

## Sponsor great music: John McCutcheon's 12th Modesto concert is January 22

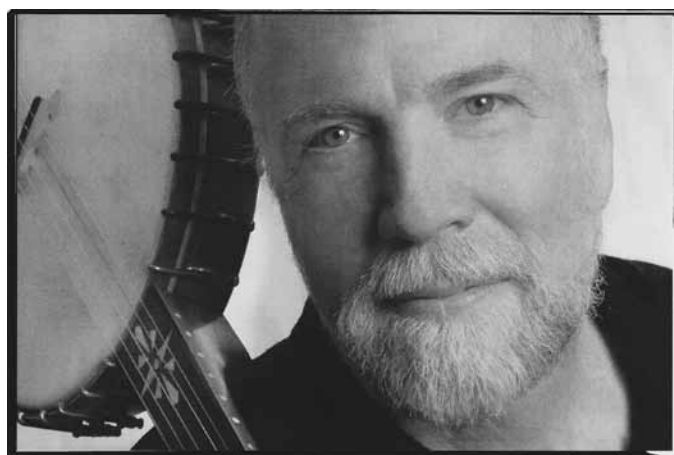
By MICHAEL JURKOVIC

Musical artist John McCutcheon will be coming to Modesto again this January as part of his annual Left Coast tour. As someone who has only recently started listening to McCutcheon I couldn't be more thrilled! His music spans many themes and topics but and maintains a high quality of perfor-

mance which is guaranteed to entertain. This will be John's 12th benefit concert for the Modesto Peace and Life Center. The concert will be Tuesday January 22, 2013 at 7pm at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Avenue.

John McCutcheon's talent and long career are well known. He is a 6-time Grammy nominee as well as an accomplished multi-instrumentalist with a career spanning decades. This tour kicks off John's 40th year as a professional musician. He writes socially and politically conscious songs but has also written and recorded music for children. John's talent is not to be missed!

Tickets are \$20 in ad-



vance and \$23 at the door. Youth 18 and under are \$5 and groups of 10 or more will be \$15 per person. Tickets are available for purchase by cash or check at Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., (209) 523-148, or at Beads of Contentment, 1028 J St., Modesto, (209) 523-6335. Out-of-towners can purchase tickets by mail through the church. Concert tickets also make a great holiday gift.

You can also sponsor the event by donating. If you do sponsor, you can receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating. There are 5 levels of sponsorship available:

Autoharp: \$40 (1 ticket)

Guitar: \$75 (2 tickets)

Banjo: \$150 (4 tickets)

Piano: \$300 (8 tickets)

Hammer Dulcimer: \$500 (16 tickets)

For information on sponsorships, contact Keith Werner (209) 572-1307, email Keith. Werner@sbcglobal.net

## Four ways to stop gun violence

By BENJAMIN VAN HOUTEN

The nation is grieving after yet another fatal mass shooting. Aren't there ways to curb this ongoing national tragedy?

The mass shooting in a Tucson shopping center on January 8, 2011—which left six dead and thirteen wounded, including Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords—has once again turned the public spotlight on the epidemic of gun violence in America. Gun violence takes the lives of 30,000 Americans each year, and injures an additional 70,000, but victims' families and friends, and, indeed, all of us are touched by this ongoing national tragedy.

Massacres like the one in Tucson and daily

**GUN CONTROL . . . . . cont. p. 8**

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## At the Gallo Center for the Arts: "Sharing the Light: Tales of Wisdom, Stories of Peace"

Founded in 1982 by Nancy Wang and Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo, Eth-Noc-Tec produces and performs contemporary presentations of traditional folktales from the many countries and cultures of Asia—including China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Tibet, and India—through storytelling, theater, dance, and music.

Having discovered a wealth of stories that reveal the trials of the human condition, they use both shadow and light

to guide the audience into a place of compassionate listening as they tell fables of Indian Kings, cautionary tales of a monstrous black hound, stories of Tibetan monks, Chinese saints and much more.

These stories are presented as mythic messages for these modern times. Eth-Noc-Tec Asian American Story Theatre, Thursday, January 17, 7 pm Tickets start at \$15. Visit <http://tickets.galloarts.org/single/EventDetail.aspx?p=2904>

## Great Valley Acoustic Music Series: Great Music You Have Never Heard Of

By CINDY VAN EMPEL

The Great Valley Acoustic Music Series hosts Claudia Russell and Bruce Kaplan on Friday, January 18, at 8:00 p.m. at the Central Grace Community Church.

Award winning songwriter Claudia Russell is a gifted vocalist and a musicians' musician. Claudia and her husband/partner Bruce Kaplan live in the Bay Area and work nationally as a duo and with the Folk Unlimited Orchestra. As a solo artist, Claudia plays a style all her own: eclectic folk music with traces of all her musical loves--blues, western swing, rock and country. Drawing from original compositions, obscure gems, folk and pop classics and contributions from her many talented friends, Claudia's performances are truly heartfelt and entertaining. Using humor, personal stories and her "Who me?" attitude, Claudia quickly bonds with audiences, winning them over

with her powerful voice and signature guitar voicings.

Find out more at [www.claudiarussell.com](http://www.claudiarussell.com) and at the Great Valley Acoustic Facebook page, where you'll find videos of Claudia Russell and other artists featured in the series (<http://www.facebook.com/GreatValleyAcousticConcerts?ref=ts&fref=ts>)

All music presented is family-friendly and peaceful. Great Valley brings some of the finest musicians you have never heard of to Modesto for you to discover with your friends. Support non-corporate, grassroots musicians

Many thanks to the folks at Central Grace Community Church for providing a beautiful concert space for the community to gather. The newly remodeled building is at 918 Sierra Dr. in Modesto, next to Modesto High School. Admission is a \$10 donation. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. No one is turned away. See you there!


## Young Masters Art Show Jan. 15 - Feb. 9, 2013

The Central California Art Association is hosting the 38th Annual Young Masters Art Show at Mistlin Gallery from January 15 to February 9 for young artists, pre-school through high school.

Categories are: painting, drawing, photography and sculpture, grouped by age. All participants receive a certificate and award winners receive art supplies and ribbons as prizes.

The show is part of Third Thursday Art Walk on January 17. Receiving for art teachers is Friday, Jan. 11 from 2 to 5 p.m. and for individuals on Saturday, Jan 12 from 12-4 p.m. There is a \$2 entry fee with a limit of two artworks per student.

Prospectus is available at Mistlin Gallery, 1015 J St., Modesto, CA 95354; 209-529-3369. Gallery hours: Tuesday through Friday 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday noon to 4 p.m.



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### The 19th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Keynote Speaker: Congressman John Lewis



**SATURDAY, February 9, 2013**

*Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration  
with John Lewis*

Mary Stuart Rogers Student Learning Center  
Modesto Junior College, West Campus  
2201 Blue Gum Ave., Modesto

- 6:00 p.m. - Doors Open
- 7:00 p.m. - Free program

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# Father Roy Bourgeois to speak at Motherlode MLK Birthday Celebration

By PAT CERVELLI

The Motherlode Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee is sponsoring a visit to Sonora by Father Roy Bourgeois, well-known Catholic Maryknoll Missionary priest. For 40 years Father Roy has focused his activism on non-violent actions aimed at stopping U.S. support for Latin American death squads and repressive regimes.

