



RANCHO CIELO

Summer 2024



Rancho Cielo's graduating class of 2024 celebrated with the customary cap launch to close out the ceremony.

IN THIS ISSUE **Rancho Cielo's Largest Graduation Ever!**

CEO's Message

Last year, I wrote with excitement about recently honoring our Rancho Cielo graduates in partnership with John Muir Charter Schools. The 37 students who made up the Class of 2023 were our largest graduating class at the time.

Student Spotlights

Rancho Cielo Class of 2024

On June 14, the Class of 2024 shattered that record, with 73 students receiving their high school diplomas! Even bigger news is that more students are working and going to college than ever. Over 70% of our graduates this year are already committed to continuing their education or working full or part time, proving their strong commitment to their future and the impact of our programs.

Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser

Jazz at the Ranch

Our students have demonstrated exceptional dedication, perseverance and academic and personal growth, and this year's graduation ceremony served as a tribute to their hard work. They will embark on the next chapter of their lives, equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed.

Support a Student

DCA Summer Internship Program

Meanwhile, Rancho Cielo continues to provide fantastic opportunities for students. This summer, we kicked off the Drummond Culinary Academy's first official paid Summer Internship Program (p. 6), which paired 12 work-ready students with some of the region's most beloved dining spots, including the Sardine Factory and Bernardus.

Enrichment Program Updates

Infinity Learning Maps

Also, we recently had the first of two driver's ed cohorts this summer, and, in total, about a hundred students have gone through the program—more than 90% have passed the written exam, marking the halfway point to becoming fully licensed drivers.

Save the Date

We are so proud of our students and their continued success, and look forward to keeping up this momentum!

Chris Devers
CEO



Student Spotlights

CLASS OF 2024 SPOTLIGHT Ismael Hernandez

It's only been a few days since Ismael Hernandez graduated from high school. A year ago, he would've never thought he'd make it.

"There was a time when I didn't think I'd graduate," Hernandez says. "I was behind by a few credits [at Greenfield High School]."

"I feel accomplished, happy, and I'm just glad I was able to do it for my mom," the Greenfield native says.

When Hernandez started at Rancho about nine months earlier, he had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. But then, he found the Welding & Fabrication program.

Since starting at Rancho, Ismael's skills and determination have earned him a \$500 scholarship to purchase safety equipment. His craftsmanship has yielded intricate metalwork in the form of decorative flowers, which he created in his spare time as gifts to several of his instructors.

In addition to the bankable welding skills Ismael has learned, he says he's also learned how to appropriately interact with others. "I've learned maturity and thinking about my future. It has a lot to do with confidence," Ismael says. "Also, the people I was [hanging out] with were always getting into trouble." Before he came to Rancho, Ismael played soccer to avoid the "friends" who could potentially get him in trouble. Now, he can do something that he not only enjoys and is gifted at, but it will also support a family one day.

"I'm going to continue to educate myself because I don't want the bare minimum," he says. "I want to go for the top. If I get a chance to [continue my education] now, why waste it when I can accomplish much more? I'm going to continue to work on my skills."



Ismael Hernandez shows off one of his fabricated metal flowers. Jesus, his older brother—by a little over a year—also graduated from Rancho Cielo this year.

Ismael says his mom was incredibly proud to see him graduate, primarily since he and his brother represent the first high school graduates on her side of the family.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Caleb Baker

After completing the three-month program, Baker's grandmother turned him on to Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy. At 23 years old, he knew he had to act quickly since he was approaching the age cutoff. "I found my place in life—in the kitchen," Baker says. "I felt like I was finally excelling. This was how I was able to find success. I found my passion."

He also found a lifetime mentor in DCA Executive Chef/Instructor EJ Jimenez.

"EJ taught me the importance of quality, service and remaining humble," Baker says.

Several years after graduating from DCA, that sense of humility that Baker credits Jimenez for instilling in him has helped him navigate a successful career that first led him to the position of pastry chef at The Club at Pasadena.

Then, about a month ago, Baker landed the executive chef position at the Bayonet Grill at Bayonet and Black Horse golf course in Seaside.

As part of the Bayonet Grill's revamping, Baker has been tasked with developing an entirely new banquet menu and new breakfast and lunch menus, which haven't changed for 15 years.

