of a high school graduate is significantly greater than those who do not finish high school. More importantly, at Rancho Cielo this accomplishment reflects a transition into adulthood with a focus on a special career path that is true and relevant for each and every one of our students. These individuals have learned the academic, kinesthetic, hands-on, experiential, critical thinking, and real-life problem-solving skills, along with hard work and dedication to make their way forward strong — and take them very far in life.

I often say, Rancho Cielo is about hope and opportunity. It's about providing support to individuals who have struggled with systems within our society and culture, and are looking to do something positive with their lives. Our vision is to empower marginalized youth and help them empower themselves to be accountable, competent, productive and responsible citizens. At graduation, our community comes together to celebrate that.

We are incredibly proud of the class of 2023. Whatever path they choose, we hope they will do their best and be the best versions of themselves.

Chris Devers  
CEO



# Student Spotlights

## Bryan Gonzalez

When Salinas native Bryan Gonzalez first stepped foot on Rancho Cielo's campus in 2018, he never imagined that within just a few years, he'd be a full-time college student at Monterey Peninsula College — and on track to earn an AA degree in criminal justice. Back then, he felt lost and hopeless. He had been struggling with drug addiction and gang associations and was out on parole following a felony conviction and incarceration.

Gonzalez was recommended to Rancho Cielo by his parole officer, and found a place where he belonged. He learned hands-on skills in construction, worked with the Youth Corps, and enjoyed long walks on the scenic campus to clear his mind. To this day, he remains thankful to the staff because they never gave up on him even when he wanted to give up on himself.

Gonzalez graduated from Rancho Cielo in 2020. It hasn't been an easy road since, but he falls back on the skills and resilience he gained at Rancho Cielo. He now works for a local nonprofit Door to Hope and is a house manager for a sober living environment in Monterey. "Rancho Cielo is a great resource and has an amazing staff," he says. "Obtaining my diploma there opened up a lot of doors for me, doors that I could have never imagined."



*Pictured: Bryan Gonzalez with his niece*

## Natalia Montiel and Julie Gonzalez

Sisters Natalia Montiel and Julie Gonzalez both found a supportive community they needed at Rancho Cielo. Gonzalez initially discovered the Drummond Culinary Academy in 2017, but believed it was not for her. Her delinquency led her to Rancho Cielo's Silver Star program and then Welding/Fabrication, which she is projected to graduate from in spring 2024. Her peers were a lifeline, and now she feels like she is thriving. As long as they come with open minds, "this is an opportunity for youth to improve their lives," she says.

Montiel was struggling through a tough time mentally, at home and with academics while attending Salinas High School. She sought recommendations from her school counselor for alternative high school programs and was introduced to Rancho Cielo in fall 2022. It was not easy at first, but with the help of her case manager and the on-site mental health professional, Montiel says her life has "improved in the loveliest way possible." She is currently working toward completing the Auto/Diesel Repair program and plans to graduate alongside her sister in the spring.



*Pictured: Natalia Montiel (above)  
Julie Gonzalez (left)*

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# Fundraising and Development



**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT ALLISON**

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🌐 [ranchocieloyc.org/veggiebox2023](http://ranchocieloyc.org/veggiebox2023)  
📍 710 Old Stage Rd., Salinas

## SUPPORT RANCHO CIELO BY ORDERING **\$20 VEGGIE BOXES** PACKED FULL OF LOCAL FRESH FRUIT AND VEGGIES.

Purchase for yourself or donate boxes for families at the  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County, Food Bank for Monterey County,  
Salvation Army Salinas, and Second Harvest Food Bank.

**ORDERS UNDER 25 BOXES** Pick up at Rancho Cielo **ORDER BY JULY 31st**  
on Friday, August 11 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.

