



# stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable future

A MODESTO  
PEACE/LIFE  
CENTER  
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## Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines

From the Centers for Disease Control

Updated Apr. 15, 2021

Now that there are authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, accurate vaccine information is critical and can help stop common myths and rumors.

**How do I know which COVID-19 vaccine information are accurate?**

It can be difficult to know which sources of information you can trust. Before considering vaccine information on the Internet, check that the information comes from a credible source and is updated on a regular basis. Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information](#).

**Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I would like to have a baby one day?**

**Yes.** If you are trying to become pregnant now or want to get pregnant in the future, you may get a COVID-19 vaccine when one is available to you.

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. In addition, there is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines.

Like all vaccines, scientists are studying COVID-19 vaccines carefully for side effects now and will continue to study them for many years.

**Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?**

**No.** COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.

There are currently two types of COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized and recommended for use in the United States: messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines and a viral vector vaccine. Both mRNA and viral vector COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions (genetic material) to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. However, the material never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. This means the genetic material in the vaccines cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way. All COVID-19 vaccines work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.

Learn more about [how mRNA COVID-19 vaccines work](#).

Learn more about [how viral vector vaccines work](#).

**Can CDC mandate that I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

**No.** The federal government does not mandate (require) vaccination for people. Additionally, CDC does not maintain or monitor a person's vaccination records. Whether a state or local government or employer, for example, can require or mandate COVID-19 vaccination is a matter of state or other applicable law. Please contact your state government or employer if you have other questions about COVID-19 vaccination mandates.

**After getting a COVID-19 vaccine, will I test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?**

**No.** None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines cause you to

test positive on [viral tests](#), which are used to see if you have a **current infection**. Neither can any of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in clinical trials in the United States.

If your body develops an immune response to vaccination, which is the goal, you may test positive on some [antibody tests](#). Antibody tests indicate you had a **previous infection** and that you may have some level of protection against the virus. Experts are currently looking at how COVID-19 vaccination may affect antibody testing results.

**Can a COVID-19 vaccine make me sick with COVID-19?**

**No.** None of the authorized and recommended [COVID-19 vaccines](#) or [COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States](#) contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine **cannot** make you sick with COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are signs that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines work](#).

It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity (protection against the virus that causes COVID-19) after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

Information: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)



### Modesto needs a Police Review Commission with an Independent Police Auditor

A Civilian Review Committee composed of representatives from various community organizations, including the Modesto Peace/Life Center, has prepared specific proposal documents, modeled upon the City of Davis' successful police review process, which have been sent to each member of the Modesto City Council. Please contact your councilmember and urge support for a Civilian Police Review Board with an Independent Police Auditor To receive a copy of these documents, email Jim Costello, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

A Community Forum on Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement for Modesto, with recognized experts on this issue, was held on February 27, 2021. Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39G3jn10uHU>

**Supported by the following groups:** Modesto/Stanslaus NAACP, ACLU Stanislaus, Latino Community Roundtable, North Valley Labor Federation, Modesto Peace/Life Center, Faith in the Valley, Democratic Women's Club of Stanislaus, Valley Improvement Projects, Indivisible Stanislaus, Turlock Black Lives Matter Movement, Stanislaus & Tuolumne Central Labor Council, United Domestic Workers of America UDW/AFSCME 3930, Advocates for Justice, DSA Stanislaus, Modesto Church of the Brethren.

**ACTION:** Get your local organization to sign on to this effort. How? Email Jim Costello at [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org) for information.

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If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from <http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>



## Central West Ballet presents Creations: Choreography In America

Central West Ballet presents Creations: Choreography In America, a LIVE! and in-studio event in the Liz & Royal Robbins Studio, 5033 Pentecost Dr., Ste. B., Modesto on May 14 7:30pm, May 15 7:30pm, May 16 3:00pm and May 21 7:30pm, May 22 7:30pm, May 23 3:00pm

CWB presents three original works: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, depicting visitors at a museum becoming the various paintings they see, *L'Arlesienne*, an exciting ballet to the music made famous in the opera *Carmen*, and *Love Duets*, a lyrical suite of dances with ethereal projections.

Tickets are \$25.00; purchase on-line at [www.centralwestballet.org](http://www.centralwestballet.org) are limited and physically distanced, masks are required and COVID protocols will be followed.



CENTRAL WEST BALLET  
René Daveluy, Artistic Director

CREATIONS  
CHOREOGRAPHY IN AMERICA

Liz and Royal Robbins Studio

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Love Duets

L'ARLESIENNE

MAY 14 to 23

Liz and Royal Robbins Studio  
5033 Pentecost Drive  
Modesto CA 95356  
Shows at 7:30pm & 3pm  
Masks Mandatory • Seats together unless instructed  
TICKETS: [www.centralwestballet.org](http://www.centralwestballet.org)

USE YOUR SMART PHONE/QR APP TO SCAN THE QR CODE!

TICKETS

Image: Principal Dancers Nicole Ergo Fisher and Grant London in René Daveluy's Love Duets • Evening Photography

## Be informed!

Read the Valley Citizen at  
<http://thevalleycitizen.com>

## Project Sentinel announces our 2021 Fair Housing Symposium!

MAY 7, 2021 10-11AM

### Panel: Fair Housing Protections for Families

Families with children, pregnancy, foster parents – Attorneys Liza Cristol-Deman and Todd Espinosa provide an overview of familial status and age discrimination under the federal Fair Housing Act and California law. Link to Register: <https://bit.ly/3acrXiX>

MAY 14, 2021-10-11AM

### Panel: Public Policy, Gender, and Sex Discrimination

A panel featuring leaders of local, regional, and statewide

efforts of sex and gender identity protections. We will discuss some of the emerging policy issues and challenges related to sex discrimination and gender-based violence, and what types of services and programs are available to survivors. Project Sentinel brings together key community members for a dynamic discussion on sex discrimination and gender-based violence. Link to Register: <https://bit.ly/2RvdsAh>

**Information: Elizabeth Sanchez**, Fair Housing Coordinator, 1490 El Camino Real, Santa Clara, CA 95050. 209.499.2626; **Office:** 209.236.1577 Ext. 8117.

## Yokuts Chapter: Upcoming Sierra Club Events

By ELAINE GORMAN

Sat. May 15-Monday May 17: "River's End" Documentary

"River's End" reveals California's complex struggle over who gets fresh water and how moneyed interests game the system. Constant battling over uncertain water supplies heralds an impending crisis—not just in California but around the world. Winner of the 2021 Wild and Scenic Film Festival Jury Award and People's Choice Award. Film participants Doug Obegi and Peter Drekmeier will be our May 21 presenters.

Note: Prior to the documentary viewing window, we will email all Yokuts members a link and password to access the documentary. Or contact Jeff Olson, [rayjeff49@gmail.com](mailto:rayjeff49@gmail.com).

Friday May 21, 7 PM: "Working to Prevent the End of Rivers"

**Presenters — Doug Obegi and Peter Drekmeier**

Doug and Peter join the Yokuts group to have a conversation about sustaining and restoring healthy rivers and our



imperiled Bay-Delta estuary in California's Central Valley, in the face of climate change and unrelenting demand for water. Both of them appear in the recent documentary film "Rivers End," which will be available for viewing prior to this talk. Peter and Doug hope that we can have a conversation that answers your questions on topics such as where California's water goes today, the state of our beleaguered rivers and fisheries, what fish and wildlife need to survive, and how cities and farms can reduce water diversions while sustaining the economy through investments in local and regional water supply projects such as water recycling and improved efficiency.

Doug Obegi is the director of California River Restoration and a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). He has worked on projects related to water management and protection of fish and wildlife in California.

