

SHORTCUTS

GIVING BACK



Rancho Cielo Celebrates 25 Years of Youth Success

BY BRETT WILBUR

In honor of Rancho Cielo's 25 years of life-changing work with youth in our community, a celebration will be held on Saturday, October 25, from 2 to 9 pm.

In 2000, John Phillips was a Monterey County Superior Court judge frustrated with sentencing teenage offenders to life in prison. Wanting to intervene in the life of at-risk youth before they landed in his courtroom, he created the nonprofit Rancho Cielo, located on 100 tranquil acres in Salinas. Over the years, the campus has served as a supportive high school with a variety of vocational and enrichment programs.

"Initially, Rancho Cielo was just for kids who had gotten into trouble and needed a more positive environment to start changing their lives," Phillips says. "It evolved into one of the top and very few vocational high schools around...We offer unique things like car restoration and culinary programs. It gives kids an opportunity to not just get a high school diplo-

ma but to head in the right direction in life and build self-confidence and enthusiasm."

Although the feasibility study initially proclaimed the program impossible in scope, it has surpassed all expectations and now serves as an international model. Many of the kids, who have come from incredibly challenging circumstances, have gone on to successful careers. The Drummond Culinary Academy helps students gain experience in the restaurant industry while also earning college credits.

"Rancho Cielo has brought the whole Monterey County community together with a common goal," Phillips says.

An anniversary celebration takes place on October 25 from 2-9pm at 710 Old Stage Road, Salinas. \$75/ticket. For more information, call 831/444-3533 or visit www.ranchocieloyc.org.