



stanislaus CONNECTIONS

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Homeless: “Don’t rip our community apart.”

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Last Wednesday’s meeting of the Stanislaus Homeless Alliance in Modesto’s City Council Chambers made one thing perfectly clear: There is a huge disconnect between residents of Modesto’s Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES) and working members of the Alliance.

While board members were chiefly interested in touting the features of what they have designated as a new low-barrier homeless shelter in the Salvation Army Berberian Building on Modesto’s 9th Street, representatives and members from MOES showed up to plea for keeping the tent camp open; it’s slated to be shut down December 2.

Even the designation as “low-barrier” seems farcical to many people familiar with why homeless shelters tend to fail. Among the most common reasons people cite for avoiding shelters is the ban on pets. “MOES residents have received mixed reports about pets in the new shelter. Most knew dogs would be allowed, but only 50 or so, and they must stay in crated next to people’s beds.”*

Misty Eckerdt, the driving force behind *Bandit’s Friends*, a pet charity, estimates there are 300 dogs at MOES. Even allowing for people with more than one dog, that’s far more pets than the new shelter will accommodate. And how many people will be willing to isolate their pet in a crate while they themselves are indoors?

The new shelter also has an 8:00pm curfew. Again, that’s no one’s idea of low-barrier. While these barriers have received objections, by far the most common complaint



among many people at MOES concerns loss of community.

“We have built a community here,” said MOES resident Brad Thompkins recently, “and now they’re going to tear it apart.”

“We’ve got each other’s backs,” said a woman. “We can feel safe here.”

Many residents of MOES with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome from prison terms say the new barracks setup is too much like a jail.

“I look at those beds and being locked in and it brings back all those bad memories,” said a 52-year-old man named Gerald, who’s done time for non-violent crimes.

“You mean to tell me they’re going to take all these people, put them in a bottle, shake it up and think everything’s going to come out nice,” said “Rabbit,” a well-known resident. “They must be crazy.”

Only a few insiders know that racial ten-

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The Women’s Education and Leadership League

Planting the Seeds Leading to Success and Wellness

An interview by TOM PORTWOOD

When she was a little girl of six or seven, Alana Scott asked her mom to buy a certain toy Alana had had her eye on. When her mom told her she couldn’t purchase the item because it wasn’t in the budget, she then further explained to her daughter what that meant, how it was important to not spend more than what you brought in. She showed Alana how to balance a checkbook. From those first invaluable lessons in financial literacy, Alana’s mother had planted the seed that would one day lead to the formation of the **Women’s Education and Leadership League (WELL)**, a nonprofit agency that Ms. Scott co-founded in Modesto in 2014.

“Each person has their own story about how they came to be inspired,” Ms. Scott remarked recently. “For me, I was really inspired by my mom. Growing up, there were a couple of key experiences that brought me to want to be philanthropic and to go into finance. My mom was a special education teacher, yet she was the primary bread winner of our home. She had our house paid off in eleven years, had a rental she was able to buy at the bottom of the market, had investments, and was able to send my brother and me to



private schools because that’s something she really believed in - so that was all pretty amazing.”

Tragically, her mother passed away when Ms. Scott was only fifteen years old. But as she grew older and became highly successful in her chosen career in finance, she realized that she wanted to find ways to give back to the community, to honor her mom and the values she had instilled in her.

“I started researching how people overcame tragedies much greater than I had experienced, people who had survived the loss of their entire families – people who just didn’t survive these tragedies, but thrived afterward, found a purpose in their lives,” Ms. Scott related. It was at this point that

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John McCutcheon returns in concert to Modesto January 14

By KEN SCHROEDER

Six-time Grammy nominated folk musician John McCutcheon performs in his 18th benefit concert for the Modesto Peace/Life Center on Tuesday, January 14 at 7pm at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. The concert will be the inaugural event of the Peace/Life Center's 50th year of working for justice and peace. Johnny Cash called John McCutcheon "the most impressive instrumentalist I've ever heard." John is a master of the guitar, banjo, hammer dulcimer, piano, autoharp and fiddle. His socially and politically conscious songs inspire us, his songs about family and every-day life move us and his wicked sense of humor entertains us. Beyond entertainment, his concerts bring us together in a sense of community and shared values.

John's latest (and 40th) album, To Everyone in All the World: a Celebration of Pete Seeger, will be available at the concert. Pete said of John, "John McCutcheon is not only one of the best musicians in the USA, but also a great singer, songwriter, and song leader. And not just incidentally, he is committed to helping hard-working people everywhere to organize and push this world in a better direction."



Red Tail Ring will perform with John. The Michigan-based duo creates lush, intricate arrangements of original folk music and traditional ballads with banjo, fiddle, guitar, and close harmonies. They are fresh off their fourth full-length studio release, **Fall Away Blues**. Featuring new songwriting fused with old-time and country blues themes, the album tackles topical subjects such as gun violence and environmentalism as well as age-old questions of place and love.

John sings their praises: "I discovered the music of the amazing duo, Red Tail Ring, after my agent was swooning over them. I soon joined in the swoon. Michael Beauchamp and Laurel Premo are two of the finest musicians and loveliest young people I know. We've circled one another's worlds for a while and I finally asked them to crash my show at the Wheatlands Festival last year and the die was cast. Check out their wonderful music at their <https://redtailring.com/>

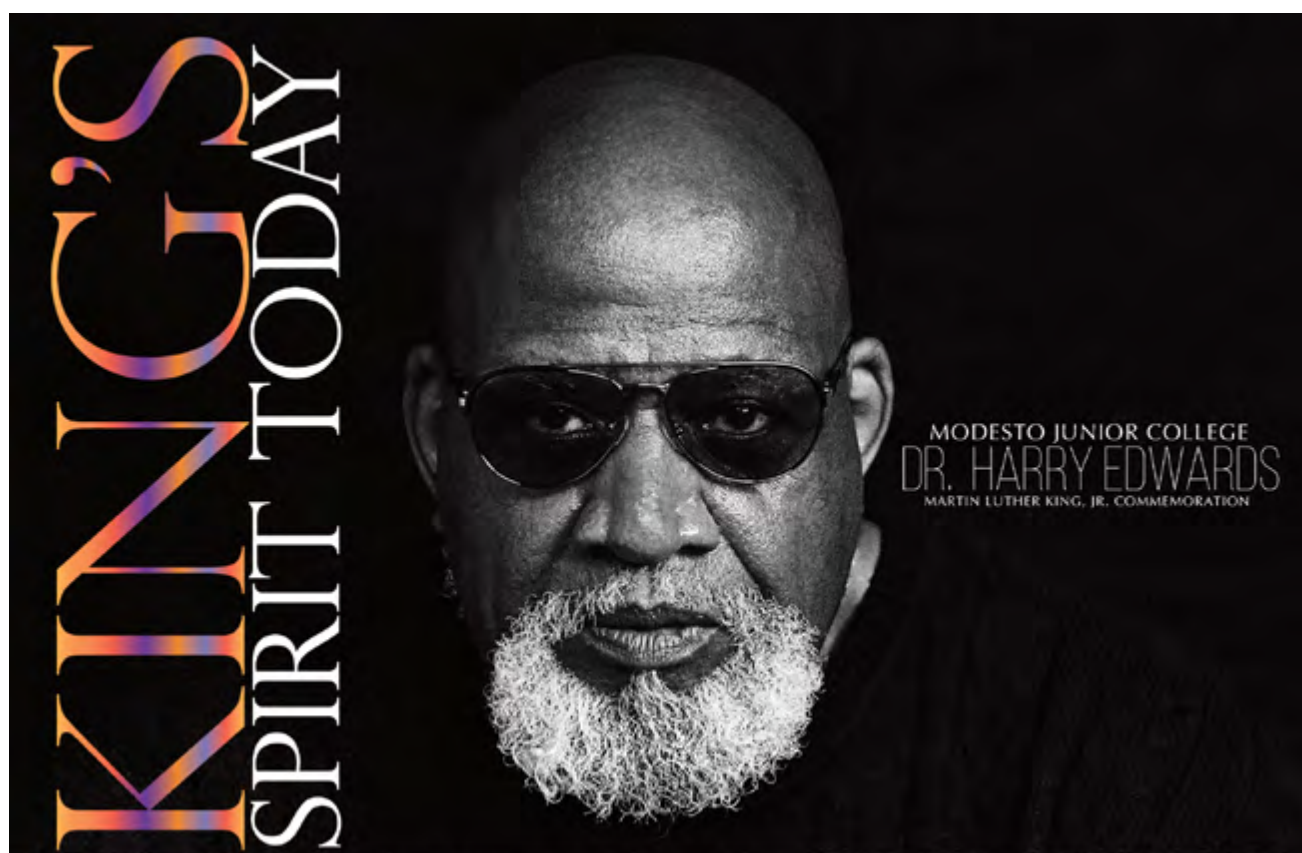
and come on out and see what we cook up together come January."