Fr. Roy began his career as a priest in 1972 working with the poor in Bolivia. When he stood up against the injustice he saw there, he was jailed, tortured and deported by military dictator Hugo Banzar. He then became involved in working for peace in Central America where civil wars were raging: in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, the U.S. was arming the insurgent Contras against the democratically elected government. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. was sending arms and financial aid to repressive regimes which sponsored death squads against peasants and workers. Those regimes, propped up by economic elites who resisted reforms, perpetuated unequal economic systems which fueled poverty and civil war.

Fr. Roy did not set out to become a leader in the movement opposing U.S. policy in Latin America. His experience in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Purple Heart, led him to the Catholic priesthood and to the Maryknoll Missionaries who work with the poor overseas. In Bolivia, his experience with injustice led to his activism.

In 1980, Fr. Roy's friend, Ita Ford, an American Maryknoll nun, was raped and murdered in El Salvador along with three other American churchwomen. He soon found out that the School of the Americas (SOA) had trained the soldiers who committed these atrocities. That same year, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by SOA-trained death squads as he preached in San Salvador's cathedral. In 1989, six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were murdered by these same people.

Fr. Roy was horrified to learn that many of the 65,000 Latin American graduates of SOA were implicated in murder, torture, terrorism, kidnappings, disappearances, drug trafficking and coups d'etat. These soldiers were being trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, on American soil by the U.S. Army

at taxpayer expense.

In 1990, Fr. Roy founded the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW), in order to inform the public about the atrocities being committed by SOA graduates. Every November, thousands of opponents of the SOA gather for a massive non-violent demonstration outside Ft. Benning's gates. They carry coffins, banners and crosses with the names of people murdered by SOA graduates. Participants sing and pray at this spiritual event. Some demonstrators commit civil disobedience by entering the base, thus risking federal prison.

Fr. Roy studied the non-violent strategies of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Like them, Fr. Roy spent time in prison for his activism and has said, "I don't fear prison - I fear apathy and indifference." As he continues his 22-year campaign to close SOA, Fr. Roy quotes Dr. King: "We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything that the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.'"

Fr. Roy is motivated by St. James' philosophy that faith without action is dead. He admires Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement which serves the poor while seeking to change an economic system that creates poverty. This is reminiscent of Dr. Martin Luther King's quote: "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not

haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

In 1995, Fr. Roy produced an academy award-nominated documentary called "School of the Assassins," narrated by Susan Sarandon. He received Pax Christi's Teacher of Peace Award, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and has testified before the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

The Motherlode Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee, in keeping with our mission of promoting Dr. King's legacy -- activism aimed at exposing injustice -- is honored to have Father Roy Bourgeois as our keynote speaker at the 18th annual MLK birthday celebration. The event will be held at Sonora High School Auditorium on Sunday, January 20, at 2 p.m. The public is invited at no charge.

Information: Pat Cervelli, patcervelli@frontiernet.net, 209-928-3494.



# Fund AFGJ solidarity with Honduran Social Movements!

Submitted by SHELLY SCRIBNER

June 28, 2009 - Armed soldiers machine gunned down the door of the Honduran President Manuel Zelaya's home rousing him at 4AM from bed and flew him into exile wearing only his pajamas. This ended Honduras' democratic government that cared about the needs of the poor.

June 28, 2009 - Alliance for Global Justice staff members dropped their planned Sunday personal activities and started putting out updates and action alerts about the Honduras coup. Who else would do it but the AfGJ? Three years later AFGJ is continuing solidarity with their struggle.

Since democracy died on that black day in Honduras - with the active backing of the US government - Alliance for Global Justice helped found and lead the Honduras Solidarity Network (<https://sites.google.com/site/honduras-solidaritynetwork/home>) and has organized six delegations (3 in 2012) to provide human rights accompaniment to the social movements there. Since the coup over 80 members of farm cooperatives have been murdered, along with 70 reporters, over 20 LGBT activists, and four anti-coup politicians. Teachers, unionists, students, and organizers in the non-violent National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP) have been killed, wounded and threatened for daring to support democracy in Honduras. Not a single murderer has been prosecuted.

AfGJ has stood with the courageous social movements in Honduras and in the US where nearly a quarter of Congress have signed letters calling for a cut-off in US military and police aid. In November 2013, we will help recruit 200-300 election monitors to guard against electoral fraud against the FNRP's new political party LIBRE. If fair elections were held today, LIBRE's presidential candidate Xiomara Castro would win hands down according to polls.

Help us change US policy which is propping up the forces of the coup regime and help us stand with our sisters and brothers in Honduras? You can do that by making a tax-deductible contribution today. Visit <https://afgj.org/afgj-donations>.

If you are interested in being an election monitor next November, send an email to [chuck@AFGJ.org](mailto:chuck@AFGJ.org).

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**CONNECTIONS**

is published monthly except in August  
by the Modesto Peace/Life Center  
720 13<sup>th</sup> St., Modesto, CA 95354.  
Open by appointment.  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,  
Modesto, CA 95353  
209-529-5750.  
CONNECTIONS is available for  
a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.

# Patterson Health, Wellness & Hunger Coalition

By JENNIFER WEST

In these challenging times, we are all being called upon to think creatively to solve problems in our communities. There's a new group in my town, the Patterson Health, Wellness & Hunger Coalition, whose members are doing just that.

The need for this effort was made clear when a man went into City Hall and, explaining that his wife was "too embarrassed to come in," and asked if Patterson has a food bank. And one of the Coalition members spent an entire day with someone to whom she's close, grocery shopping and running errands for her own family – and didn't learn, until she took her back home, that she had no food in the house. Clearly, there's a segment of the population who have suddenly found themselves in need of assistance, and are unaware of what resources are available to them.

So some wonderful folks representing the various groups and organizations who help those in need in our area sat down together late last summer to brainstorm. And one thing immediately became abundantly clear: In our town, as, presumably, in every other city and town across the nation, hunger is a very real problem. And these days, no segment of the population is exempt.

In the new group's first meeting, the discussion centered on what each group needed, in order to be better able to serve those who come to them for help. Then someone at the table spoke up and offered extra food to which she has access, and at that moment, something magical began to happen: the focus shifted from "what we need" to working cooperatively to find food and other resources, and to get the word out about what's available and from whom. Surprisingly, as the groups had never really had an opportunity to sit down together, they were, in some cases, only peripherally aware of each other. So the Coalition's bi-weekly meetings have helped avoid duplication of effort which has helped each Coalition member group to make the most effective use of their available resources.

The group has accomplished a great deal in the few short months it has been in existence. One of the first issues the



**"In our town, as, presumably, in every other city and town across the nation, hunger is a very real problem. And these days, no segment of the population is exempt."**

Coalition had a hand in solving was a reduction in the Senior Meals Program, which has gone from serving a low-to no-cost lunch five days each week to only three. One of the group's members approached the leadership of her church with the problem, among whom happened to be a restaurant owner, who immediately offered to help. Even more exciting is the fact that the situation has seemed to catalyze the seniors in our town, who have since taken on responsibility for the program themselves, and are now looking into setting up and running a "soup kitchen!"

Fresh, organic vegetables have been provided by one of the Coalition members on several occasions, as well as a large number of organic chickens. These wonderful donations have been divided up among the various groups who provide free food, with one program requiring recipients to participate in a

brief class on nutrition, and preparing and eating healthy food. That program has proven extremely successful. Participants have continued to return weekly, and are now working with the program's staff to tailor the curriculum to their needs and interests. Perhaps even more importantly, those attending the classes are becoming a support network for each other.