Peter Drekmeier serves as the Tuolumne River Trust's Policy Director. He led a campaign to convince the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to drop a plan to divert an additional 25 million gallons of water per day from the Tuolumne, and is currently working to improve river conditions through the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan and Federal licensing of Don Pedro and La Grange Dams.

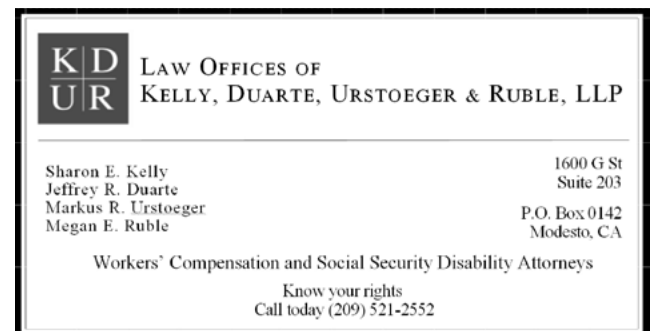
## KCBP Community Radio Seeks Volunteers

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's Community Radio Station the "Voice of the Valley" KCBP 95.5 FM needs volunteers to help develop the following programs:

Children • Art • Poetry • News/  
Journalism • Education • Health •  
Science • Social Justice • Multicultural •  
Music/All Genres

Other Opportunities: Underwriting  
• Fundraising/Event Committee •  
Community Outreach.

Contact Jocelyn Cooper, KCBP  
Development Director, (209) 422-0119,  
[kcbpvolapp@gmail.com](mailto:kcbpvolapp@gmail.com)



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# Building Bridges Without a Foundation for Peace Won't Work

By **JOSEPH BUBMAN**

On Jan. 6, 2021, a tornado struck the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.

At least that's what some "bridge-building" organizations might have led you to believe from their public statements after the insurrection. One such group spoke on Jan. 7 of the "damage and disruption" to the Capitol without bothering to note that people had committed violence, let alone that it was an effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

A burgeoning movement of well-intentioned, grassroots, nonpartisan organizations has emerged since the election victory of Donald Trump in November 2016 to remedy what they believe ails America. Indeed, I am the executive director of one such organization, Urban Rural Action.

To understand the landscape of organizations that bring together Americans across divides, we should examine the assumptions they make—about their goals, the nature of the problem, the solution, and their public posture. Given the intersecting social and political crises that face our country, these differing assumptions can either empower broad-based movements for change—or exacerbate conflict.

## The Goal

We bridge-builders often identify civility as the goal—polarization is the problem, incivility is the diagnosis, and civil dialogue is the solution. If we just bring everyone to the table, the thinking goes, then we can unify. We can heal by accepting a "negative peace," as Martin Luther King Jr. described the absence of tension in an unjust society.

But today's crises demand that we aim for what King called "positive peace," with justice for all, rather than civility, which is sometimes used as a cudgel to uphold an unjust status quo.

## The Problem

We bridge-builders too often view the problem through a narrow lens. Toxic polarization is indeed a major problem, but focusing exclusively on hostility between conservatives and liberals misdiagnoses what researchers have called "a diverse and fractured domestic extremist threat." This also ignores a range of societal challenges that cannot be solved by right-left dialogue alone.

Instead, we bridge-builders should look expansively at conflict dynamics across our social, political, economic, and environmental systems to identify factors that may lead to violence. This requires considering who is in conflict, both between groups (including the 27,730 hate crimes reported to the FBI from 2016 to 2019) and violence carried out against the state (such as the attack on the Capitol) and by the state (police brutality, solitary confinement, capital punishment, etc.).

Many U.S. experts in international conflict management have shifted their focus domestically because many of the dynamics that exist in deadly conflict zones around the world also exist in our own country, including a "flawed" democracy; widespread distrust of governing institutions; and a justice system that privileges the majority, the wealthy, and the connected over the minority, the poor, and the marginalized.

If we want to increase public safety and prevent political

violence, we must move beyond dialogue for the sake of dialogue, and address the causes of violence. We should tackle those causes through collaboration across divides, but still exclude spoilers who support violence to achieve political ends. Let us embrace the spirit of Frederick Douglass, who once said, "I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong."

## The Solution

Consider the issue of misinformation to understand how our different goals and problem diagnoses drive different approaches.

If our goal is "red versus blue" civility, our programming is more likely to equalize facts and falsehoods. Indeed, a recent bridge-building public debate featured two sides: allegations of "major fraud" in the 2020 election versus views based on evidence that it "was the most secure in American history." Such a frame might bring people across the ideological spectrum to the table, but at the cost of spreading false claims that may drive participation in violence. After all, misinformation about the election fueled the insurrection on Jan. 6 and diminishes trust in our democracy.

If instead we view bridge-building as a vehicle for advancing a safe and justice society, we would identify misinformation

as a conflict dynamic. We can counter misinformation by training community members on news literacy, strengthening civics education, and/or rebuilding a civically healthier internet.

We must recognize that we ourselves are actors within the conflict context—what we say and do (and don't say or do) affects the context. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking we can or should be "neutral." When violent extremists desecrate our democracy and we demur lest we face criticism for appearing biased, we are not being neutral—we are normalizing political violence. Instead, we should champion American values of peaceful expression and democratic participation.

At worst, our bridge-building efforts champion superficial civility, celebrate false unity, and uphold an unjust status quo. But at our best, we can expand movements to advance peace, justice, and democracy. Indeed, the future of America depends on it.

*JOSEPH BUBMAN is the Executive Director of Urban Rural Action, a 501c3 that brings Americans together across geographic, political, racial, and other divides to build relationships, strengthen collaboration skills, explore different perspectives on issues, and work together to address challenges that impact all communities*

*From Yes Magazine*

# Forging Bonds of Understanding

By **BARBARA DAMEWOOD**

Love is the moving force behind all bonds of human connection. Why do we seek such bonds? Basically, because human beings need interaction with other human beings. We need positive bonding experiences.

How do we accomplish positive bonding? We learn about and get to know others. This is the goal behind Stanislaus County Interfaith Council's ZOOM event -- Sunday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2 P.M.

The "Honoring Faiths in our Valley" program will afford leaders of different faiths the opportunity to share basic tenets and traditions of their belief system and to share them in a short, fifteen-minute video. Six different faith leaders are listed for the event and have stepped forward to be speakers.

<i>Supervisor Mani Grewal</i>	<i>Sikhism</i>
<i>Pastor Lyn Crase</i>	<i>Christianity, Lutheran</i>
<i>Rabbi Shalom Bochner</i>	<i>Conservative Judaism</i>
<i>Pastor Wayne Bridegroom</i>	<i>Christianity, Evangelical</i>
<i>Imam Ahmad Kayello</i>	<i>Islam</i>
<i>Karen Kincheloe</i>	<i>Christianity, The Church of Jesus Christ of LDS</i>

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83564602720?pwd=R2tCT0xvaTlxc1V6TUE3QkpCekE3dz09aTlxc1V6TUE3QkpCekE3dz09>

Following each presentation, there will be a "live" question and answer period on ZOOM for participants. These questions will facilitate our "really getting to know and understand each other." Knowledge banishes misunderstandings and creates closer bonds of interconnectedness.

"The more we get together, together, together... the more we get together, the happier we'll be." From my perspective, I believe my kindergarten teacher was correct! These

are wise words.

Stanislaus County Interfaith Council seeks to advance and build upon faith relationships within its county – and beyond. This organization grew from the efforts of many faith communities in our valley many years ago, and continues to extend a peaceful, loving hand of friendship to others.



