CASA: Advocating for Children in Foster Care

An interview by TOM PORTWOOD

“At any given time in Stanislaus County there’s somewhere between 800 to 1,000 children in foster care,” recently lamented Steve Ashman, who serves as the Executive Director of CASA of Stanislaus County. “Children in foster care are not in foster care because of something they did, but, rather, something that’s been done to them. A lot of kids live in multiple places, and their lives are upside down,” continued Mr. Ashman. “There’s often no stability for them. We have to ask the question – what are we teaching them about relationships, what are you teaching them about people, what are you teaching them about the value of the system.”

“CASA is an acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocates,” explained Mr. Ashman. “A number of years ago, the State Supreme Court decided it would be beneficial to have a program set up to advocate for children who were in foster care. CASA was started in 1977 in Seattle, and locally our program began in 2002.”

The large number of children in the foster care system in our area may come as a surprise to some, but it mirrors alarming national trends. Children’s Rights, an advocacy group based in New York reports that “on any given day, there are nearly 443,000 children in foster care in the United States. In 2017, more than 690,000 children spent time in U.S. foster care.”

As Mr. Ashman noted, the number of children in the foster care system far exceeds the number of adults who volunteer as advocates for those children. “Right now we have about 110 advocates. To become an advocate, you must go through 36 hours of training, 10 hours of court observation, as well as interviews and background checks. Once you complete the training, if we think you are appropriate for our program, a judge swears you in as an officer of the court, and you come in and pick one of the cases on our waiting list. When someone becomes an advocate, we don’t so much assign them a case as much as they choose it themselves – because we want the advocate to own it,” he further noted. “Everybody has limitations – some people might be uncomfortable dealing with a case that involved sexual abuse, while others might want to work with boys, or with girls, or perhaps they have in mind a specific age group. It’s all over the map, but our advocates do a remarkable job.”

“Our advocates often have very strong relationships with the kids. I am an advocate myself,” he remarked. “I’ve been the executive director for about 11 and a half years and during that time I’ve been an advocate for 38 cases. I’ve had the opportunity to represent a range of children, from a preschooler to high schoolers.”

As Mr. Ashman noted, the number of children in foster care has continued to increase. “There’s often no stability in children’s lives. A lot of kids live in multiple places, and their lives are upside down,” continued Mr. Ashman. “You’re dealing with a case that involved sexual abuse, while others might want to work with boys, or with girls, or perhaps they have in mind a specific age group. It’s all over the map, but our advocates do a remarkable job.”

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Dr. Harry Edwards to speak at MLK Commemoration

By JAMES COSTELLO

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration invites you to attend the 26th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration on Saturday, February 22, 2020. Dynamic lecturer, teacher and author, Dr. Harry Edwards, will speak at Modesto Junior College’s Performing Arts & Media Center, 435 College Ave. at 7:00 p.m.

As part of the Commemoration, Leng Power will present to community activist and advocate for the homeless, Frank Ploof, the Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Award for his community service (see article, this issue).

Earlier at 4:00 p.m. students are invited to meet Dr. Edwards at the King-Kennedy Memorial Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto. At 5:00 p.m. there will be a reception open to the public.

Harry Edwards grew up in East St. Louis, Illinois. After an outstanding career at East St. Louis High, he graduated in 1960 and was awarded an athletic scholarship to San Jose State University from which he graduated in 1964 with high honors. He subsequently was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and a University Fellowship to Cornell University where he completed a M.A. and a Ph.D. in sociology. He was on the faculty of California at Berkeley from 1970 – 2001 and currently is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology.

From 1992 through 2001, Dr. Edwards was a consulting inmate counselor at the San Francisco County Jail and periodically worked with inmate programs at California’s San Quentin State Prison. From 2001 through

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**MJC Civic Engagement Project’s Film & Lecture Series**

March 12th: The Great American Lie

Thursday 7-9 pm in Forum 110 (East Campus): The Great American Lie calls the American Dream into question by focusing on examples of social and economic immobility in our country. The film argues that many of the equity gaps we see today are rooted in cultural values that prioritize stereotypically “masculine” ideals, such as individualism, power, and wealth, at the expense of valuable qualities often regarded as “feminine,” such as caring for and cooperating with others.

March 25th: Richard Rothstein Lecture

Wednesday 7-9 pm in the Mary Stuart Rogers Student Center (West Campus): In The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, Richard Rothstein focuses on mid-twentieth century government policy that was used to enforce residential racial segregation. His research suggests that many inequities African Americans face today are the result of this history of injustice. According to Rothstein, “The core argument of [my] book is that African Americans were unconstitutionally denied the means and the right to integration in middle-class neighborhoods, and because this denial was state-sponsored, the nation is obligated to remedy it.”

Ricard Rothstein is a distinguished fellow at the Economic Policy Institute and a fellow at the Thurgood Marshall Institute of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. He resides in California, where he is a fellow of the Haas Institute at the University of California, Berkeley. His book The Color of Law was nominated for a National Book Award for best nonfiction book in 2017.

Following the lecture will be a Q & A session with Rothstein and a panel of invited guests: local activists Dave and Sharon Froba and NAACP President of Stanislaus County, Wendy Byrd.

April 9th: No Small Matter

Thursday 7-9 pm in Forum 110 (East Campus): No Small Matter shares stories of families and teachers struggling to provide young kids with quality education, and showcases the science that suggests how important it is that they receive it. The film argues that the most overlooked, underestimated, and powerful force for change in America is investing more in the care and education of our young children.

**Amazing John McCutcheon Concert**

By KEN SCHROEDER

The Modesto Peace/Life Center appreciates John McCutcheon and Red Tail Ring for the wonderful performance at our annual benefit concert in January. The room was filled with energy and a sense of community.

Additional appreciation goes to all those who attended, sang a little louder than they thought they should, laughed, got teary-eyed, worked on the planning, made copies, prepared the mailer, coordinated sponsors, became sponsors, sold tickets, put up posters, coordinated the tech work, set up the sound, moved the chairs, brought food, staffed the refreshments, handed out programs and collected tickets, sold CD’s and books, staffed the Peace/Life table, exceeded, coordinated volunteers, made donations, promoted the concert, set up hospitality, drove long distances to attend, showed people where to park, handled finances, and came early and stayed late.

Special thanks to the Modesto Church of the Brethren for hosting for 18 years. We’ll be back in January 2021 with another concert!