TICKETS are \$25 in advance, \$28 at the door and youth 24 and under are \$10. Online tickets sales are at <https://mccutcheonmodesto2020.brownpapertickets.com/>. Tickets can also be purchased in person by check or cash at the Modesto Church of the Brethren Church, 2301 Woodland Ave., 523-1438 and at Intrinsic Elements, 1214 J St., Modesto, 409-8510. Both ticket venues are closed Dec. 25-Jan. 1.

John says, "I offer a prayer of thanks to all of you who make my job possible and more fun that it ought to be. My gratitude is hardly confined to a single day of the year. Come on out to a concert near you sometime soon and let me thank you personally."

Information: contact Ken Schroeder 209-480-4576. Visit John's website: www.folkmusic.com.

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For more information, contact our volunteer/outreach coordinators: Susan Bower or Jocelyn Cooper at the Peace Life Center (209) 529-5750.

Why Are Americans So Confused About the Meaning of “Democratic Socialism”?

By **LAWRENCE WITTNER**

[Dr. Lawrence Wittner (<https://www.lawrencewittner.com/>) is Professor of History Emeritus at SUNY/Albany and the author of *Confronting the Bomb* (Stanford University Press).]

The meaning of democratic socialism—a mixture of political and economic democracy—should be no mystery to Americans. After all, socialist programs have been adopted in most other democratic nations. And, in fact, Americans appear happy enough with a wide range of democratic socialist institutions in the United States, including public schools, public parks, minimum wage laws, Social Security, public radio, unemployment insurance, public universities, Medicare, public libraries, the U.S. postal service, public roads, and high taxes on the wealthy.

Even so, large numbers of Americans seem remarkably confused about democratic socialism. This April, at a CNN town hall in New Hampshire, an attendee complained to Senator Bernie Sanders, a leading proponent of democratic socialism, that her father’s family left the Soviet Union, “fleeing from some of the very socialist policies that you seem eager to implement in this country.” Sanders responded: “Is it your assumption that I supported or believe in authoritarian communism that existed in the Soviet Union? I don’t. I never have, and I opposed it.” He added: “What democratic socialism means to me is we expand Medicare, we provide educational opportunity to all Americans, we rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.”

But, despite Sanders’ personal popularity and the popularity of the programs he advocates, large numbers of Americans—especially from older generations—remain uneasy about “socialism.” Not surprisingly, Donald Trump and other right-wing Republicans have seized on this to brand the Democrats as the party of socialist dictatorship.

Why does socialism—even something as innocuously labeled as democratic socialism—have this stigma?

Originally, “socialism” was a vague term, encompassing a variety of different approaches to securing greater economic equality. These included Christian socialism, utopian socialism, Marxian socialism, syndicalism, evolutionary socialism, and revolutionary socialism. For a time, Socialist parties in many countries, including the Socialist Party of America, housed these differing tendencies.

But the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led to a lasting division in the world socialist movement. The Bolsheviks, grim survivors of Russia’s centuries-old Czarist tyranny and vigorous proponents of socialist revolution, regarded the democratic, parliamentary path followed by the Socialist parties of other countries with scorn. Consequently, renaming themselves Communists, they established Communist parties in other lands and called upon true revolutionaries to join them. Many did so. As a result, the world socialist movement became divided between Socialist parties (championing multi-party elections and civil liberties) and rival Communist parties (championing revolution followed by a Communist Party

dictatorship).

Despite the clear difference between Socialist parties (promoting democratic socialism, often termed social democracy) and Communist parties (promoting the authoritarian Soviet model and Soviet interests), plus the bitter hostility that often existed between them, many Americans associated one with the other.

This confusion was enhanced, in subsequent decades, by the tendency of Communists to cling to the term “socialist.” As “socialism” had positive connotations for many people around the world, Communist leaders frequently argued that Socialists weren’t “socialist” at all, and that Communists were the only true “socialists.” Communist-led nations alone, they claimed, represented “real socialism.”

Actually, Communist and Socialist parties didn’t have much in common. The Soviet government and later unelected Communist regimes—much like fascist and other right-wing governments—became notorious as brutal tyrannies that instituted mass imprisonment, torture, and murder. In reaction, many Communists grew disillusioned, quit their parties, or sought to reform them, while popular uprisings toppled Communist dictatorships. By contrast, Socialist parties won elections repeatedly and governed numerous nations where, less dramatically, they enacted democratic socialist programs. Nowhere did these programs lead to the destruction of political democracy.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party of America gradually disintegrated. One reason for its decline was government repression during World War I and the postwar “Red Scare.” Another was that, in the 1930s, the Democratic Party adopted some of its platform (including a massive jobs program, Social Security, a wealth tax, union rights for workers, and minimum wage legislation) and absorbed most of its constituency. Rather than acknowledge the socialist roots of these popular policies, President Franklin Roosevelt and the Democrats chose to talk of a New Deal for “the common man.” This sleight of hand boosted the Democrats and further undermined the dwindling Socialist Party.

In response, conservatives—especially big business, its wealthy owners, and their political defenders—acted as if a Red revolution had arrived. Assailing Social Security, Republican Congressman Daniel Reed predicted that “the lash of the dictator will be felt.” In January 1936, at a gala dinner sponsored by the American Liberty League, a group of wealthy business and conservative leaders, Al Smith—the former New York Governor who had turned sharply against the Roosevelt administration—addressed the gathering and a national radio audience. Charging that New Dealers had enacted “the Socialist platform,” he asserted that “there can be only one capital, Washington or Moscow. There can be only one atmosphere of government, the clear, pure, fresh air of free America, or the foul breath of communistic Russia.”

During America’s Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union, conservatives frequently employed this line of attack. “If Medicare passes into law, the consequences will be dire beyond imagining,” Ronald Reagan warned a radio audience in the early 1960s. “You and I are going to spend our sunset years telling our children, and our children’s children, what it once was like in America when men were free.” Against this backdrop, most Democrats kept their distance from the word “socialism,” while much of the public simply wrote it off as meaning tanks in Moscow’s Red Square.

More recently, of course, the disappearance of the Soviet Union and most other Communist nations, rising economic inequality, the attractive model of Scandinavian social democracy, and Bernie Sanders’ Americanization of “socialism” have enhanced the popularity of “socialism”—in its democratic socialist form—in the United States.

It’s probably premature to predict that most Americans will finally recognize the democratic socialist nature of many programs they admire. But that’s certainly a possibility.

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Holiday Potluck & Song Fest Friday, Dec. 6

By **DAN ONORATO**

You like adventure in your food? A mix in your music? Good people with lively conversation? Doing a kind deed? Chances are you nodded yes to at least three. So you’re ripe—overdue probably—for a good party. And we’ve got just the thing for you—the Peace/Life Center’s annual Holiday Potluck Songfest at the Onorato’s on Friday, December 6, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

It’s a potluck, thus the adventure. But judging from past experience, the luck is a sure thing. Bring one of your favorite tasty dishes and a beverage—enough to share—and you’ll make eyes dilate, mouths salivate, and stomachs leap like Irish step dancers in a trance.

