



# RANCHO CIELO

Fall 2025



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## A Beautiful Ongoing Partnership With Pebble Beach Company

Remember the year 2000? As we collectively entered the new millennium (and sighed that the Y2K scare was over), Rancho Cielo was being established by then **Monterey County Superior Court Judge John Phillips** and a strong coalition of community members and public-private partnerships. Twenty-five years later, Phillips says what surprised him the most has not only been how great the need for our programs was, and still is, but also how robust the response has been to that need from the private sector and local industry across the Peninsula and the Salinas Valley.

Today, the strength and number of our partnerships have grown exponentially and are a key component in the life-changing impact this nonprofit can have on the lives of our youth and the community. Large-scale events like **Monterey's annual Car Week** provide an opportunity for locals and visitors to see our partnerships in action in the community.

Car Week also provides several opportunities for students from our **Drummond Culinary Academy (DCA)** and **Classic Car Restoration** programs to be exposed to and learn from participating in once-in-a-lifetime experiences, thanks to a longtime partnership between Rancho Cielo, **Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, Pebble Beach Company** and **Pebble Beach Company Foundation**.

When our Classic Car Restoration program started to take shape in recent years, our ongoing charitable partnership with Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance dramatically increased, as they saw our potential in training underserved youth to repair and restore automobiles—particularly collector cars. The funding for this partnership stems from donations made in memory of automotive legend **Don Williams**, enabling students to acquire the skills necessary to fill a niche in the industry and keep the car show and racing traditions that this area is known for alive for years to come. **(Continued on pg. 2)**





# Pebble Beach Partnership



Respected UK engineer, Tony Purnell (left), discusses his award-winning 1953 Jaguar C-Type with Rancho Cielo students.

Rancho Cielo's classic car students have shown their talents at the **Concours Village** for the past two years. In 2024, they displayed a meticulously restored cherry red **1952 MG**, and this year, their skills stunned crowds with a **1929 Model A** (restoration in progress; pictured, bottom right). Rancho Cielo staff and students were on hand to update guests on the restoration work and describe how the students are working on all aspects of the restoration, from bodywork to drivetrain to painting and upholstery. Students also had the opportunity to enjoy other aspects of the Concours d'Elegance, from exploring the show field, seeing the concept cars on display at the Concept Lawn and hearing from automotive experts at the **Pebble Beach Classic Car Forum**.

A point of pride was to get a sneak peek at a rare **1953 Jaguar C-type** (pictured

above) before it was shown at the Concours d'Elegance. The Jaguar's owner, world-renowned UK engineer and entrepreneur **Tony Purnell**, whose career has stretched from Formula One to the Olympics, brought the car to Rancho Cielo's campus, where Auto & Diesel Repair and Classic Car Restoration students worked together with his team to prepare the Jaguar for the show field—and it placed second in its class. Purnell was connected to Rancho Cielo through his relationship with Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, another great example of the impact this partnership has on our organization. During the automotive celebration, our DCA students showed off their culinary skills in private functions throughout Pebble Beach, preparing and serving multi-course meals under the guidance of **Executive Chef Estevan Jimenez**, for car enthusiasts and luminaries alike. This was not their

first foray into fine dining at Pebble Beach; DCA has also shone at the prestigious **Pebble Beach Food & Wine** event in recent years. In April 2025, thanks to the Pebble Beach Company Foundation, DCA students were invited to take part in preparing the second annual **Foundation Table Dinner** at **The Beach Club** in Pebble Beach, enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work and learn alongside culinary legends **Alice Waters** and **Jonathan Waxman**. DCA also had the chance to take part in the first Foundation Table Dinner in 2024, gaining new skills and techniques from renowned chef and TV personality **Andrew Zimmern** (pictured, front page). In addition, the Pebble Beach Company Foundation generously grants funding to support the DCA, which helps support vital components of the program. Importantly, the funding helps provide transportation to culinary internships across the Peninsula (more on p. 6) and supports onsite

culinary training through our **Friday Night Dinner** service (open to the public October-June) and catering services. All of this prepares our students for successful careers in the hospitality industry in Monterey County and beyond. Thanks to a workforce development program, several Rancho Cielo grads have been hired by the Pebble Beach Company as chefs, servers and greenskeepers (with machinist and fabricator positions opening to students soon). We are grateful for the support of our partners and the experiences and opportunities these relationships create for our students. As Rancho Cielo's partnership with the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, the Pebble Beach Company and the Pebble Beach Company Foundation strengthens year after year, it's evident that we will build upon our successes and help grow our next generation of skilled professionals in the culinary and automotive industries.



Classic Car Restoration Instructor Roy Sosa (above in the black hat) works with students on their latest project, a 1929 Ford Model A.



