



# RANCHO CIELO

Fall 2024



Rancho Cielo Auto & Diesel Repair students present the inaugural Rancho Cielo Student Choice Award at the Concorso Italiano during 2024 Monterey Car Week.

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## A Summer to Remember!

It's been an incredible summer at Rancho Cielo, kicking off with two successful cohorts of our driver's education program. We have now had 125 students participate; 100 students have earned driver's permits, and 54 of them have obtained licenses. In August, a **1952 MG**, fully restored by students from our **Classic Car Restoration Program**, was highlighted throughout **Monterey Car Week** and displayed at the **Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance** and Quail Lodge. It was a wonderful opportunity to highlight the amazing work of our students and the program, which is filling an important niche in training the next generation of car restoration professionals as industry veterans retire. We also had the ninth annual **Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser**. With what can only be described as a "village" of staff and volunteers who make it possible, the impact is beyond anything I've ever experienced. This year, we even extended the reach beyond the Monterey region to serve families in need in East Palo Alto and Redwood City. Topping it off, beautiful organic tomatoes from our Leadership Garden, cultivated in part by our students, took first place at the **Monterey County Fair!**

We are also excited to announce the launch of our new **After School Program**, designed to address the diverse needs of our students, with essential support and opportunities in several key areas: academic support, safety and supervision, social development, recreational engagement, and mental and emotional well-being. Of note, graduate and Monterey area native **Terry Poole**, has come full circle back to our community as the After School Program Manager and mentor to our youth. I encourage you to learn more about it at [ranchocieloyc.org/after-school-program](https://www.ranchocieloyc.org/after-school-program). Your continued support is vital in helping provide these resources and programs for our students to succeed.

Chris Devers  
CEO



# Student Spotlight

## Student Spotlight MYNDY FUENTES

After learning about Rancho Cielo, 19-year-old Drummond Culinary Academy student Myndy Fuentes knew it was the perfect fit. Plus, she's always loved baking.

"I'm not the best in crowds," she says. "Going to Alisal [High School] with more than 3,000 students was not a good fit for her: There wasn't any one-on-one with the teachers."

Over the last two years, Fuentes has benefited from smaller classes—she's on track to graduate in Spring of 2025—which, ironically, has helped with her social anxiety. She feels more confident communicating with people in general.

The proof is in the four internships in which she's excelled at four high-end restaurants throughout Monterey County, including **Lucia Restaurant and Bar** at **Bernardus** in Carmel Valley and **Alila** at **Ventana** in Big Sur.

Having case manager Joshua Cash as a sounding board and a helping hand has also been beneficial. At Alisal High, Fuentes found it difficult to connect with her guidance counselor.

When Fuentes is asked what she will do post-Rancho Cielo, she quickly responds: She hopes to continue her education at **Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts** in Boulder, Colorado, studying to become a pastry chef.

Through the wisdom of some of her culinary mentors, like instructor Chef EJ, Fuentes has already learned the importance of simplicity in cooking or baking.

"I can make any type of ice cream," she says excitedly. "Last week, I made some fresh mint chocolate chip, coffee



*Drummond Culinary Academy student Myndy Fuentes makes pasta. Her 16-year-old sister Melanie is also a DCA student.*

and vanilla ice cream."

It's not about reinventing the wheel for Fuentes. It's all about making the best wheel in the world.



*Rancho graduate Kevin Orozco (left) with Auto & Diesel Repair instructor Luis Ruiz. Orozco currently works in auto body but says he eventually wants to invest in real estate.*

After Kevin Orozco failed every class except one in his junior year at Alisal High School, he couldn't envision graduating high school. Then, he

## Alumni Spotlight KEVIN OROZCO

heard about Rancho Cielo. "I knew I wanted to go [to Rancho Cielo]," Orozco, who was initially attracted by the Auto & Diesel Repair program, says.

When the 19-year-old started his senior year at the 100-acre campus, he discovered something much more than he imagined: A sanctuary equipped to assist—Orozco has learning differences—with his academics on a personalized level that he had never had previously.

"I was not getting the support I needed [at Alisal]," Orozco says.