As for music, we’ll warm our wintry hearts with song, from “Christmas is Coming” to “Light One Candle,” from “Study War No More” to “This Land Is Your Land,” from “La Bamba” and “Country Road” to “Blowin’ in the Wind” and “We Shall Not Be Moved” and many more. Master guitarist and troubadour John Poat will help us soar in song as well as merriment.

Lively, congenial conversation will form the thread weaving from one to another throughout the evening, tying us more closely into the community that enriches our lives and gives us strength when we most need it.

And the good deed? We’re continuing a tradition started by retired teacher Jana Chiavetta: we ask everyone or every family to bring with them an **unwrapped** gift, a new book or a few new books for children (K-1 to K-6), that will be distributed at Wilson Elementary. Eighty-nine percent of the kids at Wilson qualify for free or reduced meals at school, and 20% come from families whose parents didn’t graduate from high school. The majority of Wilson students score below proficiency on state tests in English and math. The likelihood is most of the children don’t have many books in their homes. Thus, this extra touch at this time of year when the spirit of giving generously is so palpable.

Mark your calendar now, imagine the culinary magic you’ll add to our feast, start exercising your vocal chords, and have fun picking one or more books that will bring a happy smile and grateful heart to a child at Wilson School.

We look forward to a lively, memorable evening.

ACTION: The action is at 1532 Vernon Ave., Modesto.



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<http://thevalleycitizen.com>

Navigating the dilemmas of unarmed accompaniment on the US-Mexico border

International accompaniers must work to undo the power dynamics they rely on to increase the safety of their local partners and learn when to say “no.”

By ALISON WOOD

Accompaniment Coordinator Alison Wood (right) accompanies a volunteer taking sandwiches and drink to people who are waiting by the US port of entry to petition for asylum. (PPF)

There is only one migrant shelter in Agua Prieta, a town on the south side of the United States’ border with Mexico. The Centro de Atención al Migrante “Exodus,” or CAME, has offered hospitality to migrants for the past 19 years. With a shift in patterns of migration that led hundreds of asylum-seeking families to Agua Prieta in the first months of 2019, CAME has housed over 150 people at a time in a space built for 50 people — with a wait list of nearly 500 more. At the same time, intimidation from the organized crime group that controls the area escalated to the point of direct threats against CAME’s coordinators.

In response to the escalating threat, the humanitarian aid community in Agua Prieta decided to request international accompaniment. Sometimes called unarmed civilian protection, accompaniment is a form of peacemaking in which volunteers are physically present in situations of active or threatened violence to represent international attention, to support local peace workers, and to deescalate situations through context-appropriate actions. Accompaniment has been a key tool of organizations like Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemaker Teams and Witness for Peace since the 1980s in a wide variety of contexts around the world.

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, or PPF, was one of the groups (alongside Christian Peacemaker Teams) that was invited to accompany in Agua Prieta. PPF is a U.S.-based national network of peacemakers and activists with a 15-year history of accompaniment in Colombia. In an initial commitment for a three-month trial period — from May-July 2019 — PPF sent a total of 13 people to be present with shelter staff and asylum seekers forced to wait in Mexico by the U.S. government’s metering policies.

Learning to say no

In August, accompaniment partners met in Agua Prieta to evaluate the work in anticipation of continued accompaniment. Meeting together were five white U.S. citizens and three Mexican citizens; representing CAME, Frontera de Cristo, PPF and Christian Peacemaker Teams. After reviewing the highs and lows of the first three months of accompaniment, the shelter manager (whose name is being withheld for safety at his request) made an emphatic point: “You need to train your volunteers to say no.”

A “yes” to accompaniment started this partnership, but now our partners want us to understand that “no” is just as important. The shelter manager spoke about accompaniers and volunteers with other programs who did too much. These volunteers exhausted themselves by working too hard, set precedents for offering services that the rest of the team did not have the capacity to meet, or gave shelter guests the wrong impression the role of accompaniers in Agua Prieta.

The manager pointed out that accompaniers, who are on the border for only a short time, see no problem with burning themselves out. “Accompaniers who do too much then need to take a lot of time to rest,” the shelter manager said, and I

Guilt is a toxic reaction when we allow it to motivate our actions; it is a barrier to building relationships and being led by directly impacted populations.

filled in the ending, which he was politely speaking around: “and then they are less useful to us.” The actions of accompaniers also have implications far beyond their term of service. A “yes, we can take you to exchange money” to one traveler sets up the expectation for everyone that changing money is possible. What if the next volunteer has less energy or time?

Volunteers “need to understand the impact of their actions on the rest of the migrants and on the team,” he continued. The bottom line is clear: At the right time, saying “no” protects accompaniers, the local humanitarian aid community and the migrants.

Often a “yes” comes from a place of guilt. All accompaniers with PPF are U.S. Christians; all of us have some oppressor-identities — even though some accompaniers have other identities as well or have done more work to understand oppression and dominance. We are all susceptible to some kind of guilt: white guilt, class guilt, documentation-status guilt. Standing at the wall between the United States and Mexico — with people sleeping on the ground waiting to get into this country that lets us waltz in and out at will — how could we possibly say no to any request? Guilt, especially white guilt, says: “I have all of these resources, why shouldn’t I share them?”

I know this guilt all too well. I am a white, U.S. passport-holding, well-meaning, liberal Christian social worker. While in Agua Prieta last November — shortly after members of the U.S. military were deployed to the border to put up razor wire on the northern side of the wall — I gave my coat to a woman sleeping next to the port of entry. She did not need, want or ask for a coat. I thrust it upon her to assuage my razor-sharp guilt at what my country was doing.

Guilt is a toxic reaction when we allow it to motivate our

actions; it is a barrier to building relationships and being led by directly impacted populations. As accompaniment coordinator with PPF, I am responsible for supporting accompaniers in interrogating our first impulses. We work to understand what we have internalized that motivates us to act, and work to both feel our feelings and to de-center them in the pursuit of anti-racist partnership. We recognize that we have been socialized to believe that the Mexicans whom we accompany are less than we are. We acknowledge that we have been trained to believe that we are the smartest, the most correct and the best answer to any question. And we know that all of these things are lies.

A hard part of training accompaniers is helping them understand their location within a wider context: the chronology of ongoing border crises and the social geography of border communities committed long-term to humanitarian aid. The razor wire on the wall last November was new, but exclusion and control of movement at the border are decades old.

Our national commitment to forcibly halting migration at the border is a chronic illness. It’s the kind of illness that calls for continuous management, not an acute emergency that will blow up once and be over. The severity will ebb and flow, but without a revolution in treatment, this condition will always be with us.

The current U.S. administration chooses to deliberately exacerbate the situation at the border and then to paint “flare-ups” as stand-alone emergencies rather than as part of a larger picture. We are driven from crisis to crisis with no contextual understanding. “This is what that young man in El Paso was about,” said one of our partners in Agua Prieta. She was speaking about the shooting in El Paso on Aug. 3, an act of horrifying violence clearly motivated by crisis rhetoric against immigrants.

Accompaniers sometimes are driven to respond to crisis. But in building an accompaniment partnership, we don’t want to just run to the fire. We have to understand that the circumstances we have been invited into have been under construction since long before we arrived and will continue without us after accompaniers leave.

In this panorama, “no” is often the only rational answer.

Utilizing power dynamics we don’t support

Foundational to accompaniment work is our commitment to following the lead of local partners. As U.S. citizens we are addicted to taking control in international situations. The dynamics of power in this work are jagged and fragile. We deliberately use language meant to equalize, to point away from the inequalities. Here are some words we try to avoid: help, protect and secure. And these are words we move toward: walk alongside, serve, accompany and be with. The intention here is part of an effort to acknowledge in our language that any power we bring into this situation is due

continued next page

Dilemmas

continued

to what we embody, not what we do.

We trust power dynamics we don't support in order to operate.

