

2024
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2025



**Stanislaus Partners
in Education**

Year In Review

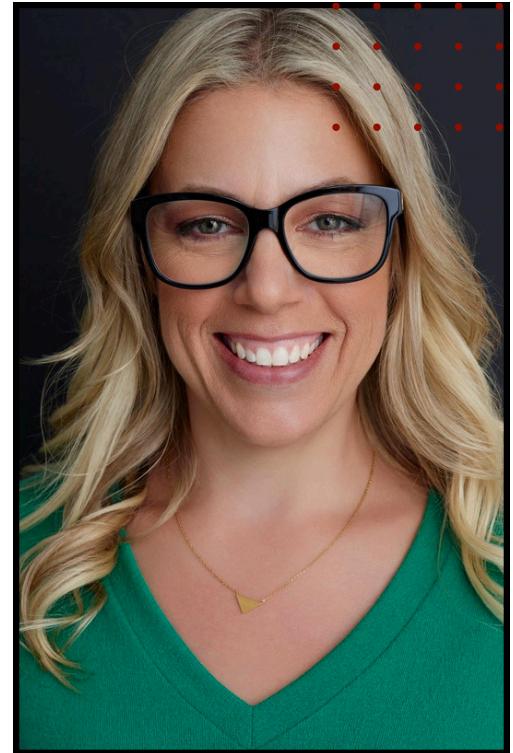
A Message from our Executive Director

Jessica Godden

As I look back on the 2024-2025 school year, one word comes to mind: **momentum**.

For years, SPIE has worked to connect the classroom to the boardroom. But this year felt different. We didn't just maintain those connections; we deepened them, expanded them, and watched them evolve into something truly transformative for our community.

We have moved beyond simply making introductions. Today, SPIE serves as a central convener—a trusted hub where educators and business leaders come together to solve workforce challenges. While we do not serve students directly, we work tirelessly to build the infrastructure that makes their success possible. We support the educators who inspire them and the employers who will eventually hire them.



You can see the impact of this "behind-the-scenes" work across the county. You can see it in the collaborative spirit of our local industries, who are no longer just donating funds but are actively stepping in to co-design pathways with school districts. You can see it in our teachers and counselors, who are now equipped with the industry insights and networks they need to guide students toward viable local careers.

Our mission has always been to create economic vitality by preparing students for rewarding local jobs. But the partnerships we strengthened this year proved that we are doing something even more profound: we are weaving the fabric of our local economy tighter. By aligning the goals of our school districts with the needs of our businesses, we are helping to ensure that the talent cultivated here, stays here.

None of this would be possible without the trust you have placed in us. To our district partners, our generous funders, and the countless business leaders who said "yes" to a partnership—thank you. You are the engine of this work.

As we look toward the future, the path is clear. We will continue to build the wide, sustainable bridges that allow our education and business communities to thrive together.

Thank you for being a partner in this journey.



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Program Manager



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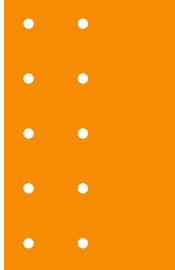
Ivan Valencia
Modesto Police
Department



Sue Zwahlen
City of Modesto



Career Education Grants



In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Career Education Grants program saw a record number of applications, resulting in **\$62,039** being paid out to educators. The program's impact was extensive, with grants supporting projects across **23 unique school districts** and directly impacting around 9,000 students. This funding proved especially critical for high-need schools, as 77% of the grants were awarded to educators at **Title I schools**. Furthermore, the program filled a significant gap, 80% of the educators reporting they receive **no other specific funding** for this type of career education. This program is crucial as it provides unrestricted funds, which educators report can be difficult to secure through traditional district channels, allowing for the flexibility needed to create timely and innovative career-connected learning experiences.



