

Draining the Last Great Aquifer: a Group Project

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

Environmentalists who had high hopes Gavin Newsom would lead the way to sustainable water use in the San Joaquin Valley are waking up to the knowledge that the new governor isn't going to be any more effective than the old governor. Sustainability is just too big a lift.

Even before Newsom took office, the terms of the water debate were morphing from "sustainability" to "voluntary agreements." Not long after, sustainability was being replaced by "resilience."

For those who follow the course of water through the Valley, "voluntary" translates as, "We'll continue doing what we've always done, only more," because the "volunteers" in this case are mostly Valley water districts and county supervisors whose board members are farmers, those dependent on farmers, and those representing farmers.

"Resilience" has replaced sustainability because there's no way to attain sustainable water use in the Valley without fallowing hundreds of thousands of acres of irrigated farmland and the major owners of that farm-

land are among the most powerful players in state and national politics.

In what amounts to a hostage situation, Big AG is responding to proposals for increased flows along Valley rivers by saying, "Unless we get our water, cities and towns down here—including all those from Merced to Bakersfield and points between—are going belly up. That's not just almonds and pistachios we're talking about, it's people, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of them, all dependent on AG money."

Like the nation's banks and giant corpo-

rations, Big AG is saying it's too big to fail. Thus far, the only resistance to their argument is from environmentalists who point out that the destruction of fisheries, farmland in the San Joaquin Delta, rivers, ecosystems and endangered species is too big a price to pay for nuts, especially since nuts are mostly an export product anyway. The problem is that the financial spinoff from those nuts, what AG proponents call the "multiplier," really is the biggest factor in a Valley economy far

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John McCutcheon Jan. 14 concert kicks off Peace/Life Center's 50th year

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. This 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.

John shares: "2019 was a year in which I traveled hither and yon celebrating Pete Seeger's 100th birthday. My biggest takeaway was how much people love the sound of singing together. It was as though Pete's music gave them permission to do something they'd not done in too long. And that was Pete's magic: he gathered us together in dark rooms, sat us shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers and convinced us to dare to raise our voices, to risk harmony, and the surprising

beauty and power of it was unforgettable. But forget it we did. Until If I Had a Hammer or Turn, Turn, Turn was intoned and it all suddenly came back.

The entire experience has not only stayed with me, it has me rethinking how to do my work. What my work is, really. I long ago abandoned the notion that a concert is an opportunity to show off for people. Certainly, they want to be entertained and enjoy musical virtuosity. But music is more than cotton candy for the ears and concerts are more than spectacles that impress. Pete moved us. He gave us hope. He challenged us and called on us to dream big. "The impossible is just going to take a little time," I remember him telling me. Indeed."

Pete Seeger 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. (See accompanying article for more information on Red Tail Ring)

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 be purchased in person by check or cash at the Brethren Church, 2301 Woodland Ave., 523-1438, and at Intrinsic Elements, 1214 J St., 409-8510.

You can sponsor the John McCutcheon concert

Please consider becoming a sponsor of the concert. You will receive tickets to the concert, your name in the program, and reserved seating. Five levels of sponsorship are available:

- Autoharp — \$50 One ticket
- Guitar — \$100 Two tickets
- Banjo — \$175 Four tickets
- Piano — \$300 Eight tickets
- Hammer Dulcimer — \$500 Sixteen tickets



For information on sponsorships contact Tim Smart 209/918-3332 or tim.les.smart@gmail.com

John says, "Here's hoping you find light, love, and laughter in these dark times. Peace in the New Year."

For information, contact Ken Schroeder 209-480-4576. John's website is www.folk-music.com

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20 Labor Warriors for 2020: Taking Activism to the Next Level

By TIM ROBERTSON

The NVLF has developed a reputation for prioritizing member development through our top-notch training programs. From our multi-week flagship Training to Educate and Activate Members (TEAM) Program, to regular trainings on everything from communication to worker rights to advocacy, the NVLF sets the standard in helping members become stronger activists.

In 2020, we're taking it to a whole new level!

As we approach the most critical election year in recent memory, the NVLF is sponsoring a new year-long training program designed to help you take your activism to the next level. In our new "20 for 2020" program, the NVLF is looking for the best of best activists – 20 in all – to learn to be fully-empowered labor warriors!

Participants will learn high-level organizing skills, cam-



paign and action planning, lobbying skills and much more!