## HONORING FAITHS IN OUR VALLEY

**Sunday, May 23rd, 2:00PM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83564602720?pwd=R2tCT0xvaTlxc1V6TUE3QkpCekE3dz09>

Please join us on **ZOOM** while we learn more about each other and the ways we experience faith in this first of a series of pre-recorded presentations followed by a live Q&A session with our presenters. Our first six presenters are:

*Modesto Supervisor Mani Grewal  
Pastor Lyn Crase  
Rabbi Shalom Bochner  
Pastor Wayne Bridegroom  
Imam Ahmad Kayello  
Karen Kincheloe*

*Sikhism  
Christianity, Lutheran  
Judaism  
Christianity, Evangelical  
Islam  
Christianity, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

**DONATIONS WILL BE GLADLY ACCEPTED DURING THE EVENT!**

<https://www.facebook.com/stanislausinterfaith/>



# Division II Winner –2021 Peace Essay Contest

## Missions of Mercy

By Lauren Bowman

Teacher: Ann Bowman

"I will soar, laugh, and smile, / Will breathe my life once more. / I will go back to a time / Before [sickness] came knocking at my door" (Hyder 69-72).

At home in Liberia, Fatu was living with a large tumor on the side of her face that caused both physical and emotional pain. She said, "I may grow another head if nothing is done to save me." But one day, her uncle heard of a hospital ship docked in Sierra Leone... Mercy Ships is a non-profit organization working to promote peace and well-being in our world by providing free health care to the poverty-stricken individuals in our society. (Mercy Ships website)

One of the most pressing needs in our world is to make healthcare more accessible and affordable to the lower income population. While many Americans are privileged to have access to cutting-edge medical care, this is not the case for everyone. According to the World Bank and the World Health Organization, "Half the world lacks access to essential health services, [and] 100 million [are] still pushed into extreme poverty because of health expenses."

Everything began with Don Stephens's dream. It was a dream to help the marginalized, heal the sick, and be the hands and feet of Jesus. He wanted to create a state-of-the-art hospital ship, staffed with volunteer medical experts, that would dock in ports around the world and serve the neediest of people by providing free medical care. It was a ship that would transcend all social, political, and racial boundaries, with the simple goal to love. He said, "The idea of mercy, the idea of a ship, the idea of launching a new way to bring modern medical care to all the world's citizens - it was suddenly all I could think about, talk about, dream about" (Stephens 20).

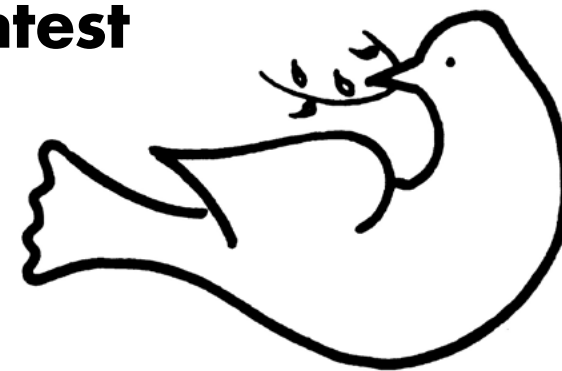
Mercy Ships was officially founded in 1978 by Don Stephens. Stephens and his family served aboard the Anastasis, their first ship, for ten years. Their current ship is the African Mercy, and a new ship, Global Mercy, is in production. Once completed, it will more than double their capacity. Planned to launch in 2022, Global Mercy will be in commission along with African Mercy, providing Mercy Ships with many more opportunities to fulfill their mission of "transcending borders [and] changing lives." (Mercy Ships)

Mercy Ships offers a large range of medical services including everything from general surgeries to eye care. Once the ship docks in port, numerous people are screened in order to find patients that the ship's doctors can treat. Then, for the remaining stay in port, the medical staff is busy performing surgeries. Once a person's surgery is complete, they are housed on the ship or at the Hospital Out-Patient Extension (HOPE) Center, where they receive care until they are ready to return home. Mercy Ships has not limited their operations to physical healing only; part of their goal is to leave a lasting impact. When docked, they help to improve local healthcare systems through mentoring programs, medical courses, and hospital renovations. (Mercy Ships)

While this organization touches the lives of each patient, it also has impacted many of the people who volunteer on the ship. Each volunteer is essential to the organization, and it takes everyone from chefs to photographers to doctors. They are all people who have chosen to give up a normal life, if only for a short amount of time, and pay to go to work, instead of being paid to work. Kat Sontologo, a videographer, feels that after serving with Mercy Ships she has been "wrecked for the ordinary". (Mercy Ships)

When COVID-19 devastated the world, Mercy Ships found unique ways to adapt and serve communities. In West Africa, mental health and well-being sessions were taught online. In Guinea, a dental school was able to continue educating and mentoring students. Lastly, Mercy Ships was able to provide eleven African countries with monetary donations and personal protective equipment. Laura Rebouche, US National Media Relations Director, wrote "Our colleagues have a key role to play for a strong and effective response against COVID-19 on the continent [of Africa]. This initiative has been ongoing to illustrate Mercy Ship's support and encouragement in the face of the pandemic around the world." (Email)

Though there are many uncertainties, Mercy Ships does have tentative plans for moving forward. Currently, the African Mercy is planning to return to Senegal in April 2021, where they were docked pre-COVID, and perform surgeries that were not completed when they had to leave two months early. In mid-2022, the Global Mercy will begin to serve in Liberia; both ships will have safety protocols in place to prevent COVID-19. Laura Rebouche also wrote that "It's a moving target and the dates may get pushed out. It's all dependent [on if] a vaccine is approved and in-process as to when we return to Africa." (Email)



Every part of Mercy Ship's work is important. Whether a person comes away with corrected clubfoot or improved vision, they will have a completely new chance at life because of Mercy Ships. Not only is the staff healing people physically - they are also sharing the love of Jesus to all they meet. Mercy Ships is doing a phenomenal job of supporting the important ideals of peace and well-being. Healing helps create inner-peace, while medical care and online classes promote physical and mental well-being. Often the rejects of society are accepted after being blessed by Mercy Ships. (Mercy Ships)

Through changing times, Mercy Ships has found ways to adapt and meet the needs of people all over the world. Because of Mercy Ships, Fatu's tumor was completely removed. She said, "I have a life. People no longer laugh at me. They will be admiring me, and I'll be dancing." (Mercy Ships) By providing free healthcare for the under-privileged, Mercy Ships is helping to spread the ideals of peace and well-being throughout the world.

Note: references will be found in the essay on Weebly at [peaceessaycontest.weebly.com](http://peaceessaycontest.weebly.com)

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# Greta Thunberg Says Humanity Must Not Be Fooled by 'Bullsh\*t' Climate Targets of World Leaders

The Swedish campaigner says insufficient goals and empty rhetoric represent the “biggest elephant there’s even been in any room.”

By Common Dreams staff

Just before U.S. President Joe Biden’s two-day virtual summit on the climate crisis got underway, Swedish activist Greta Thunberg on Thursday shared a video message calling out the “bullshit” of world leaders who she says are failing to take the steps necessary to confront the planetary emergency.

**“While we can fool others and even ourselves, we cannot fool nature and physics.”**

— Greta Thunberg

Posted online by *NowThis News*, the video featuring Thunberg comes as a warning from the well-known global climate campaigner that the people of the world should not be fooled by the lofty rhetoric they will hear at the summit.

“At the Leaders’ Climate Summit, countries will present their new climate commitments, like net-zero emissions by 2050,” Thunberg says in the video. “They will call these hypothetical targets ‘ambitious.’ But when you compare our insufficient targets with the overall current best available science, you clearly see that there’s a gap. There are decades missing.”

Watch the video:

The 18-year-old founder of “Fridays for Future” and inspiration for the global climate strike movement also penned an open letter first published in *Vogue* on Thursday, making much the same argument.