**The Campaign Nonviolence National Conference**

Albuquerque, New Mexico
August 6-9, 2020

In Partnership with The Aug. 6 & 9 Peace Vigils at Los Alamos, NM
Marking The 75th Anniversary of Hiroshima And Nagasaki

Featuring Martin Sheen, Dolores Huerta, Richard Rohr, John Dear, Erica Chenoweth, Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr., Roshi Joan Halifax, Ira Helfand, Frida Berrigan and others.

Hosted by Pace e Bene’s Kit Evans-Ford and George Martin.

The Conference takes place Friday evening and Saturday at the Hotel Albuquerque. Space is limited. Purchase tickets early. Peace and Goodness Circle members receive 10% off tickets!

Register at https://paceebene.org/cnvconference2020

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**Peace/Life Center looking for volunteers**

The Modesto Peace/Life Center needs volunteers to assist with projects, events, our radio project (radio knowledge, skills needed), fundraising, and administrative activities. No experience necessary. Experience in social media, Word, Excel, or other special skills are desired for some volunteer positions. We need volunteers for a few hours per week, or an ongoing commitment.

For more information, contact our volunteer/outreach coordinators: Susan Bower or Jocelyn Cooper at the Peace Life Center (209) 529-5750.
Be informed!
Read the Valley Citizen at http://thevalleycitizen.com
Green Tips for a Green Planet

February is about Love, Love Thy Mother, The Earth

Tikkun Olam (Repair the World): There are numerous ways to love our Mother, Planet Earth.
Seek out opportunities at your school, college, work place, religious organization or civic group for environmental clubs, education and activist opportunities.

Don’t wait for an opportunity to come your way...initiate...take your kids and/or friends and relatives for a walk along one of the area’s trails or through city neighborhoods to collect trash from public places, give others reusable grocery and shopping bags, learn about environmental activities and teach Tikkun Olam...be the change you want to see in the world.

Here are a few local suggestions:

Sierra Club Yokuts Chapter: February 21 meeting: Member sharing of nature, birding and expedition videos and pictures. College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave. at Orangeburg- Snacks 6:45 pm, Program 7 pm.
ACTION: Member Ray Nichols accepts magazines and books, household batteries, button batteries, burned out light bulbs, CFLs, eye-glasses, and old cell phones for recycling at monthly programs. (Please tape over the contacts on 9-volt batteries.)
• Chapter website: http://www.sierr.club.org/mother-lode/yokuts
• Hikes, outings, expeditions info at: http://www.meetup.com/S-M-S-SierraClub
• To submit articles to the Habitat newsletter: contact kaugustine@csustan.edu

Stanislaus County Department of Environmental Resources: Department Mission: to “protect our community by promoting a safe and healthy environment” through an “interface with local, state and federal agencies” of “a comprehensive environmental protection program, which taps into a balance of science, education, partnerships and environmental regulation. The divisions include Environmental Health, Groundwater Resources, Solid Waste Management, Landfill, Hazardous Materials, Milk & Dairy and Code Enforcement.

ACTION: The Department encourages citizens “to become better acquainted with the services” provided throughout Stanislaus County and its nine incorporated cities. Website: Contacts / Phone Numbers / Email - Environmental Resources - Stanislaus County

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Modesto Junior College’s MAPS has fostered science and environmental education since 1990 and provides science education for youth and adults.

ACTION: MAPS offers many opportunities to learn about and nurture Mother Earth including:
• Science Colloquiums - Science presentations at MJC and throughout the community free and open to the public.

New Documentary Tells Story of Troublemaker, Grandmother, Pacifist Dorothy Day

A new documentary by Martin Doblmeier and Journey Films, REVOLUTION OF THE HEART; The Dorothy Day Story profiles one of the most extraordinary and courageous women in American history—one who is being considered for sainthood by the Catholic Church, but who famously said, “Don’t call me a saint, I don’t want to be dismissed that easily.”

Realist and radical, Day was both a typical grandmother and a self-described anarchist who once made the FBI’s watch list as a “dangerous American.” Revolution of the Heart is the story of one of the greatest champions of the poor America has ever known.

It will begin airing on public television stations in March 2020 for Women’s History Month and is available on DVD now from Amazon. Special screening events will take place nationwide in January-March, 2020.

As a journalist, Dorothy Day covered workers’ rights and child labor. As an activist, she protested war and nuclear arms. Attracted to Communism as a young woman, she believed it was a way to improve people’s lives. She marched in support of women’s suffrage and was jailed and beaten.

After the birth of her daughter, she converted to Catholicism, and found Christianity to be an even more radical path. “If you take the Lord’s words, you’ll find they are pretty rigorous,” Day says in archival footage included in the film. “The Sermon on the Mount may be read with great enjoyment, but when it comes to practicing it, is really an examination of conscience to see how far we go.”

Day was co-founder (along with Peter Maurin) of the Catholic Worker Movement that began as a newspaper to expose rampant injustices during the Great Depression. It soon expanded to become a network of houses of hospitality to welcome the poor and destitute. Now nearly a century after they began, the number of Catholic Worker houses continues to grow and the newspaper is still speaking truth to power.

Over the years, Dorothy Day developed her understanding of how to follow the biblical challenge to be “peacemakers” by resisting all forms of military intervention. She protested America’s involvement in World War II and was severely criticized. Arrested multiple times for protesting America’s nuclear buildup, she also led nationwide resistance against the war in Vietnam.

REVOLUTION OF THE HEART includes rare archival photographs and film footage plus interviews with Dorothy Day’s granddaughters, writer Kate Hennessey and activist Martha Hennessey, actor/activist Martin Sheen, public theologian Cornel West, bestselling author Joan Chittister, Jim Wallis of Sojourners and many others. Excerpts from Day’s autobiography, The Long Loneliness, are read in the film by Susan Sarandon.

To receive access to view an online screener of Revolution of the Heart, or to schedule an interview with filmmaker Martin Doblmeier, please contact Kelly Hughes, 312-280-8126 or kelly@dechanthughes.com

Green Tips (continued)

• Earth Day spearheaded by the MJC Civic Engagements Project Green Committee.
• Science Olympiad High School and Junior High School Regional Science Olympiad which consists of individual and team events that encourage learning in biology, earth science, chemistry, physics, problem solving and technology.
• Science Night and free telescope viewing features free telescope viewings, a planetarium show (nominal fee), and a variety of science-based shows and hands-on experiences coordinated by the MJC Astronomy Club and MJC Science students. MJC West Campus, Science Community Center, 4th floor and roof. The planetarium is open to the public, and other planetarium shows are available on Saturdays and during special events.