Baker is confident that the skills he developed at Rancho will ensure his creations will simultaneously give longtime diners something fresh while keeping some familiarity intact.

A sneak peek at some of his new menu items includes Cannoli French Toast, Pineapple Upside Down Pancakes and a Short Rib Breakfast Skillet.

"Food can be elegant and fun at the same time," Baker says. "EJ also taught me that."



In 2020, Monterey native Caleb Baker received an Advanced Culinary Certificate from Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy.

Caleb Baker says that cooking saved his life. About six years ago, he found himself in an inpatient treatment facility for alcoholism.

"I wasn't happy with life, and I had lost my way," Baker says.

RANCHO CIELO



"I get asked all the time why I smile so much, and to that, I respond, 'I'm just so glad to be here.' Overall, my character has changed for the better, and I've embraced the support of those around me," student speaker and Welding & Fabrication graduate Julie Gonzalez said. "Every day presents an opportunity for growth, and I'm committed to lifelong learning."

Before **John Muir Charter School CEO RJ Guess** handed out diplomas, there were many words to share with the 400-plus attendees. But the focus remained on the 73 graduates sitting on the stage behind the speakers.

"We have more students working and going to college than ever," **Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers** said. "Improved outcomes to include 100% enrollment growth with an 83% attendance rate, reduced attrition rate, 100% improvement in the graduation rate and more students working and going to college than ever before."

"People always ask, 'Was it worth it?,'" **Rancho Cielo Founder Judge John Phillips** said. "It's all worth it on one day—this day. Graduation!"

"Your past and your environment doesn't define you," **Alumni Speaker Ashleigh Soto** said. "The highest human act is to inspire. Inspiration is truly what Rancho Cielo represents. To the graduates here today: Your true journey begins now."

"How do we know who we are?" **Keynote Speaker, Hartnell College President Michael Gutierrez** asked. "It's how we add value to people."

73 students graduated in 2024, making it Rancho Cielo's largest class to date, up **150%** in five years.

Over **70%** of the class of 2024 are continuing their education and/or employed.



CHRIS DEVERS



RJ GUESS



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Fundraising & Development



JAZZ AT THE RANCH
RANCHO CIELO

We're pleased to continue our tradition of joining music and the culinary arts to benefit our Arts and Mental Health programs!

CHRIS CAIN

MONTEREY JAZZ REGIONAL
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NICHOLAS BEARDE WITH FULL SPECTRUM JAZZ BAND

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Support a Student for a Year!

Rancho Cielo continues to grow, and with that growth expanded facilities and additional resources are needed to ensure our students' success. Every gift, large or small, will help make a difference in our students' lives and our community.

We've all heard, "It takes a village," and in our case it is true. Every student enrolled at Rancho Cielo attends for free. Thanks to your generosity, we fund 100% of our students' academic and vocational education—it takes roughly \$30,000 to fund one student's annual tuition.

Rancho Cielo provides a secure haven, empowering these youth to achieve a WASC-accredited high school diploma alongside hands-on vocational education that prepares them for higher education or full-time employment. Such an endeavor is not easy, which is why we support the whole student—their essential needs and well-being—and remove barriers to success.



Through partnerships with public agencies, community-based organizations and compassionate citizens like you, Rancho Cielo implements a comprehensive set of services and programs to help young people reach their potential.

Support for a student includes:

- Holistic case management and counseling with a mental health professional.
- Daily nutritious meals, prepared from scratch on site.
- Transportation to and from Rancho Cielo.
- Driver's education, enrichment programs and more.



SCAN TODAY!
EVERY GIFT HELPS
OUR YOUTH!



DCA Launches Robust Internship Program



Rancho Cielo Drummond Culinary Academy graduates Demi Rodriguez and Tony Campos (caught candidly in between blinks) receive expert guidance from Executive Chef Colin Moody during their summer internships at The Club at Pasadera.

2024 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PARTICIPANTS

This isn't the first time Rancho Cielo Drummond Culinary Academy students have interned at popular spots throughout the county. However, through a partnership with the Monterey County Hospitality Association, this summer marks our first internship program that places 12 work-ready students at seven locations and provides transportation, if needed, during the eight-week program.