“You may call us naïve for believing change is possible, and that’s fine,” Thunberg wrote. “But at least we’re not so naïve that we believe that things will be solved by countries and companies making vague, distant, insufficient targets without any real pressure from the media and the general public.”

Thunberg continued:

Of course, we welcome all efforts to safeguard future and present living conditions. And these targets could be a great start if it wasn’t for the tiny fact that they are full of gaps and loopholes. Such as leaving out emissions from imported goods, international aviation and shipping, as well as the burning of biomass, manipulating baseline data, excluding most feedback loops and tipping points, ignoring the crucial global aspect of equity and historic emissions, and making these targets completely reliant on fantasy or barely existing carbon-capturing technologies. But I don’t have time to go into all that now.



The point is that we can keep using creative carbon accounting and cheat in order to pretend that these targets are in line with what is needed. But we must not forget that while we can fool others and even ourselves, we cannot fool nature and physics. The emissions are still there, whether we choose to count them or not.

“The gap between what needs to be done and what we are actually doing is widening by the minute,” she added. “The gap between the urgency needed and the current level of awareness and attention is becoming more and more absurd. And the gap between our so-called climate targets and the overall, current best-available science should no longer be possible to ignore.”

Speaking of world leaders in the Thursday video and the shortcomings of their climate proposals thus far, Thunberg said, “Let’s call out their bullshit,” because the gap between what their rhetoric and what’s actually needed is “the biggest elephant there’s even been in any room.”

Along with other witnesses, Thunberg is testifying before congressional lawmakers on Thursday during a hearing convened by the House Subcommittee on the Environment.

Watch the hearing—titled “[The Role of Fossil Fuel Subsidies in Preventing Action on the Climate Crisis](#).”



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## Agency seeks LGBTQ Advocates

By JOHN AGUIRRE

The **Nothing About Us Without Us LGBTQ+ Advocates** is a program of the LGBTQ+ Collaborative supported by the Center at Sierra Health Foundation through their 2020 San Joaquin Valley Health Fund IHHEEL Advocacy and COVID-19 Recovery and Resiliency Grant. The program will start recruiting Advocates from April 25th to May 15th for the 6-month program. All advocates must attend 2-day Advocate Training and will be coached throughout the project. Volunteer Advocates can earn up to \$1,000 for full participation. Advocates are LGBTQ+ community members, 18 years or older, with different levels of advocacy skills, novice to experienced, from the Stanislaus & Merced County area who provide their unique perspectives through their lived experiences to inform the LGBTQ+ Collaborative’s work and perform advocacy-related activities locally, regionally, and possibly statewide. This program will cultivate inclusion of LGBTQ+ voices in Stanislaus and Merced County public and private community planning processes by training LGBTQ+ persons in community organizing, engagement, and mobilizing to



advocate for policy and systems change. Advocates will provide the LGBTQ+ voice on local, regional, and state planning bodies in housing, transportation, behavioral health, public health, COVID-19, homelessness, human trafficking, etc. to achieve systems level change. Advocates will address LGBTQ+ culture, disparities, inclusion, strengths, and affirmation to public and private social, medical, and behavioral service providers and the community at large. If interested, follow the link to the application that is due May 15th, 5 pm.

LGBTQ+ Advocate application

[jaguirre@lgbtqcollaborative.org](mailto:jaguirre@lgbtqcollaborative.org)



# Homeless: The Journey Home

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Look at Charles and Deanna Farish today and it's hard to imagine them homeless. Both are 51 years old. Their eyes sparkle and their faces radiate happiness — but it was only three years ago that they both saw no way out of the park they were living in.

Charles and Deanna met in Mellis Park, in Modesto. Both were homeless and single. Except when roused by the police, they stayed in the park for two years, until local authorities opened Beard Brook Park for permitted camping in 2018.

They both used drugs. Charles had started with cocaine in high school, following the example of his drug-using father. Deanna didn't start using until she was in her forties.

Diagnosed as bipolar, she had stopped taking her prescription medication. "I treated my mental illness with dope," she said recently, "and dope makes mental illness worse."

Once homeless, methamphetamine (meth) became the drug of choice for both of them. In part because it's cheap and widely available, meth is the preferred drug for most homeless people who use. Another reason they choose meth is that homelessness, "is scary," according to Deanna.\*

"You don't know who's going to creep up on you. You're always asking yourself, 'Where am I going to eat tomorrow.'"

A powerful stimulant, meth helps keep people awake and alert; it also suppresses appetite. A sleeping homeless person is constantly subject to theft. Some have had their shoes taken off their feet while slumbering. They're also subject to rousts by the police, harassment from angry citizens and young bullies, and visits by foraging rats, possums, and raccoons.

One homeless man, when asked about the biggest challenges of homelessness answered, "You're always alert," and, "You're always around crazy people." Hence the popularity of methamphetamine, a drug that helps keep people awake and on edge.

## A Place to Stay

Things began to change for Charles and Deanna when City of Modesto authorities permitted camping at Beard Brook Park in the city's industrial area in late fall of 2018. Permitted camping came about as the result of a court ruling that cities and counties couldn't penalize people for sleeping in public places if there were no other options for shelter. Beard Brook Park became known as Beard Brook Village.

For Charles and Deanna, one of the immediate benefits of having a place to stay was a chance to catch up on their sleep. Suddenly, they didn't have to fear loss of their possessions or forced relocations.

They also benefitted from a sense of community. Homeless people feel safer when among groups of friends. Like com-



munities everywhere, they have their own cultural standards, some of them peculiar.

"The person who stole your bike might help you look for it," laughed Deanna, "even while he's got the money from selling the bike in his pocket."

Petty theft among the homeless, among other infractions, is forgivable only as long as it's made up for. Like many poor people, rather than call in authorities, the homeless prefer to handle more serious problems their own way. It's often referred to as "park justice." Bullies, abusers, and unrepentant thieves are ostracized and kept out of the community, often by force.

Early in 2019, when Beard Brook Village was moved to what became the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES) near the Salvation Army's Berberian Shelter, Charles and Deanna felt even more secure. They were joined by Charles' mother whose fixed income was too low to afford rent. She took a tent next to theirs.

"It gave us a sort of a foundation, and a little bit more hope," said Deanna. "The people in the trailer like Christina Kenney were wonderful."

"The trailer" was an onsite trailer staffed with people who provided counseling and advice. Much of the help was in addressing basic needs such as obtaining driver's licenses and birth certificates, both of which most homeless people seldom have in their possession. Christina Kenney was one of several county workers who helped staff MOES.

## The People

In addition to Christina Kenney, Charles and Deanna discovered several other friendly benefactors at MOES. Red Hawk, a staff worker who seemed to be everywhere at once, became a trusted friend and positive influence.

"He had AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings every night," said Deanna. "We started going every night."

Another supporter was Joseph Dean Dodd. Charles and Deanna knew Dodd both as the Pastor for Church in the Park as well as the guiding spirit for Church in the Park's Shower Shuttle.

"Every time we got a shower and clean underwear and socks at the Shower Shuttle, we got a little bit more hope," said Deanna. "Pastor Dean doesn't judge, he just helps," said Deanna of Dodd, who is widely admired for his humility and service to the poorest of the poor.

Charles credits Dodd's spiritual guidance for bringing him to faith in God. "Once I gave myself to God, everything got better," he said.

Once at MOES, both Charles and Deanna began noticing other people's behavior. "Everyone was acting crazy and fighting over drugs," said Charles. "Then I realized I was acting the same way. I didn't want to be like that."

Unbeknownst to Charles, Deanna had been writing in her journal about quitting drugs. One day Charles said, "I'm ready to quit. Are you ready?" Deanna said she had been ready before he was.

One of the first people they told about their decision to quit was Modesto Police Sargent Mike Hammond, the lead officer for law enforcement at MOES.