Program Highlight

Educator: Nicole Whorton

School: Standiford Elementary

Program: DashPath: Mobile STEAM and Robotics Lab for Future Innovators

- **Summary:** This program successfully promoted early career awareness and hands-on learning in STEAM concepts for elementary students. By integrating critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and the engineering design process with robotics and coding, the project provided students with foundational skills for future careers in technology and engineering. The mobile lab served multiple schools within the district, impacting hundreds of students and over 30 teachers. STEAM and robotics lessons were modeled for teachers, who received follow-up resources and support to implement innovative learning in their classrooms. Each lesson highlighted relevant careers, inspiring students to envision their future in STEAM professions. The project equipped students with the tools and inspiration to pursue 21st-century careers in technology and engineering.



Program supported by:





Educators in Industry

The Educators in Industry program bridges the gap between classroom learning and emerging industry needs by placing K-12 educators directly within local businesses for paid externships. This transformative initiative connects educators with local businesses to gain real-world insights that enhance instruction and increase student readiness for local careers.

This externship model provides educators opportunities to spend time at a host company, allowing them to gain direct exposure to current workplace practices, technologies, and expectations. The primary purpose is to empower teachers to integrate these industry insights directly into their curriculum, strengthening their ability to teach relevant soft skills, industry language, and career pathways.

In the 2024-2025 school year, the program saw significant interest, with **18 applications** submitted from educators across **7 different school districts**. This high level of engagement demonstrates a strong demand among educators for immersive, real-world professional development.

Program Highlight

Educator: Glenn Ecalne

School: Patterson High School

Program: Supply Chain & Logistics Pathway

Business Host: Sutter Health, Modesto (Supply Chain Division)

Summary: Glenn, who already has strong partnerships with distribution centers, sought to explore logistics in a different sector. He was placed at Sutter Health and trained on their hospital operations management system, working in the main warehouse, ER, and OR. He learned to receive, pick, and deliver medical supplies, opening up the "new world" of Medical Supply Chain, which he can now implement in his curriculum.

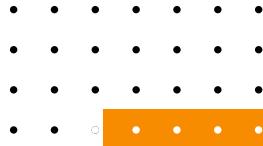
Outcome: The experience provided powerful validation for his program. He worked alongside one of his former students.

During his externship, his former student received a raise, bringing her compensation to over \$60,000 a year with full benefits and tuition reimbursement. Glenn stated, "To be able to work alongside a former student and apply what she has learned in the classroom to a real work setting just validated our efforts here at the high school!"



Program supported by:





Industry & Education Tours

The Industry & Education Tours program is a cornerstone of SPIE's work, designed to encourage mutual understanding and collaboration between education and industry. SPIE has hosted these tours for years, recognizing that the more educators, administrators, counselors, Career Navigators, and Youth Advisors know about the local workforce, the better prepared they are to guide Stanislaus County students.

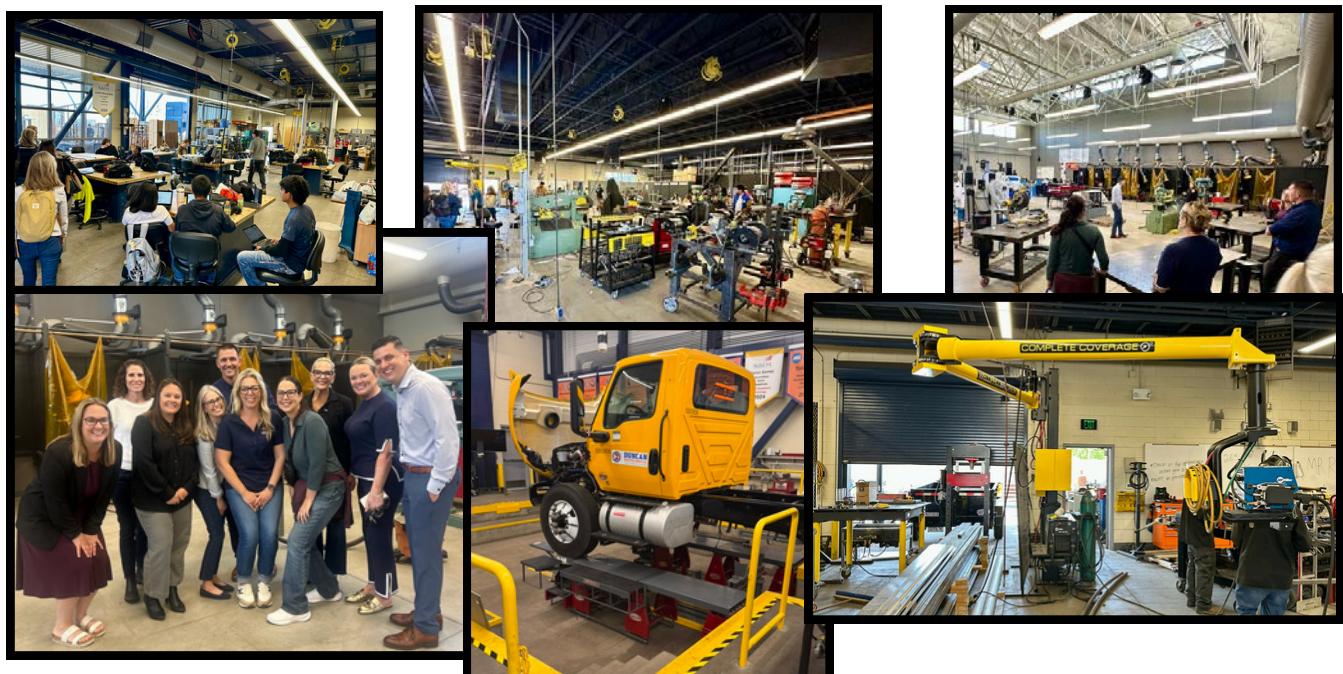
The program has two primary goals:

