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SBVC Centennial Gala Raises More Than
\$1 Million, Invites Community Input on
College Access

4 min read

🕒 5 days ago 📝 Manny Sandoval (https://iecn.com/author/calmatters/)



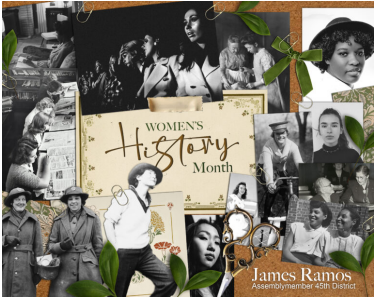
Photo by Erick Zambrano. L-R: Guests, including IECN Co-publisher Denise Berver, SBCCD Chancellor Susan Z. Rodriguez, former SBCCD Trustee and IECN Publisher Emeritus Gloria Thomas Harrison, and SBCCD Vice Chancellor Jose Torres, gather with others in vibrant Easter-themed attire before San Bernardino Valley College's 100th anniversary gala kicked off.

ONE NIGHT



APRIL 1ST, 2026
7:15 PM
REGAL EDWARDS ONTARIO PALACE
4900 4TH ST,
ONTARIO, CA 91764

(https://events.ticketleap.com/ticket-track-the-battle-for-grassroots-a-doci



(https://ramos.asmdc.org/)

San Bernardino Valley College (<https://www.valleycollege.edu/>), celebrated its centennial journey March 27 with a 100 Year Anniversary Gala that honored the college's legacy, recognized community champions and underscored a larger message about the role affordable higher education will continue to play in the Inland Empire. The gala also raised more than \$1 million to support students.

The event, themed "Centennial Journey," was held on campus and included dinner, a live auction to raise funds for student scholarships and performances reflecting the college experience across the decades through music, dance and skits tied to different periods over the past century.

A visual highlight of the evening was a walkway of classic cars dating back to the 1930s in tribute to Route 66. At the center of the gala's Roaring '20s cocktail party atmosphere was a 1926 Buick two-door Master 6 restored by SBVC automotive students and faculty.

The event also recognized several community figures, including IECN Publisher Emeritus Gloria Macias Harrison, Yuuhavitam of San Manuel Nation Tribal Member Ken Ramirez, Los Angeles Dodgers third base coach Dino Ebel and Time for Change Foundation's Kim Carter-Tillman.

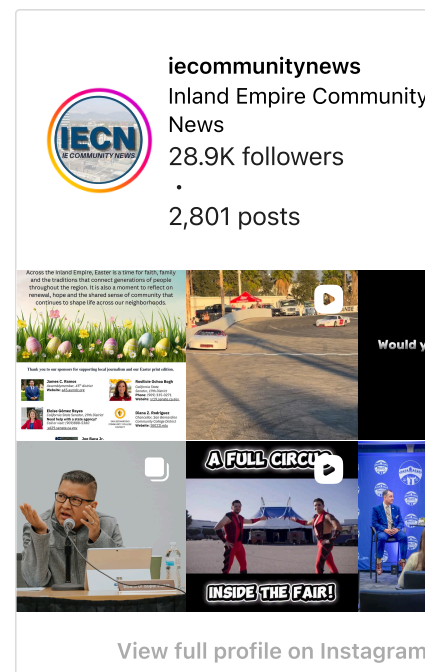


A major moment of the evening came when Inland Empire attorney Bill Lemann presented a \$500,000 award from the Pinky & Joe Brier Foundation to support SBVC aviation students. The gift is structured as a five-year matching and challenge grant that will fund an endowed scholarship for women and underserved



(<https://nationalorangeshow.com/>)

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students pursuing careers in aviation. Stater Bros. Charities also contributed \$55,000, with funds designated for the college's food pantry and the gala.

In remarks during the gala, SBVC President Dr. Gilbert Contreras tied the celebration to the college's long-standing mission.

"At San Bernardino Valley College, we are proud of our legacy, where people come with a dream and leave with the future," Contreras said. "We gather here today to celebrate 100 years of educating and serving our community."

He said the college's purpose has remained clear since its founding in 1926.