"He's the kindest, most compassionate person there is," said Deanna. "He cares about people, the community... he cares about everything. There's not a cold bone in that man's body."

Hammond is widely known among homeless people as a tough cop who prefers to help people rather than arrest them. At MOES, many viewed him as a guardian — the big brother everyone wishes they had when trouble comes.

With a physique that enables him to subdue drug-crazed men capable of doing push-ups with over 300 pounds of cop



# Rehabilitation within California's Prisons: Inmates Step Up To Fill a Void

*Michael Baldwin Senior is a Modesto Community Advocate and Paralegal. This article is the first in a series on the challenges faced by current and former convicts in their quest to successfully reenter society.*

**By Michael Baldwin Senior**  
(in collaboration with Tom Portwood)

I'm a former convict, but I don't consider the term a label but a source of strength. I am also blessed to be living in the Valley, working as a paralegal for a highly respected law firm, and advocating for other former convicts and many others who are still incarcerated. It's been a long road to this point in my life where I can proudly say I'm contributing in meaningful ways to my community. One of the most important lessons I've learned is that we are all in this together.

I walked out of Corcoran State Prison thirty months ago and into society for the first time in nearly twenty-seven years. Let me tell you, it was an amazing feeling, almost scary. It was also a hard-won moment after many years of soul-searching and rehabilitation. And I didn't do it alone – no, I received a lot of help from many of my fellow inmates along the way. Rehabilitation – that's the word, the concept that is so misunderstood by society. To be able to walk out of a prison with your freedom and sanity, that's the elusive goal. The truth is that rehabilitation, as it's structured in our prison system today, just doesn't work the way society may think it does.

Some years ago, when I was still working through my own problems, I sat at the release gate on the prison yard one day and watched seven men parole. I personally knew each of them and, of the seven, only two of them had truly pursued rehabilitation, personal progress, and transformation. These two men happened to be life-term inmates who had actively attended programs addressing domestic violence, anger management, and parole planning, as well as Narcotics Anonymous meetings and Victim Impact programs. The other five men had spent most of their days in the yard working out and just doing their time. They may have stayed out of trouble or worked a job such as sweeping the floors or passing out food on the chow line, but they had skirted around the whole process of rehabilitation. And that was a shame, for I feared that they had seriously undermined their chances of leading successful lives once they were out in the world.

But don't just take my word when I say that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) continues to fall short in its charge of providing inmates with the comprehensive schedule of rehabilitation programs they so desperately need.

In a report issued in January 2019, (<https://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2018-113.pdf>) the California State Auditor reached the conclusion that "Corrections is failing to place inmates into appropriate rehabilitation programs, leading to inmates being released from prison without having any of their rehabilitation needs met."

The State Auditor also stated that in 2017-2018, "Corrections assigned 15 inmates at the three prisons we reviewed (Folsom, R.J. Donovan, San Quentin) to rehabilita-

**It's been a long road to this point in my life where I can proudly say I'm contributing in meaningful ways to my community.**



tion programs though more than 700 other inmates had higher risks and needs." An inadequate level of staffing by CDCR for rehabilitation programs was also cited as a shortcoming in the report. Additionally, the enrollment rates in rehabilitation programs were found to be lower than their budgeted capacity.

The truth is that inmates are turning to each other for support and strength in dealing with all the issues – the addiction, the violence, the anger – that led them to commit crimes in the first place. Inside of prison, you have some programs that are really helpful toward identifying these issues. But CDCR doesn't make those programs mandatory. When you go into prison, there's no one coming to your cell door saying "Hey, this is the crime you committed, here are some of the reasons

why you committed that crime, and these are the programs you need to take to make sure you resolve the issues that led you to commit the crime." There's no judge sentencing you like that. There are no counselors coming to your door. Most of the time you have another inmate who ends up interacting with you, and actually helps you discover these things. Or, you go into a room and you hear someone else talking about *their* life and their issues and sometimes you can identify with what you're hearing. I went to a group one day and heard a guy talking about his life and it occurred to me, "Wow, I've experienced that, too!"

The peer-to-peer support, the peer-to-peer rehabilitation is the lifeblood of rehabilitation at CDCR. Inmates are stuck with each other and eventually, they build relationships with each other. There were some men in prison whom I trusted more than any other person on the planet. I would confide in them before I would confide in anyone else.

It's impossible to talk about prison without talking about addiction. The vast majority of men that I interacted with while incarcerated – maybe 80 to 85% – had some level of addiction, some level of a drug or alcohol problem. Often, though, it's also an addiction to the drama and the violence or the lifestyle. It's an addiction to the lifestyle of criminality.

The availability of 12-step programs, then, is really critical. Most institutions have a couple of 12-step programs and they can be helpful. But, in my case, it wasn't until I found CGA – Criminal and Gang Members Anonymous – that I really began to address the core root of my behaviors and reactions to my own thoughts and emotions. CGA is a 12-step program where the steps are slightly revised to accommodate the rehabilitative needs of criminals. In AA and NA, you admit that you are powerless over your addiction and that your lifestyle is not manageable. But the first step in CGA is different. It says that we admit to a lack of strength and control over all forms of criminal activity and that the lifestyle we had pursued was not decent or manageable. A wise and insightful inmate by the name of Richard Mejico was responsible for that key change. Moreover, he took it upon himself to have the change formally approved by Alcoholics Anonymous, and I can personally vouch for the fact that CGA has helped many inmates to turn their lives around.

Today, with Covid-19, rehabilitation inside of prisons has been devastated. At the moment, there are no volunteers who are coming to prisons. And without volunteers, there are no self-help programs. Most self-help programs are being conducted as correspondence courses only, through the mail. The number of correspondence courses available to inmates is increasing, due to the pandemic and the need to shut down access to the inside. But as necessary as that might be, this shutdown has intensified the inmates' desire and ability to help each other, but in very small groups. Each yard has individuals who are excellent at understanding the process of change and transformation. So, once again, the inmate population has stepped into the void to provide the most viable rehabilitation opportunities.

**Rehabilitation – that's the word, the concept that is so misunderstood by society. To be able to walk out of a prison with your freedom and sanity, that's the elusive goal.**

**The truth is that rehabilitation, as it's structured in our prison system today, just doesn't work the way society may think it does.**

# Listen to Local Programming on KCBP 95.5 FM, The Voice of the Valley



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**The Ralph Nader Hour** - 4:00pm Saturdays.

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**This is SKA** with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11pm; Sundays, 6 am.

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

## Weekdays (Monday - Friday)

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

*Thom Hartmann* - 2:00pm

*Sojourner Truth* - 4:00pm

*Democracy Now!* - 7:00pm.

*Flashpoint Magazine* - 10:00pm.

## Children's Programming

*Confetti Park* - Saturday's 8:00am; & Sunday's 12:30pm.

*The Children's Hour* - Sundays 3:00pm.

Find a complete programming schedule on our website, [www.kcbpradio.org](http://www.kcbpradio.org)

What programming do you like or would like to hear? Contact us at [programming@kcbpradio.org](mailto:programming@kcbpradio.org) or call (209) 353-3066. Help put "Community" into community radio!

We can't do it without you. Please support us! Donate at <https://kcbpradio.networkforgood.com/>

## THE RESOLVE OF CLIFFORD CALL

"Someday I'll take up kayaking," said Clifford Call, with a little grin. He pushed from the railing and left as the boaters glided down, away.

"I'll be a master at chess someday," Cliff announced, with a little smirk. He stood there, hands in his pockets, while the players became their play.

"Someday I'll marry one of them," Clifford muttered, with a little shrug. He sat and drank his draft of bitters, gazing as the party pulsed away.

"I'll push someday for that worthy cause," swore Clifford, with a little frown. He girded his loosened mind for a fight, but a tiny obstacle got in his way.

