

4-5 | The Salinas Californian's columnist Dave Nordstrand explains why you're among the chosen few.

Places

5-19 | A look at the four corners of Salinas plus cities throughout northern and southern Monterey County

Housing

21-22 | Home prices continue to rise in the Salinas Valley as more people move to the area.

Education

24-33 | The region has a wealth of public and private schools along with several colleges to choose from. Hartnell College in Salinas is expanding.



SCOTT MACDONALD/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

Bardin Elementary School Principal Esteban Hernandez reads to third-grade students as part of the Salinas Reads program.

Dining and nightlife

36-37 | Do you have a yen for something special to eat? Chances are you'll find it in Monterey County with its diverse array of places to dine and entertainment venues.

Shopping

38-41 | From large shopping malls to boutiques, the Salinas area offers everything from clothing stores to home improvement outlets.

Sports

41-51 | Salinas area high school teams prove they can hold their own in soccer, basketball and football in Central Coast Section matches.

Recreation

48-51 | The world's best golfing is right here in Monterey County. But even if golf is not your bag, there's a



SCOTT MACDONALD/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

Youngsters ride the Spin-Out at the Salinas Valley Fair in King City in May 2004.

wealth of outdoor activities, too, like hiking at the area's many parks.

Activities

52-57 | From the California Rodeo Salinas to the Monterey Jazz Festival, there's plenty to do throughout the year in the Salinas Valley-Monterey Peninsula area.

Medical

58-62 | Salinas Valley hospitals offer the best in medical care.

The essentials

60-62 | Who's who in county, state and federal government, important phone numbers and Web sites, utilities and other vital information.

WELCOME STAFF

COVER: Ryan Glenn

DESIGNERS: Jim Albanese, Melissa Chavez, Mary DiMeglio, Don Fukui, Tom Leyde

RESEARCH: Rachel Zentz

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Richard Green, Scott MacDonald

ON THE COVER



The Salinas Valley as seen from River Road west of Salinas.

Welcome to the Salinas Valley

The more I get to know the Salinas area, the more I love it.

Those readers who've lived here their whole lives know well what I mean. Newcomers rapidly discover the rich quality of life available in Monterey County.

We're blessed with agricultural bounty, beautiful landscapes and vista, outstanding entertainment opportunities and a strategic location on the California coast.



Scott Faust

I would be remiss if I didn't mention another great quality:

friendly and welcoming communities.

It's my pleasure to extend a welcome of my own — on behalf of The Salinas Californian — to enjoy and make use of this annual special section, the Welcome guide to Monterey County.

The articles, photographs and advertisements in these pages are intended to provide an overview and an introduction to life in Salinas, the Salinas Valley and other parts of our county.

We've spotlighted key communities and packed in lots of practical information to help new residents get situated.

Also included are detailed articles on how to enjoy life here, including shopping, dining and outdoor recreation.

We strive to be as comprehensive as possible. Most of all, we expect the Welcome guide to be a primer for newcomers that also helps long-time residents make the most of living here.

We think you'll find the section informative and useful all year long.

Again, from all of us here at The Salinas Californian, welcome to Monterey County. And welcome to Welcome 2006.

SCOTT FAUST is general manager and executive editor of The Salinas Californian.