

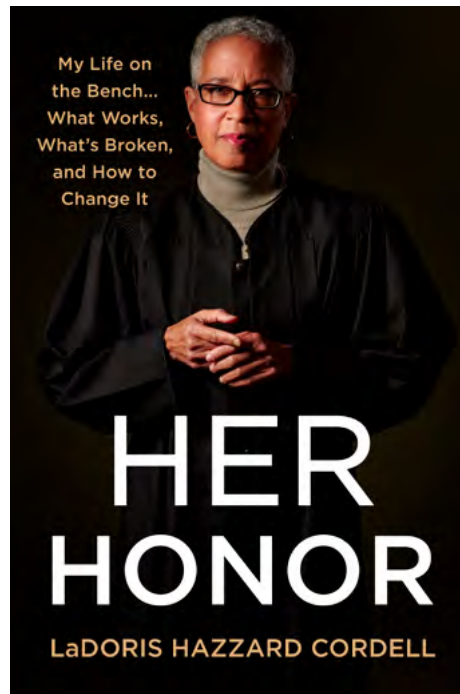
Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell to speak at 31st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration

By **JAMES COSTELLO**

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Committee invites you to our 31st Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration on Saturday, March 1, 2025. **Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell** will speak at Modesto Junior College’s Performing Arts & Media Center, 435 College Ave., at 7:00 p.m.

We invite **all interested students** to meet with Judge Cordell in the MJC Little Theatre at 4:00 p.m.

A Stanford Law School graduate, Judge Cordell became *the first African American woman jurist in Northern California* and the first lawyer to open a private in East Palo Alto, a low-income community of color. As an Assistant Dean at Stanford Law School, she implemented a highly successful minority admissions program. She was a Vice Provost at Stanford University and, in 2010, was appointed the Independent Police Auditor for the City of San Jose. Judge Cordell has overseen commissions investigating violence, racism, and mental health care in the jail system and in the San Francisco police department. The recipient of numerous awards, she has written *Her Honor: My Life on the Bench... What Works, What’s Broken, and How to Change It*. Order a copy, bring it with you for her to sign! (Copies may be available for cash only at the event.)



The Commemoration will feature inspirational music and spoken word. NAACP President Wendy Byrd will present **the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award to long-time community activist Gladys Williams**.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. died 57 years ago, his vision still uplifts and transforms countless people worldwide. To keep that vision fresh and provocative locally, a committee of community groups and supporters — the Modesto Peace/Life Center, Modesto Junior College, the

City of Modesto, and California State University, Stanislaus has offered our community an inspiring Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration.

Over the years, we have brought a stimulating array of influential speakers to our community including actors Greg Alan Williams, Edward James Olmos, Danny Glover, and Mike Farrell; Dr. King’s daughter, Yolanda King; astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison; philosopher Cornel West; Indigenous activist Russell Means; Congressman John Lewis; Civil Rights pioneers, Diane Nash, Julian Bond, and Andrew Young; historian Taylor Branch; farm workers’ champion, Dolores Huerta; and sociologist, Dr. Harry Edwards to name a few.

Our event is **FREE**. However, *we depend solely on monetary donations or services* from our co-sponsors, individuals, caring groups, and businesses. Would you help us this year? Donors are highlighted in our printed program and the PowerPoint presentation shown preceding the program.

To contribute, make your tax-deductible check payable to “Modesto Peace/Life Center-MLK” and send it to Jim Costello, 1849 Richard Way, Ceres, CA 95307-4504. The Peace/Life Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, EIN #94-2800825. Or go to <https://peacelifecenter.org/>, select the Support Us button, leave the note “MLK,” and make a credit card or PayPal donation.

Peace Essay Contest Needs Your Help

By **ADRIANA FELIX and DEENA ELLIOTT**

The Peace Essay Contest has been a beloved part of our community for over 30 years, offering students a platform to think critically and write about social justice issues. We extend heartfelt thanks to the committee members, participants, volunteers, educators, judges, and everyone who contributed to making this contest such a valued tradition in our community.

Originally, the Peace Essay Contest aligned with the Modesto Peace/Life Center’s mission by encouraging school youth to explore themes of peace, justice, nonviolence, and sustainability. The contest’s scholarship ceremony brought together students, families, and community members to celebrate the powerful voices of youth with the potential to drive social change and build inclusivity and equity. Today, we are energized by a renewed interest in bringing back a reimagined contest to continue this important work—though “contest” may evolve to reflect new forms of engagement.

One thing stands out in conversations with former committee members: their legacy is irreplaceable. Our role now is to adapt this platform to a new generation, staying true to its mission while embracing diverse voices and leveraging technology to broaden its reach. Our vision is to create a space that welcomes even more students to participate, including those who may not have joined in the past. We believe in the power of words, creativity, and dialogue to inspire change, and we want to expand this platform to include not only essays but also

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Peace essay contest from page 1

other forms of expression like poetry and audio. While the world has changed, the call for critical thinking and engagement with global and local issues remains as strong as ever. Now, more than ever, the pursuit of social justice through youth engagement is vital.

Join our committee to help shape this inclusive and accessible platform, inspiring young people to become advocates for peace and justice. We're looking for a diverse range of skills and perspectives to bring this vision to life and are calling on those who believe that a more peaceful world is possible. Together, we can empower the next generation to envision and build a more equitable world. If you're ready to engage with passionate young visionaries and play a hands-on role in reimagining this powerful project, we invite you to join us.

ACTION: Contact us at Modestopeacecontest@gmail.com or leave a message at (209) 529-5750. Bring your dedication and talents to breathe new life into this initiative—together, let's make a lasting impact.

SCF Scholarships

Through our Scholarship Program, Stanislaus Community Foundation and its partners award over \$300,000 in scholarships to more than 150 local students Each year. The program offers financial assistance to Stanislaus County residents pursuing higher education at an accredited college, university, or vocational college through multiple scholarship funds.

The 2025 scholarship application period will open on Wednesday, January 1, 2025, and run through **March**

14, 2025. Scholarship awards range from \$500 to \$3,500. Stanislaus Community Foundation's online application system matches eligible applicants with available scholarships, providing a centralized process for students seeking financial aid. Only one online application is required to apply for all scholarships.

More information and eligibility criteria for each of our scholarship funds can be found at <https://www.stanislauscf.org/scholarships>. Students or parents with further questions can email our Scholarship Coordinator, Jessica Tapia, at jtapia@stanislauscf.org



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IN MEMORIAM

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January 29, 1938 - December 3, 2024

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Long Time Peace/Life Center Supporter



MAPS Showcase of Scintillating Experts. A gateway for the exploration of the wonders and mysteries surrounding us. MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132* at 7:30 pm, FREE.

February 28: Sora Kim - Beyond Shark Week: Environmental Change Based on Chemistry & Fossils.

Modern and ancient sharks pique our imagination, but we often only hear about white sharks or megalodon as apex predators. What can chemistry reveal about these iconic sharks and the impact of the past "experiments" in climate change on shark survival?

March 21: Dr. Douglas Weiser - Adapt or Die: How the Unfolded Protein Response Allows Cells to Decide Between Responding to Stress & Programmed Cell Death. Dr. Weiser will discuss his research on the UPR, where he uses zebrafish as a genetic model for studying stress-induced apoptosis. He will also share the implications of this research on treating neurodegenerative diseases.

Modesto Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks recorded for the [Science Colloquium's YouTube Site](#)



February 12: Food Sciences and the Job Market in the Central Valley. Qiqi Peng, Applications Manager, Hilmar Cheese and Ingredients. An overview of the types of positions available in food science, including their roles and responsibilities in daily life, will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on careers in dairy science, dairy processing, and applied food science. The educational requirements for each position will also be explored, providing insight into the pathways to these specialized fields and the skills needed to succeed in them.

