



PRESIDENT'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The President's Monthly Report to the Board of Trustees, Campus, and Community

SBVC Centennial Journey Gala Celebrates 100 Years of SBVC



San Bernardino Valley College raised more than \$1 million to support students during its Centennial Journey gala on March 27. "The tremendous success of SBVC's Centennial Gala reflects the deep pride our community has in this college and its students," said San Bernardino Valley College Foundation Executive Director Mike Layne.

The gala also paid tribute to Route 66 and its 100th anniversary. A walkway of classic cars greeted guests, and a centerpiece of the Roaring '20s cocktail party in the Applied Technology Building was a 1926 Buick Opera Coupe, which was restored by SBVC automotive students and faculty. The rest of the evening was spent in the gym, where the event began with remarks from Gala Co-Chairs Gloria Macias Harrison & Dr. Yolanda Moses, SBCCD Board Chair Dr. Nathan Gonzales, SBCCD Chancellor Dr. Diana Z. Rodriguez, and SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras. State Assemblymember James Ramos and his family performed Native American bird songs and attendees enjoyed live music, dinner, silent, live auctions, and concluded with a curated show entitled "Centennial Journey."

"When San Bernardino Valley College opened its doors in 1926, the founders believed in something powerful: education should be accessible, learning should be affordable, and opportunity should belong to everybody," said SBVC President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras. "For a century, these beliefs have shaped our region."

SBVC Celebrates 100th Birthday During Valley College Day



San Bernardino Valley College students, faculty, and staff shared cake & camaraderie on Valley College Day March 26, the anniversary of the college's founding.

SBVC leadership donned special aprons and cut a giant cake then led the crowd in singing "Happy Birthday" to the college. Attendees also gathered to take a commemorative "100" group photo on the lawn and were invited to share their SBVC story on social media.

"You are part of a very precious legacy and history. You are writing our history," SBVC President Gilbert J. Contreras said. "And as we enter our second century, we count on you to be pioneers, to lead in new ways that help advance our community."

The City of San Bernardino proclaimed March 26, 2026, as "Valley College Day," and Mayor Helen Tran welcomed SBVC's Executive Team to City Hall for a recognition of the college's century-long commitment to community, education, and opportunity.

SBVC Breaks Ground on Aeronautics, Health Sciences Buildings



Aeronautics and health sciences students were on hand to watch as district and college leaders broke ground March 31 on two buildings that will educate future professionals in those industries.

The 25,000-square-foot aeronautics building will have an aircraft hangar, sheet metal shop, composites lab, and testing and inspection classrooms. The 40,000-square-foot health sciences building will boast real-world clinical settings for nursing, pharmacology, psychiatric technician, and allied health students. The two-story buildings are slated to be finished in Fall 2028.

"The Inland Empire needs nurses, it needs pilots, mechanics, aviation technicians, and air traffic controllers. It needs allied health professionals," said San Bernardino Valley College President Dr. Gilbert J. Contreras. "These are not just career pathways for our students, they're lifelines for our community."

Each attendee received a special commemorative pin with airman's wings or a medical staff twined with serpents. After the ceremony, there were tours of the former Applied Technology Building and interactive exhibits from the programs, including flight simulators.

AbilityCon Showcases Accessibility at SBVC

San Bernardino Valley College's Student Accessibility Services (SAS) highlighted disability advocacy, accessibility, and inclusion at their AbilityCon event held on March 25. Students and community members learned more about SAS, connected with resources, and explored college opportunities while enjoying music and food.

"One of the strongest highlights of AbilityCon was the visibility it brought to accessibility and student support on campus," said SAS Student Services Coordinator Michelle Crocfer.

"It encouraged meaningful conversations about disability, available services, and the importance of building a campus culture where students feel seen, respected, and supported."

In Spring 2026, SAS is serving a little over 700 students. Numbers fluctuate semester to semester with students sometimes numbering up to one thousand.

Freedom Writer Shares Story at Women's Event

Sonia Rezkalah, one of the original Freedom Writers, visited San Bernardino Valley College March 23, sharing her story as part of an International Women's Month celebration coordinated by the SBCCD Human Resources Department.

The daughter of Nicaraguan immigrants, Rezkalah attended Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, where she was one of Erin Gruwell's at-risk ESL students.