Accompaniers represent a source of power. When we send an 80-year-old white woman with a U.S. passport to walk alongside asylum seekers at the border wall, we are deliberately sending her as an emblem of U.S. imperialism, white supremacy and U.S. exceptionalism. At the same time that I encourage that woman in training to recognize and try to move away from the power of her whiteness, I am using her to say to organized crime, "the power of whiteness is paying attention to what you do here." It is an impossible balance. We are putting her whiteness — as well as mine, and the

A hard part of training accompaniers is helping them understand their location within a wider context: the chronology of ongoing border crises and the social geography of border communities committed long-term to humanitarian aid.

power that it all represents — at the service of Mexicans from Guerrero, who U.S. whiteness is working hard to exclude. Accompaniers of color are perceived differently, but still represent the United States by virtue of the passports they hold.

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole — saying, "cool new wheels," to compliment your friend's new car.

Accompaniers show up as a synecdoche for the whole of the United States, in all of its messy, militaristic, imperialist, manipulative might. In Colombia, this is why the program works: A pair of young people with U.S. passports, spending a week in a small town in the Colombian state of Urabá, serves as an indication to armed actors (including the Colombian state) that the United States is paying attention to what happens there. In their individual bodies, part of a citizenry, accompaniers represent the whole.

In Agua Prieta, there is a different dynamic at play. We understand it like this: The organized crime (cartel) that controls the area of Agua Prieta is very good at what they do. And what they do is operate quietly enough to not be bothered by the U.S. border enforcement apparatus as the cartel moves drugs north across the border. Violence in Agua Prieta is constant and contained. The cartel has unquestionable control. Any challenge to that control is dealt with swiftly and fatally. Anything that would draw attention of U.S. authorities to the cartel's activities is not allowed — it is dealt with like any challenge.

Violence against U.S. citizens in Agua Prieta would, without a doubt, draw the attention of U.S. border enforcement to the area — attention the cartel does not want. This, then, keeps U.S. citizens safer than local volunteers in humanitarian aid work supporting asylum seekers. The security of volunteers from the United States is increased, we believe, by their short tenure in Agua Prieta (a month is standard), taking volunteers who have drawn the cartel's attention out of their reach. At the same time, the brightly colored vests that accompaniers wear, and the sticker-covered car they drive, indicates that accompaniers belong to a church that is beyond the cartel's area of control.

We rely on the might of the U.S. border enforcement apparatus, and the certainty that violence toward accompaniers would draw the attention of the Border Patrol — which the cartel specifically wants to avoid — to protect accompaniers from cartel violence and to extend that shadow of protection to our local partners.

We trust power dynamics we don't support in order to operate. We use the power dynamics we are actively working to undo — the supremacy of whiteness, U.S. exceptionalism, the vision of the United States as moral authority and enforcer to the globe — in order to achieve our goal of nonviolence.

Is this an example of the master's tools dismantling the master's house or are we just buying time while the real work of nonviolence gets done?

Is accompaniment a way to change the world, or just a band-aid to ensure survival until the world changes?

I honestly don't know.

A renewed yes

I do know that accompaniment in Agua Prieta has a positive impact, hearing it directly from the partners assembled to evaluate the program in August.

The shelter manager who is our primary partner feels safer with accompaniers present, saying, "they have been 100 percent helpful."

The labor of accompaniers, who have taken on some of the

most visible volunteer tasks, means that the shelter manager can work from a secure location — materially increasing his security, as well as his sense of safety. Accompaniment is achieving its purpose in Agua Prieta.

Based on feedback from CAME staff and volunteers, and their continuing request for international presence, PPF has

We will continue to remind ourselves and the accompaniers we train that — while association with the empire we represent is bringing some small measure of increased safety to our partners in Agua Prieta — the very empire we rely on for personal security had and has an enormous role in the violence our neighbors are running from.

said "yes" again — committing to accompaniment in Agua Prieta into 2020. As we move forward with a renewed yes, understanding when and why we need to say no becomes even more important. It would be too easy to buy into our own hype: to begin to believe that accompaniers are, by our own hands, making the situation safer.

Instead, we will continue to remind ourselves and the accompaniers we train that — while association with the empire we represent is bringing some small measure of increased safety to our partners in Agua Prieta — the very empire we rely on for personal security had and has an enormous role in the violence our neighbors are running from. Rather than allowing our guilt to motivate us, we will recognize our place in the wider humanitarian aid community and say "no" as our partners direct.

This story was produced by Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Alison Wood is a facilitator, activist and educator rooted in Tucson, Arizona, on occupied Tohono O'odham land. Alison works as the Accompaniment Coordinator for Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and is engaged in justice and accompaniment work alongside migrants and asylum seekers, other white people building anti-racism practice, and young adults exploring the world through volunteer service.

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KCBP was once a dream. Its vision was exciting, but its realization felt daunting. Could our small grassroots organization pull off such a huge endeavor? The amazing answer you already know: YES! KCBP Community Radio, 95.5 FM is on air, loud and clear, 24/7. This wouldn't have happened without the tenacious commitment and hard work of a small group of volunteers. Among them are Sue Bower and Pegasus, who, sadly for us, have moved out of state. At the top of the list are three extraordinarily dedicated people: Jim Costello, Sandy Graham, and Jocelyn Cooper. As we approach the Peace/Life Center's 50th anniversary in 2020, we celebrated their monumental achievement at our Harvest Gathering in early November. Reading the tributes to each of them, you can join us in honoring them as KCBP's first Pioneers.

— John Frailing & Dan Onorato



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Jim's Journey

By JOHN FRAILING

A year ago, we had no radio station and no location for a tower. But we had a deadline! The signal had to be on the air by August or we would lose the FCC license that had been a 10-year struggle to obtain. There was only one man who could fix the problem.

Jim Costello cruised the hills above Patterson.

Looking for landowners, finding other towers, knocking on doors, or calling folks who might know where a tower could be located. He found an existing tower, but it was prohibitively expensive. The hill with the best reception had an owner with legal problems. Other landowners did not return his calls, or just said: "No."

But Jim's luck turned... twice. First, he found the Azevedo family. He had been a Physicians Assistant (PA) for their grandchildren, and so he was trusted. And he found Dale Grewal in Westley. The Azevedos agreed to rent to the Modesto Peace/Life Center a spot among their cows on the top of their hill. A hill so steep, Jim's car barely made it up that muddy slope. It was a start!

But Jim knew it would be past the FCC deadline before the land could be cleared and a tower built. Enter Mr. Grewal who agreed to rent a space for a temporary tower at his home in Westley. Something that could be built fast and easily; a short tower that would allow the station to get on the air in time. Jim called out work crews*, and Ray's Radio. A tower was installed. And Jim had sagaciously hired Michael Brown from Portland, a radio engineer who had a soft spot for non-profits. Speaking a language that was almost unintelligible (radioese), Michael guided Jim in the purchase of equipment, set up the equipment, and before the deadline, KCBP, was on the air. [It had been streaming online thanks to Sandy Graham.]

But we needed to get to the top of the hill. The lines from TID had to be run for over a mile. The cost was about \$45,000, just to get power to the hill. The land needed to be cleared for fire safety. The real tower had to be built but first a deep cement pad needed to be laid. Ray's crews worked long hours. A building installed with AC units had to be purchased and equipped. Surveyors hired to confirm the proper installation and antenna alignment. Then Jim arranged for the sign-off of the fire inspector, the County, and the transfer from Westley to the top of the hill.

Jim had succeeded. The radio signal reached all of Stanislaus County, east to Sonora, south to Merced, and North to Stockton. Thanks to Jim Costello, Stanislaus County has KCBP 95.5!

Ed. Note: work crews included John Frailing, Dan Onorato and Jim's bother-in-law, Tim Cole.



Jocelyn Cooper, Board President, KCBP's Development Director

By DAN ONORATO

Jocelyn Cooper is a quiet whirlwind. She's soft spoken and friendly, she listens intently, she doesn't get flustered when obstacles arise, and she's always on the go, helping somebody or one of the many organizations she's part of. We in the Modesto Peace/Life Center are very fortunate to have her as our Board President and KCBP's Development Director.