**ORDERS OVER 25 BOXES** Will be delivered on August 8th and 9th

**FREE LOCAL DELIVERY FOR ORDERS OF 25 BOXES OR MORE!**



# Giving Never Sounded So Good at the Inaugural Jazz at the Ranch

The Sally Hughes Church Amphitheater at Rancho Cielo Youth Campus will sizzle this summer with the first-of-its-kind Jazz at the Ranch, presented in partnership with Taylor Farms and in association with Monterey Jazz Festival and YOSAL (Youth Orchestra Salinas). Proceeds from the Jazz at the Ranch Fundraiser will go towards Rancho Cielo's Mental Health program, which helps youth process trauma through individual ongoing counseling and crisis management. These series of events also support Rancho Cielo's Arts program which introduces students to the performing arts by offering them the opportunity to attend a live concert as they learn about jazz.

Tickets grant access to an incredible lineup of six concerts every Friday evening, each including a delectable menu of hor d'oeuvres prepared by Monterey chefs, served with an assortment of Folkale wines and local beers. Attendees can enjoy happy hour from 6-7 p.m. with pre-concert entertainment from Youth Orchestra Salinas; concerts feature renowned artists from around the country and will play from 7:30-9 p.m.

"We're very proud [of this event] at Rancho Cielo, and I know the people of Salinas will be very proud as well," said Michael Jacobi, executive producer of Jazz at the Ranch.

"The sitelines are incredible, the sound is great, the views are from Monterey to Santa Cruz, out across the Monterey Bay," said Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers. "We're really lucky to have this place and share it with other people."

Concert series and individual tickets can be purchased through Rancho Cielo's Website ([ranchocieloyc.org/JazzAtTheRanch](http://ranchocieloyc.org/JazzAtTheRanch)). Individual Tickets start at \$100 (prices increase to \$125 on Aug. 1); Series Passes are available for \$500 (prices increase to \$600 on Aug.1).



### JAZZ AT THE RANCH RANCHO CIELO

#### **Tony Lindsay & The Soul Soldiers**

FRIDAY | AUGUST 25 | 7:30 p.m.

Eleven-time Grammy® Award winner and former lead vocalist for Santana.

#### **Bruce Forman & Cow Bop**

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 1 | 7:30 p.m.

Internationally acclaimed jazz guitarist with Texas Western Swing.

#### **Monterey Jazz Festival Regional All-Star Band & Vocal Ensemble**

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 8 | 7:30 p.m.

#### **Youth Orchestra Salinas**

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 15 | 7:30 p.m.

A very special performance by members of the YOSAL staff of internationally acclaimed instructors.

#### **Monty Alexander**

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 29 | 7:30 p.m.

Grammy® nominee and legendary pianist.

#### **Paula West**

FRIDAY | OCTOBER 6 | 7:30 p.m.

A Tribute to Bob Dylan

FOR TICKETS AND INFORMATION:





## Rancho's Holistic Model to Support Student Success

An innovative feature of the programming at Rancho Cielo is its case management model, which individualizes support to each student's needs, helps remove barriers — from transportation to nutrition — and encourages development of healthy coping mechanisms for emotional distress and trauma that may interfere with their academic and vocational training. This approach considers the whole student, increasing their ability to focus and engage in their education, and ultimately, make successful transitions into post-secondary training programs, college or careers.

Each program has a dedicated Case Manager who meets with students weekly, so they can best help navigate challenges during their time at Rancho Cielo. "We ensure their needs are being covered for them to be their full selves, otherwise they may not be prepared for the opportunities we're ready to give them," said Gabriela Manzo, Rancho Cielo's Lead Case Manager. Case Managers build strong relationships with students, drawing upon specialized training in culturally relevant programming and trauma-informed healing practices. When issues are beyond their expertise, they refer students to the on-site mental health professional (thanks to a partnership with Harmony At Home).

If needed, they provide students a ride home, to appointments or court proceedings, which they will attend for moral support. They also meet with Probation Officers about their progress or write character reference letters. If students are interested in college, they help demystify the application process, as many will be the first in their families to attend. Additionally, Case Managers connect students with apprenticeships, internships and full-time jobs and assist with resumes, job applications and interview preparation.

It's extraordinarily unique for a career and technical education institution, particularly a nonprofit, to employ case management. That's the beauty of Rancho Cielo — helping youth transform their lives, realize their potential, and become productive members of society and an inclusive economy.