February 26: Understanding Autism: Embracing Neurodiversity for a More Inclusive Future.

Giselle Flores, Professor of Child Development, MJC. This talk will explore the concept of Autism through the lens of neurodiversity, focusing on how society can better understand, support, and include individuals on the Autism spectrum. Topics will include common traits and experiences, challenges faced in various environments, and strategies for fostering acceptance and inclusion. This session aims to raise awareness and promote a more empathetic and accessible world for everyone.

Come & Hear Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell!

*First African-American Woman Jurist
in Northern California*

SATURDAY, March 1, 2025

**31st Annual
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Commemoration**

• *MLK Legacy Award - Gladys Williams* •

**Performing Arts & Media Center
Modesto Junior College
435 College Ave., Modesto**

- 4:00 p.m. - Meets with Students
MJC Little Theatre
- 6:00 p.m. - Doors Open
- 7:00 p.m. - Free program

— *Sponsor/Donors* —

Modesto Junior College & Modesto Peace/Life Center; City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Dept.; California State University, Stanislaus; Associated Students of Modesto Junior College; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Turlock Teachers Assoc.; California Teachers Assoc.; Modesto Teachers Assoc.; Oak Crafts by Jeremiah. *Sponsors/Donors needed!* Contact Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org.



Memorial Donations to the Modesto Peace/Life Center

Gene Palsgrove	Kathy Tellin & Kevin Rice
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Ron & Gloria Lane	Unknown
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Sandy Sample	Kurt & Melinda Kopp
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The Modesto Peace/Life Center thanks these donors for remembering these peacemakers.

Don't Miss the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team Plays in Modesto!

The 2023 league champion Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team, sponsored by the NBA Golden State Warriors, will visit Modesto for a fundraising event for KCPB Community Radio 95.5 FM and the non-profit Road Warriors. KCBP Radio is a non-profit project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Ten percent of the proceeds will go to scholarships for Modesto Junior College students with disabilities.



This one-of-a-kind audience-interactive event will occur from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on **Saturday, March 22, 2025, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.** at the Modesto Junior College Gymnasium, 435 College Ave., Modesto.

You will witness the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team play top-level basketball, all from their wheelchairs! The strength and determination of these players will surprise and inspire you! Bring your friends and family out for an uplifting, fast-paced, fun-filled day.

The total experience will consist of the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team versus

A Plea to the President of the United States and His Response

The Plea:

“Let me make one final plea, Mr. President... In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now.

There are gay, lesbian, and transgender children in Democratic, Republican, and Independent families, some who fear for their lives.

And the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meatpacking plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the nightshifts in hospitals. They may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches and mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras, and temples.

I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away. And that you help those that are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands, to find compassion and welcome here.

Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were all once strangers in this land.”

*Washington National Cathedral,
Bishop Mariann Budde*



The Response:

“The so-called Bishop who spoke at the National Prayer Service on Tuesday morning was a Radical Left hard line Trump hater. She brought her church into the World of politics in a very ungracious way. She was nasty in tone, and not compelling or smart. She failed to mention the large number of illegal migrants that came into our Country and killed people. Many were deposited from jails and mental institutions. It is a giant crime wave that is taking place in the USA. Apart from her inappropriate statements, the service was a very boring and uninspiring one. She is not very good at her job! She and her church owe the public an apology! T”

*Donald Trump,
President of the
United States.*



school basketball team members and various community celebrities. Audience members will play in wheelchairs and experience the sport. There will be a silent auction and raffle prizes. Modesto Junior College's concession stand will be open.

ModestoView and KCBP's SKA dynamic musical expert, Middagh Goodwin, will MC.

The public is invited to attend. Tickets are \$5 per person, \$2 for students (MJC students are free), and \$3 for veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities. For more information, call Jocelyn Cooper at 209-422-0119 or email jocelyncoper2012@gmail.com. Visit <https://www.goldenstateroadwarriors.com/>



Two Rivers in Paradise

By **ELAINE GORMAN**

On this post-Christmas, pre-New Year day, I was thinking of the coming year's potential. OPS is not very positive, so I shift to the present, driving on Paradise Road, west of Modesto, and admire the Diablo Range as it comes into view. I cross over my beloved Tuolumne River, look for the Dos Rios State Park (SP) sign, and begin to anticipate the beauty of California's newest state park.

Greeting Martha and JB at the picnic area, they tell me of their sighting of river otters in the pond. Lucky them! We scan the pond with our binos for herons and egrets. The pond is an "oxbow," a remnant of the path that the Tuolumne River followed in the past. Erosion and time have moved the river to the north.

The other members of our group arrive, and Ranger Ali gives us a short orientation to the history and landscape of Dos Rios. Until recently, this land was part of the vast farmland of the San Joaquin Valley. About 12 years ago, River Partners and Tuolumne River Trust began to restore the 1600-acre future park by creating swales (flood channels), building "bunny mounds" for escape hatches for endangered riparian brush rabbits, and planting hundreds of thousands of native plants. Someday, this park will resemble the natural landscape from hundreds of years ago.

When Dos Rios SP opened in June 2024, visitors could walk the trails (farm and levee roads) on ranger-led hikes. These hikes were offered Friday-Sunday mornings, and themes included birding, oaks, floodplains, and native plants. Now, there are two self-guided trails, along with the ranger-led hikes. We pick up trail maps and head out on the Confluence Trail, 3.6 miles round-trip.

We pass an almond orchard on the left, the pond on the right. Periodically, we lift our binos to check out any wildlife. The honking of Canada Geese alerts us to look up — there are several "strings" of geese, dozens per flock, heading in all directions. From our vantage point, it seems as if there will be a mid-air collision, but the GTC (goose traffic controller) must be working diligently!

After about a mile, we follow arrows/signs to the right and begin to walk toward the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers. The San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge is located across the San Joaquin River. When we pass a numbered sign, we pause to look at our trail guide to read and learn about the natural and cultural history of the park. When we reach the overlook, I think about the origins of these two rivers — high up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, hundreds of miles away. Both rivers are blocked by dams, which support flood control and irrigation but negatively impact salmon and wildlife.

We walk back to the picnic area and stop periodically to admire raccoon and deer tracks, oak galls, and perching egrets. Squeaky Sandhill Cranes and soaring pelicans attract our attention. On a previous visit, we found a shed snakeskin, reminding us of the presence of reptiles. The strings of countless geese continue to amaze us, and we feel like we have stepped back in time.

After lunch, we walk the 1.8-mile Pond Loop. Duck



nest boxes await future feathered families. We spot turtles in the pond, hoping they are native California pond turtles. The odor of mud and decomposition fills our nostrils, proclaiming the richness of this landscape. We pass beneath ancient Valley Oaks, walk alongside a walnut orchard, then reach the parking lot. One last photo, and we all head for home.

Notes: Currently, there is no admission fee. Check the website for a schedule of guided hikes and events. Restrooms and picnic tables are located at the temporary visitor center near the parking lot. There is not much shade on most trails; bring a hat! The park is currently closed to the public Monday-Thursday. There are plans for bike trails, campgrounds, and other amenities. Stay tuned!

Visit https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=31363 for directions.



Yokuts Group Sierra Club Student 2025 Scholarships

The Yokuts Group Sierra Club \$1,000 Scholarship for 2025 is now open for applications to students attending any accredited community college, junior college, or university in the fall of 2025. These students must be enrolled in a Stanislaus County high school or an accredited community college, junior college, or university.