In her professional life with companies like PacBell and AT&T, she managed various administrative groups like salesforce coordination and human resources, with the constant goal of getting better results. In her role with HR she was responsible for letting people go. When yearly layoffs became a pattern at AT&T, that task became painful: some were good, long-time employees, some were her friends. She was a boss, but one with heart. She did the best she could for them. Anticipating that she herself might soon be one of those statistics, she retired and moved from the Bay Area to Modesto in 2007.

Being retired for Jocelyn means having the time and opportunity to work with others for the betterment of all. Perhaps her biggest joy in life is visiting and helping out her two daughters (in Lathrop, CA and Birmingham, AL) and seeing her five grandchildren grow. When not doing that she volunteers her time. She's been or still is a part of a number of groups: Organizing for America (that worked to get Obama elected President); the Democratic Central Committee (as a delegate); the Stanislaus African American Club (as VP); various candidates' campaigns; the NAACP; the West Modesto Community Collaborative (Chairperson); the Dr. Parker Committee that has protested the high rate of suspension and expulsions of African American students in Modesto's schools, and works to get parents to become leaders and role models for the children; Project We Care for You that works with getting high school Black Student Union Club members to set up debate teams; the National Black Women's Coalition; and last, but hardly least, the Modesto Peace/Life Center and KCBP Radio.

Why'd you choose to commit so much of your time and energy to the Peace/Life Center and KCBP? I asked Jocelyn. "Because I liked the people, from the start. They were friendly, welcoming, and open. And I like helping people."

continued next page

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Jocelyn Cooper continued

she added. “Doing good for others gives me energy.” Judging by her energy, she’s doing a lot of good.

Jocelyn’s main focus for the Center and the radio station is on outreach—creating bonds with other groups to form networks that can be more effective in working to serve the common good. This takes the form of reaching out to attract new volunteers. One of those volunteers helped out with the recent fundraiser Jocelyn organized, the Golden State Warrior Wheelchair Basketball Team playing against locals (I should say “with” locals, kind of the way a cat plays with a captive mouse, but much kinder. Saydie Alvarez helped keep score, and then she won the Wheelchair Warrior team’s signed basketball in the auction. I’m wondering, was that one of Jocelyn’s strategies to keep good volunteers? Later this month Jocelyn will meet with volunteers who already have some radio experience to discuss how they might be of most help.

Another way Jocelyn works on outreach is by getting Center volunteers to work on other groups’ projects. Examples are Love Modesto, Pride, and a Tea Party at St. Paul’s Episcopal church. This involvement helps create connections that build mutually useful bonds.

KCBP radio’s broadcasting to well over a million potential listeners is a major way to extend the Center’s vision for a better world. That’s one of the reasons Jocelyn is so happy and committed to work on the radio leadership. “Radio,” she says with uplift in her voice, “is an important way for people to expand their knowledge of what’s going on in their own community, especially between different cultures and groups. This will lead to better relationships among diverse groups and more unity in the community.”

As Development Director Jocelyn also is working on grants, underwriting, and fundraising. All of these will help KCBP raise money to pay for our monthly expenses of at least \$2,000. Have you done this before? I wondered. “No,” Jocelyn readily answers, “but I love to learn new things. Everything new to me is a challenge. And if I can help make something happen, it makes me enjoy life! And I love meeting new people!”

Jocelyn, for your eagerness to take on new challenges, meet new people, and constantly learn new things; for your determination to get more people involved in KCBP and the Peace/Life Center; and for your commitment to bringing diverse people and groups together, we thank you. And for your caring, selfless, generous, and kind spirit we honor you as one of KCBP’s three pioneers. Congratulations!

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Sandy Graham, KCBP Program Director

By **DAN ONORATO**

When we turn our FM dial to KCBP 95.5 FM what we hear is due to the hard work and dedication of KCBP’s Program Director, Sandy Graham. Sandy says she can get along on 4 hours sleep a night, but sometimes gets more. When you hear all she does in a day, you understand why she gets more only sometimes. It seems she likes being busy, especially with work that matters. And being the innovator and director of KCBP’s programming matters to her a lot.

Sandy also has a full-time job with the Office of Clients’ Rights that provides free legal advocacy for disabled people, many of them participants in the programs of Valley Mountain Regional Center. Sandy works in outreach, training, and the initial stages of legal support for her clients.

That’s her 40-hour a week work. She loves helping disabled people, but since she was a little girl radio has run deep in her veins. When I interviewed her at her office, she told me, half giggling with delight, how she gathered her favorite toys in front of her and played radio. One toy became a headset, another a microphone. And she became her favorite DJ. That fascination has stayed with her all her life.

At Turlock High School she volunteered to work on the school radio station KBDC, then learned more at MJC’s campus station. She got her first radio job at Modesto’s AM 1360, KCSH Radio, and over time gained more knowledge and experience at other local stations. At Rock 104.1 she worked nights as the public service director, produced commercials and created a community Round Table discussion program. After she left Rock 104, she worked with her husband at that time to start a low power FM station where she developed her skills with online streaming. A few years later, when Leng Nou, the Center’s President, told her about our radio project, she eagerly volunteered to help with programming. I can say with no exaggeration that had Sandy not offered her expertise, we would not be hearing KCBP on air today.

In Sandy’s “off” time—at night after her paid job and on part of her weekends—Sandy focuses on her many tasks as Program Director.

- Check out www.KCBPradio.org, the lively website Sandy designed that streams our on-air programming. On your computer or cell phone go to the website to find out what’s playing and to learn the name of the song or the band that’s playing. Sandy keeps the website updated with headlines of the Center’s upcoming events and a KCBP calendar of regular and new shows.

- Sandy trains volunteers on the basics of using our station’s editing software to create content like the community calendar upcoming events, Public Service Announcements, and “live assists,” where the volunteers announce: “This is KCBP, your community radio station, a project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center. We’re new, so tell us what you think.” Sandy especially enjoys training and helping the volunteers learn new skills. She glowed as she told me about Felton Daniels. He’d come to the Center with an idea for a program, but he knew nothing about how to produce it. Slowly and patiently Sandy guided him, and gradually he learned, and now Felton is a proud producer of his own program on air.

- If there’s a technical glitch with the broadcast software, Sandy’s the magician who fixes it.



(L-R); Leng Nou, Jocelyn Cooper, Jim Costello, Sandy Graham

- Sandy spends hours listening to the sounds of local bands and selecting what goes on air. KCBP’s goal is to air mostly local programming, and already, Sandy told me, 75% of the music is local. She adds proudly, “You hear this music on no other station. Only KCBP!”

- Sandy also submits our Public File with the Federal Communications Commission. This is a regular requirement that explains what community issues KCBP programs have covered each month. For some stellar examples of local talk-programs KCBP offers, check out “Arts of the San Joaquin Valley,” “The Peril and the Promise,” and “Women of the Valley.”

Sandy enjoys meeting creative people and local bands and especially appreciates being involved in a project that has the possibility to make an impact in people’s lives. Good programs featuring local talent in the arts and informative programs that highlight local issues and upcoming events can help people connect with their community. The end result is a better, more engaged community. “I do this,” Sandy told me, “because I’m passionate about it.” “It’s important,” she continued, “for the community to support this project.”

Sandy, for your passionate dedication, your creative imagination, your inspiring teaching of our volunteers, and your hard work each day, week after week, we thank you. W.C. Fields is well known for his comment, “Keep your eyes on the ball.” Sandy, for keeping your eyes on the KCBP ball to extend the Center’s vision of a more interconnected, caring, engaged community and a more sustainable future, we honor you as one of KCBP’s three pioneers. Congratulations!

SAVE THE DATE: MoSt hosts 8th Annual Poetry Festival

The Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt) will host its 8th Annual Poetry Festival on Saturday February 1, 2020 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, facilitated by two of our region's outstanding poets – former Fresno Poet Laureate Lee Herrick, and Camille Norton, who has taught at the University of the Pacific in Stockton.