# Veggie Box Rules: 10 Years and Counting

What began as a small idea around a Rancho Cielo boardroom table has grown into one of Monterey County's signature community fundraisers. "I just walked into a meeting with the concept of vegetables in a bag as a fundraiser," Veggie Box co-founder and Rancho Cielo board member Mike Costa recalls. In its first year, 900 veggie bags were assembled on a single line of tables. Costa reached out to local agricultural companies, contacted farms and spoke with prominent local produce leaders, requesting produce donations. Their support was instrumental, as was the spirit of innovation and determination that carried the event forward. The Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser just marked its 10th anniversary with record-breaking success. Costa says it truly became a bona fide success when Rancho Cielo partnered with local nonprofits, including the Salvation Army of Salinas, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County, the Food Bank of Monterey County and Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz. This year's fundraiser was a testament

to an effort that has grown beyond anything imagined. More than 15,000 veggie boxes, filled with fresh produce from over a dozen local shippers and growers, were distributed to families and organizations across the region and beyond. The BBQ element has also grown. This year, 2,500 BBQ lunches were served to sponsors and the public. What makes the fundraiser even more remarkable is the collaboration of hundreds of volunteers, students, alumni, Rancho Cielo staff, local businesses and community members coming together each year to ensure everything runs seamlessly. The Veggie Box & BBQ is more than a fundraiser—it's a celebration of what can be achieved when a community unites around shared purpose. "This is one of the best community-based fundraisers I've ever seen," Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers says. "I'm very thankful for the entire community."



Just a few days after starting the new school year, Rancho Cielo students helped prepare and assemble 2,500 BBQ lunches.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Veggie Boxes Distributed:  
**15,395**

BBQ Lunches: **2,500**

Sponsors: **110**

Community Volunteers: **419**

Materials Recycled: **7,720 lbs\***

Amount of Materials Diverted  
From the Landfill: **82%\***

*\*Provided by WM (formerly Waste Management)*



For a decade, Mike and Kim Costa's leadership and tireless dedication have helped transform a small, annual effort into a largescale fundraiser that not only raises money for Rancho Cielo's programs but also provides fresh and healthy produce to many in need.

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# Fundraising & Development



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**2025**



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## SPECIAL THANKS TO

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# Rancho Cielo's 25th Anniversary Celebration

**MUSIC • FOOD • AWARDS • COMMUNITY**

**10 • 25 • 25**

A benefit to honor our legacy of building skills and transforming lives.



**FEATURING**

**Chris Cain & Tony Lindsay**

*A Tribute to Ray Charles*

**John Nava & the Latin Jazz Collective**

## **A Culinary Experience**

American Culinary Federation  
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Folktale Winery & Vineyards  
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and Rancho Cielo's Drummond  
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*Fine local wine & craft beer available for purchase.*



SCAN OR VISIT  
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**\$75/ticket**  
includes food &  
entertainment

**All proceeds  
benefit our  
programs  
and youth.**

**Sally Hughes Church Amphitheater | 710 Old Stage Road, Salinas, CA**

Rancho Cielo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



# DCA's Summer Internship Program Continues to Grow



Executive Chef of The C Restaurant + Bar Matt Bolton with DCA student Isaiah "Jacob" Flores, who picked up real-world experience while interning at the popular ocean view restaurant on the Monterey Peninsula.

Last summer, our Drummond Culinary Academy's Summer Internship Program was its most robust yet. 17 students were placed at 10 top restaurants throughout Monterey County, including the Quail Lodge, Fish Hopper and Folktale Winery & Vineyards. Every student completed their eight-week internship, and 10 received job offers; the other seven are focusing on school full-time.

"Being exposed to a professional work environment outside of the Rancho Cielo culinary program gives the students a new and appreciative perspective on the industry, as well as their self-worth and what they can contribute," Wanda Straw, DCA General Manager, says.

DCA student Efrain Villa Valdez says he enjoyed his internship at the legendary Sardine Factory, especially learning how to make a cheesecake from local celebrity chef Bert Cutino. He looks forward to gaining more knowledge from Cutino while working at the iconic spot.

At Bernardus Lodge & Spa, Tony Campos, DCA Junior Culinary Coordinator, delved into the world of in-room dining (room service), an area he had little experience with.

"I had to learn all of the Michelin standards of talking on the phone," Campos explains. "I must ask, 'Are there any dairy or food allergies I should know about?' From there, you take the order, you get it ready, load up the cart and bring it to the room. All the training I got here from Laura [Nicola] and Wanda [Straw] helped me out a lot."

Campos is one of the students who was offered a position after completing his internship. He'll be doing everything from bussing to serving to eventually bartending.

"The internships expand [our students'] world, and in turn, they gain confidence and feel valued," Straw says.