The application letter should include a short essay on the applicant's classwork and activities related to environmental stewardship.

Deadline for applications is April 30, 2025. Application: visit <https://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts>

ACTION: For more information, contact Laura Stokes at LauraHerdingCatsLLC@gmail.com or (206) 371-4853 (Seattle Area Code).



**Stanislaus County
YOUTH POET LAUREATE
CONTEST**


Applications open through March 3, 2025.
For poets ages 15-19 who live or attend
schools in Stanislaus County.

Application & information:
MostPoetry.org/contests/ypl









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Can Nonviolent Struggle Defeat a Dictator? This Database Emphatically Says Yes

The Global Nonviolent Action Database details some 40 cases of mass movements overcoming tyrants through strategic nonviolent campaigns.

By **GEORGE LAKEY**

With Donald Trump set to take office after a fear-mongering campaign that reignited concerns about his desire to become a dictator, a reasonable question comes up: Can nonviolent struggle defeat a tyrant?

There are many great resources that answer this question, but the one that's been on my mind lately is the [Global Nonviolent Action Database](#), or GNAD, built by the Peace Studies department at Swarthmore College. Freely accessible to the public, this database — which launched under my direction in 2011 — contains over 1,400 cases of nonviolent struggle from over a hundred countries, with more cases continually being added by student researchers.

At quick glance, the database details at least 40 cases of dictators who were overthrown by the use of nonviolent struggle, dating back to 1920. These cases — which include some of the largest nations in the world, spanning Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America — contradict the widespread assumption that a dictator can only be overcome by violence. What's more, in each of these cases, the dictator had the desire to stay, and possessed violent means for defense. Ultimately, though, they just couldn't overcome the power of mass nonviolent struggle.

In a number of countries, the dictator had been embedded for years at the time they were pushed out. Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, for example, had ruled for over 29 years. In the 1990s, citizens usually whispered his name for fear of reprisal. Mubarak legalized a “state of emergency,” which meant censorship, expanded police powers and limits on the news media. Later, he “loosened” his rule, putting only 10 times as many police as the number of protesters at each demonstration.

The [GNAD case study](#) describes how Egyptians grew their democracy movement despite repression, and finally won in 2011. However, gaining a measure of freedom doesn't guarantee keeping it. As Egypt has shown in the years since, continued vigilance is needed, as is pro-active campaigning to deepen the degree of freedom won.

Some countries repeated the feat of nonviolently

deposing a ruler: In Chile, the [people nonviolently threw out a dictator in 1931](#) and then [deposed a new dictator in 1988](#). South Koreans also did it twice, [once in 1960](#) and [again in 1987](#). (They also [just stopped their current president](#) from seizing dictatorial powers, but that's not yet in the database.)

In each case people had to act without knowing what the reprisals would be.

East Germany's peaceful revolution

When East Germans began their revolt against the German Democratic Republic in 1988, they knew that their dictatorship of 43 years was backed by the Soviet Union, which might stage a deadly invasion. They nevertheless acted for freedom, which they gained and kept.

Researcher [Hanna King tells us that East Germans](#) began their successful campaign in January 1988 by taking a traditional annual memorial march and turning it into a full-scale demonstration for human rights and democracy. They followed up by taking advantage of a weekly prayer for peace at a church in Leipzig to organize rallies and protests. Lutheran pastors helped protect the organizers from retaliation, and groups in other cities began to stage their own “Monday night demonstrations.”

The few hundred initial protesters quickly became 70,000, then 120,000, then 320,000, all participating in the weekly demonstrations. Organizers published a pamphlet outlining their vision for a unified German democracy and turned it into a petition. Prisoners of conscience began hunger strikes in solidarity.

By November 1988, a million people gathered in East Berlin, chanting, singing and waving banners calling for the dictatorship's end. The government, hoping to ease the pressure, announced the opening of the border to West Germany. Citizens took sledgehammers to the hated Berlin Wall and broke it down. Political officials resigned to protest the continued rigidity of the ruling party and the party itself disintegrated. By March 1990 — a bit over two years after the campaign was launched — the first multi-party, democratic elections were held.

Students lead the way in Pakistan

In Pakistan, it was university students (rather than religious clerics) who launched the 1968-69 uprising that forced Ayub Khan out of office after his decade as a dictator. Case researcher [Aileen Eisenberg tells us](#) that the campaign later required multiple sectors of society to join together to achieve critical mass, especially workers.

It was the students, though, who took the initiative — and the initial risks. In 1968, they declared that the government's declaration of a “decade of development” was a fraud, protesting nonviolently in major cities. They sang and marched to their own song called “The Decade of Sadness.”

Police opened fire on one of the demonstrations, killing several students. In reaction the movement expanded, in numbers and demands. Boycotts grew, with masses of people refusing to pay the bus and railway fares on the government-run transportation system. Industrial workers joined the movement and practiced encirclement of factories and mills. An escalation of government repression followed,

including more killings.

As the campaign expanded from urban to rural parts of Pakistan the movement's songs and political theater thrived. Khan responded with more violence, which intensified the determination among a critical mass of Pakistanis that it was time for him to go.

After months of growing direct action met by repressive violence, the army decided its own reputation was being degraded by their orders from the president, and they demanded his resignation. He complied and an election was scheduled for 1970 — the first since Pakistan's independence in 1947.

Why use nonviolent struggle?

The campaigns in East Germany and Pakistan are typical of all 40 cases in their lack of a pacifist ideology, although some individuals active in the movements had that foundation. What the cases do seem to have in common is that the organizers saw the strategic value of nonviolent action, since they were up against an opponent likely to use violent repression. Their commitment to nonviolence would then rally the masses to their side.

That encourages me. There's hardly time in the U.S. during Trump's regime to convert enough people to an ideological commitment to nonviolence, but there is time to persuade people of the strategic value of a nonviolent discipline.

Another important takeaway: Occasional actions that simply protest a particular policy or egregious action aren't enough. They may relieve an individual's conscience for a moment, but, ultimately, episodic actions, even large ones, don't assert enough power. Over and over, the Global Nonviolent Action Database shows that positive results come from a series of escalating, connected actions called a campaign — [the importance of which](#) is also outlined in my book “How We Win.”

As research seminar students at Swarthmore continue to wade through history finding new cases, they are digging up details on struggles that go beyond democracy. The 1,400 already-published cases include campaigns for furthering environmental justice, racial and economic justice, and more. They are a resource for tactical ideas and strategy considerations, encouraging us to remember that even long-established dictators have been stopped by the power of nonviolent campaigns.

George Lakey has been active in direct action campaigns for over six decades. Recently retired from Swarthmore College, he was first arrested in the civil rights movement and most recently in the climate justice movement. He has facilitated 1,500 workshops on five continents and led activist projects on local, national and international levels. His 10 books and many articles reflect his social research into change on community and societal levels. His newest book is the memoir

Dancing with History: A Life for Peace and Justice.

See [WNV's guide to protecting and expanding democracy](#) From [Waging Nonviolence](#).



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Advocates Mobilize in California's Central Valley As Deportation Fears Spread Over Trump's Immigration Orders

"We've received so many calls and messages from people who are scared and worried about immigration raids," said one Merced-based advocate.

By **Christian De Jesus Betancourt**, [The Merced Focus](#)

President Donald Trump's executive orders on immigration — signed on his first day back in office — have reignited fears among immigrant communities across the Central Valley.

The orders, which include attempts to end birthright citizenship and revive the "Remain in Mexico" policy, have also spurred local advocates into action.