The festival features a poetry contest open to attendees of the day-long workshop. The 2020 contest categories include:

- The Graceful Stumble
- Handling Earth with Care
- Notre Dame
- Following a Thread

Flyer and registration forms for the festival and contest

will soon be available on the MoSt website (www.mostpoetry.org). **Contest deadline is January 11, 2020.** Registration fees (\$35, \$30 for MoST members, or \$10 for high school/college students, include the contest, morning and afternoon workshops, a delicious luncheon, an author's table, and fellowship with poets and poetry aficionados from throughout Northern California.

Submit entries **by mail** to the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center, PO Box 578940, Modesto, California, 95357; info@mostpoetry.org



rapunzel

my mother said **they took my son** *a blue-eyed blonde* she would die and
they said that *he was young enough for* she begged my father **he needed**
a new family to climb the wall **a shot** *redistribution* for she must have rampion
i never saw him again

mid-theft **they put me in a cell** *i had to work* a witch stepped from the shadows
my children were led away *for the komandant* who claimed the unborn child
an agent raped me *his wife hated me for* i was relinquished at birth and **he said**
i must bear his child raised in a cottage that crawled with toads **if i screamed**
she beat me swirling steam from the cauldron **worse would follow**
he leers billowing up and **i don't know where** *heaven help me*
trickling down **they took my children**

my daughter was eight when the moon began to influence my body
i was sent to germany **when we tried to get back** the witch locked me in a tower
relocated **to america** without stairs or door *against my will*
we'd been deported twice a day she climbs *they said* **everything was very bad**
deposits food and water *many were shot* **blood everywhere** on the floor
disease **and hunger** she climbs back down *others disappeared*
the river was high i draw up my hair *now* **we were desperate**
i watch the clouds *exterminated* **the boat capsized** the birds *my god*
she couldn't swim regard me with pity

i sit near the window and **i thought we'd get across** *the border meant safety but*
listen **they caught us** *on the road* roosters crow and
they sent us back *my son was conscripted and then* at night an owl calls
they killed him *shot for refusing to fight* cold stars glitter **at point blank range**
i weep and sometimes i dream **my daughters dare not go out** *shells rain down*
two children play and **they're hungry** *the wounded are everywhere*
a man without eyes stumbles forth **we have no food** *we have lost* the braid
oh my son *all hope* falls writhing to the ground

This braided poem is a synthesis of three narratives: in normal typeface, my retelling of an old fairy tale; in *italics*, Eastern European women during the Nazi occupation of the 1930s and 40s; and in **bold**, four Central American women at the United States of America's southern border.

– Linda Scheller

Social Plans*

While planning her next
vacation in the Caribbean
She wonders:
“Why so many social plans?”

Picking the right dresses and hats
is always a problem
She wonders:
“Why are those problems mine?”

A moment of frustration brings
a WhatsApp message to her girlfriends
She wonders:
“Why is the message always so dark?”

Outside
the lumpen, the dark, are invading the city
vacationing in tents on the main boulevard.

Their message is about lack
lack of basic food and housing
lack of basic empathy and love.

The problems are theirs and ours;
they are just asking for better social plans.

–Sandra García Sanborn

*“Social Plans” refers to a massive two-day protest in front of the Ministerio de Desarrollo Social/Ministry of Social Development organized by social organizations in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 9/4-5/19, because of extreme neoliberal measures which caused inflation and the doubling of unemployment. Inspiration for this poem was motivated by a woman being interviewed on local TV who complained about “social plans” just before explaining she was planning her next vacation.

A Poet Leads*

The poet has risen
And because of that
We are better
And because of that
There is no more shame
And the black ocean
Is beauty and a forward path.

The poet has risen
Yes, terror and fear are behind
The dream and the hope
Of the slave
Are alive.

–Sandra García Sanborn

*A response to “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou.

From: *A Folio for the Dark*

Camille Norton, Sixteen Rivers Press, 2019



Camille Norton's *A Folio for the Dark* was published by Sixteen Rivers Press in 2019. She is also the author of *Corruption*, a National Poetry Series winner, published by Harper Perennial in 2005. She grew up near Philadelphia, studied in Boston, and is a Professor of English at University of the Pacific, in Stockton, California. She has worked collaboratively with artists and composers since the early 1990s.



BREATH

The poem she wanted was waiting for the next breath.
She wanted to push it like a girl on a swing.
Into the line and out again,
into the line, out into

switchgrass rippling across a prairie.

How long would it wait, she wondered?
Would it wait longer than the gasp between lightning and
thunder?
How long would it hold its breath in defiance of her?

She decided to make a study of it,
of breath that originates in the mind.
Not in the mind, exactly, but in the brain's
beautiful pith, in the long and narrow
starry shadows of the medulla.

Inside the starry shadows are two kinds of breath:
voluntary and involuntary, like armies and lovers.
There is the breath one masters.
And the breath one is mastered by.

But which was the breath that would master the poem?
And how would she know it when it arrived?

Would be a minstrel breath out of Kansas,
climbing out of her fiddle?
Or the strict churchy music of childhood
lifting up from a steeple into the trees,
some long ago meter that used to mean
you'd go to heaven if you were good.

(Breath/2)

If she was good, why couldn't she breathe?
If she could breathe, the poem would go to heaven
the way a girl on a swing heaves away from the earth with
a force.

When it came finally, the breath was sweet and dry
as the desert in spring.
The poem sounded like *shush, shush, shush*.
Then the clatter of wind and something half-heard,
like laughter and an old-timey voice

singing: *Something's wrong with Miss Nancy.*
She won't say and I can't guess.
Dying. Probably for lack of a prairie.
Or is it breath?

THE BLACK DOG

My father kept a black dog all his life.
Black Shuck, he called him, or Hairy Jack.
There were many dogs and they were the same dog:
two feet high at the withers and hungry-looking.

The dog's eyes glowed in the dark
like spots on the earth where lightning strikes.
Graven, those eyes, spooked and loyal,
the eyes of a dog who belongs to a king.

The look of the dog was the very look of my father
when he didn't know I saw him--
when he was alone with himself, so to speak,
in the presence of others, with the hound at his knee
leaning close. It was love. I could see it,
plain as glass between the pair of them.

I must have felt jealous of the black dog.
I must have wanted to become my father's black dog
because the way I figured it was this:
the dog was my father's familiar and I was not.
My father trusted the dog with his most tender confidences.
When my father sat alone in his room drinking god-knows-what,
he was never really alone.
He had the dog with him,
waiting for the signal for the hunt or for sleep.

There's nothing for the hunt like a black dog,
and there's nothing for sleep like the black dog
with his muzzle on your muzzle.

My father went hunting only once, when I was three.
He brought back a hare and I cried
from the shock of the animal
bleeding out on the table,
and if we ate it
I do not remember.

Ever after the gun stood in the closet like a ghost
until my brother came and took it away.

When my father lay dying, the black dog lay stock-still beside him,
both of them dreaming the same dream of the black dog.

In the dream, my father followed the black dog home
down a little lane to his own father's house.
Oh, the contours and boney landscape of that dog—
Dad's own creature. He held fast to his dog all winter
in the cold, boney house where my grandfather kept
his own black dog in the bed instead of a wife.

Grandfather loved his dog as much as a son.
My father loved his dog as much as a daughter.
More than a son, more than a daughter,
if I read that dream like a book.

My father kept a black dog all his life.
There were many dogs and they were the same dog.

Exploring the South Bay by Train, Bus, and Bicycle

By ELAINE GORMAN and PAUL PLATHE

Up at 5 AM, I ate a quick breakfast, then filled my day pack with needed items. I left home near Modesto at 6 AM, giving me almost ninety minutes to drive 20 miles to catch the 7:24 ACE commuter train in Manteca/Lathrop. A couple of miles from home, I realized that I had forgotten my folder containing directions, itinerary, and notes. I pulled a U-y and headed back home, retrieved the folder, and was relieved that the maneuver only took 10 minutes, still giving me over an hour to get to the station.