The Coalition also recently received a donation of about 2,200 fruit cups. The cans, which needed to be labeled and boxed in order to be divided up among the various groups feeding those in need, were brought to Patterson and stored temporarily in a staging area. A group of about twenty volunteers soon converged on the project – and in about an hour, all 2,200 cans had been labeled, counted and boxed. By the end of that day, they had all been distributed to the various groups providing food.

The Coalition is discussing other programs as well, including one patterned after Finger Pickin' Good, a program featured in this column last month, which creates a vehicle for backyard gardeners and fruit tree owners to donate their excess. Another group that the Coalition is reaching out to is local farmers. A lot of food is grown in our area, and it seems logical that there must occasionally be excess which could be used to bless the lives of our neighbors in need.

The Coalition is currently working on a Resource Guide, which will provide information regarding assistance available from the various entities/programs in the area, and has set up a Facebook page as well.

The coalition's membership is constantly evolving, but various County agencies, nonprofit groups, the City of Patterson, the school district, representatives of elected officials, a church or two, folks from the UC Cooperative Extension's office and private citizens have occasionally or regularly attended the meetings. Currently, more than 50 people receive meeting notices and notes, and about a dozen regularly attend.

Working both creatively and cooperatively, we really can come together to address serious problems in our communities – and any ordinary person who has concern for his or her fellow man can help get things started. Is that person you?

## Green Tips for a Green Planet: Green Resolutions 2013

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

As the New Year begins, the focus is both inner and outer, and we are reminded to make resolutions for positive change in our lives and in the world.

Those resolutions can be a catalyst for ongoing change or a disappointing let down of unfulfilled intentions. So forgive the Past, allow the Future to have limitless possibilities, and accept each moment of Now as a new beginning.

Green resolutions are outlined each month in Green Tips. This month we simply recommend you consider the key components of the Global Marshall Plan (GMP), outlined by Rabbi Michael Lerner of Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) in Embracing Israel/Palestine: A Strategy to Heal and Transform the Middle East.

The GMP is based upon the premise that "our well-being as individuals and the well-being of the planet...are fundamentally interconnected," and is designed to transform that premise into action, calling "for all the world's people to work in solidarity to eliminate poverty... and to heal the environmental crisis.

The GMP strategy and an abridged 5-point outline of its key components begins on page 330 of Rabbi Lerner's book. A full version of the GMP is available on line at [www.spiritualprogressives.org/GMP](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org/GMP).

As you consider the GMP and explore the endless possibilities of new beginnings, be sure to hug yourself, avoid expectations, and remind yourself at the New Year and daily to make green decisions.





# Four reminders of human strength and goodness after Sandy Hook

By JEREMY ADAM SMITH

From *Greater Good: The Science for a Meaningful Life*  
Are people horrible? It's a question many Americans are asking ourselves after the horror of a school shooting.

I first heard about the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Twitter. In the flood of reactions, one stood out to me. "The children were killed execution style," tweeted one woman. "People are horrible."

## Are people horrible?

It's a question we as a culture pose after every war and atrocity; it's a question we as individuals ask ourselves after we experience personal betrayals or cruelty. The question certainly crossed my mind as the details of the massacre emerged; my immediate reaction was to think about the violence I've experienced in my life, and to look inside at my own capacity for violence. In the face of such horror, we feel overwhelmed. Optimism about our species seems out of place, perhaps even frivolous and offensive.

But that is exactly why it's important, in the aftermath, to remind ourselves of human propensities for compassion, empathy, forgiveness, heroism, peacefulness, and altruism.

We can find evidence of human goodness in the event itself—in the actions of teacher Victoria Soto, school psychologist Mary Sherlach, and principal Dawn Hochsprung, who gave their lives in defense of the kids. Several friends have told me that they wept after reading the story of Soto,

who died at age 27. I admit that I cried as well. We were crying over its tragedy, of course, but I believe we were also moved to tears by the example of primal human goodness that Soto now represents.

We can also look beyond this one event—to its context, and to what the science reveals about such violence. I like to say that science is essentially counting. That sounds like a cold activity, perhaps, but we humans count because it's a tool that helps us create an accurate picture of reality. Emotions can be counted, and so can actions. And that natural human propensity for counting helps correct for our "negativity bias"—that is, our tendency to remember threats better than the good things.

Before we make room for counting and logic, we must allow ourselves to feel. To weep and to mourn, and to feel terrible about ourselves and humanity. But then comes the work of understanding what happened, and why, and what events like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary tell us about human nature, and what we can do to cultivate the good and diminish the bad. Here are four reminders that people are not, in fact, horrible—and that we can turn to each other in times of horror and need.

## 1. Compassion and forgiveness are everywhere.

I haven't been able to stop thinking about this image, of one child comforting another. This image may be burned into my mind because the boy is just a little younger than my own son. But I am also struck by the maturity of the girl's compassion. This girl (whose name I haven't been able to discover) was probably frightened beyond all reason, and so the way she holds the boy seems to me to be an act of heroism.

And if you do an image search for Sandy Hook, you'll find picture after picture of people holding and comforting each other. We shouldn't be surprised. There is now a mountain of research showing that compassion and empathy are instinctive, defining human traits, ones that manifest themselves in children from a very early age. As Dacher Kelter writes in "The Compassionate Instinct," the brain "seems wired up to respond to others' suffering—indeed, it makes us feel good when we can alleviate that suffering."

What happened in Sandy Hook is incomprehensibly horrific. But against the act of one mentally ill young man, we have to count the sacrifices of women like Victoria Soto. Let's remember to count those children and parents who comforted each other. Let's not forget the first responders—police, paramedics, firemen, doctors, nurses—who rushed to help, not knowing what they would face. Their work is part of an entire infrastructure of compassion, one supported by all of us through our tax dollars.

And we should remember the words of Robbie Parker, the father of one of the children who was killed. He offered comfort and forgiveness to the family of shooter Adam Lanza, saying "I want you to know that our love and support go out to you as well." We should all take to heart Parker's hope

that the killings "not turn into something that defines us, but something that inspires us to be better, to be more compassionate and more humble people."

## 2. Schools are safer than ever.

When I heard about the massacre, my first instinct was to rush to my son's school. I gave in to that impulse, and I secretly spied on him and his classmates during recess. I didn't go to him or pull him out of school, because I think that would have created questions and fear. I want school to feel safe for him.

And, in fact, Americans schools are safe. Yes, there has been violence. But believe it or not, school violence has been declining for almost 20 years, and your kids are safer at school than outside of it. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of homicides in American schools fell by half in less than two decades, from a peak of 34 in 1993 to 17 in 2010, the latest figures available—this, despite the fact that enrollment skyrocketed during the same period.

Why? Most criminologists agree it's not tighter school security or zero-tolerance policies, which more and more school districts are rejecting. As Claudia Anderson, director of Student Support Services for San Francisco Unified, once told me: "For a decade we went through this zero-tolerance era. And quite frankly it didn't work. It didn't make one bit of difference."

That's why San Francisco and hundreds of other school districts around the country are turning from punitive policies to ones that are designed to foster empathy for victims and to provide mental health support for families. The data are still coming in, but so far these policies seem to have contributed to reducing school violence. Today, parents can send their kids to school confident that they will be safe.

## 3. Children (and adults) are resilient.

Much of the attention has focused on trauma, and some press coverage has looked to divorce, Asperger's Syndrome, and video games for explanations of Adam Lanza's violence.

The trauma is real. And it may well be the case that elements of Lanza's personal life fed the rampage. But tragedy can feed speculation, which, if unchecked, can lead to scapegoating and stigmatization. What are the facts?

