

# CSHS NEWSLETTER



Winter 2026

## LETTER FROM THE MANAGER

Hello, CSHS Family,

What a phenomenal year 2025 was! As 2026 begins and we prepare for an exciting new year, I offer my deep gratitude to each one of you for your role in making last year a masterpiece. The warm welcome to my positional shift has filled my heart and made me smile daily. Your support is the momentum that carries our museum forward. Thank you.

We're proud of our accomplishments and excited about the direction we're headed as an organization.



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This past summer, we hosted many fabulous events! Five Fridays in the Pines- with record numbers, three Steam Donkey and Powerhouse Demonstrations, five eventful Sierra Voices, a delicious Ice-Cream Social, a Pancake Breakfast, we participated in the Shaver Lake Volunteer Fire Dept Creek Fire remembrance 2025, as well as our two larger fundraising events: Instead of our Annual Fundraiser Dinner- we hosted our first ever Symphony in the Sierra and the 26th annual Black Pot Cookoff. See page 6 for the Black Pot Cook-Off recap, page 8 for Symphony in the Sierra.

In addition to all these projects and events, our wonderful staff kept the museum doors open seven days a week. In the summer of 2025, we were delighted to welcome new hires Mackinna Anderson and Seth Chrisman, as well as our new Administrative Assistant, Cheyenne Cheney. Each of them has jumped right in, greeting guests with enthusiasm and serving as invaluable museum assistants.

We were also fortunate to have familiar faces back with us: Mitch Dunshee returned for his second season, Cory Nelson for his third, and Joy West and Deb Bell continued to be treasured members of our team throughout the summer, each celebrating over a decade of dedicated service. This summer marked the start of a grand new chapter in volunteerism at the museum for Deb, as she quietly stepped away from her role as an assistant.

Their energy, commitment, and heart are felt in every corner of the museum. We are so grateful for their kind, attentive, dedicated work!

Thank you for being our rock, and at our Friday in the Pines evening- our rock and roll, and for making each and every event successful and so much fun!

Warm regards,  
Jeanine Halbbrook

### Big Updates at the Museum of the Sierra!

We're excited to announce nine new outdoor signs now installed across the Museum grounds. If you haven't visited recently, be sure to stop by during our 2026 season and check them out!

#### New Signs Include:

- SJ&E Caboose
- Flume Tender's Cabin
- Shay Steam Engine Smokestack
- Pelton Wheel
- Ward Tunnel Segment
- Redinger Powerhouse
- Big Creek Aerial & Project Schematics
- Dark-Start-Enabled Generator



Plus, our new Geology Exhibit is now complete—an engaging and beautifully curated addition to the Museum.

Our Botanical garden is in its planning phase. Huge thank you to our amazing volunteers.

We look forward to welcoming you back to explore what's new!





## Partners in Education (PEP) 2025

Our Partners in Education Program (PEP) is made possible in part through the generous support of The Garabedian Foundation. Our educational programs are among the most meaningful work we do — sharing our region's history with the next generation and keeping our stories alive.

The Museum of the Sierra is honored to have a team of knowledgeable, caring volunteers, docents, and staff leading our field trips. Together, they offer a strong balance of experience and enthusiasm, representing retired professionals, mid-career experts, and those just beginning their careers. Our team includes foresters, biologists, geologists, educators, and other dedicated specialists who enrich every visit with their passion and expertise.

April marked the beginning of a busy and exciting field trip season. We kicked things off by welcoming a lively group from the Sequoia Learning Community. In May, we hosted Foothill Middle School, Big Creek Elementary, and Mountain Home School for our Annual Science Days. Later that month, we shared the wonders of our mountain region with students from C.A.R.T. in Fresno at our Careers in the Sierra Educational Day, which focuses on high school juniors and seniors to introduce career opportunities in our mountain region. In June, we hosted a visit from the Visalia FFA chapter; in October and December, we welcomed North Fork Elementary and, in December, Sherman Thomas Charter School from Madera.

It is always a joy to see curiosity spark in students and adults alike as they explore our treasured museum and the stories it holds. In total, nearly 350 students participated in our planned educational field trips this year.

Feedback from students, parents, and teachers was overwhelmingly positive, with many already looking forward to returning next year. This season's success reflects the power of partnership and community in creating meaningful, hands-on learning experiences for our local youth. A special thank you to SCE Camp Edison for the crew of fantastic experts who generously helped with our field trip stations, and to our strident team of volunteer docents who make our museum a family.





