

# Empowering Ventura County's Future Workforce: Hospitality Bridges Education and Industry

*Ventura County Lodging Association  
Partners with Oxnard Union High School  
District to Build a Stronger Local Workforce*

VENTURA, CA, UNITED STATES, March 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This week, students from

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*Debra Gallagher, Oxnard  
Union School District*

the Oxnard Union High School District shared their experiences from Ventura County Hospitality Week (January 27–31, 2025) at the Ventura County Lodging Association (VCLA) Board of Directors meeting. As a key partner in the event, VCLA collaborated with the school district to connect students with hotels across the region, where industry leaders led behind-the-scenes property tours. This year, students also participated in hands-on workshops, where they created digital marketing campaigns to promote the destination to potential visitors. During the board meeting, they reflected on their experiences and presented the results of the campaigns they developed.

This collaboration between education and industry demonstrated the powerful impact of immersive experiences in shaping career aspirations. Board members and partners saw firsthand how these experiences expanded students' understanding of the diverse career paths in hospitality, inspiring many to consider a future in tourism.

"I had such a welcoming experience, and it really inspired me to pursue a path toward a marketing role. I loved working on the social media campaign and learning how I could grow into a career like that. It was so much fun and truly eye-opening!"

-Diamond Merrill, Culinary Student at Rio Mesa High School

The success of Ventura County Hospitality Week goes beyond a single event—it's a movement to bridge the gap between industry, education, and workforce development. VCLA, also known as Ventura County Coast (VCC), is helping to create a skilled and diverse workforce that supports

Ventura County's tourism sector.

In Ventura County, the hospitality and tourism industry play a pivotal role in the local economy, contributing \$1.87 billion in visitor spending, \$162 million in tax revenue, and supporting nearly 17,000 jobs. This sector serves as a cornerstone for the county's economic vitality. By connecting students with meaningful, career-building experiences, VCLA is helping to shape the future of the industry.

"This is an incredible opportunity for our students to see the hospitality industry in action. It broadens their perspectives and allows them to envision a future where their passions and talents can thrive in meaningful careers. The engagement from local businesses makes all the difference in showing students that they belong in this industry."  
-Debra Gallagher, Oxnard Union School District Career Technical Education Program and Hospitality Industry Specialist



Rio Mesa High School students gathered in front of the Crowne Plaza during Ventura County Hospitality Week.

Students didn't just observe the action—they took an active role. Working alongside VCLA's Director of Marketing and Communications, Dave Lion, as well as the Communications and PR Specialist, Kristal Silva, students developed and launched live digital marketing and social media campaigns, gaining real-world skills in tourism marketing. They also participated in professional development activities, including networking opportunities, professional headshots, and workshops. These activations were designed to support and ensure students developed tangible skills for their future careers.

"The future of our industry starts with the opportunities we create today. Strengthening our workforce means investing in the next generation, giving them a seat at the table and a chance to see the industry in action. I encourage business leaders to partner with schools or youth organizations, invite students in, and offer hands-on experiences that showcase the diverse career opportunities in hospitality, travel, and tourism. By providing real-world exposure and mentorship, we're not just building a workforce—we are shaping the next generation of leaders."

-Brian Tucker, CEO and President of Ventura County Lodging Association

While VCLA plays a pivotal role in driving visitation to the region, the organization is also shaping the future of hospitality through workforce development initiatives. By partnering with hoteliers,

local businesses, and educators, VCLA is helping prepare the next generation for careers in the hospitality and tourism industry. As more partners join this effort, its impact will grow, further establishing Ventura County as a hub for talent, innovation, and opportunity.

For press photography, [click here](#).

About Ventura County Coast:

Ventura County Coast (VCC) is where California's relaxed coastal charm meets endless adventure. Encompassing the cities of Camarillo, Oxnard, Ventura, and Port Hueneme, VCC invites travelers to experience wide-open beaches, incredible year-round weather, and a welcoming atmosphere just an hour north of Los Angeles. Follow VCC on Instagram at [@venturacountycoast](#) or visit [www.venturacountycoast.com](http://www.venturacountycoast.com).

Kristal Silva

Ventura County Coast

ksilva@venturacountycoast.com

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