As Christine Carter regularly discusses in her *Greater Good* blog about raising happy kids, children of troubled families can struggle—but divorce is often a solution to, not a cause of, these troubles. Most school shooters have come from intact homes; quite a few have come from seemingly happy, stable homes, though parental conflict and neglect are huge risk factors. People on the autistic spectrum, such as those with Asperger's, can be treated and can manage their own difficulties, and autism is not at all linked to shooting

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# Celebrating the Prince of Peace in the Land of Guns

By MICHAEL MOORE

After watching the deranged, delusional National Rifle Association press conference on Friday, it was clear that the Mayan prophecy had come true. Except the only world that was ending was the NRA's. Their bullying power to set gun policy in this country is over. The nation is repulsed by the massacre in Connecticut, and the signs are everywhere: a basketball coach at a post-game press conference; the Republican Joe Scarborough; a pawn shop owner in Florida; a gun buy-back program in New Jersey; a singing contest show on TV, and the conservative gun-owning judge who sentenced Jared Loughner.

So here's my little bit of holiday cheer for you:

These gun massacres aren't going to end any time soon.

I'm sorry to say this. But deep down we both know it's true. That doesn't mean we shouldn't keep pushing forward – after all, the momentum is on our side. I know all of us – including me – would love to see the president and Congress enact stronger gun laws. We need a ban on automatic AND semiautomatic weapons and magazine clips that hold more than 7 bullets. We need better background checks and more mental health services. We need to regulate the ammo, too.

But, friends, I would like to propose that while all of the above will certainly reduce gun deaths (ask Mayor Bloomberg – it is virtually impossible to buy a handgun in New York City and the result is the number of murders per year has gone from 2,200 to under 400), it won't really bring about an end to these mass slayings and it will not address the core problem we have. Connecticut had one of the strongest gun laws in the country. That did nothing to prevent the murders of 20 small children on December 14th.

In fact, let's be clear about Newtown: the killer had no criminal record so he would never have shown up on a background check. All of the guns he used were legally purchased. None fit the legal description of an "assault" weapon. The killer seemed to have mental problems and his mother had him seek help, but that was worthless. As for security measures, the Sandy Hook school was locked down and buttoned up BEFORE the killer showed up that morning. Drills had been held for just such an incident. A lot of good that did.

And here's the dirty little fact none of us liberals want to discuss: The killer only ceased his slaughter when he saw that cops were swarming onto the school grounds – i.e., the men with the guns. When he saw the guns a-coming, he stopped the bloodshed and killed himself. Guns on police officers prevented another 20 or 40 or 100 deaths from happening. Guns sometimes work. (Then again, there was an armed deputy sheriff at Columbine High School the day of that massacre and he couldn't/didn't stop it.)

I am sorry to offer this reality check on our much-needed march toward a bunch of well-intended, necessary – but ultimately, mostly cosmetic – changes to our gun laws. The sad facts are these: Other countries that have guns (like Canada, which has 7 million guns – mostly hunting guns – in their 12 million households) have a low murder rate. Kids in Japan watch the same violent movies and kids in Australia play the same violent video games (Grand Theft Auto was created by a British company; the UK had 58 gun murders last year in a nation of 63 million people). They simply don't kill each



other at the rate that we do. Why is that? THAT is the question we should be exploring while we are banning and restricting guns: Who are we?

I'd like to try to answer that question.

We are a country whose leaders officially sanction and carry out acts of violence as a means to often an immoral end. We invade countries who didn't attack us. We're currently using drones in a half-dozen countries, often killing civilians.

This probably shouldn't come as a surprise to us as we are a nation founded on genocide and built on the backs of slaves. We slaughtered 600,000 of each other in a civil war. We "tamed the Wild West with a six-shooter," and we rape and beat and kill our women without mercy and at a staggering rate: every three hours a woman is murdered in the USA (half the time by an ex or a current); every three minutes a woman is raped in the USA; and every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in the USA.

**And here's the dirty little fact none of us liberals want to discuss: The killer only ceased his slaughter when he saw that cops were swarming onto the school grounds – i.e., the men with the guns.**

We belong to an illustrious group of nations that still have the death penalty (North Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran). We think nothing of letting tens of thousands of our own citizens die each year because they are uninsured and thus don't see a doctor until it's too late.

Why do we do this? One theory is simply "because we can." There is a level of arrogance in the otherwise friendly American spirit, conning ourselves into believing there's something exceptional about us that separates us from all those "other" countries (there are indeed many good things about us; the same could also be said of Belgium, New Zealand, France, Germany, etc.). We think we're #1 in everything when the truth is our students are 17th in science and 25th in math, and we're 35th in life expectancy. We believe

we have the greatest democracy but we have the lowest voting turnout of any western democracy. We're biggest and the bestest at everything and we demand and take what we want.

And sometimes we have to be violent m\*\*\*\*\*f\*\*\*\*\*s to get it. But if one of us goes off-message and shows the utterly psychotic nature and brutal results of violence in a Newtown or an Aurora or a Virginia Tech, then we get all "sad" and "our hearts go out to the families" and presidents promise to take "meaningful action." Well, maybe this president means it this time. He'd better. An angry mob of millions is not going to let this drop.

While we are discussing and demanding what to do, may I respectfully ask that we stop and take a look at what I believe are the three extenuating factors that may answer the question of why we Americans have more violence than most anyone else:

1. **POVERTY.** If there's one thing that separates us from the rest of the developed world, it's this. 50 million of our people live in poverty. One in five Americans goes hungry at some point during the year. The majority of those who aren't poor are living from paycheck to paycheck. There's no doubt this creates more crime. Middle class jobs prevent crime and violence. (If you don't believe that, ask yourself this: If your neighbor has a job and is making \$50,000/year, what are the chances he's going to break into your home, shoot you and take your TV? Nil.)

2. **FEAR/RACISM.** We're an awfully fearful country considering that, unlike most nations, we've never been invaded. (No, 1812 wasn't an invasion. We started it.) Why on earth would we need 300 million guns in our homes? I get why the Russians might be a little spooked (over 20 million of them died in World War II). But what's our excuse? Worried that the Indians from the casino may go on the warpath? Concerned that the Canadians seem to be amassing too many Tim Horton's donut shops on both sides of the border?

No. It's because too many white people are afraid of black people. Period. The vast majority of the guns in the U.S. are sold to white people who live in the suburbs or the country. When we fantasize about being mugged or home invaded, what's the image of the perpetrator in our heads? Is it the freckled-face kid from down the street – or is it someone who is, if not black, at least poor?

I think it would be worth it to a) do our best to eradicate poverty and re-create the middle class we used to have, and b) stop promoting the image of the black man as the boogey-man out to hurt you. Calm down, white people, and put away your guns.

3. **THE "ME" SOCIETY.** I think it's the every-man-for-himself ethos of this country that has put us in this mess and I believe it's been our undoing. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps! You're not my problem! This is mine!

Clearly, we are no longer our brother's and sister's keeper. You get sick and can't afford the operation? Not my problem. The bank has foreclosed on your home? Not my problem. Can't afford to go to college? Not my problem.

And yet, it all sooner or later becomes our problem, doesn't it? Take away too many safety nets and everyone starts to



# Practical suggestions for gun control from a Vietnam Vet

By BRUCE JONES

As much as I have read about American history, it was only comparatively recently that I began to understand that historically, the second amendment has little to do with guns, which the founders assumed people would continue to have especially as the nation expanded, but really was all about the debate then of whether there should be a standing army run by the federal government, which was scary for many patriots. Instead, the 2nd was a call for state militias to be the cornerstone of our defense system, and therefore citizens must keep their muskets so that they can rally for their home state in times of danger. Well, the National Guard seems to be filling that role, but even those soldiers have to turn back their M-16s when training or active duty is completed.