## **Central Sierra Resiliency Fund 2025 Review**

It feels strange to write about the Central Sierra Resiliency Fund on the fifth anniversary of its containment. Much has changed—new homes, new landscapes, new realities. We are stronger, Mountain Strong, and recovering still. Yet, the impact of showing up for each other as neighbors and as a community remains as indelible as the fire that forged us.

During the fire and in the long months that followed, the Resiliency Fund focused on the essentials: community organizing, erosion control, replanting through Seedlings of Hope, and preserving the stories of what we endured. Step by step, we rebuilt, and we began to heal.



### **STORYTELLING PROGRAM**

The Creek Fire left a lasting mark on our communities. To honor that experience, the Storytelling Committee spent years gathering first-hand accounts of the fire, the history that preceded it, and the long recovery that followed. Through the work of a small, dedicated team, the voices of those affected were recorded and offered as part of the healing journey for all who chose to share.

In 2024, we published The Creek Fire Storytelling Project, a full-color, nearly 200-page collection of 65 first-hand accounts. The first printing sold out quickly, but we reprinted, and a limited number of copies are still available at the Museum of the Sierra.

These five years have been about more than recovery; they have been about resilience. The Central Sierra Resiliency Fund continues to support the renewal of this region we call home—one still marked by loss but rich in courage, memory, and new growth.

To everyone who lives here, to those who supported these efforts over the last five years, and to all who hold this place in their hearts, thank you.

–Sahara Saude



## The Central Sierra Resiliency Fund 2025 Report



### EROSION

Many of us recall vividly frosted bare hills and crews of dedicated volunteers with red, cold hands, tirelessly learning about and implementing anti-erosion measures above Cressman's, along Peterson Road, at Pine Ridge School, and at many other locations. Between fall 2020 and spring 2021, the Central Sierra Resiliency Fund Erosion Task Force:

- Hosted ten anti-erosion clinics and community workdays
- Spread 421 bales of weed-free rice straw
- Provided 160 tons of mulch
- Dispersed 2,400 linear feet of wattles
- Supplied 1,300 sandbags



### SEEDLINGS OF HOPE

With dedicated oversight of registered foresters, over the past five years, the Seedlings of Hope program has distributed more than 112,000 seedlings to Creek Fire-impacted property owners.

With support from local nurseries, such as Mulholland Citrus, our seedlings are:

- Native to the Central Sierra—Giant Sequoias, Incense Cedars, Pines, and White Firs
- Planted according to local forester recommendations
- Planted within the Fresno County footprint of the Creek Fire
- Provided at no cost to property owners



In 2022, we launched the Cone Collection Project to secure future seed supplies. Professional climbers gathered thousands of cones, yielding nearly 420,000 seeds. Volunteers processed and stored them at the Museum of the Sierra to ensure the next generation of trees.

Each spring, volunteers continue the cycle—lifting seedlings from cold storage and sowing the next crop. Applications for 2026 seedlings are now open on the Museum of the Sierra website.

Seedlings of Hope has been made possible in part through support from the Arbor Day Foundation, CalFire, Cal Forest, Creek Fire Recovery Collaborative, National Forest Foundation, Mulholland Citrus, One Tree Planted, Sierra Resource Conservation District, and Southern California Edison.





## 26th Annual Black Pot Cook-off – All Proceeds to Support our Buildings & Exhibits

The lake came alive on August 2, 2025, as the aroma of simmering pots, the sound of live music, and the laughter of friends and neighbors drifted through the pines. The Annual High Sierra Black Pot Cookoff, hosted by the Shaver Lake Fishing Club, once again brought our community together in the best of ways—around food, fun, and fellowship—all in support of a meaningful cause. By the end of the day, the event had raised approximately \$35,000 for the Museum of the Sierra's Building and Exhibit Fund.

Behind the scenes, it was the heart and hard work of many that made the day shine. From the Shaver Lake Fishing Club members and the McDonald Family who managed the details, to Sue Johnson and the High Sierra Black Pot Cookers who filled the air with mouthwatering aromas, to Stevo Gillett and his fellow musicians whose music lifted spirits—this event is a true team effort. Year after year, their dedication ensures that the tradition not only continues, but flourishes.