"And I felt somewhat afraid to ask for help. At Rancho Cielo, multiple people were checking in on me at once. There are so many people here giving

you really good support. Whenever you need them, they'll help you."

The Salinas native says it felt good to graduate from high school and it feels better to know he still has a support system despite no longer being a Rancho Cielo student.

"All of the teachers reassured me that I can come back [to Rancho] whenever I need," Orozco says.

Orozco is taking mechanics and business classes at **Hartnell College**. He's also working at a Salinas autobody shop. He comes by Rancho Cielo frequently to talk to his mentor, Auto & Diesel Repair instructor Luis Ruiz.

"I come here to talk to [Luis] when I need clarity on some stuff," Orozco explains.

He says Ruiz provides him with a lot of solid advice, but the one that sticks with him most: "Not everyone you meet is your friend, but everyone can teach you something."

# Fundraising & Development



Rancho Cielo students were all smiles, volunteering to package delicious barbecue tri-tip lunches.



KSBW was one of many local businesses who volunteered, packing several hundred veggie boxes for delivery.

## 2024 Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser Delivers BIG!

Rancho Cielo's ninth annual Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser was our most successful yet! Over 15,000 veggie boxes were distributed (see the "by the numbers" box for a breakdown of the statistics that stand out most). The event has become one of our most dynamic fundraisers and a local annual institution.

It also showcases one of the values Rancho founder Judge Phillips relied on to turn his dream of Rancho Cielo into reality: anything is possible if our community and local businesses rally together and show support.

In addition to the proceeds going directly to Rancho Cielo, several thousand veggie boxes also benefited some of our area charity/nonprofit partners, including the **Boys & Girls Club of Monterey County, Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz,**

### BY THE NUMBERS

Veggie Boxes Distributed:

**15,120**

Sponsors: **115**

Volunteers: **512**

Student Volunteers: **171**

**Salvation Army of Salinas** and the **Food Bank for Monterey County.**

All of those boxes went directly to families via the aforementioned organizations.

We also served needy families beyond our region; thousands of boxes were donated in support of charity organizations in East Palo Alto and Redwood City!

This ambitious orchestration, facilitation and arrangement of

community collaboration, which took months to organize, couldn't have been possible without Kim and Mike Costa, friends of Rancho Cielo who founded the fundraiser.

"It's about the students," Mike Costa says. "That's the main thing—always remembering it's about the students. Everyone's on board with why we're doing this."

Kim Costa adds, "It's a well-oiled machine!"



Over 170 Rancho Cielo students volunteered their time at our annual Veggie Box & BBQ fundraiser.

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## 2024



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**SPECIAL THANKS**  
TO OUR AMAZING  
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# Fundraising & Development

## JAZZ AT THE RANCH



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NICOLAS BEARDE WITH FULL SPECTRUM  
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In association with  
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## Three Days of Music and Food Supports Arts and Mental Health Programs



**CHRIS CAIN**



**LOS LOBOS**



**SARAH MCKENZIE**

In association with the **Monterey Jazz Festival**, **Jazz at the Ranch** provides a special opportunity to experience the magic of Rancho Cielo while enjoying world-class entertainment.

Our sophomore event boasts a stellar lineup: blues guitar virtuoso **Chris Cain**, acclaimed singer-songwriter **Sarah McKenzie**, renowned SF crooner **Nicolas Bearde with Full Spectrum Jazz** and the acclaimed

7-piece **Latin Jazz Collective with John Nava**. And the one and only multi-Grammy Award-winning rockers **Los Lobos!**

In addition to the notoriety of the artists performing, it's important to note the intimate venue: Concerts are held at our **Sally Hughes Church Amphitheater**, offering a stunning view of the Salinas Valley as a backdrop.

Along with top-notch live music, Jazz at the Ranch features three days of delicious cuisine from Monterey County's most beloved restaurants and some of the most respected chefs in the region, including **Salt Wood Kitchen & Oysterette**, **Folktale Winery** and **Stonies Taphouse & Bistro**.

100% of the proceeds go to Rancho Cielo's arts and mental health programs.