My friend and fellow Vietnam vet, Gary Hendryx, observes that an “assault weapon” may be nothing more than a rifle (semi-automatic of course) that is camouflaged. Wikipedia also notes a “cosmetic” aspect in the prior legislation, that assault weapons look like and have features of “assault rifles,” which are fully automatic and illegal since the 1930s. Obviously a color scheme or even imagery is not what we need to look at— but it seems that the banning of “assault weapons” can’t depend on a precise definition. Instead it apparently requires a long list of specific models that are to be banned — the new bill by Senator Feinstein will do this again.

But doesn’t past experience show that if we ban one model, another one, whether semi-automatic pistol or rifle, will be designed with some modifications to replace it? This is, after all, about that “free market” and corporate profits.

With a blanket definition of assault weapons apparently not possible, it seems to me that the clip is the core issue.

Regarding clips, let me go back to my experience in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive (when I had to steal a .45



to protect myself because “Saigon Warriors,” the support troops, were denied weapons which we might and would misuse). After the first night and day of combat in the streets, I secured a carbine and, like the real infantry soldiers, I taped two clips together so that if one was exhausted, it could be pulled and flipped over for a fresh clip. The clip for carbines contained 30 rounds — so that arrangement meant I had 60 rounds quickly available to me. (For the record, I was lucky enough to never pull a trigger in Vietnam.)

Even if we limit magazines to 10 rounds — which clearly would be an improvement on today’s failure to put any controls on ammo— the next murderer with a rifle will respond by taping two clips together to make available 20 fast rounds.

I propose an even more stringent approach — if politically the movement becomes strong enough, I would advocate that all rifle/pistol clips be limited to 6 rounds, just as is the capacity of my .38 revolver, which in reality is also a “assault

weapon.” Let’s put all the non-hunting weapons on a “level playing field.” Even then, an owner of a rifle would have 12 rounds quickly available if he taped the clips together, but that is so much better than today’s monster clips.

Owners of too-large clips or drums must be subject to huge fines — no jail time, except to hold bad risks until those fines are paid off (and complete background checks are available). There should be a presumption that any gun owner with extended gun clips is a risk to society and subject to temporary imprisonment.

Before we get into the deep politics of banning assault weapons, let’s get the background checks resolved and stop unregulated gun sales over the internet and at gun shows NOW. Those are truly no-brainers.

When will this country regain some sanity? I am copying this to Senator Feinstein in hopes that her new bill will answer some of these questions,

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## Sandy Hook

from page 5

rampages. Most kids today play video games without ever physically harming others—and the best evidence we have does not reveal a link between mass shootings and video game play.

It’s critical in the wake of tragedy to not go to the easy answers—and to remind ourselves that divorce does not create homicidal killers, people with Autism should not be viewed as threats, and the data on video games remains inconclusive. If we allow these unsupported explanations to flourish, we risk blaming and marginalizing people who happen to share Lanza’s traits and experiences without actually changing one thing for the better—and we risk making things even worse for people who might need help.

We have good reasons to have faith in ourselves and each other. People are built to survive and rebound from life’s difficulties and tragedies, including divorce, illness, and encounters with violence. In *What Doesn’t Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth*, psychologist Stephen Joseph argues that treatment for trauma must highlight strengths, reframe horrible experience in a more positive way (by, for example, focusing on being a survivor rather than a victim), and taking positive steps in your life.

As childhood trauma expert Dr. David Schonfeld told the

New York Daily News, “The one thing to remember is that while these experiences are life-changing and traumatic, it doesn’t mean these kids are damaged for the rest of their lives.”

### 4. Peace is the rule, not the exception.

“Believe it or not,” writes psychologist Steven Pinker, “violence has declined over long stretches of time, and today we may be living in the most peaceable era in our species’ existence.” His 2011 book *The Better Angels of Our Nature* assembles an impressive array of evidence for this startling argument.

But again, we shouldn’t be surprised—the evidence has been mounting for decades. “The study of killing by military scientists, historians, and psychologists gives us good reason to feel optimistic about human nature, for it reveals that almost all of us are overwhelmingly reluctant to kill a member of our own species, under just about any circumstance,” writes Lt. Col. Dave Grossman in his Greater Good essay, “Hope on the Battlefield.”

Anthropologist Douglas P. Fry studied violence in hundreds of societies—and found that it is peace, not war and

violence, that characterizes most human lives. “Our daily observations may seem to contradict the idea that peacefulness predominates in human affairs, especially when we have become accustomed to Hollywood films and daily newscasts that depict unrelenting violence. In actuality, the vast majority of people on the planet awake on a typical morning and live a violence-free day—and this experience generally continues day after day.”

That’s easy to forget when confronted by horrors like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Of course, peace is never a given. It’s something we have to work for every day, in every interaction with other people. As a result of Sandy Hook, we are now engaged in national discussions about mental health, guns, and education, much of which is shaped by trauma and fear. In that discussion, it’s critical that we follow Robbie Parker’s example—and speak out for the good in people.

From the [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\\_reminders\\_of\\_human\\_strength\\_and\\_goodness\\_after\\_sandy\\_hook#](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_reminders_of_human_strength_and_goodness_after_sandy_hook#)

Originally published by Greater Good, the online magazine of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley ([greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu))

# Gun Control

from page 1

shootings around the country compel many to ask, “Can’t we do something about gun violence in America?” The answer, of course, is yes—beginning with changing the weak federal laws that allow almost anyone access to a wide variety of deadly weapons.

In Tucson’s aftermath, Americans are hungry for action: a recent bipartisan nationwide poll confirmed that large majorities of Americans support a variety of innovative, common sense reforms ([http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/maig\\_poll\\_01\\_18\\_2011.pdf](http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/maig_poll_01_18_2011.pdf)). While political will may lag behind public opinion, it’s time to demand safer, less violent communities and to embrace the smart laws that can make them a reality. A good start would include federal adoption of the following proposals:

Ban large capacity ammunition magazines. In Tucson, Jared Loughner was able to cause so much devastation in a matter of seconds because he used a handgun equipped with a large capacity ammunition magazine capable of holding 33 bullets. Large capacity magazines, some of which can hold up to 100 rounds, are the

...large majorities of Americans support a variety of innovative, common sense reforms...

common thread uniting all of the major mass shootings in recent history, including those at Fort Hood, Columbine, and Virginia Tech ([http://www.vpc.org/fact\\_sht/VPCshootinglist.pdf](http://www.vpc.org/fact_sht/VPCshootinglist.pdf)). These magazines were prohibited under federal law until Congress allowed the 1994 assault weapons ban to expire in 2004. There’s simply no reason not to ban them again, and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy and Senator Frank Lautenberg have courageously introduced legislation to do just that. (<http://carolynmccarthy.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=155&parentid=189&sectiontree=155&itemid=1719>)

Require a background check every time a firearm is sold. Many Americans assume that every person who wants to purchase a gun must first pass a criminal background check confirming that he or she isn’t prohibited from owning guns. If only that were the case. Under federal law, a prospective purchaser only has to undergo a background check when buying a gun from a licensed dealer. If a person buys a gun from a so-called “private seller”—as is the case in an estimated 40 percent of gun sales every year—no background check is federally required.