Two weeks prior, I had received an email from hiking pal, Paul Plathe, outlining his idea for this trip to San Jose and Los Gatos. We had been communicating about destinations near the Central Valley that were accessible by public transportation. This day-long trip seemed easy and fun and would give me the experience of traveling sans automobile.

When I reached the Highway 99 on-ramp in Salida, my heart sank. In the pre-dawn dark, all I could see in the north-bound lanes were red taillights in a sea of near-motionless vehicles. It took me almost 15 min. to crawl down the ramp. I called Paul in a panic, explained the traffic situation and warned him that I may not make the train (Paul was boarding the train in Stockton). With only 40 minutes left to get to the station, I decided to get off 99, and to drive the back roads to Manteca.

After I reached the station parking lot with 5 min. to spare, I grabbed my bike out of the back of the car and rode it to the ticket kiosk. I was happy to show my driver's license to get the senior discount — only \$13 for a roundtrip ticket to San Jose! On board, I located Paul. Since this was the final ACE train of the morning, it was fairly empty, with plenty of space in the bike rack.

During the nearly 2-hour train ride, I gazed out the windows at the tawny hills of the Altamont, the yellowing leaves of the trees in Niles Canyon, and the salt pyramids along the Bay. De-boarding in San Jose, we grabbed cups of coffee, then headed to another set of tracks to catch the VTA light rail to Campbell and transfer to a VTA bus going to Los Gatos. Paul showed me how to load the bikes (easy!) on the front of the bus and we had a short ride to downtown Los Gatos.

After a yummy brunch at the Los Gatos Cafe, we found the Los Gatos Creek bike trail, and headed north. We had a leisurely ride, stopping periodically to admire the Creek, greet Canada Geese, and read interpretive signs. Paul would occasionally check his GPS for our location. After a quick side trip to Campbell to check out the historic Ainsley House, we rode on quiet streets for a few miles.

Via Willow St., we continued our bike adventure on the Guadalupe Creek Trail, traveling through the center of San Jose. We passed by several over-flowing homeless encampments. We rode under freeway overpasses. The San Jose Airport hummed noisily just to the west of the trail. For the last few miles to the station near Levi's Stadium, we enjoyed the quiet and solitude along Guadalupe Creek.

We arrived at the Great America ACE station in time to catch the first afternoon northeast bound ACE train, at 3:45



PM. It was crowded with commuters. I took out some reading material and settled in for the ride back to Manteca. As the sun sank toward the horizon in my rearview mirror as I headed home, my leg muscles were pleasantly tired from the 20-mile mostly flat (400 feet of elevation loss) bike ride.

Thanks to Paul for researching this fun and interesting outing.

Notes:

- Check ACE, VTA, and bus schedules online prior to planning your trip.
- Use your smartphone to locate cafes, parks, local attractions, and GPS.
- You can do this outing from the Sacramento area using Amtrak's Capitol Corridor trains.
- Keep in mind that most buses can carry only 2 bikes.
- Clipper cards can be used for local transportation in the Bay Area, send away for a senior card if applicable.

It is possible to take MAX (Modesto Area Express) bus to ACE in Lathrop. <http://www.modestoareaexpress.com/314/Bus-Schedule-MAX-to-ACE>

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Homeless

from page 1

sions flared early on when MOES was getting established, but respected resident peace makers and smart police officers calmed things down. Now, MOES residents have almost unanimous respect and appreciation for law enforcement efforts at the encampment. Modesto Police Sergeant Mike Hammond is especially highly-regarded and many members of the Rank Security force have also gained the approval of a population ordinarily highly distrustful of anyone with a badge.

For people desocialized by years on the streets, establishing community friendships and values has been the chief benefit from living at MOES. Many residents slept two or three days straight after first arriving, making up the deficit from sleep deprivation brought on by constant anxiety. Most homeless people fear predators, law enforcement, and angry citizens. MOES gave them a place of their own among peers who valued the relative safety of a tent and neighbors. "We have each others' backs" became a community ethic.

Now, with winter coming on and rental prices rising in anticipation of coming rent controls, hundreds of people at MOES are facing eviction from a camp that has been their only home for months. With approximately 450 MOES residents and a little over 200 new beds, the numbers simply don't work, even if the shelter were to accommodate enough pets.

For people who entered MOES with a deep distrust of authority and gradually came to appreciate law enforcement and community values, the uprooting of their lives once again is a cruel blow that confirms their early suspicions—Modesto's claim to be a "City of Great Neighbors" doesn't include the unfortunate poor.

*An earlier version of this story reported the dogs would have to stay outside. We have since received updated information. We will always make corrections as we get them.

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GREEN TIPS: “What do Sabra Hummus, Recycling in Virginia, a synagogue in Long Island, and saving the world all have in common?!”

Submitted by **TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL**

(Taken from a *Drash* (sermon) written and delivered to Congregation Beth Shalom in Modesto by Rabbi Shalom Bochner.)

Once in a while you read an article that is just so hopeful and so bizarre that you have to tell others about it. Upon checking the news from Israel Modesto's Rabbi Shalom Bochner of Congregation Beth Shalom came upon such an article on *The Times of Israel* website: “Sabra hummus founder says plastic is the perfect way to upcycle waste” By Melanie Lidman.

The article tells that Yehuda Pearl, Rabbi Emeritus of Anshei Shalom Synagogue on Long Island, New York, who introduced the United States to hummus, is now looking to bring his business acumen to his newest venture, turning trash into a sustainable plastic-like material.

“The United Nations Environment Program estimates that every year the world produces about 11.2 billion tons of solid waste. Decomposing organic material in landfills produce five percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Roughly half is methane, which is 21 times as potent for global warming as carbon dioxide, according to the World Bank. For every ton of material produced, UBQ says, it prevents between three and 30 tons of CO₂ from being created by keeping waste out of landfills.”

“I see ideas in many areas,” said Rabbi Pearl, “and if they seem...viable, I do my best to bring them to life. I did that with hummus when everyone didn't understand that hummus could be a very interesting and ubiquitous food in America. I did it with the current product I'm working with [UBQ “plastics”], and I did it in synagogue as well,” he adds, building a congregation of 7 families to more than 300.

Pearl, the founder of Sabra Hummus, is now the co-founder and honorary chairman of UBQ Materials, a company that has patented a process for breaking down regular household waste, including dirty diapers, paper, plastic, cardboard, and all food scraps.

“We don't recycle plastic, we convert the residual material that would have gone to a landfill,” said Pearl. The process takes unsorted household waste, such as chicken bones, pineapples, tomatoes, and plastic cartons, which end up being about 80% organic matter and 20% plastic. Although there are variations in diet and lifestyle, this rate is more or less consistent across industrialized countries, meaning that UBQ's process will work in many different countries, said Pearl.” At the end of their lifecycle, UBQ materials can be recycled in regular plastic recycling plants, and they can go through the UBQ process up to 6 or 7 times without losing structural integrity.

Using the example of dirty diapers, *The Times of Israel* article points out that Israel, which produces a major supply of so called “disposable diapers,” is reported by the Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection to comprise 6% of Israel's waste by weight and heretofore thought to be impossible to recycle. UBQ deconstructs dirty diapers into separate molecules of cotton, fibers, plastic and organic matter, which are reassembled to create a plastic-like pellet, called a bio-based thermoplastic usable by plastics factories to manufacture any type of product they already create.

“One of the benefits to UBQ's business model is that their raw material is free. In the future, municipalities might even pay UBQ to dispose of their trash, rather than it going to the landfill, but for now, UBQ is accepting waste without payment. UBQ does separate glass and metal from the waste that



UBQ Materials has developed a technology that takes unsorted household waste – from banana peels to dirty diapers to used yogurt containers and cardboard – and converts it into a bio-based thermoplastic – a plastic substitute (Photo: UBQ).

arrives at their factory, and most municipalities already separate these materials from landfill-bound waste for resale and recycling.