## Students Represent Rancho Cielo at *2024 Monterey Car Week*

On Aug. 17, several of our Auto & Diesel Repair students were at the **Bayonet & Black Horse Golf Course** for the **Concorso Italiano**, one of the many prestigious **Monterey Car Week** events.

The students weren't there to ogle at the dozens of dazzling examples of Italian automotive craftsmanship, including Ferraris, Lamborghinis and Alfa Romeos; they were there to select the inaugural **Rancho Cielo Student Choice Award** winner. The accolade went to Randy Brown for his stunning 1999 Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster Momo Edition.

Meanwhile, Monterey Car Week was an opportunity for Rancho Cielo to showcase its new Classic Car Restoration program and the **1952 MG** (coincidentally, 2024 is the 100th anniversary of the MG), a massive restoration that marks its first project. In addition to being displayed at **The Quail, A Motorsport Gathering** at the **Quail Lodge and Golf Club**, the MG appeared at the **Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance**, the toast of all the week's events.

Classic Car Restoration, a branch of our Auto & Diesel Repair program, was born out of a necessity for a new generation of specialists trained to restore, fabricate and keep these sought-after historical vehicles from fading into obscurity.

Thanks to the support of **Don Williams**, Rancho students can acquire technical expertise while gaining invaluable life skills, self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment in this hands-on vocational training program.

"A lot of the skills it takes to work on older cars aren't around anymore," auto-body instructor **Tom Forgette** says. "Everything has changed so much that the old cars and the new cars have nothing in common."



Rancho Cielo student Marco Narez and alum Kevin Orozco (Class of 2024) with the 1952 MG, which was on display at Pebble Beach during Monterey Car Week. The vintage car was completely restored in 2023 and represents the Classic Car Restoration program's first project.



Rancho Cielo students pose in front of a 1999 Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster Momo Edition, the car they selected as the first-ever recipient of the Rancho Cielo Student Choice Award (the trophy, also constructed by the students, is pictured in the middle) at the Concorso Italiano on Saturday, Aug. 17, at the Bayonet & Black Horse Golf Course in Seaside.

## New YouthBuild Partnership Propels Construction and Culinary Programs

Rancho Cielo is boosting its Construction & Sustainable Design Academy and Drummond Culinary Academy (DCA), further amplifying their impact on our students' education and community, thanks to a recent partnership with YouthBuild. "Through this public-private partnership with the Department of Labor, Rancho Cielo will be able to expand the DCA and realize our culinary dreams in the pastry arts," says Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers. "We'll also be able to serve more students and prepare more students for jobs."

The partnership funds construction and culinary training programs, including credentials like NCCR and ProStart. YouthBuild also provides education, vocational training and leadership development to help students find sustainable careers. Additionally, students will gain the

skills necessary for the construction jobs of tomorrow while prioritizing the creation of homes that are conducive to human health and harmonious with the environment. "[YouthBuild] encompasses education, occupational skills training, leadership development and a large focus on high-quality post-program placement opportunities," says Rancho's YouthBuild Program Manager Jonathan Phan. Phan emphasizes that all housing projects must be geared toward low-income families, aligning with the program's community-focused mission.

"YouthBuild sets up the students to have fruitful careers but also focuses

on community as something to help build and be a part of," he says.



*A Construction & Sustainable Design Academy student works on Nexus\_01, our student-built healthy home that won the inaugural 2023 Orange County Sustainability Decathlon. Rancho Cielo was the sole high school competing against UC Irvine, UC Santa Cruz and other notable universities.*



## RANCHO CIELO FRIDAY NIGHT DINNERS

*Reservations Open!*

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Support our talented students and experience  
epicurean excellence!**

Prix Fixe 3-Course Menu - \$50

Wine & Beer Available



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SCAN





# RANCHO CIELO

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## SAVE THE DATE



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Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay  
Two Portola Plaza, Monterey

#### SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Joanne Bravo - [jbravo@ranchocieloyc.org](mailto:jbravo@ranchocieloyc.org)

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### Donations

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### Volunteer Opportunities

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831-444-3523

### Friday Night Dinners

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



## GIVE

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