*Pictured: Case Management Team*

## Rancho Cielo Launches Enrichment Programs



Rancho Cielo's enrichment programs provide educational and transformative experiences that empower youth from diverse backgrounds with hands-on skills, responsibility and self-confidence. Students can choose from beekeeping, dog care and training, bike mechanics/riding, horsemanship, gardening, fishing and art. Each program offers a fun diversion from their studies that also allows them to enjoy the beauty of the Rancho Cielo campus. In turn, students feel calmer and more motivated, which translates directly back to their academics and vocational training.

*Pictured: Beekeeping, Leadership Garden, & Bike Programs*



# Ranch News

## Ag Tech Program Builds Refrigeration System for Local Farmer

Our Ag Technology/Mechatronics program recently completed a super cool project – literally. It all started when our partners at Kitchen Table Advisors connected our Ag Tech team with a need that was right in our own backyard: commercial refrigeration for farmers. When farmers harvest their crops, they need to be able to keep



*Ag Tech Team with their refrigeration build*

everything cold to maintain freshness for as long as possible. For big corporations this is no problem – but for the smaller farmers who don't necessarily have a refrigerated warehouse on site, it's a little more challenging.

Ag Tech Instructor Andres Aranda and Assistant Ag Tech Instructor Arnold Chavez were connected with a local organic farmer who was tending an acre plot as a part of the ALBA program.

Over the course of approximately four months, our students built an 8'X8' refrigeration system that utilized a standard AC unit that was supercharged with a Coolbot device, getting the fridge down to a chilly 30 degrees F. One of the students on the project, Giovanni Landeros, remembers how exciting it was when the system actually decreased to 30 degrees. As a prototype, you're always hoping that everything comes together – and it's magic when it finally does. One of the biggest things that Landeros and the rest of the students learned was about insulation and creating

an airtight environment to maintain the temperature for optimal freshness. After they completed the structure, the Ag Tech team transported it to the local farm to install.

The Ag Technology/Mechatronics program plans to continue to build these commercial yet compact refrigerators for farmers – all while learning valuable skills in the industry.

## OCSD Open House and Project Update

If you weren't able to attend our Open House event on June 20th for our Construction Academy's latest project, allow us to fill you in (and yes, you definitely missed out!).

The Rancho Cielo Construction Academy, together with NexusHousing.org, shared the progress of their sustainable home build, named Nexus\_01, for the Orange County Sustainable Decathlon. Once completed, the home will be transported to the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa, CA for evaluation in October of this year. An arsenal of talented business owners have collaborated to bring this project to fruition. Noteworthy contributors who have donated their expertise and resources include Thomas Rettenwender of EcoLogic Architects, Bill Hayward of Hayward Lumber, and Pete Scudder of Scudder Roofing – and that is not an exhaustive list!



*Checking out the sustainable home build at the OCSD Open House*

With all of these talented pioneers coming together, the project is pretty impressive: Nexus\_01 is a net-zero energy, 847 SF, 1 bedroom (plus a loft!), 1-bathroom single family home. "I think this competition can bring some national attention and hopefully new supporters," said Rancho Cielo Founder and retired Superior Court Judge John M. Phillips.



## RANCHO CIELO

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### Save the Date!

## TASTE OF Markon

Join celebrated Markon member chefs from across the country for a one-of-a-kind culinary event in support of Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy, helping students build a brighter future through hard work and creative skill.



### Contact Cathy Gomez

for sponsorship opportunities:  
831-775-1439  
[cathyg@markin.com](mailto:cathyg@markin.com)

### Event Preview:



# 9.22.23

5:30 p.m.

Hors D'oeuvres & Wine

6 - 8:30 p.m.

Strolling Dinner

Tickets are limited for this exclusive affair and will go on sale soon.

### Get in Touch

#### Events & Dining Room Reservations

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

#### Student Enrollment

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#### Donations

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

#### Volunteer Opportunities

Sandra Moore 831.444.3523  
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#### Main Office

831.444.3533

### How to Give

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