"Someday I'll visit my old friends," thought Clifford, with a little cough. He pulled his blankets up to his chin, and swiftly came the very next day.

– Salvatore Salerno

Ed. Note: This poem was not printed properly in last month's paper edition of *Connections*.



## Voices Poet: Sheila D. Landre

**Sheila D. Landre** is a retired teacher, poet, minister, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who has been performing her work in public since 1995 at coffee houses, book stores, such as Sacramento's Luna's Art Café, the J-Street Café, Queen Bean, and on stage at the State Theatre, The Prospect Theatre Project in Modesto, Stockton's Haggin Museum, and the Carnegie Center in Turlock. Her work has appeared frequently in *Penumbra* (the literary magazine of California State University Stanislaus), *iZam Bomba!*, *TalkArt*, *Song of the San Joaquin*, *Stanislaus Connections*, and other California publications.

Recently Sheila became a member of the National Pen Women. She currently belongs to two book clubs and is a longstanding member of the Licensed Fools writing group. Besides writing poetry she enjoys writing short stories and crocheting whimsical figures, scarves, and hats.





## HOMEBOUND

### Pandemic Reflections

*No big deal. I've been locked down before.  
Locked in, quarantined, imprisoned, sheltered in place,  
under beneficent power or hostile thumb.*

#### I. HER MEMORIES ARE MINE

Anne Frank and I spent two years in the House Behind,  
divided by place and time but of like nature,  
not daring to speak nor pace creaking floors.  
We filled empty books with our hearts' ambition;  
words were our solace, incomparable friends;  
a pencil, a treasure, stale potatoes, a feast.  
No locks or chains could inhibit free thought.  
She continues to live always in the back of my mind,  
courageous young author who grew famous,  
but was never given the chance to grow old  
in the wide world the way I did.

#### II. EXPECTATIONS AT SEVENTEEN

I've been shut up before in an unknown country,  
in a coal heated garret overlooking a garden.  
I kept my old-fashioned secret unseen  
through assassination of fall, shared sorrow,  
bleak, lonely winter, conspirators all.  
Brisk, silent walks by the broad Neckar,  
I sat alone on a stone bench and gazed at the sky,  
the brown water, never seen by people who  
mattered, only strangers.  
It was vital to my mother that no one find out,  
no one who had known us back home.  
That's how it was in those prim, proper days,  
So seriously tragic then, so acceptable now

#### III. MARRIAGE: THE SANTA CRUZ YEARS

I've been shut in with the Lost Boy  
eight thousand miles from family or friends,  
anyone ever known, in a room by the bay.  
I could watch TV all day or walk alone to the beach  
where no one recognized me,  
not the clowns on the Boardwalk or  
painted carousel beasts whirling past.  
No safe haven except the chilly back seat  
of a '47 Chevy parked overnight,  
dark sanctuary behind the Peter Pan Motel.  
Determined to ride out the storm  
I kept my promises,  
learned to dance in the rain.  
The thunder would deafen and terrorize  
for twenty years more before my escape.

#### IV. A YEAR IN THE PROVINCE OF CERES

I've been suspended between  
a sadly safe house in a small rural town  
and exile in the country for nearly a year.  
Taking care of a pack of galloping dogs, I lived  
in an unfinished, transplanted cottage  
hidden deep in tall eucalyptus  
at the end of a long dusty driveway.  
My cats would climb a wooden ladder to the loft.  
In the chill depth of winter, I descended  
stairs to feed the wood-burning furnace.  
I lived through pneumonia there in that cottage.  
Alone for two weeks I did nothing but sleep,  
feed every dog once a day,  
repeatedly climb to and from bed.  
descend to the basement woodpile,  
feed pre-cut logs to the furnace,  
try to stay warm,  
stay alive.

#### V. TRUE LOVE AND CAREGIVING

I knew back in Austin his plight would get worse.  
He had been a driver who could no longer drive,  
a writer who could no longer write,  
independent but no longer able to live alone.  
Fulfilling long sought love and desire,  
these would be the best years of our lives--  
fragmented, comforting, broken, sublime.  
My caregiver role consumed every minute, all space.  
Time apart was infrequent and brief, conflicted,  
like a single mother with her beloved new child.  
He needed assistance with everyday tasks:  
walking, dressing, waking, sleeping.  
Every bodily function required my involvement.  
He needed me here as I needed him to complete  
precious days--my beloved companion,  
my reason for enduring all previous trials,  
now a thumbprint in silver, ashes in a clock.

#### VI. NORMAL REDEFINED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The year 2020 seems to me all too familiar.  
We don't go anywhere that isn't essential.  
Someone checks on us or someone does not.  
There are few people we see every day or  
maybe no one even knows we are here.  
We relish our solitude, but miss living company.  
We bristle at rules, face masks, closed doors,  
crave our lost freedom but fear that  
exposure will be too much to bear.  
We may lose it one day--whatever "it" is.

Authorities may invade this sacred enclosure,  
hustle us roughly, disrespectfully away.  
The Lost Boy may discover our hiding place,  
injure with careless words or with anger.

We may waste down to nothing if we stay here;  
we may soar like a weather balloon into space;  
we may perish if we travel to some other place.  
We may forget what is required besides sustenance,  
shelter, security, connection, delivery.  
Dig deep to uncover love exchanged,  
soul examined, minutely dissected,  
push-pinned to the wall.

This world will never be as it was  
after we have all been shut in and shut up,  
locked down, quarantined,  
kept our distance, lived solitary,  
confined, bound together, departed

#### VII. PREAMBLE TO AN EPILOGUE

Nearly a year passed, a half million dead,  
the ones who couldn't't or wouldn't't  
get out of harm's way, to find that what  
will break down the doors of denial  
may make you a casualty, another digit  
on the right of rising/falling statistics.

Our friends and family are faces on screens,  
photos on walls or tucked securely inside  
of our phones, not embraced in the flesh.  
Elbow bumps, hugs made of gestures,  
cartoons to gently remind us  
what it's like to breathe the same air,  
avatars bearing emojis of love.  
Promises of future normality made furtively  
behind masks, from a distance,  
out a car window, across a brown lawn,  
posted or scribbled or viewed on the news.

There will be better days, but they will never  
be the days that once were.  
We will look back on this year as the time to  
compare to the rest of our years:  
our own Great Depression,  
our War of the Worlds,  
our New Year of Plague.

What have we lost by being homebound?  
What can be salvaged?  
What can inspire?  
What can we grow in the freshly tilled soil?

*Sheila D. Landre  
Modesto, California  
April, 2020—March, 2021*





## Dear friends at the Modesto Peace/Life Center

Thank you for being there, for persisting in your calling to keep bringing us together.

KCBP keeps opening new doors for us. In these times of “social distancing” (impacting way more than 6 feet!). I am both wowed by the new information and deeply grateful for the cultural/spiritual nourishment. Since 95.5 has become our default radio setting, I’d like to earmark my donation for the radio station.

Love,  
Elizabeth Burns  
(m-m-m! hugs!)

## Firing Officer the Right Decision

The recent ruling of firing the officer who killed Trevor Seever was the right decision by the MPD. Frankly I was surprised because so many officers who use extreme force are exonerated. I watched the video 3 times and was appalled that the officer started shooting immediately without giving the man a chance to comply. There have to be procedures that the department trains an officer to do in that situation, before a gun is used. If he thought the man was armed he could have fired a warning shot. A criminal charge of voluntary manslaughter was issued by the D.A.

This officer must be held accountable. Police officers are public servants whose responsibilities are to protect the public and keep us safe. My heart goes out to the family as they grieve the loss of their son. It appears their son was in a state of distress. There needs to be strategies to address people in that condition that are not gun related.