In the agriculturally rich region, where immigrants form the backbone of the economy, nonprofits like Merced-based [Cultiva Central Valley](#) and the Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative ([CVIIC](#)) are stepping up to provide critical resources and support.

"We've received so many calls and messages from people who are scared, worried about immigration raids," said Anabel Serna, health promoter coordinator with Cultiva Central Valley.

"They're asking for cards they can give to immigration officials. Many assume they'll be detained and their children will be left alone. They're even scared to go to the store."

Among the strategies to help those fearing deportation, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) has developed the concept of red-colored cards to help individuals assert their constitutional rights during encounters with immigration or law enforcement officials.

These cards inform individuals of their right to remain silent, refuse consent to a search without a warrant, and the right to speak with an attorney if detained.

"This card empowers people to say, 'I'm not going to open that door,'" said Claudia Gabriela Corchado, Cultiva Central Valley's director. "It's something we can give them immediately, and it gives them a sense of security."

Corchado shared that her organization has already produced approximately 500 red cards. Demand for the cards shows no signs of slowing, said Corchado, adding that Cultiva Central Valley is committed to printing more as the need continues to grow.

Emotional trauma grows in immigrant community

The fear among immigrant families in the Central Valley extends far beyond legal concerns. It has permeated their daily lives, creating an atmosphere of constant anxiety.

Corchado shared heartbreaking stories of children begging their parents not to leave the house, terrified they may not return.

"The trauma is real," she said. "Kids are telling their parents, 'Don't go anywhere; immigration might take you.' This fear doesn't just go away — it stays with them."

For many families, this fear has changed how they interact with trusted organizations like Cultiva Central Valley. Serna described how some residents, once comfortable welcoming her into their homes for outreach visits, now hesitate.

"People are behaving with panic and distrust," she said. "Even those who know us prefer to meet in public or avoid contact altogether."

Resources and support available

Amid this pervasive fear, Cultiva Central Valley is one of several groups statewide meeting urgent needs with tools like the red cards to help families assert their rights.

Meanwhile, CVIIC is expanding its reach, offering legal and educational resources to provide a broader lifeline for immigrant families across the Valley.

"CVIIC organizes free immigration legal services workshops throughout the region," said Jesus Martinez, executive director of CVIIC.

Recent workshops were held in Visalia and Fresno, with more planned in the coming weeks. CVIIC also hosts informational "Know Your Rights" presentations in public forums and at private events requested by partner organizations.

The organization's website provides [downloadable](#) guides in English and Spanish to help immigrants understand their rights and navigate the legal system.

A regional [directory](#) of nonprofit immigration legal services agencies, which includes contact information and services offered, is also available.

"The single most important resource that we share with the public is a regional directory of nonprofit immigration legal services agencies," Martinez said.

Corchado said local organizations and immigrant advocates will continue to work tirelessly to provide guidance and reassurance in the likely difficult years ahead.

"These are essential workers and families who contribute so much to our society," Corchado said. "We'll keep fighting to ensure they're supported and protected."

President's executive orders stokes anxiety

While organizations like CVIIC focus on meeting immediate needs, the broader policies fueling these fears continue to loom large.

Among the flurry of executive orders Trump has issued thus far is an attempt to end [birthright citizenship](#) for children born in the United States to non-citizen parents, which many critics and constitutional experts argue violates the 14th Amendment.



A farmworker at a Leon Farms site in Turlock looks at the land full of yams that he, along with the rest of the 81-man crew assigned to the site, will have to pick. Photo: Claudia Gabriela Corchado Cultiva Central Valley



Red cards, a resource distributed by Cultiva Central Valley and other organizations, outline immigrants' constitutional rights when facing immigration authorities. Photo: The Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Trump has also taken steps to revive the controversial [Remain in Mexico](#) policy, forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their cases are processed in U.S. courts.

In a statement Tuesday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced new [directives](#) expanding immigration enforcement.

Among the changes, DHS declared in a statement that "Criminals will no longer be able to hide in America's schools and churches to avoid arrest ... The Trump Administration will not tie the hands of our brave law enforcement, and instead trusts them to use common sense."

This shift has alarmed advocates and immigrant communities who warn such measures put migrants in precarious and dangerous conditions, further compounding the risks they already face.

While legal [challenges](#) to these orders are underway, the announcement has created a chilling effect, adding to the fears of families and individuals living with the constant threat of deportation.

Quiet deportations: A hidden threat

While fears of large-scale immigration raids dominate

VIP Statement on Mass Deportation: Standing Together Against Mass Deportation

From The [Valley Improvement Projects](#)

As mass deportation policies loom, our communities must remain informed, resilient, and united. The fear of separation and uncertainty can be overwhelming, but together, we can stand strong and support one another.

Mass deportation efforts threaten to separate families, disrupt lives, and erode the very fabric of our communities. Immigrant communities are the backbone of our society, contributing to our culture, economy, and shared prosperity. Yet, fear and uncertainty cast a shadow on the homes and lives of millions.

Now is the time to act. There are resources to help. Connect with local organizations, know your rights, and stand in solidarity with those at risk. We can fight these policies

with love, resilience, and a commitment to protecting every member of our community.

To our allies: It's time to step up. Speak out against injustice. Offer your voice, your platform, and your resources to protect our friends and neighbors. From the Underground Railroad to sanctuary movements, history has shown that we are stronger when we protect each other.

We urge our community to avoid spreading unverified or false information, which can cause unnecessary fear.



Advocates Mobilize in California's Central Valley continued from page 6

public perception, experts warn that mass deportations may take a [quieter approach](#).

Instead of dramatic sweeps, the Trump administration could expand existing collaborations between local law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) through programs like the [287\(g\) Program](#).

These agreements deputize local police to act as immigration agents, creating a direct pipeline from routine traffic stops to deportation proceedings.

Additionally, the administration may broaden the definition of deportable offenses, criminalizing minor infractions such as shoplifting or driving without a license.

Local advocates say this quieter approach could devastate immigrant communities. The constant threat of deportation, whether through high-profile raids or everyday interactions with law enforcement, creates an environment of fear that disrupts daily life and discourages engagement with schools, healthcare, and other public institutions.

Immigration detention adds to this burden. César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, author of "[Immigration Detention as Punishment](#)," argues that detention facilities operate more like prisons, perpetuating a stigma of criminality.

"The legislative origins and practical implementation of immigration detention are rooted in punitive measures," Hernández wrote, highlighting how policies from the 1980s and 1990s tied immigration enforcement to the war on drugs.

Mexico's Consular Network steps in

As immigrant communities grapple with these sweeping changes, Mexico's government, led by [President Claudia Sheinbaum](#) has unveiled a comprehensive program to support its nationals in the U.S.

"They should know that they have rights, that you cannot deport a person by taking them to the border, but rather that a series of legal procedures must be followed, which are procedures in the United States," said Sheinbaum in a news release.

As part of this initiative, the Mexican government introduced the "ConsulApp," which features a "Botón de Alerta" (Alert Button) to support its nationals.

This application lets users quickly notify consulates, family members, and the Mexican Foreign Ministry if detained by immigration authorities.

Currently, the app is available exclusively on Android devices, with iOS compatibility [pending approval](#).

Foreign Secretary Juan Ramón de la Fuente emphasized the government's commitment.

"The Mexican government, through its consular network in the United States, will defend the human rights of its citizens in accordance with international law," he said in a news release.

Additionally, consulates have expanded resources, including the Centro de Información y Asistencia a Personas Mexicanas – Center of Information and Assistance for Mexican Persons ([CIAM](#)), a 24/7 call center offering legal assistance, and the Programa de Asistencia Jurídica a través de Asesorías Legales Externas – Program of Judicial Assistance through External Legal Assessments (PALE), which employs legal advisors across the U.S.