**Of course, the day would not have been complete without the many volunteers, donors, and guests who gave their time, resources, and energy to bring it all to life. To everyone who contributed—whether by cooking, playing, donating, or simply gathering with us—thank you. We extend our deepest appreciation to the following individuals, organizations, and businesses whose generosity carried this year's Cookoff to success:**

Shaver Lake Fishing Club  
Southern California Edison  
SDM Realty  
Brenda & Mark Isaac  
Enterprise Car Rental  
DeGraw Livestock  
Don & Carolyn Schimnowski  
Donaghy Sales  
Fresno County Sheriff's SAR  
Quilt & Company Wine

James Quashnick Photography  
Kimberly Clay Designs  
La Boulangerie  
Lite on the Land  
Mountain Milk & Air  
Norman Saude  
Patty Holman  
Reimer Packing  
Shaver Coffee & Deli  
500 Club Bar & Grill



We recently celebrated the launch of our **newest Geology Exhibit!**



The launch event was brimming with excitement as attendees explored our new geology exhibit. We were honored to welcome Chelsea Hutchins and Ben Anderson, whose dedication, along with Craig Poole, brought this exhibit to life. Chelsea delivered a captivating presentation, covering the local geology—from the rock cycle to the Bald Mountain and Dinkey Creek plutons, the metamorphic rocks of the Dinkey Lakes area, and the sedimentary processes of Dinkey Creek and the region's glacial deposits. Her expertise and passion sparked an engaging Q&A session.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this achievement. Together, we continue to inspire and educate our community—thank you for your support and enthusiasm!





Symphony in the Sierra 2025 was a memorable first for CSHS and for the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra. The evening blossomed with musical notes that delighted every ear, including the nearby birds, who responded with their own joyous song.



The very successful fundraiser met expectations and has provided a sustaining amount of capital. Deep appreciation goes out to all who generously supported our endeavors through ticket purchases, donations of time and skill, and, of course, to our magnanimous event sponsor who made the evening possible. We could not do what we do without such a strong community supporting us.



A special thank you to Linsey Garcia for the exceptional catering and to Tess Danielle of Vans Photography for your commitment to capturing our event through an artist's eyes.







**Amphitheater Expansion.**  
The Boogaert Amphitheater has grown to fit our capacity needs! With our growing crowds, it was time to expand and create more space to enjoy events like our Friday in The Pines and Symphony in The Sierra

Work is underway to re-love and expand our Botanical Garden and trails! Led by our museum assistant, Seth Chrisman, along with Master Gardeners and Beautify Shaver Lake volunteers, this work-in-progress is already transforming the space. Thank you to Intermountain Nursery for their partnership and to all who have contributed—from pulling weeds to trimming or removing trees. Special thanks to Tree Trippers Inc. for their support. This project wouldn't be possible without our dedicated volunteers and community partners.



Thank you for helping new life take root!



Oh, but wait! There's more! Work in progress....stay tuned and start planning your next visit! We open at the end of March and are excited to share our transformations with you!







### TASTE OF FREEDOM

In March, the Museum proudly participated in the "Taste of Freedom" reenactment day at Fresno State with a Buffalo Soldiers booth, featuring Robert Knapp, Elin Anderson, and Erin Adams (now retired).



### FIVE-YEAR CREEK FIRE COMMEMORATION TO HONOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Community Invited to Remember and Celebrate the Heroes  
of the 2020 Wildfire



### EMBERS OF GRATITUDE

- Meg Tallberg, Volunteer
  - Marsha Waller, Volunteer
  - Jan Akins, Volunteer
  - Kathy Hall, Volunteer
  - Mitch Duhnshee, Museum Assistant
  - Jeanine Halbrook, Museum Manager
- sold Creek Fire Storytellers' Books and ice cream to support the Shaver Lake Volunteer Fire department at the Embers of Gratitude event at the Community Center





**2026 ANNUAL  
FUNDRAISER DINNER**

**Saturday, June 6**



**PANCAKE  
BREAKFAST**



**JULY 5TH**

**SIERRA VOICES**

Oral history presentations  
to preserve our past.



- June 13th
- July 11th
- August 8th
- September 12th
- October 3rd

**San Joaquin  
Valley  
Flywheelers**

**July 19th**

**2 More  
Shows ADDED!!**

Summer Concert Series  
**FRIDAY IN THE PINES**

• May 15th	• July 24th
• June 12th	• August 7th
• July 3rd	• August 21st
	• September 4th





**Ice Cream  
Social  
July 19th**




**MOUNTAIN  
POWER**

- May 24th
- July 4th
- July 19th
- August 29th

**Annual Black Pot  
Cookoff  
TBA**

**HIKES  
FOR HISTORY**



- June 20th
- July 18th
- August 15th

**CRAFT FAIR**

**FARMERS  
MARKET**

May 24th  
July 4th  
Aug 29th

**CHILDREN'S  
HOLIDAY  
CRAFTS**

**November 29th**



Above dates, times, & events are tentative and subject to change.  
Please check our calendar at [MuseumoftheSierra.org](http://MuseumoftheSierra.org) for any possible changes and updates.