Great Valley Museum: A premier science and nature museum dedicated to exploring the flora, fauna, ecosystems, geology, habitats, astronomy and all natural aspects of California’s Great Central Valley. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays 9 am to 4 pm at MJC West Campus.
Good Samaritan Locates Alan Davis, Gets Help

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Back in May and June, when he was working near the county courthouse in downtown Modesto, Tony Montalbo used to keep tabs on Alan Davis, the disabled homeless man who just recently wandered away from the new shelter in the Salvation Army’s Berberian building on 9th and D Streets.

“We’re buds, really,” said Montalbo Saturday. “I used to check on him and bring him some food just to make sure he was okay.”

When Montalbo saw on Facebook that Davis had gone missing, he contacted Frank Ploof and said he would watch for Davis downtown. Ploof asked Montalbo to let him know if and when he found Davis.

Saturday November 30, just after 1:00pm, Montalbo found Davis near the corner of 12th and J Streets, not far from his old courthouse haunts. Montalbo immediately contacted Ploof. Ploof drove downtown, verified Davis was okay and willing to return to the shelter, then confirmed there was still a bed available.

Davis himself seemed a bit bewildered about exactly how things would work out at the shelter, but he did agree that it was very cold and windy outside.

“It’s going to be bad weather all winter,” said Montalbo. “You better get inside where it’s warm.”

Like many veterans of the streets, Davis seemed reluctant to go inside. But he admitted it was cold, and when he was told it would be raining steadily for at least a week, he gave in.

“Well, maybe I’ll go in and give the shelter a try,” he said.

Davis was very vague about where he’d spent his nights — he’d been missing since Wednesday — and may even have been confused about how his stay at the shelter had been arranged. Very often his mumbled communication is difficult or impossible to understand. It could be after so many years on the streets he’s lost some fundamental cognitive capacities.

Frank Ploof, who’s been a volunteer outreach worker for the homeless for over six years and now also helps coordinate services at the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter, has worked with Davis for over two months. There are still lots of unanswered questions about exactly how Davis ended up in Modesto after decades in Sacramento, but Ploof’s major concern all along has been getting Davis placed in an appropriate service facility.

Saturday, the most urgent issue was getting Davis inside, and Ploof arranged that within minutes of verifying Davis was willing to go. He also had a change of clothing ready, knowing from experience Davis would need it.

Whatever reasons Alan Davis ended up in Modesto, he’s been fortunate to have so many good Samaritans watching over him. Tony Montalbo is one among several who routinely brought the wheel-chair bound amputee food and drink and checked on his welfare when he was on the street.

The one thing that should be clear to all concerned is that Davis needs help, even in those cases when he tells people he doesn’t. And Alan Davis is only one of hundreds like him, most just as needy as he is.

That reality was clearly evident Saturday afternoon, as another homeless man slept huddled against the wind directly across the street from Davis and Montalbo. He perched precariously on a motorized scooter, while his dog curled in a ball at his feet.

His solitary slumber in the heart of downtown Modesto was stark evidence that not even the undeniable power of good Samaritans like Tony Montalbo and Frank Ploof will be enough to hold back the rising tide of homelessness. There are just too many people in need.

Not long after Tony Montalbo found him, Alan Davis arrived at the new Berberian shelter, just as the rain came. Downtown, another man and his dog were not so lucky.
Reflecting on the Significance of our Peace Essay Contest: Winners Remember

One of the Center’s most important projects, initiated by Indira Clark in 1987, has been our annual Peace Essay Contest. Thousands of students from throughout our county, K-5 through K-12, have participated. As we celebrate in 2020 our 50 years of activism and education for peace, justice, and a sustainable future, some of us raised the question: what impact, if any, has this contest had on the students who’ve responded to our prompts and written essays? We would love to get further responses from students of other schools, but when I asked Jeanne Pollard of Fremont Open Plan (where my children went) if she were in contact with any of her former students, she asked a few of them our question.

We thank the four writers below who so thoughtfully and generously responded. – Dan Onorato

Jeanne Pollard: A Teacher’s View

Why?” (Eye roll...)

“Oh, not again...” (another eye roll)

“Do I have to?”

Yep. It’s happening! We are each entering the Modesto Peace Life Center’s Annual Peace Essay Contest.

(Big sigh. Lots of hard work ahead...)

You might ask why a teacher might assign her students to write an essay for the Modesto Peace/Life Center’s annual Peace Essay Contest. It’s a good question. It deserves a serious response.

For a classroom teacher, this kind of essay has the merits of having students write to a topic with specific directions, having their work read and judged by a panel of adults, and perhaps winning a prize. But for me, a teacher of 5th and 6th graders in Fremont Open Plan, a parent participant school of choice within Modesto City Schools, the answer has another level.

In 1976 when Fremont Open Plan first began, there was input from parents with a wide variety of outlooks. Some were conservative, some liberal. Some preferred a 3R’s school and some wanted a very unstructured, Summerhill type school. All of those varied views could be incorporated into an acceptance-based outlook of teaching, except for one thing: religion.

In 1976, elementary schools in Modesto had Christmas pageants. There were Christian songs sung and Christian stories acted out. But our student body in Open Plan had a wide variety of religious outlooks, so in order to be inclusive, we focused on a universal theme with which everyone could connect: peace. Instead of a Christmas Pageant, we began a Peace Assembly: we sang songs of peace, shared observations and skits, recognized heroes of peace, and looked at ways each of us could make our corner of the world a more peaceful place. I am delighted this tradition continues still, 44 years later.

Many of our parent group and, as the years progressed, our graduated students, have been active in the Modesto Peace/Life Center. When the writing contest began in 1987, it was shared with the Open Plan staff. It was a natural progression for us to be involved. Open Plan has participated every year since.

As an Open Plan classroom teacher, the true gift of the writing assignment for the Peace Essay Contest has been its focus on the values we hold dear. The topics varied with some being more accessible to students than others, but they always have been good for discussion both at school and at home, where parental involvement has been asked, both to talk about it to help the child form ideas, and then to help with the editing.