Mexican nationals can access legal assistance and guidance by calling CIAM at 520-623-7874 (U.S. and Canada) or 001-520-623-7874 (Mexico).

De La Fuente said that special attention will be given to all Mexican citizens who wish to return to Mexico, as well as to those who might face deportation and their families.

"We are also making extensive efforts to encourage all those with children born in the United States to register them with the consulates," he said. "Not everyone has done this yet. We strongly encourage everyone to register with our consulates as this enables us to provide legal protection when needed."

Contribution of migrants to the economy

De La Fuente also highlighted the significant contributions of Mexican nationals to both the U.S. and Mexican economies.

In 2023 alone, Mexican nationals sent over \$60 billion in remittances to Mexican families.

According to U.S. [data](#), Mexican migrants accounted for approximately 8% of the United States' Gross Domestic Product, which totaled \$27.7 trillion last year.

Instead, stay informed with trusted resources. If you see ICE activity in our neighborhoods, call the **Valley Watch Rapid Response Team @ (559) 206-0151** to immediately document and mobilize support.

Visit our [Migra Watch Google Drive Folder](#) to find guides, know-your-rights materials, and tools to organize effectively.

Let's work together to protect our families and communities with truth, solidarity, and action. Together, we can stand against fear and uphold the dignity and humanity of every person.

For more information, email bianca@vip209.org. Visit the folder above for a complete copy of this statement.

Among the 38.4 million Mexicans living in the United States, 11.5 million are first-generation migrants, including 4.8 million undocumented individuals.

De La Fuente noted that two years ago, undocumented Mexicans contributed approximately \$42.6 billion in taxes, while Mexican migrants as a whole contributed close to \$121.5 billion.

Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest 2025 is Open for Submissions

By LYNN M. HANSEN, Contest Chair: National League of American Pen Women & MoSt Poetry Center

In October of 1982, the Poets' Corner Chapter of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets received its charter and became known as the "poetry center" of the San Joaquin region, later renamed as The Poets of the San Joaquin. Among the charter members was Aileen Jaffa, poet, artist, sculptor, and retired agricultural reference librarian at UC Berkeley for 34 years. Author of over 3,000 poems, she was the President of the Poets of the San Joaquin, past President of the Piedmont/Oakland Branch of the National League of American Pen Women, and prolific writer.

Aileen Jaffa is said to have composed her first poem at age 2 years, nine months, and her mother wrote it down. It is in this spirit of encouraging young writers, and to remember poet Aileen Jaffa, the Modesto/Stanislaus Poetry Center, in collaboration with the National Association of American Pen Women (NLAPW), Modesto Chapter, sponsors a youth poetry contest, The Aileen Jaffa Young Poets Contest, each spring.

Guidelines

For this 29th annual contest, any student enrolled in a Stanislaus County school, grades K through 12, is eligible to submit up to 3 entries, **at \$1 per entry**. Each entry, except for typing, must be the student's original creative work.

Poems will be judged by adult poets who are

knowledgeable about young people's work. Any poem that shows evidence of plagiarism will be disqualified. Poems may be in any style but no longer than 24 lines. **No simultaneous submissions** of poems to Poets' Corner or other contests. Two copies of each poem must be submitted: one copy should contain the title and poem but no author identification. The other copy should contain the student's name and a copy of the entry form below, and the \$1 entry fee.

Poems submitted will be placed in categories according to the student's year in school: 1. Grades K-3; 2. Grades 4-6; 3. Grades 7-9; 4. Grades 10-12.

First, Second and Third place winners in each category will receive cash awards from the contest sponsors. Prizes are First place \$25, Second Place \$15, Third Place \$10. In addition, the Modesto Chapter of NLAPW will award a \$60 Aileen Jaffa Outstanding Poem award in each of two combined categories: Categories 1 and 2, and categories 3 and 4.

The **deadline for submissions is April 3, 2025**. Winners of the contest are invited to present their work at the Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N Broadway, Turlock at 2 p.m. Saturday, May TBA, 2024.

Fill out the entry form below and Submit entries by mail to MoSt Poetry, P.O. Box 578940, Modesto, California 95357. Information: info@mostpoetry.org

Where I'm From

By Aaliyah Gonzales, 12 years old. Modesto, Ca.

"I am from markers and papers so I could scribble colorful nonsense.

I am from watching arts and crafts videos, to making a mess.

I am from getting slime stuck in the carpet, and playing with Play-Doh.

I am from learning English as a Spanish speaker, to reading and writing at above grade level.

I am from reading Diary of a Wimpy Kid books and trying to write my own stories into books.

I am from a small duplex with a big family crammed inside. I am from living with my tia, tio, and grandparents and parents, to finally getting my own room.

I am from the smell of grilled chili peppers and burnt tortillas, to the taste of a michoacanos morisqueta.

I am from a mother who's big on her Native American heritage and encourages me to acknowledge my roots. I am from Mexican culture, bright and proud. I am from Dia de los Niños to Dia de los Muertos.

I am from having to clean litter boxes and feed my dogs, Patricio and Xochitl. From hearing "Limpia ese cuarto!" to having to clean the bathroom.

I am from two hard-working parents, Lidia and Ignacio. I am from Redwood City, San Jose, and Modesto, the places where I've spent most of my childhood."

Fill out and attach a copy of this form to one copy of each poem

Name _____

Boy _____ Girl _____ Grade _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School _____

Teacher _____ Teacher's email: _____

Title _____

I certify that the above poem is my own original creation

(Signed) _____

MoSt's Poetry Everywhere Initiative: Getting Poetry Books to Schoolkids

By TOM PORTWOOD

As they have for the last many years – excluding a two-year hiatus during the pandemic – board members from the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt) fanned out across our county in January to deliver a generous selection of poetry books to area elementary schools – in total, MoSt was able to donate sets of 19 brand new books to each of ten schools this year.

"As a small nonprofit, our *Poetry Everywhere Initiative* is a multi-year project, but so far we have donated books to 76 elementary schools and the library at juvenile hall,"

explained MoSt board President Gillian Wegener.

The books chosen for the program offer a rich and diverse sampling of poetry for younger readers.

"There are no strings attached to this donation," Ms. Wegener continued. "We believe in the power of poetry to change lives, and we want to share that in all ways possible. By donating books to every school – beginning with elementary schools – we hope that poetry will reach even our youngest community members and help them see the joy and wonder alive in that art form."

To find out more about the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center, please visit <https://www.mostpoetry.org/>



Molly Fisk: Poet Par Excellence

Molly Fisk edited *California Fire & Water, A Climate Crisis Anthology*, with a Poets Laureate Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets. Author of *The More Difficult Beauty*, *Listening to Winter*, and five volumes of radio commentary, her new collection *Walking Wheel* is forthcoming from Red Hen Press.

Fisk, who lives in the Sierra foothills, has also won grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

A Gathering of Voices is very pleased that this fine poet - long a favorite of poetry lovers in the Valley - is sharing several of her excellent poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.



Sometimes

That small song when the water hits the packed circle of grounds, mechanical, negligible, drowned by the slippery hiss of milk heating and foaming, a puddle filling the silver pitcher with infinitesimal bubbles — joy in miniature, multiplied a thousand-fold and potable, affordable. Sometimes pleasure is like this, a late sunrise, a vee of sandhill cranes calling high overhead, indistinguishable from angels, the sharp aroma, your hands warming around a white ceramic cup.