## FRIDAY NIGHT DINNERS ARE BACK!

*Support the future  
of young chefs!*

EVERY DISH HELPS OUR  
DRUMMOND CULINARY ACADEMY  
STUDENTS GAIN SKILLS,  
EXPERIENCE AND CONFIDENCE!



**RESERVATIONS  
REQUIRED**

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

Rancho Cielo is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization.





## Alumni Spotlight: Lorie Sanchez



*"There was a lot of gang violence around me in Salinas, but Rancho Cielo was there for me and put me on a great path," Lorie Sanchez says. Follow her delicious creations on Instagram: [lories\\_cakery](#).*

After working until 3pm at the Flying Artichoke in Salinas, Lorie Sanchez drives into Marina for her shift at the Brass Tap. Between the two jobs, the 30-year-old averages about 70 hours a week, most of which she spends on her feet. But Sanchez is always wearing a smile that can brighten a room and has an infectious laugh that punctuates most of her conversations.

"Lorie is one of those students that you will never forget," DCA Dining Room Manager and Front-of-House Instructor Laura Nicola says. "I knew immediately that she would excel in the culinary program, especially in the front of the

house. Dinner guests would specifically request to have her as their server. Lorie was also a great team player, an extremely hard worker and always willing to jump in and help whenever needed." Sanchez says that growing up in East Salinas, she never considered culinary school an option because of the cost. Then, she learned about Rancho Cielo from a cousin. She was eager to start. Sanchez took part in every event and Friday Night Dinners, missing only one over two years. She was determined to learn everything, cooking, front-of-house service and baking, of course.

"Laura [Nicola] taught me to keep on smiling regardless of what happens and never to give up," Sanchez says. Two days after graduating from the Drummond Culinary Academy, Sanchez was on a plane to Boulder, Colorado,

where she received a full scholarship to attend Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts.

It was her first time leaving California. She left everything behind for a world very different from her hometown.

After learning how to bake bread, macaroons, and everything else imaginable at Auguste Escoffier, Sanchez had an opportunity to work as a pastry chef at a luxury ski resort in Sun Valley, Idaho. There, she refined her skills in gourmet French pastries for nearly three years before returning to Salinas to be close to her mother.

Sanchez's dream is to start an online baking business that meets everyone's dessert needs. When she's not working or baking, Sanchez travels to find baking inspiration, exploring the desserts of the United States and abroad. She's visited Dubai, Mexico and Colombia, and she plans to go to Oregon and Hawaii in the coming months. In January 2026, she will head to Japan.

"I am so proud of Lorie and the person she has become," Nicola adds. "I know she will continue to succeed in whatever she sets her mind to."

## Student Spotlight: Ruben Robles

Before coming to Rancho Cielo, Ruben Robles didn't think he would graduate from high school. Now, the 17-year-old Construction & Sustainable Design Academy student is on course to graduate this year.

"I came to Rancho Cielo because I need a lot of help with my reading skills," Robles explains. "I also needed to catch up on a lot of academic credits."

While attending a local public high school, the Watsonville native who now lives in East Salinas says he didn't care much about going to school. He felt like he was slipping through the cracks. Over the past year, his outlook has completely changed.

Robles mentions one of his instructors, Ed Bennett, and his case manager, Jessica Montero, as two of many mentors at Rancho Cielo who regularly support him in any way he needs.

"Ed's taught me a lot since I've been here, like reading a tape measure and communication skills," Robles says.

Robles's first encounter with Montero, before starting Rancho Cielo in 2024, is something he'll always remember—it's a clear example of how dedicated our case managers are.

"Jessica called and asked if I needed anything, and I mentioned that I needed new clothes," Robles begins. "And she got me some new clothes. That was a good push to get me going for the school year."

After he graduates, Robles plans to work in construction for a few years, doing roofing or framing. Then, he's planning to join Cal Fire and eventually



*"Ruben's positive attitude and reliability make him a true role model for his peers," Case Manager Jessica Montero says. "We're proud of his growth and excited to see what he achieves next!"*

become a firefighter.

"Since joining Rancho Cielo, Ruben has been a dependable, hardworking and kind member of our program," Montero says.





# RANCHO CIELO

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## SAVE THE DATE



## CONTACT

### Main Office

831-444-3533

### Student Enrollment

[recruitment@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:recruitment@ranchocieloyc.org)  
831-444-3561

### Donations

[giving@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:giving@ranchocieloyc.org)  
831-444-3530

### Volunteer Opportunities

[pcampos@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:pcampos@ranchocieloyc.org)  
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## GIVE

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P.O. Box 6948  
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To better serve you and operate more efficiently, we're updating our donation acknowledgement process. In January, we will provide you with a single, comprehensive tax acknowledgement statement for the previous calendar year, summarizing all donations made during that year. For more information visit [ranchocieloyc.org/donate](http://ranchocieloyc.org/donate).

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