Gruwell connected with her students before teaching them, and eventually "we weren't just learning — it would feel like we were home," Rezkalah told an audience in the SBVC Auditorium. "Now I was feeling like I belonged, like I mattered."

Gruwell gave students composition books to write their stories in, and Rezkalah said she would ask her parents questions and then jot down their responses. "It was beautiful to be able to put my words to paper, because now I'm leaving a legacy," she added.

Rezkalah's and her fellow students' writings were featured in the bestselling book, "The Freedom Writers Diary," which was also made into a film starring Hilary Swank.



Spotlighting Our Success Celebrates Century of Community and Excellence

San Bernardino Valley College continued its Centennial celebration with the 2026 Spotlighting Our Success faculty and employee awards dinner April 17.

The event, themed "A Century of Community & Excellence," featured cuisine prepared by the Culinary Arts program and centennial-focused decor.

"As we spotlight our successes tonight, let us also acknowledge the collaborative spirit that makes our work possible," said SBVC President Gilbert J. Contreras. "Let us be thankful for the Wolverines and Indians who came before us — all 100 years' worth."

Spotlighting highlights employees nominated by their peers for outstanding performance and services provided throughout the year. The event included academic rank recognitions, categorical awards, and retiree tributes. New this year, honorees were chosen by blind committee rather than campus-wide voting, and the Presidential and Cabinet Awards were introduced.

Dozens of SBVC employees were celebrated, including Laura Estrada and Raquel Villa (Excellence Award); Vivian Marquez (Outstanding Service Award); Dr. Vanessa Thomas (Innovator of the Year); Barbara Bray (Professional Expert of the Year); Dr. Shannen Millen (Outstanding Adjunct Faculty); Michael Layne (Manager of the Year); Francisco Gonzalez and Andrea Hecht (Outstanding Professor); Jonathan Flaa and Kevin Moreno (Classified Employee of the Year); Tatiana Vasquez (President's Choice Award); and Christina Acevedo, Keith Candelaria, and Edgar Ortiz (SBVC Heroes Award).



CENTENNIAL SPOTLIGHT

Ben Sakoguchi



A piece from Ben Sakoguchi's "Postcards from Camp."

San Bernardino Valley College alumnus Ben Sakoguchi channeled his experience as a Japanese American growing up during World War II into his art.

Sakoguchi was born in San Bernardino in 1938, and just a few years later his family was incarcerated in an internment camp in Poston, Arizona. When they returned to San Bernardino after the war, they reopened their small grocery business, with difficulty.

Sakoguchi attended SBVC from 1956 to 1958 and then went to UCLA, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in art and a teaching credential. He joined the art faculty at Pasadena City College in 1964, and taught there until his retirement in 1997.

Over the course of his career, Sakoguchi was awarded two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, a Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund Artists at Giverny residency, and received grants from the J. Paul Getty Trust and the California Arts Council.

His art focuses on socially relevant themes, and one of his crowning achievements is "Postcards from Camp." Sakoguchi used his own family photos and images taken by military, civilian, and internee photographers to create 80 paintings that describe the Japanese American experience. "Postcards from Camp" has been exhibited at schools, galleries, and museums across the country.

Theatre Arts Helps Caitlyn Tiszai Unlock a New Passion

Caitlyn Tiszai found community — and confidence — as a part of SBVC's Theatre Arts Department.

Tiszai started at SBVC in 2020, but because of the pandemic and health issues, couldn't participate in theatre arts productions until 2025. She has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, and during the fall production of "Shrek," performed in her wheelchair. "It wasn't planned, but we made it work and the choreography I was in was quite manageable for wheelchair dancing," she said.

Tiszai was also a costume designer for the play, which earned her an invitation to this year's American College Theater Festival. There, she gave a presentation on costume design, was a Music Theatre International (MTI) Finalist, and appeared in the Dance Cabaret.

When she heard her name called as a finalist, "it took a moment for it to really hit," she said. "My hard work paid off. My passion for dance was validated in a way it hadn't been in years."

Over the last year, Tiszai has grown as an actor and found a new passion in costume design, and credits the Theatre Arts Department with being "truly so invested in making sure all its students gain the education and tools that we need to succeed in the world," she said.