**Debera Bell, Museum  
Assistant**

In 2014, I began a 12-year journey as a Museum Assistant. During that time, I was privileged to interact with staff members, volunteers, visitors, and members of the Central Sierra community.

What was the best part of the job? That's easy. The people.

What did I enjoy doing? Writing and revising exhibit posters. Working with museum software to catalog our extensive collection of artifacts.

Assisting with the publication of The Creek Fire Storyteller's Project.

Familiarizing myself with the museum's invaluable archives – an infinite task! And last but not least – listening to visitors' stories.

The Museum of the Sierra is built upon stories. Our past, our present, our foundation.

Now it is a part of my own story and, I hope, yours.



**Joy West, Museum Assistant**

I love welcoming museum guests from all over—it's energizing to hear their stories and share a little bit of our own history in return. Our volunteers are one of my greatest joys. Their commitment, kindness, and enthusiasm truly make this place feel like family, especially those who have been here with us since I first joined in 2014.

As a Museum Assistant, my hours may be minimal at the moment, but the work is wonderfully busy and deeply meaningful. I'm also a proud mama—one little one nearly ready for preschool and another preparing for their final year of high school—so life is full in all the best ways.



**Mitch Dunshee, Museum Assistant**

My favorite parts of the Museum of the Sierra are the people and exhibits. My fellow staff are like family. We get our work done, enjoy each other's company and have each other's backs. The guests are for the most part enjoyable and have great attitudes. My favorite guests are the kids and dogs. The board members and volunteers all contribute significant effort and time. The museum could not exist without them. My favorite exhibits include the diorama, the taxidermy and the hydroelectric displays.

**Cory Nelsen, Museum Assistant**

As a Museum Assistant, I take real joy in welcoming guests and helping them explore the layered history of this region — especially the development of hydroelectric power and its profound influence on the Sierra. Connecting visitors with the people, innovations, and turning points that shaped this landscape is genuinely one of my favorite parts of the work. And if the moment feels right, I may even slip in one of my famously terrible dad jokes — purely in the name of historical interpretation, of course.

**Mackinna Anderson , Museum Assistant**

My name is Mackinna Anderson, I am a Museum Assistant, and I love working at the museum because I get to share the importance and fascinating natural history of our beautiful community with others. It's rewarding to help people connect with and appreciate our shared heritage every day.

**Seth Chrisman , Museum Assistant**

Hello all! I'm very grateful to be a new member of the Museum team this year. Sierra raised, my love for our mountain home extends from engaging in local botany and boswerke to reading the stories of locals past and present. It is my hope that working with CSHS will allow me to better serve our community with both the skills and values I hold.



### **Cheyenne Cheney, Administrative Associate**



I'm overjoyed to join the team as the Administrative Associate at the Museum of the Sierra — not only as a lifelong local, but as a mother of two strong young women who inspire me every day. The more time I spend in our archives, programs, and community stories, the more layers of Shaver's past I uncover. Just when I think I know everything about this place, it surprises me in the best possible way. There is always something new to learn, and that constant discovery is one of the greatest joys of this role.

What truly makes this work meaningful are the people — the dedicated team I get to collaborate with and the visitors I have the privilege of welcoming and introducing to our rich history. Helping bring amazing events to the community I've always called home feels like both an honor and a gift.



### **Jeanine Holbrook, Museum Manager**

Twenty-four years ago, I moved to the Shaver area to raise my children in a place that reminded me of my own childhood—surrounded by trees and a slower pace of life. As a Fresno transplant, I've come to value the diversity and richness of our region deeply. This year, my transition from Administrative Associate to Museum Manager has been an absolute joy, mainly because of the incredible people around me: our devoted board, inspiring volunteers, generous donors, and talented staff — a team that truly makes every achievement possible.

I love welcoming guests to the museum and our events, watching them leave as friends of the museum, and seeing smiles everywhere. Hosting fabulous events, like the Symphony in the Sierra — where even the birds seemed to join in — reminds me daily why I love this work. With a background in community service, business ownership, volunteerism, and nonprofit leadership, I bring experience and passion to every endeavor. Outside the museum, I'm a happily married Nana to two wonderful grandchildren, dog mom to three amazing pups, and lover of hiking, rock-hounding, and yoga. Above all, I'm grateful to be part of a place like the Central Sierra Historical Society & Museum, where giving back to the community feels as natural as breathing.



As this year renews and blooms before us, your support and dedication inspire growth and sustain our focus on building a lasting legacy for future generations, all while staying true to our mission.