Farmers Market

Yesterday I was so lonely
I could barely walk,
my friend being mobbed
by her grandchildren
as we made our way
past the farmers market's
delicata squashes, the last
tomatoes. I couldn't think
what to buy — came home
with nothing but sweet
peppers, myriad colors
in a single flavor, an elusive
solitary note. I watched her
lay her cheek against
the downy faces, saying *love
love love* and would
have wept except I'm dry
of tears. I love how she loves
them and that she has them,
I love them all from my arms-
length distance, half-familiar
grandmother's friend
with a laughing eye, glasses
one might want to pluck
from the top of her head.
All that touch. That flesh.
The body heat. Fingers woven
together. I am starving.

Old Men in Cafés

and how they just have to keep talking,
sentence after vague sentence, because they are men,
an attempt to connect but interrupting whatever
you're thinking or writing at your out-of-the-way table,
a breeze bearing off the pandemic germs and what
you missed most in isolation, the sense of belonging
to your own town, a human among its kind,
didn't include the memory of these overly-loud voices,
the bluster and cheer, or how to find compassion
as the sound grates into your ears and the line
is lost, the focus. You know it's another face of love
and a hope to be part of art's making but braided through
is the maddening assumption that women must listen
to men, the expectation of attention, that we will
put down our pens and smile, parry the jovial remarks,
that we won't risk seeming unfriendly. I am not
unfriendly, I am working. Show some respect.

Particulate Matter

If all you counted were tires on the cars left in driveways
and stranded beside the roads.
Melted dashboards and tail lights, oil pans, window glass,
seat belt clasps.
The propane tanks in everyone's yards, though we didn't
hear them explode.

R-13 insulation. Paint, inside and out. The liquor store's
plastic letters in puddled
colors below their charred sign. Each man-made sole of
every shoe in all those closets.
The laundromat's washers' round metal doors.

But then Arco, Safeway, Walgreens, the library —
everything they contained.
How many miles of electrical wire and PVC pipe swirling
into the once-blue sky:
how many linoleum acres? Not to mention the valley oaks,
the ponderosas, all the wild

hearts and all the tame, their bark and leaves and hooves
and hair and bones, their final
cries, and our neighbors: so many particular, precious,
irreplaceable lives that despite
ourselves we're inhaling.

Flood Plain, Tulare

Too hot too fast so the snow is melting upstream,
reservoirs filling, water being released because
it must be or overflow or break the manner
of its containment and then what, already the old
lake south of here is being born again, a foot or two
of water spread over forty miles of plowed fields,
orchards, small towns that assumed they would live
forever, that didn't remember, despite so many levees,
they were built on an inland sea floor. Pistachios
and almonds, citrus, cotton, tomatoes, wine, milk,
cheese, that soil so rich no one could resist it, a century
of ingenuity, drainage ditches and canals. What if
you were the pickers, your houses filled to the bed
frames, the cane chair bottoms, snakes hunting refuge
on kitchen counters? School's closed, the kids
are scared, you don't eat if you don't work. What if
you send Cara Caras to Boston by truck and train
but the ladders collapse under so many acre-feet
and it continues to rain? Meanwhile, biologists
monitor the bird life returning, National Weather
tracks where the water goes. Strangers watch
on TV as if this is a Ken Burns documentary.

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Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 fm, the Voice of the Valley

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

Confetti Park - Music, stories New Orleans style, Saturdays at 8:00 am; & Sunday's 12:30 pm.

The Children's Hour - Sundays 3:00 pm. And Mondays at 4:00 p.m.

SCIENCE

Radio Ecoshock – the latest scientific information on Climate Change – Saturdays, 9:00 am.

Explorations – Science explained with Dr. Michio Kaku - 9:00 am Sundays.

Big Picture Science - 1:00 pm Sundays.

Planetary Radio – 2:30 pm Sundays.

PROGRAMS

The Ralph Nader Hour: Citizen advocate Ralph Nader and guests discuss topics important for consumers and our nation on Saturdays at 4 p.m.

Ukraine 2.4.2 - a collaboration between Anne Levine, WOMR, the Pacifica Network, and Kraina FM, a 26-city radio network in Ukraine that arranges weekly cutting-edge and exclusive interviews with key people in Ukraine – Thursdays, 10:00 am.

Beethoven to Bernstein - Classical music ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein. Big hits from well-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

The Not Old – Better Show - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

Down on the Farm - topics important for our San Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

Sounds Irish Music from County Wicklow - Saturdays, 7:00 pm.

Various musical programs during the noon hour: Oldies, Old Piano, and International.

Dead Air - Hear the Grateful Dead with Cory Daniels. Fridays, 6 pm; Saturdays, 3 pm.

Attitude with Arne Arnesen – 3:00 pm. Political and social issues.

Sojourner Truth - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews and panels focus on issues that affect people of color.

Democracy Now! - 7:00 am, Monday thru Friday. Reporting by veteran journalists Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez.

Flashpoint Magazine - 10:00 pm, Monday thru Friday. Politics, social issues, from KQED's Dennis Bernstein.

Julian Taylor's Jukebox – 4:00 pm, Thursdays and Fridays. Eclectic, contemporary music.

Nuestra Música – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays. Eclectic, Latin-flavored music with a beat!



LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

Rockin' with MJC – One-hour music shows by Modesto Junior College students. 1:00 a.m. Saturdays; 2:00 p.m. Saturdays; 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays.

Triumphant Tuesdays – Noon, Tuesdays. Inspirational thoughts & music with Catrice.

Sports Talk Modesto - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes. Snappy banter to catch up on everything happening in the sports world. – Thursdays, 5 pm.

Vibn with the West Modesto Collaborative - Jasmine Corena and Likhi Rivas. Engage, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community – Wednesdays, 7 pm.

AREA 5150 UFO RADIO – Spooky music & sounds out of this world, Friday night, 11:00 pm.

Cyber Stallion: Bucks Stallion's Radio Transmission Emporium – Cyber Acoustic Music - Saturdays, 12:00 am, Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.

I-On-Modesto - John Griffin interviews local people who reveal their inspiring stories. Mondays & Fridays, 10 am and Wednesdays at 9 pm.

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

Women of the Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

Modesto Sound - California Audio Roots Project (CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

Sunday Cruisin' with your host, DeeJay Rig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

Faithful Fridays – inspirational music and thoughts with Catrice – Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

Why Not Nice? - Showcases unique music from unique cultures and thinkers worldwide, focusing on world/academic/jazz and roots music – Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

Mars Radio – Hip-Hop Show - Music, interviews from local & regional artists - Fridays, 8:00 pm. A new, second show plays on Saturday nights at 8:00 pm, with a third at 8:00 pm Sundays.

Modesto Area Music Awards (MAMA) with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00 pm; Fridays 9:00 pm & Saturdays 6:00 pm.

Freak Radio with Christian E. Boyett, 6 pm Thursdays. Replays Saturdays, 9 pm & Tuesdays 11 pm.

This is SKA with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11 pm; Sundays, 5 am to 7 am.

I'll Take You There - A musical journey with Modesto's El Comandante - Saturday, 5:00 pm; Sundays, 9:00 pm.

Penny Bloods – Fun, Victorian melodrama radio plays, often performed by local actors, written by Arnold Anthony Schmidt, CSU, Stanislaus. As scheduled.

PSAs in English and Spanish produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

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Find a complete programming schedule on our website, www.kcbpradio.org

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Homeless Citations Rise say Modesto Authorities

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

Carl Wolden may have held the record for days and nights spent under the Graceada Park Gazebo in Modesto, so it was a fitting place for his wake. After [Carl's death](#) last November, [Pastor Dan Lempenau](#) set December 13 as the date for his celebration of life.