Since 1994, the background check system has prevented nearly 1.8 million prohibited persons from purchasing firearms, while untold numbers of convicted criminals and mentally ill individuals have exploited the “private sale loophole” to gain access to guns. A recent undercover investigation by the City of New York showed just how easy it is to get a gun at a gun show, no questions asked. A background check requirement alone isn’t enough—more also needs to be done to ensure that the names of persons who are prohibited are appropriately entered into the system—but it would be a vital step in the right direction. (<http://www.gunshowundercover.org>)

Give ATF the resources it needs. A common refrain used to oppose firearms legislation is that “we should just enforce the laws that are on the books.” Although new laws are certainly needed, better enforcement is an important piece of reducing gun violence, which is why the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) needs to have the resources and leadership to effectively enforce existing federal firearms laws.

For starters, it would be nice for ATF to have a boss. The agency has not had a permanent director in over four years. That’s an inexcusable leadership vacuum, and the Senate ought to promptly confirm President Obama’s nominee for ATF Director, Andrew Traver. Second, the Bureau should be given the resources to crack down on dishonest firearms dealers. A small number of unscrupulous gun dealers—by one estimate, only 1 percent of all licensed dealers—sell the ma-

majority of firearms recovered in crime scenes nationwide. ATF has the authority to perform an unannounced inspection on a dealer once a year; ATF has the resources, however, to perform an inspection, on

average, only once every decade. As documented by the Washington Post late last year, that’s only one of the many resource limitations that are preventing ATF agents from more effectively preventing the widespread trafficking of crime guns.

Improve access to funding and data for researchers. Congress has, time and again, succumbed to gun lobby pressure to obstruct research into the development of smart, effective policies to fight gun violence, stopping the flow of data as well as money. As the New York Times reported recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) once played a key role in supporting research into the public health concerns surrounding gun violence and the development of effective firearms laws. That was until Congress singled out guns in the CDC’s funding bill with language stating that, “None of the funds made available for injury prevention and control...may be used to advocate or promote gun control.”

Researchers are also denied access to data tracing the origins of firearms recovered in crimes. Trace information helped academics and members of the public identify particularly problematic gun dealers and observe trends in the spread of crime guns until Congress, in what is known as the Tiahrt Amendment, imposed restrictions that now conceal trace data from public view. This data could provide a valuable resource for innovative policy reform; for example, a recent report from Mayors Against Illegal Guns used trace data to identify ten important state laws that can reduce the trafficking of illegal guns across state lines. (<http://tracetheguns.org/#>)

This list could go on, as the gaps in federal firearms laws are as many as they are glaring. Still, there’s reason to think that successfully reducing gun violence through the adoption of common sense gun policy is possible, and the evidence lies

not at the federal level, but among the states. While too many states have done nothing to combat gun violence, state and local governments in California and New York, among others, continue to adopt innovative laws to protect public safety. In a recent publication, Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV) found that many of the states with the strongest gun laws also have the lowest gun death rates, while many states with the weakest gun laws have the highest gun death rates.

One conclusion seems inescapable. As the LCAV publication’s title puts it, Gun Laws Matter. With this knowledge, we’ll all be empowered to work toward a better, less violent future.

Benjamin Van Houten is a Staff Attorney at Legal Community Against Violence, a national law center dedicated to preventing gun violence. He specializes in Second Amendment litigation and California legislation. Visit <http://smartgunlaws.org>

Words Matter: How Media Can Build Civility or Destroy It. The media can, as we know, promote fear, hatred, and extremism. Can they also lead us to greater civility and more productive debate? <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/words-matter-how-media-can-build-civility-or-destroy-it>

Real Family Values 9 progressive policies to protect our families. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/what-happy-families-know/real-family-values>

More information: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/25/AR2010102505823.html>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/us/26guns.html?\\_r=2&http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/federal/tiahrt.shtml](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/us/26guns.html?_r=2&http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/html/federal/tiahrt.shtml)

<http://smartgunlaws.org/gun-law-statistics-and-research/>

# Land of Guns

from page 6

feel the impact. Do you want to live in that kind of society, one where you will then have a legitimate reason to be in fear? I don’t.

I’m not saying it’s perfect anywhere else, but I have noticed, in my travels, that other civilized countries see a national benefit to taking care of each other. Free medical care, free or low-cost college, mental health help. And I wonder – why can’t we do that? I think it’s because in many other countries people see each other not as separate and alone but rather together, on the path of life, with each person existing as an integral part of the whole. And you help them when they’re in need, not punish them because they’ve had some misfortune or bad break. I have to believe one of the reasons gun murders in other countries are so rare is because there’s less of the lone wolf mentality amongst their citizens. Most are raised with a sense of connection, if not outright solidarity. And that makes it harder to kill one another.

Well, there’s some food for thought as we head home for the holidays. Don’t forget to say hi to your conservative brother-in-law for me. Even he will tell you that, if you can’t nail a deer in three shots – and claim you need a clip of 30 rounds – you’re not a hunter my friend, and you have no business owning a gun.

Have a wonderful Christmas or a beautiful December 25th!



## January 2013 - New Beginnings

Modesto poets weigh in on “new beginnings” as we enter the New Year.

### January's Poem

January's a month of naked sticks,  
lichen-crust and gray,  
moss gone damp and soft as sponge.  
Cold clings to the insides of coats, creeps  
into boots marooned on the rug.  
Fog funnels in through the chimney,  
rattles the windowlocks, fashions itself  
into sheets thin as puddle ice, and  
exits under the door. January's cranky,  
moody as witch dreams, now threatening  
to dampen, chill, and freeze us all, now,  
quite gently, offering the snapped twig  
with its wild tinge of green.

— **Gillian Wegener**

*Originally published in The Opposite of  
Clairvoyance (Sixteen Rivers Press, 2008)*

### Autumn Winter Rise

Spring blossoms bear fruit  
Summer scorched leaves remain fixed upon  
thirsty branches  
Grasses spent flowers mulch together in  
rotting layers

Earthworms tangle into knots Seek blindly  
Find themselves at the end of where they  
began  
Embedded within dormant doughy darkness

Minute organisms gather together in muddy  
colonies  
Mix and blend in soft autumn air  
Rest quietly within winter's dormant facade

Under the guise of a lifeless winter blanket  
The substance of new beginnings  
Reveals life at the next perfect thaw

— **Tina Arnopole Driskill**

### From this moment forward...

I can see only today. Nothing above my  
shoulders from times ago holds me bound  
to faded dreams not come true or passions  
lost.

No past voices calling me back from  
the edge of unknown adventures, or  
discouraging the me of explicit reality to  
merge with my artist's heart.

Not forgetting lessons earned nor hands that  
reached out & held me down when fear was  
moving me in backwards momentum.

Escarpment dreams now give way to a  
sentient journey of hopeful confidence &  
joyful anticipation.

All I once believed impossible has now  
become a vibrant pallet of “oh yes I cans”!

Each moment offers new opportunity. I will  
no longer walk in a place where I become  
my own shadow.

Rather I shall greet the sun with celebration  
& confirm with the moon in nights season  
that I am indeed “a new beginning.”

— **Jai Gullatt, 12/12**

### Ten Again

How exciting to be ten! If only I were ten  
again—  
or twenty, egocentric twenty, when I cared  
for no one  
but myself and my reflection. Terrors of the  
thirties—  
my youth dissolved with twenty-nine, lost  
loves and false,  
how could it all be gone? A twisted broken  
run towards forty—  
ancient, wrinkling, desperate, knowing,  
four times  
as old as when I was excited to be a child  
of ten.