AMAPOLA KITCHEN & WINE MERCHANT
BERNARDUS LODGE
FOLKTALE WINERY & VINEYARDS
MONTEREY PLAZA HOTEL
QUAIL LODGE
SARDINE FACTORY
THE CLUB AT PASADERA

Also, all participating employers are committed to delivering permanent employment following the paid internship. DCA Program Director Mark Bruszer emphasizes that “the employer will provide the student with work experience and employment guidance, help them gain the knowledge required in the workplace and expand their knowledge in the field.”

Sensory Gardens, New Queen Bees & Learning Leadership From Horses!



Rancho Cielo Beekeeper Mike Kurtz explains to students how to identify a honeybee queen.

Since our seven enrichment programs launched, our students have said they feel happier and even more motivated in their studies after spending time throughout the school day with the horses, working with the bees in our apiary or fishing in one of our two ponds. Here are updates from some of our enrichment programs.

Bicycle Maintenance: Program instructor Luciano Rodriguez is in Colorado at the Park Tool School. The hands-on maintenance and repair clinic centers on everything from changing a flat to a complete overhaul. Park Tool also provides Rancho with bike toolkits for students.

Equestrian: Hope Horses & Kids' Lori Tuttle says a new seven-week curriculum, “Leadership to Work Readiness,” will help students explore guidance and how horses demonstrate control in a herd and with humans.

“It's been rewarding to see the students learning and growing,” Tuttle says. Tuttle adds that her team has designed activities to help students “embrace silliness and pretend play, which can be challenging for some kids.”

Gardening: Leadership Garden Manager/Master Gardener Julie Lorenzen is facilitating the installation of two unique

gardens. The self-contained Sensory Garden in the transitional housing courtyard will stimulate sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch in ways that visitors may not usually encounter.

“Sensory gardens have a wide range of educational and recreational applications,” Lorenzen explains. “We will also use it as a respite for students and faculty during the school day.”

The second garden, an Indigenous Peoples Garden near the Silver Star classrooms, will concentrate on plants that the Indigenous people of California use daily, such as native plants for food, medicines, shelter, spiritual ceremonies, clothing, tools and basketry.

Beekeeping: Rancho's head beekeeper, Mike Kurtz, plans to map Drone Congregation Areas (where new honeybee queens mate in the air with drone bees) and register them online on an international map. Under Kurtz's guidance, Rancho students have marked several new queens raised in the apiary on campus this year.

Infinity Maps & Learning About Learning



Rancho Cielo students who volunteered to participate, created Infinity Learning Maps, showcasing the things in their lives that are most important to their success, both in school and at home.

Infinity Learning Maps provide a practical approach for teachers and parents to support students in fun ways by analyzing and improving their learning.

Teachers support students in drawing pictures of their interactions surrounding a learning situation. Students then create data sets from the images and analyze their data to identify areas for improvement.

In April 2024, Dr. Brian Annan and Mary Wootton of Infinity Learn Ltd. spent 10 days on the Rancho Cielo Campus reflecting on how our students can improve their learning once they understand more about the learning-how-to-learn agenda.

Annan and Wootton have laid out a three-year plan to incrementally increase the understanding between staff and students.

Year one (2023-24): Revitalize the relationship between Rancho Cielo strategic leaders, staff and students and the Infinity Learn Ltd. facilitators by trialing the mapping activities in preparation for a full roll-out in 2024-25.

Year two (2024-25): This year, we will see Rancho Cielo staff taking the lead as we roll out a comprehensive Infinity Identity Maps and Learning Maps program.

Year three (2025-26): Staff will be encouraged to adapt the Infinity Identity and Learning Maps program as the students develop a habit of reflecting and adapting as they learn.

Conclusion: The April trip was crucial for setting up the Infinity Learning Maps project for the 2024-25 school year. It revealed that many Rancho

students believe the school positively influences their lives.

Rancho Cielo boasts a world-class alternative education setting where students contribute significantly. The environment, including committed staff, excellent facilities, learning resources, healthy food, physical activities and friendly animals, creates a positive influence on students. Rancho has reached a point where the environment no longer solely influences students; students also contribute to and influence it. As students learn to reflect and adapt, they will continue recognizing their value and gaining confidence.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT INFINITY
LEARNING MAPS



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Taste of Markon
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Jazz at the Ranch
October 18-20, 2024



JAZZ AT THE RANCH
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Reservations open now: Fall 2024



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