So, here is the challenge. How does one teach a 10-year-old to be kind? An 11-year-old to stand up for what is right? A 12-year-old to make the values that correspond with peace an active part of his or her life? It is not easy. As a teacher of the oldest students in Open Plan, I was fortunate to be at the culmination of seven years of the attitude and actions of peace being an important part of our curriculum, and with wonderfully supportive parents and extended families. It was a team outlook, and a team success.

That is why this writing is assigned. To keep the focus on peace.

So, future participants, put on your thinking cap, your kindness cap, your peace-centered cap, and write on!

Satya Onorato

I’ve been involved in the Peace Essay Contest as a six-time participant, one-time judge, and occasional screener. The lasting impact of the contest for me has been my experience as a screener. Reading the contest entries has introduced me to the next generation of peacemakers.

Peace Essay Contest entrants demonstrate how peace can be realized where they live: in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities. The hopeful solutions the essays describe are instructive and inspiring, and the investment of young people in a more peaceful world is one of the contest’s valuable outcomes.

If peace is going to begin with you, consider what it means to begin peace—to contribute to peace where there is none. How can you build your values into your education, your goals, your livelihood, and your aging to inspire the next generations that you’ll share this earth with.

Shelley Agostini

“Write about a living peacemaker whose actions make an impact in creating a more peaceful world. Your essay serves as a nomination for the 2009 Peacemaker of the Year.” While I know that wasn’t the exact prompt, I remember staring at the blinking cursor on my mom’s giant desktop computer as an 11-year-old, thinking about what to write. Now, as a recent college graduate looking back on my 18 years of schooling, I am astounded by how well I remember that prompt for an assignment I had in 6th grade. It was the Peace Essay: the first actual essay I ever wrote, the first assignment I typed all by myself, the first assignment that made me think deeply about a complex topic. An impactful assignment both then and now, it has stayed in my memory because it helped shaped my character and the way I think.

Within minutes I knew who to write about. Although I had learned about many Nobel Peace Prize winners and other peacemakers from Fremont Open Plan’s annual winter Peace Assemblies, one person in my life stood out: my 3rd and 4th grade teacher, Julie TenBrink. From her serving in
the Peace Corps, protesting in Berkeley during the Vietnam war, to shaping thousands of young and curious minds as a teacher, Julie’s story was one I wanted to emulate in my own life. With a focus on Julie as my role model, the Peace Essay encouraged me to examine and evaluate how I could take actions to spread peace, kindness, and open-mindedness to make an impact on the world.

In the years since, I have traced the inspiration for all of my decisions back to my elementary school teachers. I am thankful to have held on to the natural curiosity I had as a child, and I am still an enthusiastic learner of all subjects. At the University of California, Los Angeles, I was inspired to think about my place in the interconnectedness of global and local issues across all subjects. I majored in Psychology with a double minor in Global Health and Geography/Environmental Studies. I got involved in a global health organization and worked on public health projects in Nicaragua and Honduras. In the future, I am considering following in Julie’s footsteps by applying for the Peace Corps or working for a global or environmental health organization. At the core of this pivotal broadening of my horizons was the spirit of Fremont Open Plan and the Peace Essay Contest: the belief that one person can make a big difference in the world one action at a time. Through her everyday actions, Julie taught students to live a life of peace, activism, and kindness.

I remember sitting in the car with my mom after the 2009 Peace Essay Awards Ceremony telling her that I wanted to be a 4th grade teacher and thinking about how special it would be to make such a big impact on so many students. I’ve changed my mind on many things since I was 11, but the desire to teach has remained constant. No matter where I go in the next few years, whether traveling around the world teaching English, serving in the Peace Corps, or pursuing holistic solutions to global socioeconomic health issues from within the US, I am working toward becoming an elementary school teacher. Like my nominee for the 2009 Peacemaker of the Year, I want to inspire thousands of students to live kindly, inquisitively, and inclusively, and to spread a legacy of peace.

Jordan Smith

In preparation for writing these lines, I talked with my mother—who raised three of us siblings in Fremont Open Plan—and she managed to dig out a few of my old notes, including ones for the Modesto Peace/Life Center’s Peace Essay Contest. I remember writing them with a glowing heart, with commitment and passion and excitement. I wanted to change the world for the better, believed I could help, with the help of people like the Onorato family and the Open Plan community with our fearless, inspiring teachers.

Some children grow up with idealistic fire, and then tell various tales of how that fire was quenched. Or maybe they don’t think it a tale even worth telling. Kids become adults: they adjust to a violent world and learn to accept one’s place, with minimal damage to one’s own family and friends. It’s hard to blame them when we think how much pressure there can be to put food on the table, to stay healthy and functional and reasonably sane. But that’s not my story. I still speak about peace, now in classrooms as a professor. I teach world literature, literary translation, and cultural studies in universities from Rhode Island to Los Angeles, Seoul to Tokyo. I carefully guard another ideal: that literature is a bridge to understanding and caring about others, and that compassion is essential for a peaceful world. If humans tend to compete, clash, fight, and wage war, the only forces that can curb or stop the violence have to be somehow bigger or more powerful, made up of millions of people and their values. Their individually held ethical commitments translate into billions of tiny actions—a vote, an act of kindness, a donation, attending a protest, making a friend.

I’ve always wanted to contribute—however I could—to multiplying those actions. Over time, I realized my commitment to literature was helping me reaffirm my values. It wasn’t my doing so much as it was literature working on me. The career I committed to gained a momentum of its own, and that momentum swept me in the direction of values, meaning peace. Maybe that’s the secret to maintaining youthful values—choosing career paths that help us walk on in peace.

Lyrics of two songs we sang at yearly Fremont Open Plan peace celebrations come to mind:

“Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me,”

and “I ain’t gonna study war no more.” Their simple power lies in the call for individual responsibility which ultimately is all we have control over.

I would encourage teachers of children to pick up their guitars, strum out chords, and get kids singing. To kids at the age when singing feels uncomfortable or embarrassing and thinking about careers crowds out simple fun, I would say: keep choosing with your values. If you’re not going to study war, then take time to consider what you will study instead. If peace is going to begin with you, consider what it means to begin peace—to contribute to peace where there is none. How can you build your values into your education, your goals, your livelihood, and your aging to inspire the next generations that you’ll share this earth with.