If only I were ten again, but fifty waves its  
banner,  
confident, deeply grown, and  
competent No one  
tells me what to do. Peers respect me; I do  
too.  
Sixty. Well over halfway there, Fall grows  
colder,  
branches grey and bare. Around me stand  
the others—  
unadorned, exposed by truth, what finally  
counts revealed.  
Counting down I look ahead a day, a  
month, a year:

It could end anytime and what do I do with  
any time  
that I have left? How exciting it would be  
to feel  
like ten again! Not to care what others  
think, to watch them  
wonder what it's like to be a grown-up  
child like me,  
Blessed and free at sixty-five, wise with my  
years at eighty-three,  
looking back from ninety-two with a sigh  
of humble pride,  
looking forward with a thrill to someday  
being ten again.

— **Rev. Sheila D. Landre, 2/12**

### Fall Into Winter

When the old leaf snaps its last hold  
As it sweeps sun gold through currents  
Of airy crisp morning  
Does it shade back through green  
To remember warm budding, bloom?  
Does a whole leaf life flash before it  
In falling?

— **Linda Johnson**

The difference is the water remaining,  
the evaporation, absorption  
of dust and ashes, the rough green  
pushing up to shine in the noon sun.

A difference between this solstice  
and the last dream of the one before  
is what still puddles when we wake,  
the cascade of fog saturating the dawn.

All the difference in the way light  
penetrates and surrenders to mist  
can be held in a cracked cup, a forgotten  
corner, a cold coup d'oeil.

Some differences occur because answers  
winnow themselves before they can fit  
the questions they were planted alongside,  
shrinking with each year and left behind.

What is precious is often what is faintest—  
the tiny matters at the edges of our hearts,  
the time it takes to grow a seed, a reply—  
with no difference in the source of light.

— **Gary Thomas, 2 January 2001**

A new beginning is a motherless child  
An unsuckled babe  
Searching the faces of passers-by  
For the one thing  
Defiant of gold doubloons  
Of losing contests with leviathan  
Searching for just one ally  
The Saint of Cabora?  
Ultima, Huila, Manuelito?  
Amulets of rattlesnake tail  
Bear claw, turquoise stone  
Or the one leaf given in awe  
To the grandmothers of the world.

But first the oak must lose  
everything it owns.  
Must settle its contract  
with the galls.  
First its roots must upend the tiles  
Crack the well-built walls,  
Stand alone in the schoolyard  
Rain darkening its scars  
Rain lashing its thirsty roots  
Rain rushing the old,  
The spent, into the gutters,  
into the hungry seas.

— **Lillian Vallee**



### Beginnings

To understand  
somewhere  
a place or thing  
begins  
look outside  
the picture window  
glass, leaves fall  
and scurry  
in early autumn  
like rodents  
you dreamt  
the next night, kicking  
me awake...  
it started the season  
a walk in the mind  
drawing  
the first letters  
of a name, ellipsis  
at the Palomarin  
trailhead, looking  
forward, time  
was up that path  
that fringe  
posing  
next to the pond  
where you often  
swam free...  
camera rolling  
in front of  
your eyes  
you took me  
beyond the rope  
swing, rippled  
the surface  
of language  
understanding  
the untouched  
surface  
of water  
that suddenly  
deepened as to  
where we should go.

— **Gordon Preston**

### Still New

(after “New Year” by Linda Toren)

Between here and now and forever  
Is such precious little time  
What we do in love and kindness  
Is all we ever leave behind

— **Carrie Newcomber**

# The Helen White Trail in West Modesto: Making A Dream Come True

By LYNN M. HANSEN

Dreamers dream and doers do, but in West Modesto a community of people are in the process of converting a dream into action. The idea, first proposed in 2005, is to construct a walking trail, The Helen White Memorial Trail, in West Modesto to provide a safe corridor for young people to walk to school and an environment that promotes physical activity for community members. Naming the trail to honor the memory of Helen White was the idea of Reverend Marvin Jacobo, founder and President of the faith-based Board for City Ministry Network, because Helen was a mentor for youth, a constant community servant, community leader and activist who many referred to as “Mrs. West Side.”

The proposed site of the Helen White Memorial Trail is on an existing MID easement over a buried irrigation pipe extending from Maze Boulevard to California Avenue. In collaboration with KLA Landscape Architecture Planning and public safety officials, the community plan is to convert this site from a dirt path and dumping site into a safe walking environment for West Modesto residents. The cost of the project is one million dollars.

The people spearheading the effort to build the trail are members of the Helen White Memorial Trail Campaign Committee and Stanislaus Multi-Cultural Community Health Coalition\*West Modesto/King Kennedy Neighborhood Collaborative, a direct outgrowth of the Stanislaus County Minority Community Health Coalition formed in 1991 and consisting of over five hundred members. In a time of recession the goal of raising one million dollars could seem impossible but not to Executive Director Cleopatia Moore-Bell and Program Manager Carole Collins. Their optimistic outlook is summed up by Carole, “He always has a ram in the bush” referring to the biblical story of Abraham when God provided a ram in the bush for sacrifice in the place of Abraham’s son, Isaac. In this spirit, the fundraising for the trail began.

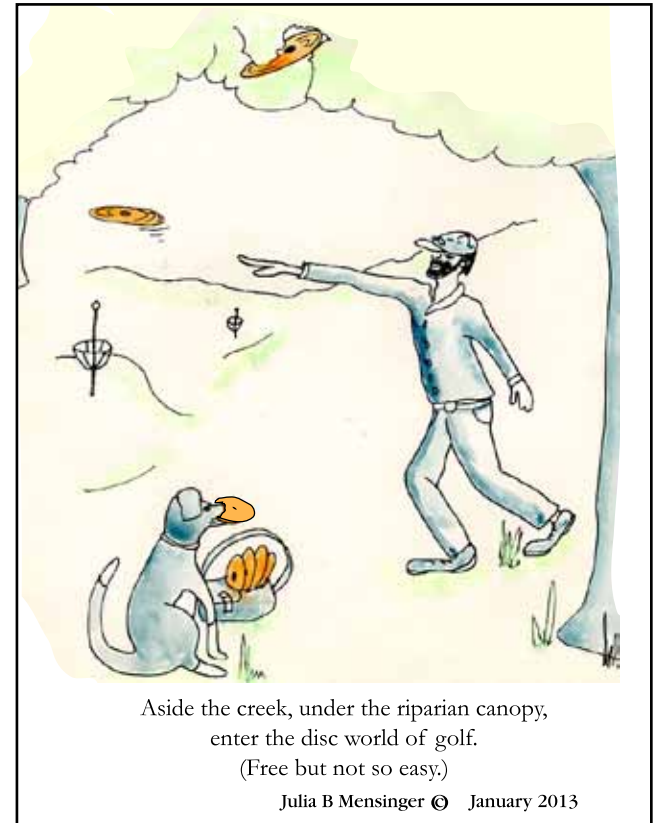
The grass roots support of the Helen White Trail for the West Modesto community is evidenced by the enthusiastic

financial and in-kind support from a diverse coalition of businesses, community organizations, schools, and individuals: Stanislaus County, the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods, Cal-Trans Safe Routes to School, Modesto Irrigation District, Kaiser Permanente as well as community organizations such as the Women’s Auxiliary, Modesto Teachers Association and Black Jaks Motorcycle Club to name a few, have contributed cash or in-kind services toward the project.. Carrie Cardoza of Cardoza and Associates, Inc. and Richard Anderson of Modesto Science Videos have made presentations of the project to prospective donors together with brochures produced by Martino Graphic Design. Students from Mark Twain Jr. High, Fremont and James Marshall Elementary Schools, groups from Modesto, Enoch and Beyer High School student bodies and student clubs have made cash donations for the trail. Children from Franklin Elementary School even held two penny drives collecting \$2,274 for the project.