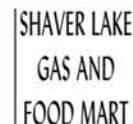
Our mission is to provide cultural and educational experiences to deepen the understanding of the human and natural history of the Sierra region. The Museum of the Sierra is a museum without walls, inspiring future generations to nurture a healthy and resilient forest and community.

Begin your year with the act of giving; Support our mission.

- Renew your commitment to or become a sponsor for 2026
- Renew your membership 2026
- Contribute to our Annual Appeal
- Consider CSHS as part of your estate planning
- Volunteer with us during open season.
- Participate in our amazing events all season long!
- Visit Central Sierra Historical Society & Museum and bring your guests to visit!



**Thank you to our annual sponsors, past and present!**  
**We look forward to a wonderful 2026 with you!**





## **Thank you to our Business Partners, Past and Present. We look forward to renewed friendships and community growth side by side.**

Auberry Feed Station, Patty Jones, Auberry  
Cal West Rain, Larry Isheim, Kerman  
Coleman Farms, Tom & Lisa Coleman, Fresno  
Creek Fire Recovery Collaborative, Tanner Michaelson, Shaver Lake  
Dancing Bear Marketing, Inc., Michael Klepper, Fresno  
Dick's Mountain Tackle, Dick & Diane Nichols, Shaver Lake  
Dogwood Homeowner's Association, Patty Chilpigan, Shaver Lake  
Doug Koerper Construction, Doug Koerper, Shaver Lake  
DRL Automotive Repair, Doug & Cathy Lencioni, Prather  
FACSCO, Steve McBride, Fresno  
Foothill Physical Therapy, Caroline Thomson, Auberry  
Friends of Silver Fir Foundation, John Wagner, Glendale  
Gold Arrow Camp, Steven & Audrey Monke, Huntington Lake  
Golden Empire Electric, Doug & Sharon Tudor, Bakersfield  
Intermountain Nursery, Chris & Beverly Schubert, Prather  
J Noble Binns Plumbing Co, Don & Carolyn Schimnowski, Bakersfield  
J&J Custom Picking, Jim & Judy Erkart, Shaver Lake  
Jack Benigno Tree Service, Jack Benigno, Visalia  
James G. Palmer Appraisals, Josh Palmer, Fresno  
Jeff Covey, CPA, Jeff Covey, Auberry  
Keith Gibson, Realtor, Fresno  
Lite-On-The Land, Steve & Starla Lawshe and Ryan & Kristen Day, Auberry  
Little-Worley's Auto, Brian & Denise Little, Hanford  
McPheeters & Associates, Land Surveying, Katrina Olsen, Clovis  
Mid-Term, Inc, Craig & Ellen Middleton, Fresno  
Muir Trail Ranch, Karla Hurley, Ahwahnee  
Nicholberry Farms, LLC, Brian & Kerry Nichols, Clovis

O'Neill Agri-Management, Inc., Tim & Anna O'Neill, Madera  
Outback Materials, Curtis Lovett, Fresno  
Peter Van Vleet, Realtor, Shaver Lake  
Pinnacle Real Estate of Shaver Lake, Beth Brown, Shaver Lake  
Pius Construction, Diana Pius, Shaver Lake  
Ponderosa Solid Waste, Fred Dow, Friant  
Ponderosa Telephone, Dusty Gauthier, O'Neals  
Reinhardt Insurance Agency, Inc., Walt Reinhardt, Fresno  
Shaver Lake Fishing Club, The McDonald Family, Shaver Lake  
Shaver Lake Marina, Tyler Powell, Shaver Lake  
Shaver Lake Sports, Tyler Powell, Shaver Lake  
Shaver Lake Trophy Trout Project, Caroline Thomson, Treasurer, Shaver Lake  
Sierra Crest Properties, Tami Myers, Shaver Lake  
Sierra Forest Products, Kent Duysen, Terra Bella  
Sierra Marina Inc., Sheldon Sandstrom, Shaver Lake  
T.B. Pump Systems, Thom Boganwright, Madera  
Tim Messer Construction, Inc., Tim Messer, Auberry  
Two Brothers Landscaping, Mario Contreras, Sanger  
Valley Veteran Industries, Inc., James Weirick, Auberry  
Vermilion Resource Management, Juli Stewart & Meghan Breniman, Shaver Lake  
Yosemite Sequoia RC and D Council, Erin Capuchino, Oakhurst  
Waters Properties, Danny & Joan Waters, Fresno  
Watkins Ranches, Keith & Susan Watkins, Visalia  
Wer-Stan Associates, John Stanfield, Bob Stanfield, Shaver Lake  
Western Solid Waste, Fred Dow, Friant  
Wheat Land, Inc., James Anderson, Coalinga