Rabbi Pearl's [new process] “is truly Tikkun Olam, fixing and healing the world,” points out Rabbi Shalom, “which is a foundational aspect of Judaism.” As the article explains: “Environmental activists have been desperate for a solution to the overwhelming problem of solid waste for decades.”

Rabbi Shalom is happy to announce that the project for collecting household garbage and turning it into re-usable and recyclable plastic will start in suburban Richmond, Virginia where his father and step-mother live.

“Pearl said he hopes that the recycling bins in Virginia are just the beginning of the story, and that this type of trash-cum-plastic will become as ubiquitous as the hummus now found in approximately 1 in 4 American refrigerators.... [which] we can make [into] UBQ material at the end of its cycle, too,” he said.

So from a New York congregational rabbi came a revolution in American food using an Israeli style of a middle eastern staple, and now a possible revolution in making plastic from garbage, with its test-market in Richmond, VA, completing a connection to Modesto between hummus, saving the world, and Richmond, Virginia, concludes Rabbi Shalom.

Note: Much of the content above was quoted from *The Times of Israel* article: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/sabra-hummus-founder-says-plastic-is-the-perfect-way-to-upcycle-waste/>

Visit UBQ at <http://www.ubqmaterials.com/>

The Women's Education and Leadership League

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she and her business partner decided the moment had arrived for a non-profit dedicated to providing “women with the tools they need to take charge of their lives, businesses, and communities.” As a seasoned financial professional, Ms. Scott had seen all too often that many women were at a disadvantage compared to men when it came to accessing financial knowledge or training.

Indeed, the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center reported in 2017 that, while financial illiteracy is widespread, there exists “a large and persistent gender difference” regarding financial literacy. The Center goes on to state that “because women face unique challenges, they need financial knowledge in order to build a financially secure future. Women's distinct challenges arise from life expectancies that a longer than men's, lower lifetime income than men, and career interruptions due to child-rearing.”

From its inception, **WELL** has addressed this disparity with a vigorous inquiry-based educational curriculum, started initially as a component of Sierra Vista's First Step program, but since expanded to an online version called **Living WELL**. A third version of the curriculum has been developed for the Stanislaus Office of Education.

The **WELL** curriculum is built upon three cornerstones – **Financial Wellness, Physical Wellness, and Emotional Wellness**. “We want to reach the women who really need this, who might be on the verge of homelessness, or overcoming tragedy – women who could really benefit by starting to

change their lives around with the help of this curriculum,” Ms. Scott noted. “We want women to become the CFO of their lives, to create budgets and stick to them, to reduce expenses,” she explained. “We want them to create a personal mission statement so that even if they have a bad day, or a major setback, they still have that bigger vision to focus and fall back on.” But while providing program participants with the tools to take better control over their finances, **Living WELL** also empowers participants to improve their emotional and physical wellness – for all three components are intertwined. “We talk about stress management. We implement the lens of empathy and incorporate forgiveness, Ms. Scott states. “Forgiveness doesn't mean we let anyone off the hook for bad behavior, it means we let ourselves off the hook from the negative impacts of that bad behavior. We also teach them mindfulness techniques, to put them in a state of confidence, in a place where they can make really good decisions.”

Although **WELL** is barely five years old, the agency is already succeeding in its mission, making a genuine difference in the lives of the participants who have thus far graduated from the program. “One of the participants in the February group at Sierra Vista wrote down four goals,” noted Ms. Scott. “In June, she opened up her book where she had written down those goals and said, ‘I accomplished my four goals.’ They were long-term goals – she would strive for long-term independent living, would purchase a car, would fix her credit, that she would work in a capacity of giving

back to women who had had the same difficulties she had overcome. Fast forward four months later, and she was working at Sierra Vista as a mentor Mom, she had a car, her credit was fixed, and she had had wonderful experiences with her children that were memorable. She's now working two jobs and has recently transitioned to independent living. So, she's had this wonderful transformation!”

In addition to its educational programs, **WELL** also hosts a series of gatherings called **WELL Wednesdays**, which is held on the first Wednesday of most months. “We meet at Skewers in Modesto from 5pm-7pm,” Ms. Scott explained, “...mingle, get to know one another, then we head upstairs at 6pm to hear the inspiring message from our keynote presenter.”

Looking back at the last few years, seeing **WELL** take root in the community and achieving much for women, and always remembering her mom, Ms. Scott concluded by saying, “I think the most remarkable thing about taking this idea, this dream and actually going forward with it is to see the lives that are not just impacted, but these women then giving back, making an impact of their own, almost like a ripple effect. So I'm really grateful that we were able to take action on our dream and to help other people do the same.”

For additional information on **WELL** and its educational programs, or the **WELL** Courage Award scholarship program, please call the Women's Education & Leadership League at (209) 765-8045, 1509 K Street, Modesto, California 95354. Visit the **WELL** website at <http://www.well4women.org/>



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

DECEMBER 2019

Science Colloquium, Fall 2019, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., Science Community Center, Rm. 115, MJC West Campus. Free; \$2 parking fee. See article, this issue.

MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science). Free, engaging community science programs. Fridays, 7:30 pm, MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132. Dec. 6: Paul E. Lenze, Jr., Northern Ariz. Univ., Syrian Forced Migration & Public Health in the European Union. More than 400,000 people killed, millions displaced during the Syrian Civil War. Examines causes of the War and impact of migration on public health in the Middle East and Europe. "Excellence in Teaching Award" winner!

4 WED: VIGIL: Justice at the Border, McHenry & J St., 4:00-5:00 pm. Note new time.

6 FRI: Annual Holiday Potluck Song Fest. Celebrate our Peace Community at the Onorato's, 1532 Vernon Ave., Modesto. Bring your favorite dish and beverage to share, your merry Holiday spirit, and your eagerness to sing. 6 to 9 pm. Bring an unwrapped children's book (K-6). All welcome.

7 SAT: Holiday Fair at The Barn at Barosso Orchards. 8:30 am to 12 noon. 15 vendors selling items for the holidays. 6589 S. Escalon Bellota Rd., Farmington, (209) 647-0774. Visit us on Facebook.barossoe@yahoo.com

15 SUN: The Modesto Film Society presents *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. The State Theatre, 1307 J. St., Modesto. 2:00 pm. <https://thestate.org/movies/the-man-who-came-to-dinner/>. Join the State Theatre and get perks! Visit <http://www.thestate.org/Membership>.

LOOKING AHEAD

January 14: John McCutcheon Concert. Modesto Church of the Brethren. See article, this issue.

February 1: 8th Annual Poetry Festival, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, facilitated by two outstanding poets – former Fresno Poet Laureate Lee Herrick, and Camille Norton. Flyer, registration forms available at www.mostpoetry.org. Contest deadline: January 11, 2020; info@mostpoetry.org

February 22: 26th Annual MLK Commemoration. Keynote speaker, Dr. Harry Edwards. MJC auditorium, 7 pm.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

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. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: info@imcv.org

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

MONDAYS

Suicide Loss Support Group: Friends for Survival meets every third Monday at 7 pm. Details: Norm Andrews 209-345-0601, 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 or call 209.577.1604.

Silver & Gold Support group for our senior LGBT communities' unique concerns and experiences. Come to 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 the various locations in Modesto. Information: Steven Cullen/Facilitator. Cell/text - (559) 799-0464. Email: 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, 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

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.

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

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 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

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: 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.

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

Modesto Folk Dancers All levels welcome. Raube Hall, Ceres (call for address), 480-0387.

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, or 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

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

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

Third Thursday Art Walk, Downtown Modesto art galleries open – take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-9 pm every third Thursday. <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

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter. 2nd Thursday of the month. Contact: Joanna Rose-Murray, 209-484-8276, jrmcompassionate@gmail.com, <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

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

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

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.

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

Village Dancers: Dances from Balkans, Europe, USA and more. Fridays, Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock. 7:30-9:30 pm, \$5 (students free). Info: call Judy, 209-480-0387.

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

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

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

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

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS:

Tenth of each month.

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org

Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.