Peace is a practice and a habit to be developed. It has to be cultivated, to be sung again and again. In my life, it means teaching literature, writing poetry, organizing poetry readings, translating literature, curating art exhibitions, bringing people together, and being as kind as possible to everyone I meet.

Kate Trompetter

It’s been well over 2 decades since I wrote my first essay for the Peace Essay Contest. Truth be told, I don’t remember what I wrote about. I do, however, know that experience was a critical part of a large theme that played out consistently in my childhood: Love.

Whether it was at my synagogue, my home, or my elementary school (Fremont Open Plan), the expectation was that we’d love ourselves, love each other, heal the world. Writing for the Peace Essay Contest translated concretely those messages of love and peace. Such experiences are a gift, one I’m grateful our community and the Peace/Life Center have continued to embrace and give to our young people for over 30 years.

I’ve often reflected on the parts of my childhood that impacted where I landed in my life. I’ve spent most of my adult life working in the social sector. Currently, I’m a Leadership Coach. My focus is primarily on those people and organizations trying to change the world through social impact work. I care deeply about supporting people who care about healing the world. And my philosophy on leadership is grounded in a deep commitment to self-awareness and how we behave with one another in times as complex as they are now. Really, it’s about Peace I think—not the artificial or superficial Peace we often claim to have achieved. I work towards lasting, authentic Peace—one that embraces divergence and knows how to dance with it in service of a greater purpose. I think the Peace Essay Contest was among the experiences that anchored that orientation to the world for me.

The other thing I would say, as a parent who is trying to raise children in a world as complicated and divided as ours is today, is that I’m exceedingly thankful for gifts like the Peace Essay Contest. Opportunities like these yearly contests that encourage our children to think critically and help them (us all, really) to imagine what might be possible in the world—they help me as a mom feel a little less tired and a lot more hopeful.
Many Californians are Struggling to Live in Our Communities
Five Reasons to Share the State’s Prosperity

By ALISSA ANDERSON, SARA KIMBERLIN, KAYLA KITSON, AUREO MESQUITA and SARAH JIMÉNEZ, California Budget & Policy Center

State policymakers have many opportunities to continue building the state’s fiscal health and invest in the people of California as they consider policy priorities for 2020-21 and beyond. While California is a wealthy state home to many high-income households and businesses that have been able to greatly leverage resources and expand their wealth in the last several decades, millions more Californians live in a different reality every day. Workers in low- and mid-wage jobs are unable to afford the high cost of living – from paying for housing and child care to stretching their paychecks at the end of the month to cover food and medical bills. This is true no matter what region Californians work in across the state and call home. For women, Californians of color, and immigrants the economic challenges and disparities are vast. The state is in danger of allowing millions of Californians to spend their lifetimes in financial distress.

California can do better for its people. The state’s policy choices can help more people earn adequate incomes, build wealth, and afford basic necessities that will allow them to live, learn, work, and age comfortably in their homes and communities. With renewed discussions about the state’s available resources, healthy reserves, and the need to plan for the future, this analysis provides five facts that show why state leaders should ensure that all Californians share in the state’s vast wealth.

- Economic inequality has worsened for Californians, reinforcing racial and ethnic disparities
- Child poverty remains high, especially for Black and Latinx children
- Workers’ wages remain stagnant as housing costs significantly increase
- Economic insecurity has serious consequences – but policy choices can make a difference
- California can increase revenue, support investments, and share the state’s prosperity

Read the new report to better understand the economic disparities in California and how the state has the resources to do better for all its people. View a PDF version of this report.

Combatants for Peace lay down weapons in favor of democracy, security, dignity and respect for all

In 2006 Palestinian prisoners and Israeli combat soldiers and officers, former combatants, laid down their weapons and established Combatants for Peace, an egalitarian, bi-national, grassroots movement modeled on the core values of democracy, security, dignity and respect for all.

Founded upon the belief that the cycle of violence can be broken only when Israelis and Palestinians join forces, CFP is the only organization worldwide in which former fighters on both sides of an active conflict have renounced violence, laid down their weapons, and chosen to work together for peace, earning the organization Nobel Peace Prize nominations in 2017 and 2018.

CFP is a nonviolent civil resistance movement working to end the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and all forms of violence between the two sides. Together former adversaries work for equality and human rights with the aim of bringing a just and secure future for both peoples. Activists build bridges of respect, so that the humanity of all may be recognized and honored. Joint action demonstrates an alternative to violence, both acute and systemic, and activism lays the groundwork for a peaceful future by modeling the potential of what can be.

**ACTION:** Together Palestinian and Israeli Combatants for Peace demand freedom for all. Learn more about how you can participate in this peace movement by attending one of several Combatants for Peace events to be held up to February 12.

California Tour (Jan 26 – Feb 12, 2020)
(Edited. For a complete list, visit https://afcfp.org/california-2020-tour)

**Speakers:** Ismail Assad, Yoni Kallai and Galia Gallili

**Santa Rosa-Shomrei Torah,** Jan 26, 3-5pm, 2600 Bennett Valley Rd, Santa Rosa.

**Santa Cruz-Center for Spiritual Living,** Jan 28, 6-7pm, 1818 Felt St, Santa Cruz. Sponsored by: Muslim Solidarity Group of Santa Cruz & Temple Beth El.

**Sacramento Area-Congregation Bet Haverim,** Wednesday, Jan 29, 7-9pm, Congregation Bet Haverim Social Hall, 1715 Anderson Rd., Davis. Sponsored by: Rabbi Greg Wolfe, J Street Davis, and J Street UC Davis.

**Berkeley-UC Berkeley,** Feb 4, 7pm, Berkeley Hillel, 2756 Bancroft Way.

**Contra Costa-Hillcrest Congregational Church,** Feb 6, 7-9pm, 404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Sponsored by: The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa for World Interfaith Harmony Week. The Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center.

**San Francisco-Manny’s Café,** Feb 9, 4-6pm (doors open 3:45pm), 3092 16th St., San Francisco, corner of Valencia. Sponsored by: Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Project & J Street.