Over the nearly twenty years Carl was homeless in Modesto, a great part of that time was spent at the gazebo, especially during cold and rainy weather. Carl was a savvy veteran of homelessness and frequently kept himself and his beloved dog Little's out of direct lines of sight. Often, he would hunker down behind a picnic table near the back of the gazebo, his bike and trailer concealed by tables and benches.

For several years, the Graceada Park Gazebo was also a refuge for a group of homeless friends Carl called "the family." The family was a loose group of chronically homeless people who had formed bonds of friendship over the years, friendship that included "having each other's backs" in mutual protection agreements.

Shortly after Carl's wake, [the Modesto Bee ran a story](#) about increased citations for homelessness in the City of Modesto. According to local authorities, the steep rise in citations began in 2022, coincident with implementation of Modesto's "Park Ranger Program." According to the Bee,

"Rangers are tasked with enforcing park codes and addressing illegal camping, public consumption of alcohol, and vandalism. The Police Department issues citations, which act as notices or tickets, but only some become charges, which are criminal accusations."

Actually, local law enforcement in Modesto and Stanislaus County had begun an "accountability" program prior to hiring Park Rangers, just after the worst of the Covid crisis. The accountability program began as a tactic to break up homeless camps of larger than ten people. It then escalated to including any homeless person who might be sleeping or resting in a public place.

Very early on, it became apparent to anyone on the ground that there were not enough shelter beds for Modesto's homeless population, nor were there enough qualified staff people to manage the mentally ill, addicted, disabled, traumatized, elderly and cognitively challenged individuals who comprise a large segment of the homeless population. Given these indisputable facts, some observers wondered what the benefit was of hiring more people to chase homeless people around town.

One clear benefit, at least superficially, was the virtual elimination of homeless people from Graceada Park, Modesto's crown jewel of public parks. People with nowhere else to go soon found that use of the gazebo required a permit; even a nap on the grass was subject to a citation or orders to "move along."

The "benefit" in this case, of course, was not to homeless people but to the neighbors of the park, as well as to citizens who visit the park, most of whom seldom use the gazebo, especially during the winter months. There was also the benefit of paying rangers less than police officers to relocate homeless people, though police were still called to the park on a routine basis.

"The family" was a loose group of chronically homeless people who had formed bonds of friendship over the years, friendship that included "having each other's backs" in mutual protection agreements.

As for the homeless people, some relocated to Enslin Park, less than one block north. Others moved downtown, a couple of blocks south. Some died. Almost none found housing and work, first, because there is no housing they can afford and second because there's not enough work that pays a living wage.

Thus, the chief benefit from Modesto's Park Ranger Program is increased supervision of Modesto's parks, not a bad thing. As for the problem of homelessness itself, there has been no net reduction in homelessness; in fact homeless numbers have grown, as have the number of citations.

As a tactic for reducing homelessness, hiring Park Rangers is like hiring more people to bail water from a sunken ship; in fact, the economic term for previously incurred expenses that can't be recovered is "sunk costs." Chasing homeless people around town from one spot to another doesn't just represent sunk costs, it also raises the question of "return on investment" (RoI). With billions of dollars spent statewide on sweeps, what has been the RoI? It certainly has not been a reduction in homelessness, not in the City of Modesto nor in the State of California.

And while no one ever considers such things, it might be worth evaluating what the effects of Park Ranger Programs and other such tactics are on homeless people themselves. One effect is increased stress. As homeless camps are broken up, people are separated from their friends, the people who "have their backs." The result is more fear, less sleep and greater brain trauma.

Over time, the minor offenses of homelessness rise to the level of misdemeanors. People with nowhere to go tend to get into trouble, if only for trespassing, loitering and littering. The longer people are homeless, the more likely they are to compile a criminal record. Citations become misdemeanors, misdemeanors become part of the criminal record and poverty morphs into crime, almost magically.

From the very beginning, homelessness has been widely viewed as a voluntary refusal to conform to social norms, a "choice" made by people who prefer idle sloth and degenerate drug use to responsible citizenship. In fact, the chief drivers of homelessness have been housing shortages, collapsed systems of care — especially health care — stagnant wages and increased costs of living.

Carl Wolden was able to escape the streets because neighbors around Graceada Park and friends who came to know him contributed to provide him with a place to lay his head — first a camper, then a motor home. He went from "transient" or "vagrant" status to good citizen almost overnight, at least in the eyes of the law. Of course, he also had a place to park, another prerequisite for good legal

standing. After his death, a neighbor to Enslin Park who had known Carl for over a decade adopted his beloved dog.

As for Carl's homeless friends, many of whom attended his wake, the vast majority are still homeless and under the watchful eyes of Modesto's Park Rangers and Police Officers, who make sure to move them along should they venture under the Graceada Park Gazebo or lie down on Graceada Park grass.

A Letter to the Modesto City Council

Dear Council members,

Sacramento has just opened its **3rd** "stay safe" site. This one has 175 Bridge Housing cabins for those who are unsheltered. Here is a link to the article in the Sacramento Bee (along with video).

<https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article298602208.html>

San Jose has also just announced construction on their **7th** tiny home facility, this one with 136 cabins, developed by Dignity Moves. Here is a news report

<https://sanjosespotlight.com/san-jose-breaks-ground-on-seventh-tiny-home-facility/>.

You did the right thing back in 2023, allocating \$3 million to buy such cabins for those living on the streets of Modesto. But it is now 2025 and so far, (I believe), not 1 cabin has been purchased from what you promised (using Proposition H funds).

As you would have seen from last week's *Modesto Bee* article, I have been busy doing my part for **families** experiencing homelessness with developing the Family Promise program at the Church of the Brethren. It is going well.

But what about all those folk we still have sleeping on our streets?

We need to put that \$3 million to work setting up a significant-sized village for those sleeping on our streets and in our parks.

Yes, I, of course, know that 42 folk will soon have cabins at Dignity Village. However, this is not nearly enough: we will still have at least 400 sleeping on our streets. And besides, it is County/State money, not what you promised to do back in November 2023.

Please ask the City Manager and staff to make it an urgent priority to identify a suitable site for the cabins you have promised, and please do what you can to assist.

And please make providing funds for lots of tiny cabins a high priority in your upcoming budget discussions.

14 months is too long to have folk suffering on the streets.

Sacramento is doing the right thing. San Jose is doing the right thing. We had the intention to do the right thing, but intentions are not enough.

Derek Castle
115 Park Ave.
Modesto
(209) 573-3245

(Ed. Note. Edited slightly for publication.)

calendar

Help keep our readers informed. We urge people participating in an event to write about it and send their story to Connections.

february

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm. unless noted otherwise. **February 28: Sora Kim - Beyond Shark Week:** Environmental Change Based on Chemistry & Fossils. Modern and ancient sharks pique our imagination, but we often only hear about white sharks or megalodon as apex predators. What can chemistry reveal about these iconic sharks and the impact of the past “experiments” in climate change on shark survival?

Modesto Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks recorded for the [Science Colloquium's YouTube Site](#). **February 12: Food Sciences** and the Job Market in the Central Valley. Qiqi Peng, Applications Manager, Hilmar Cheese and Ingredients. **February 26: Understanding Autism:** Embracing Neurodiversity for a More Inclusive Future. Giselle Flores, Professor of Child Development, MJC.