The introductory meeting and training session will be Saturday, January 4, 2020 from 10AM-12Noon at the NVLF -- 417 7th St. in Modesto. We'll talk about how we build power and why, as well as outlining the program for the year.

We at the NVLF are extremely excited about this unprecedented program and hope you are as well. To sign up to attend, please fill out the form at this link:

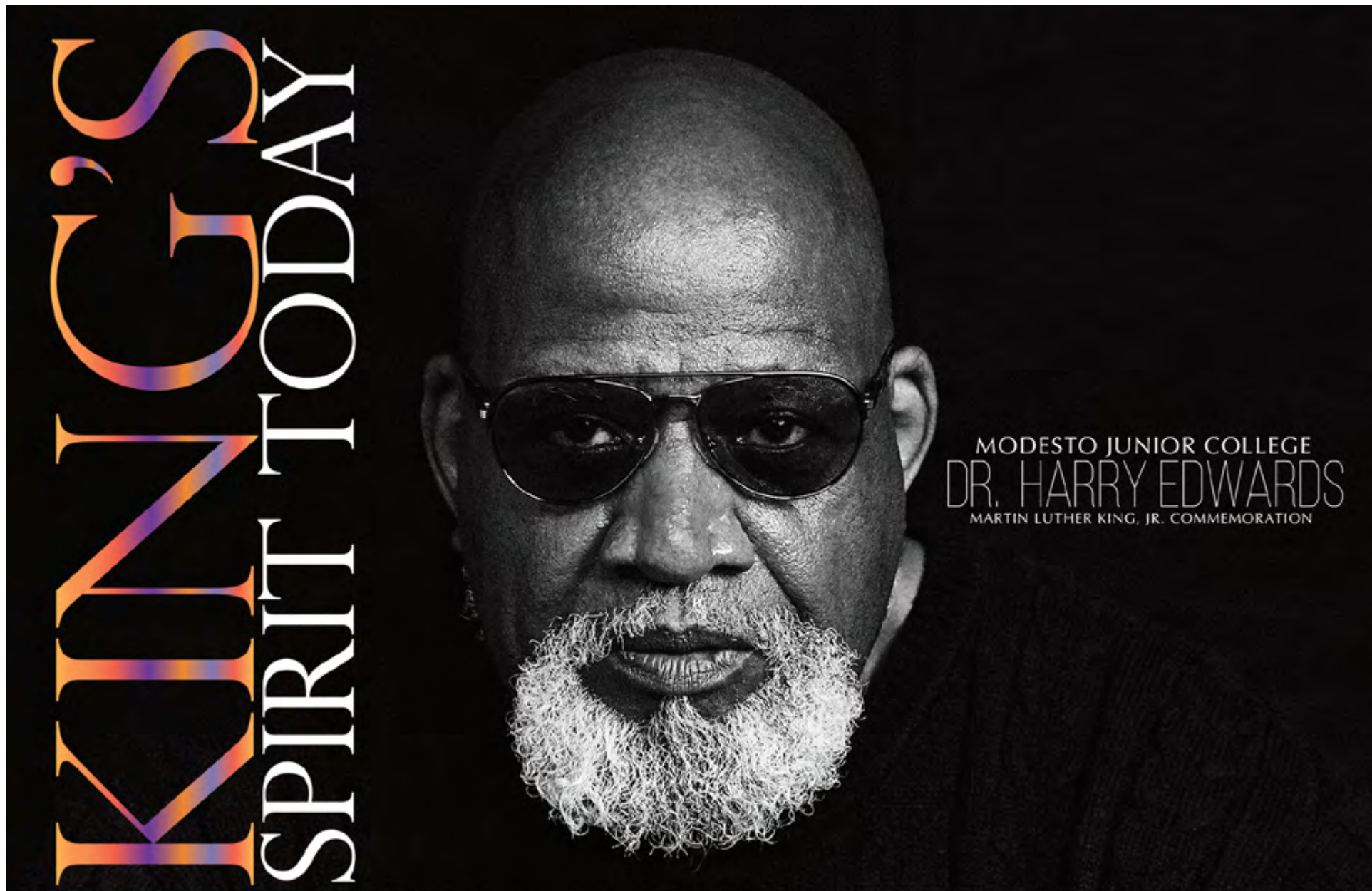
RSVP Link: <https://forms.gle/S7pdjDpkKiQfYToz5>

Find the full program details here. Questions? Email Tim Robertson, tim@nvlf.org

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.