This situation shows that our community needs a citizen review board with the authority to oversee the disciplinary process and provide the third objective community-based eye on how these situations are resolved. This officer had 4 other shoots in his record. The review board would work in partnership with the department to give suggestions for police improvements and changes if needed. Most police officers are fine people and do a dangerous job well. But for those who don’t this has to change and the CRB is a good plan for that to happen.

Carole Stark  
Modesto

## Law enforcement shouldn’t police itself

Cities across our country have or are seeking to have community oversight of their police departments. I think it’s time for Modesto to have civilian oversight of its police. Right now if you have a complaint against a police officer you have to go to the police station to file it. Many people feel intimidated to file a complaint there. A Police Civilian Review Board (PCRB) would allow the complaint to be filed with this board. It would build trust between police officers and the community they serve.

The recent killing of Trevor Seever by Modesto police officer Joseph Lamantia may not have happened if a PCRB had existed. Officer Lamantia had been involved in four shootings where deadly force was used. This is very unusual for a police officer to be involved in that many deadly shootings in their career. If a PCRB had been in place there is a possibility that this tragic killing wouldn’t have taken place.

Having a PCRB will foster transparency, accountability, and better relations between the police and the community they serve. We need civilian oversight of our police today.

John Lucas  
Modesto



**Stanislaus LGBTQ+ Community...**

**CA COVID-19 RENT RELIEF**

**Californians affected by COVID-19 can now get help with unpaid rent.**

**Text RENT to 211-211 SMS/ Text functionality across the state for basic program information**

**Californians can also get help with past due utilities.**

Hi from [HousingIsKey.com](https://HousingIsKey.com) CA and United Way!

First what is your language preference?

English  
Español  
中文  
Tiếng Việt  
한국어  
Tagalog  
Français/Française  
Português  
Yoruba

**California ALL**

**CA COVID-19 RENT RELIEF**

**Local Partner Network**

**LGBTQ+ Collaborative**

**Covid-19 Health & Wellness Project**

**TOGETHER TOWARD HEALTH**

A program of the Public Health Institute



# Homeless: The Journey Home

from page 6

and equipment on their backs and the temperament of a social worker, Hammond became both friend and supporter of Deanna and Charles, even before they decided to quit drugs.

"He checked on us almost every day he was at MOES," said Deanna. "He kind of held us accountable."

Quitting was difficult, even with the moral support of friends like Mike Hammond and Red Hawk.

"We mostly slept every day for about two weeks," said Deanna. "Charles' mom took care of us. She woke us up once or twice a day to feed us."

Once off drugs, Charles and Deanna started thinking ahead. They wanted a future. They wanted out. Greg Pensinger showed them a path.

## The Path

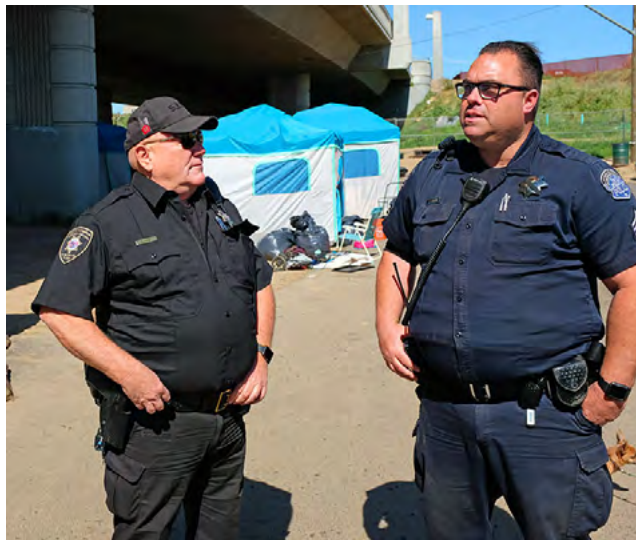
Greg Pensinger is the Director of the Stanislaus County Downtown Streets Team (DST). Originating in the Bay Area, the **Downtown Streets Team** is staffed by volunteers who are "homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless." DST volunteers engage in cleanup and beautification projects.

People experiencing homelessness often become dissocialized. They lose track of time, fail to keep appointments, and have difficulty focusing and following through on simple tasks and intentions. The Downtown Streets Team is designed to "provide homeless and low-income people with the resources they need to rebuild their lives." Volunteers are held accountable and rewarded for improved performance.

One of the innovative features of the Streets Team is the practice of paying people with coupons and gift certificates good only for basic necessities like food and clothing. The program is designed to last a year, with the purpose of moving participants into regular employment. Charles and Deanna were the first graduates of the program.

"Greg helped us with our work ethic," said Deanna. "Now I even have a résumé."

"The Downtown Streets Team is why we are where we are today," said Charles.



Today, Charles and Deanna are married and employed. Charles works for Stanislaus County at the low-barrier Berberian Shelter in Modesto. Deanna works in retail at a local department store. They're also housed.

"At first we lived with some other people in the Airport District," said Charles, "but they started using drugs and it all came apart." Ultimately, once they were both employed, Charles and Deanna were able to share a house with Charles' mother. The three formerly homeless residents of MOES now live in Modesto.

When Charles is asked what would most help homeless people, he says, "Housing." He then adds, "Housing and rehabilitation, both with drugs and mental health."

Charles says that most of the homeless people he works with have varying degrees of mental illness that drugs make worse, yet few are motivated to change. Because she had a strong support system, Deanna began taking her prescribed



medication even before she quit using. The medication was a major factor in her escape from homelessness.

Charles and Deanna, like most people on the streets, once shared whatever they had with other people in the same situation, including their drugs.

"Whenever people had drugs, they shared them," said Deanna. "That's just the way things were."

"We still share," said Charles, "but now we share different things. Sometimes if we see somebody hungry we can buy them a burger."

Reflecting on homelessness and the people she has met along the way, Deanna said, "Most of us are good people. We have our bad moments, but most of us are good-hearted. Most people are good."

\*Video interviews with Charles and Deanna by Richard Anderson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dz1gEt6uDWg>

# Rehabilitation within California's Prisons

from page 7

I would recommend to CDCR that if it really wants to facilitate rehabilitation within its system the staff should be responsible for maintaining the dignity of the population of inmates they serve. That's the best course toward rehabilitation. Yes, CDCR needs to do what's needed for those who have violated the law, but I believe that we need to adopt more of a restorative justice model into our judicial and prison systems.

It's critical to give a new inmate the opportunity to see the end at the beginning of their prison sentence, to help them set achievable goals so that they can go home again one day. Each inmate should be asked: "If going home matters to you, what type of person do you want to be when you leave here?"

I also strongly believe that CDCR should find a way to reinfuse family back into inmates' lives. Again, the pandemic has made this almost impossible over the past year. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't prioritize this as a critical need, even if it means free phone calls. Without connections, it

It's critical to give a new inmate the opportunity to see the end at the beginning of their prison sentence, to help them set achievable goals so that they can go home again one day. Each inmate should be asked: "If going home matters to you, what type of person do you want to be when you leave here?"

becomes almost impossible to reclaim a life. Crime happens as a result of severed connections. If justice doesn't include reconnection, it's not justice at all.

The high rates of recidivism for felony offenders – 66% – makes it all the more imperative that CDCR overhaul its approach to rehabilitation. If CDCR is willing to do that, lives will be saved – and society will be the better for it.

Recidivism Rates Data: (<https://www.ppic.org/publication/recidivism-of-felony-offenders-in-california/#:~:text=We%20find%3A,41%20percent%20to%2035%20percent.>)



Look for  
**CONNECTIONS**  
online at:  
<http://stanislausconnections.org/>





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

## MAY 2021

**CHECK WITH MEETING HOSTS. ONLINE MEETINGS MAY BE PLANNED.**

**Science Colloquium**, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC via Zoom. To access the program, click <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmaymqgHqzxhsAa0RjYwVg/>.