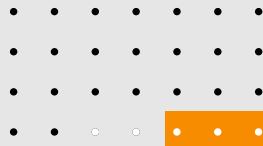
- **For Educators:** To equip counselors and educators with relevant, firsthand knowledge of job requirements, workplace expectations, and emerging career opportunities.
- **For Industry:** To help local employers better understand the innovative programs, facilities, and student preparation happening in local schools and CTE pathways.

2024-2025 Tour Highlight

This year, SPIE recognized the benefit of exploring other successful school districts and brought district CTE directors together with industry partners to tour exemplary programs in neighboring counties. The group visited Fresno Unified School District's Duncan Polytechnical High School to explore two specialized programs: the Innovative Design and Applied Technology Academy (IDATA) and the Medical Academy of Science and Health (MASH). They also visited MaderaTEC (Madera Unified), a powerful program that prepares 8th graders for high school CTE pathways through six career-themed labs aligned with regional industry needs.

These tours give participants valuable opportunities to see and ask questions about model programs, generate ideas to take back to their own districts, and—perhaps most importantly—allow them time to network and build connections with each other.





Recognition Luncheon

The Annual Recognition Luncheon is SPIE's signature event, a moment dedicated to celebrating the vital link between our local business community and our schools. We host this event for one simple reason: to publicly acknowledge and thank the individuals and organizations that go above and beyond to support education in Stanislaus County. It is a gathering intended for the educators, business leaders, and community partners who are the driving force behind our mission.

This year, the scope of our community's commitment was on full display as we recognized more than **80 unique businesses** for their contributions to Stanislaus County schools and students.

The event culminated with the presentation of the Peter Johansen Award, a prestigious honor bestowed upon a business or individual selected by the SPIE Board of Directors for exceptional service to the community. This year, the award was presented to Alex Sugar and the Antone E. & Marie F. Raymus Foundation in recognition of their enduring impact on local education.

True to SPIE's mission of career-connected learning, the luncheon itself served as a real-world classroom. Students from across the county were not just attendees; they were the professionals running the event:

- Culinary Arts: Food preparation and service were flawlessly executed by students from Downey High School.
- Design & Floriculture: The event's visual atmosphere was created by students, with centerpieces designed by Central Valley High School students.
- Graphic Design: The program and inserts were designed by Ceres High School students.
- Logistics & Hospitality: Day-of logistics were supported by the students of SCOE's Stanislaus Military Academy.
- Entertainment: The event featured a performance by the Hughson High School Choir.

By integrating students into every aspect of the day, the Recognition Luncheon stands as a powerful testament to what our young people can achieve when given the opportunity to lead.





District & Strategic Partnerships

Over the last several years, SPIE has strategically restructured its approach to supporting our full partner districts. Our goal was to help create robust, meaningful relationships that directly connect education with the local business community.