**Palo Alto-First Congregational Church,** UUC, Feb 10, 7:30-9:30pm, 1985 Louis Rd, Palo Alto.

**San Francisco- Interfaith Panel at the Center for World Affairs,** Feb 12, 6:30-8:30pm, 312 Sutter St., San Francisco. RSVP Required — register HERE. Sponsored by: Grace Cathedral, Qalbu Maryam Women’s Mosque, The Kitchen, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Project & J Street. https://www.worldaffairs.org/events/event/2028

New State Laws Impacting LGBTQ Californians in 2020

By JOHN AGUIRRE

Several new pieces of legislation will take effect in California in 2020, including:

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 2119:** requires that transgender foster youth receive health care services consistent with their gender identity
- **AB 711:** ensures transgender students can obtain school records and diplomas with their preferred name and gender pronoun
- **AB 493:** calls on public schools to provide training in LGBT cultural competency and bullying
- **AB 785:** assists LGBT couples who use gamete banks to have children
- **Senate Bill (SB) 495:** makes it state law that a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity can’t be used to disqualify them as an adoptive parent or legal guardian
- **AB 962:** requires CA hospitals to publicly disclose how much they are contracting with businesses owned by LGBT persons, women, minorities, and other groups such as veterans.
- **SB 534** creates a similar requirement for the insurance industry
- **SB 159** allows pharmacies to provide 60 days of PrEP without a prescription

Reach John at Stanislaus LGBTQ+Collaborative; Coordinator, Peer/Consumer Advocate. Cell/Text: 559-280-3864, jpmamodesto@gmail.com

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**FEBRUARY, 2020**

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POET: Zaid Shlah

Born in Canada and of Iraqi heritage, Zaid Shlah resides in Northern California with his family. His poetry has appeared in literary magazines, journals and anthologies in both Canada and the US. In May of 2005, he was awarded the American Academy of Poets Award. He is the author of Taqsim, a book of poetry. His most recent book is a collection of poetry and essays entitled ClockWork (Frontenac House, 2015). He teaches composition and English literature at Modesto Junior College.

The Lit Road

Could we have come away from it all right—turned away from that dark day?

But oh the stars last night. Early morning.
One small room, four walls—the coffee, bananas, a bagel with cream cheese awaiting their arrival.

Three sleeping lights in bed, tucked away, their dreams, their sorrows—quiver of apprehension.

It’s okay I say. Look at the sleeping angel—her mother, exhales a smile inside you.

Did we miss the tree, the pink awning at dusk, dirt on their feet; their cheeks, their hair, the earth runs into their dreams, the joys tucked up inside their small bones—

initiators of their own breath, soil, loam—the sun-bronzed beautiful skin, and we were with each other in breath, in this small room;

what hubris then—who dares to rip apart our roots from this safe house?

Should we turn here, or run from a freshly skinned knee—for more, and for more and for all of this, from the wreckage of storm: a dream ripped clean from its mast.

I cannot turn away, my sons, the boat our dreams—I cannot get the thing straight.

I hear it in a crashing hand, on journeys I wish we could have left behind.

For we falsely learn from shadow what we think we can avoid, the sleepy murmurs in the hallways of our nights—needling burrs and doubts that keep us from our sleep.


The San Joaquin River

I’m as dumb as I ever was, sitting and watching—trying to rethink the river’s flow.
What’s been, well remains, long after my inability to rethink it—indifferently absorbed by the river: my brooding on Aeschylus, or hearing Triton’s final bleat gurgling up from the dark river’s edge.

I see the white egret, who knows not the tree and its perch, as I’ve tried to know it, who pulls up from the river’s depths its silvery stock of fish, the torrent of rain off its back; who knows not the Coast Guard’s pursuit of what it thinks it owns, but can never quite possess; who tends to the quiet preening of its feathers, the still quiet of the shadow I’d wished to know.

Emerging or disappearing into the river’s cool laughter, and stands perfectly contented.

A Fortress

I think that if I had left for all of my old answers in you, that if I had kept myself taught along the eaves of a wrecked November that if in the quietest hour of souls where the devil leaps to and fro—

That if we two lovers lying naked and empty on the hallway floor spent with the salt and ravages two minds possessed and devoured all at once, betraying and defying the hall of ancients—where only ungodly rivers dare flow—

That if in the darkest recesses, a fortress in the meadow, paying no heed to the stars or the moon, or the impressions of every other lesser cause; nor for multiplicity of life’s banal effects, but ate them whole—

That if in a picture through a window of my childhood an aged winter poplar haunts what is real and what has gone away from us all; embittered, grown apart, two children colliding and crashing—an antimatter the universe refused to hold—

Not for fate or for will, nor for any other state or its abuses, but for the reason of the thing: this love our art has no business in the world but as tired metaphor. Now if the rivers cease, and the oceans crack under its man and god Then I would have good cause to leave this place, and spend the rest of days searching for the answers in your face.

Enigma of the Arrival

Perhaps I had gone wrong, I remember the sail, and a view of the port, a lighted entrance only, when I arrived, seeing the young man with a face much like my own—and taking hold of the rail apprehension of horror when I found this age-old hand was mine, the ship no longer there.

Based on Giorgio De Chirico’s The Arrival in V.S. Naipaul’s The Enigma of the Arrival

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Listen to Local Programming at KCBP 95.5 FM

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley: Mondays, 8:00pm; Tuesdays 9:00 am & Wednesdays 8:00 pm
Women of the Valley: 8:00pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays 9:00am
The Peril and the Promise: Wednesdays 9:30 pm; Saturdays 2:30 pm
Modesto Sound: California Audio Roots Project (CARP) Season 1 - Wednesdays 11:30am, & Sundays 11:00am & 5:30pm
Modesto Area Music Show: Mondays 5:00pm Fridays 9:00pm & Saturdays 6:00pm
Where We Were: Hear the fascinating history of Newman with Felton Daniels 1/23, 1/27 & 1/30 at 9am, 1/24 & 1/31 at 8:30pm, and 1/26 & 2/2 at 11am on 95.5FM and streaming at kcbpradio.org.

Weekdays (Monday - Friday)
Letters to Washington - 1:00am
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 - Sunday’s 3:00pm

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

How you can help support the Modesto Peace/Life Center

Visit our websites and click the Donate button:
Modesto Peace/Life Center: http://peacefulcenter.org/
KCBP Community Radio 95.5 FM: http://kcbpradio.org/listen.html
Stanislaus Connections: http://stanislausconnections.org/
Send a check to the Modesto Peace/Life Center, PO Box 134, Modesto CA 95353.
HELP THE PEACE/LIFE CENTER WITH YOUR IRA

The federal government requires that everyone over 70 1/2 who has money in an IRA account withdraw a minimum sum each year. This distribution from your account is then taxed. But if you are in the fortunate position of not needing your distribution for living expenses and are charitably inclined, you can donate part or all of your annual required minimum distribution (RMD) withdrawal to one or more non-profit organizations without paying taxes on the amount donated. The part you don’t donate goes to you and is taxed.