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Red Tail Ring to perform with John McCutcheon

By KEN SCHROEDER

Red Tail Ring will be performing with John McCutcheon on his California tour, including Modesto on January 14. Laurel Premo and Michael Beauchamp of Red Tail Ring create lush, intricate arrangements of original folk music and traditional ballads with banjo, fiddle, guitar, and close harmonies. “The very best of the 21st century’s minimalist and highly original folk music . . . a peerless duo.” – American Roots UK.

The Michigan-based band is 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.

Since 2009, Red Tail Ring has performed their brand of acoustic roots all over the United States, traveled overseas to play in the UK, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and Sweden, and has also appeared at some of the most notable festivals and venues that the US has to offer.

John sings their praises: “A fabulous young duo, Red Tail Ring, will be opening. They’ll do a short set of their music and then join me in the 2nd half for some fun collaborations. I discovered the music of 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. I know my long-time California friends are going to flip over these two. Check out www.redtailring.com for some stunning videos.”

Michael and Laura say, “We’re looking forward to time on the road with John and to backing him up on a bit of his own material, too. John released his 40th album this year, and his poetic songwriting has been an impactful force for generations of folk music participants.”

IN MEMORIAM

Gene Palsgrove: A Life of Building Bridges

August 10, 1923 – November 25, 2019

On March 30, 2019, the committee for the 25th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration honored Gene Palsgrove and Mary Baucher with the MLK Legacy Award. On behalf of the committee and leading up to the award presentation, Dan Onorato summarized the generosity of their lives. What follows is his tribute.

Good evening, everybody, and a special welcome to the family members and close friends of Gene and Mary who are here tonight, and to our keynote speaker Dr. Michael Eric Dyson.

Dr. King dedicated his life to working for nonviolent social change. For the last several years the organizing committee for this annual commemoration has honored local people who, in their varied commitments, have lived that legacy. Tonight, marking 25 years since we started, we honor two of our elders, Gene Palsgrove and Mary Baucher. Gene is 95; Mary is not far behind.

In their long lives they have faced suffering with compassion. They have confronted unfairness with understanding and determined action. They have been faithful to their vision of meeting needs with imagination and love. And in living generously and with good will toward all, they have learned the wisdom of life’s central paradox that “in giving, we receive.”

Gene and Mary are life-long active members of the Modesto Church of the Brethren, one of the three “peace churches” in the U.S. Gene is from Ohio, Mary from Illinois. A major influence on Gene in his adolescence was a Brethren minister who was dedicated to peace. For Mary, Brethren seminarians and others at a Brethren summer camp helped deepen her thinking. Both graduated from the Brethren Church’s Manchester College in Indiana. And both volunteered in Brethren Service Projects to work with migrants, Gene in south Modesto, Mary in Fresno.

Ever since then, each, in different ways, has spent his or her life helping others. Tonight’s program lists a sampling of various projects they’ve given their time and energy to. I will highlight one, Modesto’s Sister City Project with Khmelnytsky in the Ukraine.

Picture the time, the mid 1980s, the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Both countries poised with thousands of nuclear missiles ready to launch against the other. The threat of nuclear war was palpable. In this environment of fear and mistrust, Gene heard about a “Paired City” project that involved people-to-people connections, a kind of citizen diplomacy. Inspired by this “Paired City” program, Gene worked with others to establish a sister city with Khmelnytsky in the Ukraine, then still part of the Soviet Union. Gene wrote the mayor of Khmelnytsky explaining the project and expressing interest in having a delegation from Modesto visit. After several letters and still no reply, the local committee wrote saying they would arrive in April 1985, “in peace and friendship.” Modesto’s mayor Peggy Mensinger was part of the local group.

Friendly, open strangers and a warm Ukrainian welcome gave birth to a Sister City relationship that continues to this day. Gene is proud and thankful to have been instrumental in



building this bond. He has gone to Khmelnytsky five times and several times has helped welcome groups from Khmelnytsky to Modesto. On his first visit, he was asked to speak on the radio. Gene asked delegation members Mary and (her later deceased husband) Bob Baucher to say a few words.

Mary and Bob had suffered the death of their youngest son in a farm accident. We know the devastating pain and heart ache, Mary and Bob told their audience, and the indelible memory of our loss. But we know also of your losses in World War II, the many millions throughout the Soviet Union and here in the Ukraine, your sons, fathers, brothers, relatives, and friends. We have some understanding of your deep grief, and we stand with you in your sorrow. Bob and Mary’s quiet understanding and compassion, shared from the heart, broke through a barrier and built a bridge.