**MAPS** (Modesto Area Partners in Science: free MJC science programs. Resumes in the Fall. Watch past presentations at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2pMYnCos9w0xwd\\_5lcw3Pg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2pMYnCos9w0xwd_5lcw3Pg)

**VIRTUAL FILMS** are available at the State Theatre! Visit <https://thestate.org/virtual-screenings/>

**The Prospect Theatre** has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2020-2021-season/>

**5 WED: VIGIL:** NO VIGIL in May.

**6 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM** Monthly Board Meeting, 6:30 pm. Email Jim Costello for login information, [jcostello@igc.org](mailto:jcostello@igc.org)

**14 FRI: Central West Ballet presents Creations: Choreography In America**, LIVE in-studio in the Liz & Royal Robbins Studio, 5033 Pentecost Dr., Ste. B., Modesto. Other performances: 7:30pm; May 15 7:30pm; May 16 3:00pm; May 21 7:30pm; May 22 7:30pm; May 23 3:00pm. Tickets: <http://www.centralwestballet.org/>. See article, this issue.

**23 SUN: Honoring Faiths in Our Valley.** About other faiths. Forging bonds of understanding. Live by Zoom See article, this issue. Sponsored by Stanislaus County Interfaith Council.

## LOOKING AHEAD

**July 18: Sundays at CBS:** California Zephyr. 3 pm. Info: <https://sundaysatcbs.com/zephyr21/>

**Jan. 11, 2022: John McCutcheon** returns to Modesto for Modesto Peace/Life Center Concert Benefit. More info: TBA

## REGULAR MEETINGS

### SUNDAYS

**Village Dancers** are not dancing in person but have a Zoom class, every Sunday 3:00-5:00 PM (PST). Lessons and reviews every week are given in international folk dances and are led by different teachers from around the Valley. People from England to Taiwan, New Hampshire to Oregon, Arizona to Denair join us each week to exercise in their own homes to interesting music. Email Judy at [JudyKropp40@gmail.com](mailto:JudyKropp40@gmail.com) to receive the Zoom number and password.

**Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship**, 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email [modestovineyard@gmail.com](mailto: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. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: [info@imcv.org](mailto:info@imcv.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 Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the 2nd Mondy at 7p.m. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in their support group for families whose children have died at any age, from any cause. Call 209-622-6786 or email for details: [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com); <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

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

**Monday Morning Funstrummers** Beginner Ukulele Lessons. Modesto Senior Center. 10:45am to Noon. Free Scenic and Bodem.

**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 (September only meeting 9/15/14 due to Labor Day). Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email [WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com](mailto:WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com) or call 209.577.1604.

**Silver & Gold Support group** for our senior LGBT communities' unique concerns and experiences. A group that will understand and accept you where you are. For LGBT folks over 50 yrs. old. Every Monday at 3 pm to 4 pm at various locations in Modesto. Info: Steven Cullen/Facilitator. Cell/text - (559) 799-0464. Email: [stevencullen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stevencullen@sbcglobal.net)

### TUESDAYS

**Teen Tuesdays** every week from June-August, 2-5 pm., Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St. Peer Support, Games & movies. Safe space for teens to socialize, work together on projects, and learn about LGBTQ history. Each week will be a little different as we want YOU (youths) to guide the direction this group will go!" Info: Maggie Strong, Political Activist Director/ GSA Liaison, [mstrong@mopride.org](mailto:mstrong@mopride.org), 209-284-0999.

**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; email: [naacp.branch1048@gmail.com](mailto: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.

**Tuesday Evening Funstrummers** Ukulele Jam. Songbooks provided. 6pm to 8pm, 1600 Carver Rd., Donation. 209-505-3216, [www.Funstrummers.com](http://www.Funstrummers.com).

**IMCV weekly Insight Meditation** and dharma talk, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcome. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: [info@imcv.org](mailto:info@imcv.org)

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

### WEDNESDAYS

**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

## MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

**Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: SUSPENDED**, held THE FIRST WEDNESDAY 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 **KCBP 95.5 FM** Community Radio, the “Voice of the Valley” also streaming at <http://www.KCBPradio.org>

**PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING**, FIRST Thursdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750.

**MEDIA COMMITTEE** of Peace/Life Center. Meetings TBA.

**PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO**, 720 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMT RYT, [orlando@arreygue.com](mailto: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: [merced-board@gaycentralvalley.org](mailto:merced-board@gaycentralvalley.org) – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. [www.mercedlgbtcenter.org](http://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 of Gay Central Valley, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. <http://www.gaycentralvalley.org/>

**GLBT Questioning Teen Support Group** (14-19 years old). 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, College Ave. Congregational Church, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 7 – 9 pm. Safe, friendly, confidential. This is a secular, non-religious group. Info: call 524-0983.

**Transgender Support Group**, 2nd & 4th Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email [info@stanpride.org](mailto:info@stanpride.org), or [tgsupport@stanpride.org](mailto:tgsupport@stanpride.org)

**Mindful Meditation:** Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

**Compassionate Friends Groups**, 2nd Wed., 252 Magnolia, Manteca.

### THURSDAYS

**CA10 Progressive Coalition Monthly Meeting**, third Thursdays. Inclusive group of progressive activists to share resources, ideas, and information in order to support all the great organizing work happening in the Valley! Feel free to invite trusted allies. Meet-up and social hour: 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Meeting: 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Follow group on Facebook. Info: Tim Robertson, [tim@nvlf.org](mailto:tim@nvlf.org)

**Laughter Yoga**. Every other Thursday at The Bird's Nest, 422 15th St., Modesto. The dates are February & March 7th & 21st, April 4th & 18th, May 2nd & 16th. 5:30pm-6:30pm. \$15.00 per class. To register, call or text Nicole, 209-765-8006 or visit [www.nicoleottman.com](http://www.nicoleottman.com)

**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](mailto: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](http://www.StanislausGreenTeam.com)

**Third Thursday Art Walk**, Postponed until further notice. <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

**The Book Group**, First & third Thursdays. College Ave UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 – 5:00 pm. Info: [mzjurkovic@gmail.com](mailto:mzjurkovic@gmail.com)

**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 Thursdays, Cafe Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

### FRIDAYS

**Overcoming Depression:** Small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 p.m. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd., Manteca (209) 825-1220.

**Game Night and Potluck**, third Friday of each month. For 21+ only. Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto. 7 pm to 10 pm. Info: John Aguirre, (559) 280-3864; [jpamodesto@gmail.com](mailto:jpamodesto@gmail.com)

**Friday Morning Funstrummers** Band Rehearsal. Donation 9:15am to Noon. College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 209-505-3216, [www.Funstrummers.com](http://www.Funstrummers.com).

**Latino Emergency Council (LEC)** 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Dale Butler, 522-8537.

**Sierra Club:** Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, College Ave. Congregational Church, 7 pm. Info: 300-4253. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

**Mujeres Latinas**, last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

**Hispanic Leadership Council**, 3rd Fridays at noon, 1314 H St., Modesto 95354. Questions? Yamilet Valladolid, [yamiletv@hotmail.com](mailto:yamiletv@hotmail.com)

### SATURDAY

**12-Step/Buddhist Meeting** starts with a 30-minute meditation and then open discussion. Held monthly every second Saturday, 4:30 to 6:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto at the UUFSC in Sarana (small building, rear of the east parking lot). Freely-offered donations welcome. Information: 209 606 7214.

**Free Community Drum Circle** every third Saturday, 3 pm, Deva Café, 1202 J. 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](mailto: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](mailto:orkingenne@gmail.com)

**So Easy ~ So Good:** Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group. Potlucks, guest speakers, field trips, activist activities, movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email [kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com)

### 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.