The Modesto Peace/Life Center qualifies as an eligible 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Let’s say you want to donate to the Center. Here’s what you do. Contact the Trustee of your account (the company that holds your investment) and follow their directions on how to make your donation(s). The process is straight forward. You indicate how much you want to donate to the Center, then provide information about the Center, mainly its address, phone number, and Tax ID Number which is 94-2800825. You can donate the whole amount of your RMD to the Center and to one or more eligible non-profit organizations, or you can donate a portion (non-taxable) and receive the remainder which is taxable. For more information, see a helpful explanation at. https://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/iras/articles/2017-12-04/how-to-donate-your-required-minimum-distribution-to-charity.

“How to Donate Your IRA Required Minimum Distribution to Charity” by Emily Brandon, U.S. News and World Report, 2/12/19.

Advocating for Kids in Foster Care

about 120 kids. Right now I have 31 cases. All my kids have differing needs and differing personalities. I’m pretty close to a lot of them. Once they exit the system, our relationship is determined by them. I still hear from a lot of the kids I advocated for years ago. They’ll call and ask me how I’m doing. The commonality is that I fight for what I think is in their best interest. All of our advocates try to hold everybody accountable. The reward is in the effort. If you’re looking to be an advocate to get something out of it, like recognition for yourself, you’re in it for the wrong reasons. If you want to become an advocate because you want to help children, to be their voice because they can’t find theirs, or sometimes it’s been taken away, then we are a great program to be involved with. Regardless of the circumstance, most kids want to live with their families. They love their families. The system is very imperfect.

My personal belief is if you are going to take a child out of a particular situation, say one that is dangerous, you need to find them someplace better. And that doesn’t always happen.”

CASA provides outstanding support to the dedicated cadre of community volunteers who serve as advocates. “We hold monthly advocate meetings,” stated Mr. Ashman. “Sometimes we have a topic that advocates have expressed an interest in learning more about - such as trafficking and children - but at every monthly meeting the advocates have the opportunity to discuss their case with other advocates, although they do not get into specifics. They share information and get support. A lot of times when you are doing this work, it’s easy to feel isolated, so it’s important for advocates to understand that there are others out there doing the same work. We have the highest retention rate for advocates of any program in California because we have a really attentive staff. We do a good job. About 90% of the time, the judge will go along with the recommendations the advocates make on behalf of their clients, because the judge knows that we know the children.”

Mr. Ashman pointed out that CASA collaborates with a variety of other community agencies and professionals. “We work with child welfare, schools and school districts, SCOES, and mental health organizations, as well as attorneys and counselors.”

“Every human being, regardless of their circumstance, finds joy in some aspect of their lives,” concluded Mr. Ashman. “There’s value in relationships, and when we can provide a stable, positive supportive relationship for a child, whether it’s a social worker, or a CASA advocate, or a teacher, there’s nothing but good that will derive from that relationship. Sometimes that person doesn’t know that he or she has made a difference in a child’s life. But so often they do make a difference. Adults have to learn to meet kids where kids are, and then work from there. I think that working with children is incredibly rewarding, and these children will teach me far more than I will ever teach them.”

CALL TO ACTION: For those interested in learning more about CASA of Stanislaus County or are interested in becoming a Special Advocate for children, please contact the CASA office, located at 800 11th St # 4, Modesto, CA 95354, phone number (209) 548-6320, or visit their website at http://www.casaofstanco.org/.

2020 Annual Student Poetry Contest
1st prize: $40 | 2nd prize: $30 | 3rd prize: $20
NO ENTRY FEE
Submit entries to: Raven Sisco
2020 CFCP, Inc. Student Contest Chair
California Federation of Chaparral Poets, Inc.
P.O. Box 24979, San Jose, CA 95154 or ms.ravensisco@gmail.com
Postmarked Deadline: February 14, 2020
Newsom faces facts: Time to set up the tents

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Within a few short weeks of establishment of Modesto’s new low-barrier shelter in the Salvation Army Berberian building, tents began appearing along the street opposite the building, mostly occupied by former residents of MOES, the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter. At first there were only a few. Now, the number of tents is growing almost daily, but not as fast as the number of homeless people in our parks, along our rivers, and on our sidewalks.

Governor Gavin Newsom has faced facts and realized there won’t be enough housing or services to stem the rising tide of homelessness for years. He’s authorized use of public lands for temporary housing and offered state money both for transitional temporary living space and more permanent housing and services.

To date, with few exceptions, no one in the state has been willing to admit the obvious truth: We don’t have enough infrastructure and services to address homelessness and it will be years before we do have enough. The failure to face these facts has resulted in wasted time, money, and opportunity.

Most everyone charged with addressing rising homelessness has been operating on the obsolete assumption that shelters—barracks-like buildings featuring heavy rations of rules and religion—can fill the dual needs of rehab and relocation.

According to this traditional model, homeless people just need to, “get back on their feet and get back to work.” It was once a workable approach, but today it ignores just about every current reality that applies to homelessness, most especially the fact we don’t have enough housing for disabled and low-income people, including people with fixed incomes—no matter how long they’re in the shelter, they still have nowhere to go.

The shelter model also bypasses entirely the lack of housing and services for homeless people who are mentally ill, estimated at between thirty and forty percent of the total homeless population. At least thirty-three percent are considered seriously mentally ill.

Traditional shelters separate men from women, require people to exit during the day, force residents to listen to sermons before they eat, and deny entry to anyone who’s intoxicated or on drugs. They also don’t allow pets.

The newest concept in shelters—low barrier—allows couples to stay together, permits pets, does not check for drug or alcohol use, and imposes no religious requirements. But even low-barrier shelters, when in the form of a barracks, repel as many homeless people as they attract.

The barracks configuration itself is a barrier to people who fear crowded quarters. It’s also a contagion facilitator, helping spread flu, gastroenteritis, and strep throat, all more common among homeless people than in the greater population.