Kruse Lucas Art Gallery. The exhibit, titled RODEO, is the work of Brerdog, photographer Alyn Brereton. The gallery is located at 525 Tully Road, Modesto and is open Monday-Friday 9-5, except holidays. Visit his website at [brerdog.com](#)

The Prospect Theatre: 24/25 season has continuing offerings. Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2024-2025-season/>

1 SAT: The Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center's (MoSt) 13th Annual Poetry Festival at the Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock, CA, from 10 am to 2 pm. Visit <https://www.mostpoetry.org/>

4 TUES: VIGIL: SAVE OUR IMMIGRANTS at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Info: Call the Center-209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

16 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society presents *Heat*. 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/heat-022025/>

LOOKING AHEAD

Saturday, March 1: 31st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration. Speaker: Judge LaDoris Hazzard Cordell. Gladys Williams will receive the MLK Legacy Award. See article p.1.

Saturday, March 22: The Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team returns to MJC for a KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio fundraiser. See article p.3.

Saturday, April 5: MPLC Annual Meeting. Details TBA.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Unity of Modesto meets in person every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. at 2467 Veneman, Modesto. Information: 209-578-5433.

Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email modestovineyard@gmail.com; All Welcome.

IMCV weekly Insight Meditation and Dharma Talk, 8:45 am - 10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely; donations welcome. All are welcome. For more information, please email charlie@imcv.org. Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County meets in person and on Zoom every Sunday at 10:30 am at

2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto. Info: 209-788-3720; www.stanuu.org

Food Addicts Anonymous in Recovery. Sundays 6:30 pm, 2467 Veneman Ave. Modesto. Info: Emily M., 209 480-8247.

MONDAYS

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the second Mondays at 7:00pm. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in this support group for families whose children have died at any age, from any cause. Call 209-622-6786 or email for details: tcfmdestoriverbank@gmail.com; <https://www.modestoriverbanktcf.org/>

Suicide Loss Support Group: Friends for Survival meets every third Monday at 7 pm. Details: Norm Andrews 209-345-0601, nandrews6863@charter.net.

Walk with Me, a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

TUESDAYS

Climate Action Justice Network-Stanislaus meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/CJAN-FirstTuesday>

Attention Veterans: Join us for **Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet** at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

NAACP Meeting. King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmoDESTOSTANISLAUS.ORG/> email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up for Racial Justice Meetings, Fourth Tuesday, monthly 7:00 p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto. Info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/>

Pagan Family Social, third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, 6:00 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

Adult Children Of Alcoholics. Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

WEDNESDAYS

Retired Public Employees Association. All seniors welcome! Meetings every third Wednesday. Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave. 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Call (209) 324-2060. Pay \$8.00 and order from the menu.

The Almond Blossom Sangha meets on Wednesdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, Zoom, and sometimes hybrid, for meditation and Dharma discussions. Call Anne at 209-404-4835 for more information.

The GAP. A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1528 Oakdale Rd. Instagram: [Thegapmodesto](https://www.instagram.com/thegapmodesto)

Ongoing meditation class based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMT RYT, orlando@arreygue.com

Merced LGBT Community Center offers a variety of monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on-site **Wed-Fri**, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. www.mercedlgbtcenter.org

Merced Full Spectrum meets the second Wednesday of every month, 6 p.m. 1744 G St., Suite H, Merced <http://www.lgbtmerced.org/> Merced Full Spectrum is a division

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: Held THE FIRST TUESDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J St. (Five points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

MEDIA: Listen to **KCBP95.5 FM** Community Radio, the “Voice of the Valley” also streaming at <http://www.KCBPradio.org>

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, FIRST Thursdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 829 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

of Gay Central Valley, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. <http://www.gaycentralvalley.org/>

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP, 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email info@stanpride.org, or tgsupport@stanpride.org

THURSDAYS

Attention Veterans: Join us for **Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet** at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

IMCV Grupo de Meditación en Español, cada semana 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (edificio trasero al final del estacionamiento este de UUFSC). Ofrecido libremente, las donaciones son bienvenidas. Info: Contacto Vanessa, 209-408-6172.

LGBTQ+ Collaborative Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of the month, unless noted. Evening meeting, 1pm to 2 pm, Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto, CA. Information: John Aguirre at cell/text - (559) 280-3864/ e-mail: jpamodesto@gmail.com

Green Team educational meetings the 3rd Thursday of each month, 10 to 11 am, Kirk Lindsey Center, 1020 10th St. Plaza, Suite 102, Modesto. www.StanislausGreenTeam.com

3rd Thursday Art Walk, downtown Modesto, third Thursdays, 5 to 8 pm. stroll to art displays and galleries. Info: <https://visitmodesto.com/arts-entertainment/#art-walk>

VALLEY HEARTLAND ZEN GROUP: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

Pagan Community Meeting, 1st Thursday, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

FRIDAYS

Friday 7:30-9:30 pm (Sept thru May) **International Folk Dancing** with Village Dancers, Carnegie Art Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock \$7. No experience or partner needed. 209-480-0387 for info.

Overcoming Depression: small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 pm. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd, Manteca, CA 95366, (209) 825-1220.

Ukulele On Funstrummer Fridays: Every Friday morning from 9 am to 10:30 am Play Along Easy Songs from the Funstrummers Songbooks of over 500 songs. Funstrummers Performing Band Practice from 10 to noon and afternoon gig. Unitarian Church, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto, 209-505-3216 for details. Donations accepted. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8Y19zZg660qHCXGoC60jQ&index=1>

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, Office of Valley Improvement Projects, 1224 K St. Modesto., 6:45 pm. Info: 209-632-5473. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

SATURDAY

Free Community Drum Circle every third Saturday, 11 am to 12:30 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. <https://drum-love.com/>

Refuge Recovery: A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. @Friends Coming of Age., 1203 Tully

Rd., Ste. B., Modesto. Saturdays 8-9 am. FREE (donations accepted). Info: RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com

Divine Feminine Gathering. Join us for a time of ritual, song and conversation as women come together to celebrate one another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0763, orkingenne@gmail.com

CalPride Stanislaus EVENTS

1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto, 209-408-8848.
Open Monday-Friday, 10 am-6 pm.

ONSITE GROUPS & PROGRAMS (Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus)

QUEER POINT: CalPride's harm reduction program supports individuals who use drugs and the broader community and provides on-site syringe services, safer injection kits, fentanyl test strips, and Narcan for overdose prevention. Available Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 6 PM.

FOLX Group for LGBTQ+ Individuals between the ages of 25-49, 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 1-2 pm.

Women's Group, run by women for ALL women every Wednesday, Noon-1 pm.

Dreams and Solutions Drugs and Alcohol Support Group, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 1-2 pm.

Writing Group Peer Support Group for anyone looking to explore themselves through creativity every Friday, 4:30 pm-6 pm.

BEADiFULL Peer Support Group focusing on organic, peer-lead conversation and connection while making friendship bracelets and beaded jewelry, 1st and 3rd Fridays, 11:30 am-1 pm

Wellness Wednesdays, every Wednesday from 1-5 pm, for any individual receiving services in-center to be in community, create art, play games, etc.

Legal Name Change Clinic, every Tuesday and Thursday, 10 am-4 pm, and Monday, Wednesday, and Friday by appointment only.

Affirmation Station FREE Clothing Closet, open during business hours, Monday-Friday, 10 am-6 pm.

FREE HIV/HCV Testing and Counseling available Monday-Friday, 11 am-5 pm.

OFFSITE GROUPS (Hosted Elsewhere)

The Men's Senior Group meets every Thursday at 1 p.m. at the Queen Bean Coffee House, 1126 14th St, Modesto.

We Thrive POZ Art Group meets every Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m. at The Dragonfly-Art for Life Studio, 1210 J St, Modesto.

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month.

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to [Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org) Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.