This shift has transformed SPIE into a central convener. By focusing on deep alignment between classroom instruction and workforce needs, we have successfully boosted access for both students and educators. In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, this partnership model facilitated a wide range of career-connected learning experiences, including industry tours, job shadowing, short-term internships, special projects, and more.



We have established ourselves as a trusted and reliable partner, not only for our school districts but for a widening network of industry leaders and professionals. This mutual trust allows us to effectively:

- Retain and strengthen connections between K-12 education and local employers.
- Increase visibility for the innovative work happening in our schools.
- Facilitate meaningful collaboration through industry-education roundtables and recognition events.

Our role as a countywide engagement lead has expanded beyond district lines to include collaborations with organizations such as San Joaquin A+, Stanislaus 2030, and HealthForce Partners California.



Because SPIE has established trust and relationships across both education and industry, we are now positioned to play a key role in emerging workforce programs. The strength of these partnerships has paved the way for some of the special projects detailed in the following pages, including NextGen MedPros and the Growing Futures Pilot Program.



Program supported by:





Special Projects

NextGen MedPros

NextGen MedPros is a collaboration between HealthForce Partners California, Modesto City Schools, and SPIE designed to enlighten students about accessible, in-demand healthcare careers. The initiative follows a dedicated cohort of 30 Modesto City Schools students, guiding them through a multi-year exploration of the healthcare ecosystem beyond the most visible medical professions.

During the 2024-2025 school year, SPIE facilitated foundational career-connected learning for these students—then Juniors—through campus tours, industry visits, and career presentations. This preparation paved the way for the current 2025-2026 school year, where the cohort (now Seniors) has advanced to immersive shadowing rotations at Doctors Medical Center and Sutter Memorial Medical Center to witness day-to-day operations firsthand.

Program supported by:



Modesto Area Rotary Career Days

The 2024-2025 school year marked the launch of the Modesto Area Rotary Career Days, a collaborative partnership between all five Modesto area Rotary clubs, Modesto City Schools, and SPIE. Hosted twice this year (October and February) at the Peterson Event Center, the initiative connected students from selected Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways directly with local civic leaders.

Designed to facilitate two-way engagement, the event featured a student showcase where youth educated Rotarians about their programs, followed by networking and mock interviews to refine professional skills. Each day concluded with dynamic keynote speakers and a shared lunch, successfully bridging the gap between Modesto's business community and its future workforce.





Growing Futures Internship

The Growing Futures Internship Program is an initiative designed to cultivate the next generation of skilled workers, specifically focusing on the agriculture and advanced manufacturing sectors. Through a strategic partnership with San Joaquin A+, this initiative creates a comprehensive education-to-employment pathway that includes career exposure, soft skills training, and paid summer internships for youth ages 17-19 in Stanislaus County.

SPIE's Role: Regional Engagement Lead Recognized for its established trust and deep relationships across both education and industry, SPIE was selected to lead local engagement for this regional pilot. San Joaquin A+ partnered with SPIE to leverage our unique local expertise and network to ensure the program was deeply connected to the local context.

2024-2025 Progress: From Foundation to Action The partnership officially launched in May 2025. SPIE spent the summer months laying the critical foundation for the program, focusing on the recruitment and relationship management necessary to build a robust pipeline. During this foundational phase, SPIE successfully recruited 13 employer partners committed to the program.

Since the summer, the program has moved rapidly from planning to action. Students from participating pilot schools have already begun touring partner sites, gaining early exposure to the work environments they may soon enter. Following the current phase of industry tours, students will begin comprehensive employability training in the Spring. This training is the final step in preparing the inaugural cohort for their paid summer internships, which will launch in the Summer of 2026.

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Thank you to our Recognition Luncheon Sponsors!



Thank You!



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MISSION

Stanislaus Partners in Education aspires to create economic vitality by supporting efforts to prepare students for rewarding local jobs that offer pathways to a living wage and careers that fulfill their potential.

VISION

Stanislaus County will be an educated and skilled community that has a qualified and engaged workforce.

Please consider supporting
our work by donating here