Nonetheless, shelters in the form of barracks can still serve certain segments of the homeless population until more permanent facilities are built, especially the disabled, elderly, and those needing only temporary assistance. The shelter remains one option for addressing homelessness but shouldn’t be the only one.

When given a choice, homeless people prefer a tent or tarp to anything else. That’s why we see tent encampments along our rivers, sidewalks, and freeways. The manifold problems of homeless tent camps have been well-documented—they accumulate trash and garbage, attract rats, roaches and bedbugs, and degrade and devalue property values and quality of life.

Inevitably offered as reasons to eradicate homeless camps, few people will acknowledge that poorly managed trailer parks, slums, cheap motels and deteriorated apartment buildings feature the same problems, yet are almost never demonized, mostly because they are less publicized.

When the City of Modesto and Stanislaus County experimented with tent camps at Beard Brook Park and under Modesto’s 9th Street bridge, the results were for the most part positive. The Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES), which was set up early last year, was studied by groups around the state as an effective approach to homelessness.

At its peak, MOES sheltered around 450 people. Quality of life crimes decreased dramatically throughout Modesto, the concentration of people in need made it easier for volunteers to donate food and clothing, and also made it easier for service providers to locate, assess, and serve people in need.

MOES closed when a new shelter became available. Unfortunately, the new shelter could only offer 182 beds and crates for 50 dogs. It couldn’t serve even half the needs of people who had been at MOES.

Since the closure, Modesto’s streets, parks, and sidewalks have seen a surge of homeless people. Authorities are once again caught up in the “move ‘em along” cycle of, “warn ‘em, sweep ‘em, and bust ‘em,” that preceded MOES. And once again, to no one’s surprise, the move ‘em along tactic isn’t working.

Given their experience with Beard Brook Park and MOES, Modesto and Stanislaus County are well-positioned to offer a state model for managed homeless camps. They’ve got a huge reservoir of experience to tap, and most of the personnel who were part of the success of MOES are still available. Authorities should seize the moment and get state funding now for a model approach to homelessness.

Most everyone charged with addressing rising homelessness has been operating on the obsolete assumption that shelters—barracks-like buildings featuring heavy rations of rules and religion—can fill the dual needs of rehab and relocation.

Dr. Edwards

training in the discipline of sociology led Harry to propose that by the late 1960’s America had become very complacent about the issue of race in sports. He ultimately called for a Black athlete boycott of the United States 1968 Olympic team in large part to dramatize the racial inequities and barriers confronting Blacks in sport and society. The movement resulted in demonstrations by Black athletes across the nation and ultimately at the Mexico City games—a movement commemorated by a 24-foot high statue on the campus at San Jose State University.

Years later, Dr. Edwards was to become a consultant on issues of diversity for all three major sports. He was hired by the Commissioner of Major League Baseball in 1987 to help with efforts to increase front office representation of minorities and women in baseball. He also was with the Golden State Warriors of the NBA from 1987 through 1995, specializing in player personnel recruitment and counseling. In 1986, he began work with the San Francisco 49ers in the area of player personnel counseling and programs. The programs and methods that he developed for handling player personnel issues were adopted by the entire NFL in 1992, as was the Minority Coaches’ Internship Program developed by he and Coach Bill Walsh to increase opportunities for minority coaches in the NFL.

Over his career, Harry Edwards has persisted in efforts to compel the sports establishment to confront and to effectively address issues pertaining to diversity and equal opportunity within its rank. Edwards, a scholar-activist who became spokesperson for what amounted to a revolution in sports, is now considered a leading authority on developments at the interface of race, sport, and society and was a pioneering scholar in the founding of the sociology of sport as an academic discipline.

Dr. Edwards has been a consultant with producers of sports related programs for numerous television and film productions in the United States and abroad over the last 40 years. He has received dozens of awards and honors, including several honorary doctorate degrees and has been honored by the University of Texas which has established the “Dr. Harry Edwards Lectures”, a permanent series of invited lectures on themes related to sport and society. He has written many articles and four books: The Struggle That Must Be, Sociology of Sports, Black Students, The Revolt of the Black Athlete.

ORGANIZATIONAL SPONSORS at press time: Modesto Peace/Life Center; City of Modesto Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Dept.; Modesto Junior College; California State University, Stanislaus; Ed Fitzpatrick, Valley Lexus; Rockwell, Kelly, Duarte & Urstoeger, LLC; Central Valley Democratic Club; Associated Students of Modesto Junior College; Modesto Teachers Assoc.; Turlock Teachers Assoc., California Teachers Assoc.; College Avenue United Church of Christ; The Men’s Group; NAACP.
**FEBRUARY 2020**

Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., Science Community Center, Rm. 115, MJC West Campus. Free; $2 parking fee. Jan.29: Christine Grimaldi Clarkson, M.A., P.P.A., Executive Director, California Rock Art Foundation, The Influences of Ancient Astronomy on Local Rock Art. Feb 5: Dr. Julia Sankey, Professor of Paleobiology and Geology, CSU Stanislaus. Society and the Global Climate Crisis: How Is This Affecting California and What Can We Do? It is urgent that we all engage in this topic. Feb. 12: Dr. Dan (Danielle) L. Edwards, Assistant Professor, School of Natural Sciences, UC Merced. Evolutionary Lizard Games on Different Environmental Courts (a Darwin Day talk). Feb. 19: Vicki Jones, MPA, REHS - Merced County Environmental Health Division Director, Food Safety: Where is it safe to eat? Learn how to protect yourself from foodborne illness. Feb. 26: Kimberly Lindsey, Epidemiologist, MPH, Stanislaus County Public Health. How healthy is Stanislaus County? Highlights from the 2019 Community Health Assessment.

**MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science).** Free, engaging community science programs. Fridays, 7:30 pm, MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 328. Feb. 28: Colin Milburn, UCD, Gary Snyder Chair in Science and Humanities. The “History of Our Science.” [https://stx.ucdavis.edu/people/milburn](https://stx.ucdavis.edu/people/milburn)

**TUESDAYS**

Teen Tuesdays every week from June-August, 2-5 p.m., 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, 209-249-0534, mstrong31@modesto.org.

**WEDNESDAY**

**MONDAYS**

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

**Tuesday Morning Funstrummers** Beginner Ukulele Lessons. Modesto Senior Center, 10:45am to Noon, Free. 

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