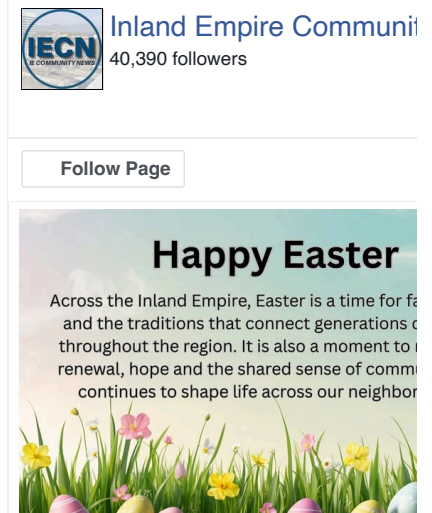
"When San Bernardino Valley College opened its doors in 1926, the founders believed in something powerful," Contreras said. "Education should be accessible, learning should be affordable, and opportunity should belong to everybody."

Contreras said those values have shaped generations of students who arrived on campus with ambition and left with the tools to improve their lives and lead in the Inland Empire and beyond.

He also pointed to several institutional milestones, saying Valley College was the first community college in California intentionally designed and built as a community college, the first in the state to establish a Dreamers Resource Center (<https://iecn.com/sbvc-bids-farewell-to-liberal-arts-building-after-55-years/>), and the first in the Inland Empire to offer a public nursing program. He added that the college is also among the first community colleges in California to earn designation as a Black-serving institution (<https://iecn.com/san-bernardino-valley-college-black-serving-institution/>).

Alongside the celebration, district leaders also used the event to draw attention to San Bernardino Community College District's Affordable College Survey (<https://sbccd.edu/affordable-college/index.php>), which asks community members to help shape the future of affordable college and job training across SBVC and Crafton Hills College. District materials say SBCCD serves about 30,000 students and that the survey includes three required questions and six questions total.

The district said community feedback gathered so far has highlighted priorities such as safe drinking water, asbestos and mold removal, expanded training for local jobs and skilled trades,



and preparation for 21st-century careers, including opportunities for students and veterans. District outreach materials also say SBCCD colleges are six times cheaper than a California State University campus and 16 times cheaper than a University of California campus.

SBCCD Chancellor Diana Z. Rodriguez said the district's work remains rooted in the real pressures facing students and families.

"Tonight is really about students, and it's also about you," Rodriguez said. "You know the pressures that our students take on every day, and their families, and what they are facing right now. And you know that this community is working hard every single day."

She said the district's century of service has been especially important during difficult times.

"One thing we know for sure is that Valley College and this district have been here for 100 years serving this community," Rodriguez said. "Our roots are firmly planted. Our doors are open wide."

Rodriguez said that commitment continues through "affordable access to higher education, workforce training, and real opportunities for our families, your children and your neighbors."

For SBVC, the centennial gala was not only a reflection on the college's past, but a statement about its next chapter — one centered on keeping the doors open, expanding opportunity and preparing the next generation of Inland Empire students for the future.

Help SBCCD plan and shape the next 100 years by taking the survey here: sbccd.edu/affordable-college/ (https://sbccd.edu/affordable-college/?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

Tags: 100 Years (<https://iecn.com/tag/100-years/>) Automotive (<https://iecn.com/tag/automotive/>) Aviation (<https://iecn.com/tag/aviation/>) College (<https://iecn.com/tag/college/>) College Access (<https://iecn.com/tag/college-access/>) crafton hills college (<https://iecn.com/tag/crafton-hills-college/>) diana z. rodriguez (<https://iecn.com/tag/diana-z-rodriguez/>) Dr. Gilbert Contreras (<https://iecn.com/tag/dr-gilbert-contreras/>) gala (<https://iecn.com/tag/gala/>) Gloria Marcias Harrison (<https://iecn.com/tag/gloria-marcias-harrison/>) James Ramos (<https://iecn.com/tag/james-ramos/>) Ken Ramirez (<https://iecn.com/tag/ken-ramirez/>) Manny Sandoval (<https://iecn.com/tag/manny-sandoval/>) San Bernardino Community College District (<https://iecn.com/tag/san-bernardino-community-college-district/>) San Bernardino Valley College (<https://iecn.com/tag/san-bernardino-valley-college/>) SBCCD (<https://iecn.com/tag/sbccd/>) sbvc (<https://iecn.com/tag/sbvc/>) SBVC Foundation (<https://iecn.com/tag/sbvc-foundation/>) scholarships (<https://iecn.com/tag/scholarships/>) Survey (<https://iecn.com/tag/survey/>)