

Editorial: Thumbs up, thumbs down

By The Bee Editorial
Board

Thumbs up to **Toyota dealerships statewide** for their water-saving campaign called "The Wash Can Wait." Customer can decline the complimentary car wash following service appointments. The goal is to reduce car washes by 75% in July and August, saving 20 million gallons of water. Of course, it's important to squeegee windows to see clearly, but if the car's already shiny clean, why not save a little water?

Thumbs down to **Fresno Unified Superintendent Michael Hanson and trustees Luis Chavez, Valerie Davis, Christopher De La Cerda, Cal Johnson and Janet Ryan** for violating California's open meeting law. The Brown Act prohibits "serial meetings" in which the public's business is discussed behind closed doors. Hanson conducted a serial meeting by privately communicating with five trustees about a \$132,000 contract for international consulting firm Ernst & Young LLP before the contract was brought up for a vote on the board's Aug. 12 agenda. Perhaps district leaders should order copies of "The Brown Act" handbook from the state Attorney General's Office and refresh their memories on how to comply with the law.

Thumbs up to **Habitat for Humanity and its many community partners** for creating Fresno's newest park, the Almy Street Playground, out of what once was a bleak and empty dirt lot. Construction costs of about \$350,000 were raised by groups, businesses and individuals. Among the many donors making this possible was Wells Fargo, which gave \$120,000. Cargill Meat Solutions, which has a plant west of the playground, will maintain the park for its first three years. Well done, all hands.

Thumbs up to the **Tulare County agriculture industry** for securing its spot once again as the nation's top performing county in crop sales, topping \$8 billion in 2014. The increase was a 10% improvement over 2013. The high numbers primarily came from dairy, cattle and citrus. The top commodity, dairy, was valued at \$2.5 billion, cattle brought in \$980 million, while oranges brought in \$963 million. In less than 10 years, Tulare County has doubled its ag value.

Thumbs up to **Madera County** for grabbing the top spot in the nation for manufacturing job growth among not only small metropolitan areas, but all metro markets in the country. The blog New Geography.com analyzed metro areas nationwide and found that Madera County was gaining ground in an impressive way. The county shows a 215% growth in food-processing jobs from 2010 to 2014.

Thumbs up to **Howard Watkins** for creating his photographic archive project. Since the 1970s, Watkins has taken nearly 300,000 photographs at Fresno events. Now he wants to donate [his collection](#) to Fresno State, and is raising money to cover the costs for scanning photos, staff work, digital storage space and licensing fees in perpetuity. So far, he has raised about \$30,000 but he needs about \$200,000. None of the money goes to Watkins for his time to do this work; this is just a way to preserve our history. If you would like to help out, tax-deductible donations can be sent to the Fresno Regional Foundation, with a note that the donation is for the "Howard K. Watkins Photo Archive Fund." Donations can be made [online](#) or by mail and sent to 5260 N. Palm Ave., Suite 122.

Thumbs up to **Community Medical Centers' employees** for donating more than 2,000 books in this year's "Fill the Book Bin" book drive for the Children's Clinic at the Deran Koligian Ambulatory Care Center. While at appointments, the Children's Clinic offers free books to pediatric patients to promote early literacy and encourage families to read together.

Thumbs up to the **Fresno County employees** working in the Hall of Records building when a pipe broke, flooding parts of the building. The workers scrambled to protect records and serve the public requests despite plunging into a rescue effort for important documents.

Thumbs up to **Ken Dias** for receiving the Outstanding Teacher Award from the California Agricultural Teacher's Association. He has been in agricultural education in Clovis for 32 years. The award is given to a member of the agricultural education profession who has demonstrated the highest level of professional performance and involvement in their program and community.

Thumbs up to **Rotary Club of Fresno** for giving \$4,645 to Valley Preparatory Academy Charter School for a shuttle bus that will transport students to school and for use for field trips, \$4,030.95 to Valley Center for the Blind for office equipment and furniture, \$2,500 to Stone Soup Fresno for converting a parking lot to a playground for the Early Childhood Development Center, and \$2,500 to Light-House Recovery Program Inc. for playground equipment for the after-school program and computers on site for adult GED study program.