At this writing, the project fund drive is in the home stretch. Your contribution combined with a two-to-one anonymous donor matching pledge, will close the gap towards reaching the final goal of \$150,000 and construction on the trail will begin – a positive step toward creating a healthier environment for our West Modesto community and its children. Will you be a “ram in the bush” that will help the Helen White Trail to be realized?

**ACTION:** To make a monetary or in-kind donation toward this project contact Executive Director Cleopatia Moore-Bell or Project Manager Carole Collins at 209-522-6902.

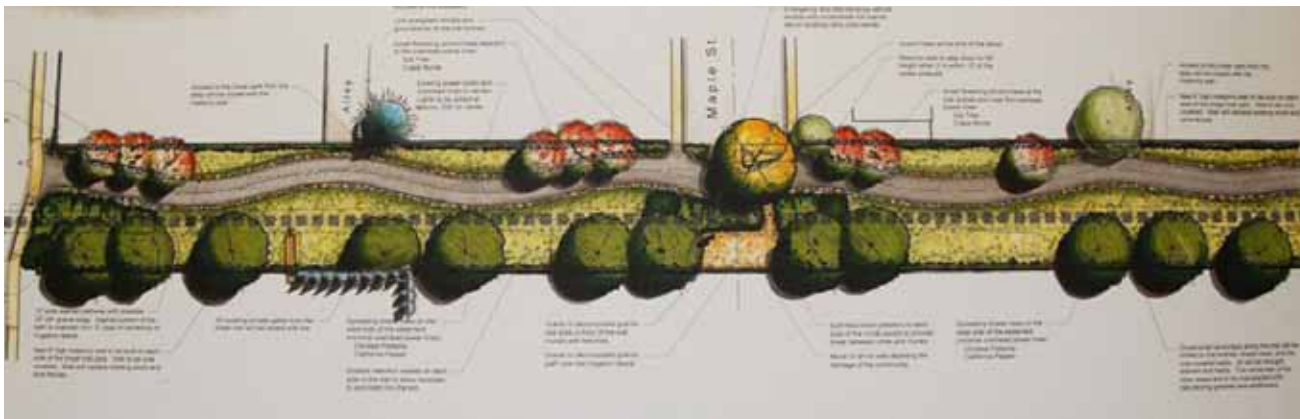
OR visit the Stanislaus Multi-Cultural Community Health Coalition West Modesto/King Kennedy Neighborhood Collaborative at 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, CA 95351. View the Collaborative’s video at: <http://vimeo.com/38616669>. Checks may be made out to SMCHC/WMKKNC. For credit card donations, call 209-522-6902



## Videographers wanted or people interested

The Modesto Peace/Life Center is looking for a program on the “invisible people.” These are the poor or homeless people that live in our area. If you are interested, email or call John Lucas at [johnlucas1947@gmail.com](mailto:johnlucas1947@gmail.com) or 527-7634.

The finished video will be aired on the Peace/Life Center’s public access television time slot on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 9 PM on Comcast Channel 26.





# Sandy Hook and an Amish response to tragedy

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

I first heard about the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut on a Friday evening in my home here in Cambridge, England. American friends began posting those strange messages to Facebook that lacked context like, "Tragedy. No words." I had to go find the context, and I found they were right.

I felt a hole open in my chest and drop into my belly. I came very close to uttering the inchoate, incoherent wail of a bodiless spirit in eternal mourning. Then I wanted to utter a string of expletives until I found catharsis. I did neither of these things. But I did watch the coverage via the internet for a short time. In my calmer moments I realized I felt something much different from I did last time this happened.

I feel more connected to the loss of life than I did when I heard about Columbine. I am a father now. I have learned what it means to give everything you have and everything you are to someone who can only recognize that imperative, that drive, and that commitment when they are old enough to have their own children. Having a child is an act of faith that the future will be at least as good as the present, that the person you are creating will have a fulfilling life: love, friends, satisfying work, enjoyable pastimes.

To have that future torn away from my daughter as her life begins would be, for me, an inconsolable loss. And here the words are failing me. The thought of losing my daughter to an event over which I have no control fills me with grief. I can taste the pain the parents of 20 children in Connecticut are feeling. I know this is only a taste, and that fact is both comforting and horrifying.

Crying for the loss of those 20 beautiful souls and the 6 adults who cared enough to spend their vocational lives working with children is the most appropriate response I

can muster. I know there are people who are angry. Some of them vent their feelings on social media, some call in to radio shows, some write letters.

But I have never felt comfortable in anger. So in the immediate aftermath of this horror I thought about how people respond to these types of tragedies and went looking for reasons to feel encouraged and hopeful about human civilization. I recalled another recent school shooting. In October 2006, a gunman entered West Nickel Mines school, a one-room school-house in rural Pennsylvania Amish country, and took hostages. He eventually murdered 10 girls, aged six to thirteen, all of them Amish.

The response by the Amish community is indescribably beautiful. It moved me then, and it reaches my core now. One murdered girl's grandfather said, "We must not think evil of this man." Other members of the community reached out to the gunman's family and helped them grieve for the loss of their son who committed suicide at the end of his attack. The gunman's widow was one of the few non-Amish allowed to attend a funeral for one of the murdered girls. The Amish community set up a charity to help the family this gunman left behind, and 30 of them attended his funeral.

The people of that community showed immense courage in the immediate aftermath of the shootings. They know that the best response to seemingly senseless destruction of human life is love and forgiveness rather than hatred and anger. They acted on that knowledge. I aspire to the same level of courage.

So my second response, beyond the grief I feel for the people who lost their children, is to make sure the people I love know I love them. I also want them to know that love does not judge. We all struggle with something, talking about our struggles helps us to address them before they get to the point at which violence seems a plausible cure.

Finally, we citizens of the United States need to address the issue of the availability of firearms in our society. It is long past time that we protect each other from gun violence by reducing the availability of guns. Countries in Europe and Asia have a staggeringly smaller rate of death by firearm than the United States because they control access to firearms.

As a Historian, I am well aware of the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. It has two clauses. The second, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed," is the part that our government seems to shape our laws around. The first part, "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State," is the part our government currently ignores.

It seems to me that the first clause leaves the door open to a great deal of regulation of firearms. And it could argued that establishing a law requiring gun owners to join a state-regulated militia or the National Guard would not violate the letter of the Second Amendment.

I can see a lot of space between our government's current reading of the Second Amendment and my "Strict Constructionist" suggestion. We need to start a conversation about the role of guns in our society and from that discussion create some sensible regulations and restrictions.

None of us, whether we support tighter regulations on firearms or not, wants events like Columbine, West Nickel Mines, and Sandy Hook to happen again. But it is beyond time to recognize that the most effective way to make sure that none of us feels the loss of a child due to gun violence is to curtail the availability of guns.

**The response by the Amish community is indescribably beautiful. It moved me then, and it reaches my core now.**

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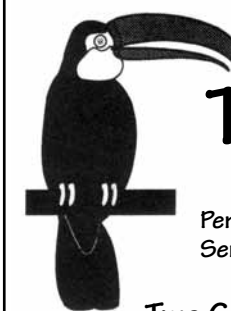
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