That’s what peacemakers Gene and Mary have done throughout their lives— broken through barriers and built bridges, Gene through his outgoing friendliness and leadership, and Mary through her unassuming, quiet presence and diligent attention to people and to getting the work done.

In my interview with Gene and Mary earlier this week, I asked them what advice they might offer us. Mary said, “When you meet someone, pay attention to them and listen. Respect them. We are all different, but we have the same needs. Break down the “Us vs Them” attitude.” Gene said, “Get involved.”

For two people who’ve spent their lives respecting people and being involved, please join together to honor this year’s recipients of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Award, Gene Palsgrove and Mary Baucher.

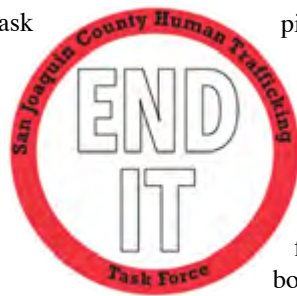
Mary, would you please come to the stage to receive the award. Gene, would you please stand up. Everybody, let’s show Mary and Gene our appreciation for their lives lived so generously.

A memorial service will be held at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto, California, on Sunday, January 19, 2020, at 3:00 p.m. Donations may be made in Gene’s memory to Interfaith Ministries, 120 Kerr Ave., Modesto, CA 95354, or Modesto Peace/Life Center, PO Box 134, Modesto, CA 95353-0134.

Local Taskforce Hosts 4th Annual END IT Human Trafficking Summit

The San Joaquin County Human Trafficking Task Force in collaboration with the San Joaquin County Office of Education will host the 4th Annual Human Trafficking End It Summit on Friday, January 31, 2020 from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Tickets to attend the End It Summit are \$25.00 or reserve tables of 8 for \$300.00. The Summit will be held at the Robert J. Cabral Agriculture Center in Stockton, California.

This year's keynote, Carissa Phelps is a Mexican American author, attorney, and advocate for sexually exploited runaway children and homeless youth. She is the subject of an award-winning documentary which revisits her life as a sexually exploited runaway child living on the streets of Fresno, California. Having been involved in various petty crimes and probation violations, she was incarcerated at the CK Wakefield Home for Boys during their



pilot program to integrate girls into the facility. She eventually graduated with an MBA and a J.D. degree from UCLA. She is the founder of Runaway Girl, Inc., which advocates for runaway and homeless youth while providing training for organizations to effectively reach out and address homelessness and human trafficking. In 2012, her life story was told in the book, *Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets, One Helping Hand at a Time*.

The End It Summit will highlight accomplishments achieved by the San Joaquin County Human Trafficking Task Force over the past year and share the critical goals for the upcoming year. Additionally, participants will hear from some of our county's top agencies during a panel discussion and insight on how to be a part of our communities' effort to respond to and eliminate human trafficking.

Space is limited. Tickets are \$25.00 and reserved tables of

8 are \$300.00. To find out about Sponsorships contact Joelle Gomez at jgomez@chsstk.org. To purchase tickets, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/85260453311>

The San Joaquin County Human Trafficking Task Force, established in 2014, now has more than 60 local government and non-government agencies, including Children's Home of Stockton, Child Abuse Prevention Council, Community Medical Centers, Human Services Agency/ Children's Services, Motel 6, St. Joseph's Medical Center, Stockton Police Department, San Joaquin District Attorney's Office, Probation, Victim Witness, and Women's Center YFS. It is only through a collective effort, action and commitment that we can achieve our goal of creating a community, and world, where we can all live free of human trafficking.

GREEN TIPS: EPA Brings Zephán Wood and EcoLearn to Stanislaus County

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Zephán Wood, California State University Stanislaus student and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) intern, recently presented the EPA's EcoLearn program to fifth and sixth graders at Fremont Open Plan.

Zephán writes:

"Overall this was a captive audience that shared in a mutual exchange of knowledge, as well as exploring ways they can change their personal and family lifestyles to reduce their carbon footprints.

Fremont Open Plan is a public school within a school that focuses on integrative curriculum, incorporating environmental, human rights and peace issues into the educational fabric, hence several students who had vast knowledge on the issue of climate change helped guide the presentation.

The students really enjoyed calculating their **carbon footprints**,* joyfully looking at their partner's screens to compare each other's responses and results. Many of them expressed their appreciation of the presentation, some even asking if a master's degree is needed to have a job like this (so sweet).

I had just as wonderful a time as they had and look forward to offering future presentations at Fremont Open Plan and many other schools and after school programs in the Stanislaus County area!"

ACTION: Zephán is available to bring the EcoLearn program to a school near you and help you discover your personal foot print. The EcoLearn Program provides environmental enrichment activities for students in preschool through 5th grade. Through the program students not only will increase their environmental knowledge but will be empowered to use their skills outside the classroom. Small actions, like asking to compost food at home, will allow students to have a noticeable impact on the community. Education makes a difference, and the EPA is ready to bring Zephán and EcoLearn to your classroom.

*Carbon Footprint Calculator: <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>

Contact Zephán at zephánw@gmail.com

When I got music, I got a place to go

By MIDDAGH GOODWIN

It used to be driving around listening to the radio was a right of passages for teenager all over America. It was how the rest of us passed the time while stuck in traffic or as we just cruised around on a Saturday night.

When was the last time you tuned in to the radio? The last time you heard local band music came out of the speakers of a car?

Hopefully, that is all about to change.

KCBP 95.5 FM is Modesto's community radio station and already has been playing a fair number of local artists and is where my dial has been for the last several months.

On Monday, November 24th my new radio show, Modesto Area Music aired for the first time on KCBP. It was a special hour of local music released on vinyl. You can hear Modesto Area Music with Middagh Goodwin broadcast weekly at 5 pm every Monday and rebroadcast on Friday at 6 pm and Saturday at 9 pm. You will listen to songs of all genres spanning several decades performed by musicians from the greater 209.

My goal with the show is to continue to promote and grow and showcase our local music scene. To allow local artists to have that "electric" feeling of hearing a song they wrote or recorded. If you are interested in being included in my



show, you can email songs appropriate for airing to mamarecords209@gmail.com and make sure you cc musickcbp@gmail.com so the station can consider it for regular rotation.

I am looking forward to what will happen next year, a new decade, the Roaring Twenties. Downtown Modesto is more vibrant than it has been in years; there are more opportunities to hear locals perform and talk of some new spaces opening up that will allow even more live music. None of this will last without our continued support. I urge you to step up and go out more often, supporting the restaurants and cafes that host live music, especially on the off nights. Go check out an open mic or better yet get up on stage and perform a song or tell a joke at one.

I want everyone to make a New Year's resolution to go out more, to bring your friends and family and fill up our venues. **Music and art are meant to be enjoyed with others.**

Join your host Middagh Goodwin for the Modesto Area Music show starting Mondays @5pm with replays Fridays @9pm & Saturdays @6pm. Listen on 95.5FM or online at kcbpradio.org.

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<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

The Pilot Flame

By TOM PORTWOOD

It was four in the afternoon when I got to the bus stop on the corner of Floyd Avenue and Coffee Road; it was a pretty day in early July, with a cooling, almost balmy, breeze. A pleasant day to take the bus around the block to the grocery store, then start reading a novel over a cup of coffee at McDonald's.

I saw the old woman sitting on the bench, her head bowed, sobbing softly, eyelashes wet with tears. "I'm so sorry," she said, shoving a canvas shopping bag closer to where she sat to make room for me. The woman stared ahead, slumped and looking lost, the bag overflowing with clothes, packages of candy bars, potato chips, plastic water bottles, "Here, sit yourself down," she murmured.

I sat down beside the shopping bag. "Thanks," I said. "Hope you're having a blessed day," the woman said, struggling to smile. "Me, I've seen better, can't wait to get this one done." The woman cried openly now. "I'm so sorry," I whispered, stunned. "Bless you. It'll get better. Pray for me. I got evicted from my apartment today. But the Lord will provide I know He will." She almost smiled again. I sat there thinking, envious of her faith, hoping her God would come through for her, but lost for words. Sunday traffic flowed by us - it was the last day of a Fourth of July weekend for most of us, a day for wine-tasting at posh wineries, for family picnics out in the backyard, for swimming lazily with a noddle in the pool, or sipping a Piña Colada in your lush, well-manicured patio. For this woman, though, a day for finding yourself out on the street, a bag full of belongings by your side, a breeze

All of us share space on this tiny planet as it spins around the sun, physically so close to one another, breathing the same air, many of us privileged and secure, but often blithely unaware of the desperate plight endured daily by so many of our neighbors.

riffling through the graying strands of your thinning hair.

All of us share space on this tiny planet as it spins around the sun, physically so close to one another, breathing the same air, many of us privileged and secure, but often blithely unaware of the desperate plight endured daily by so many of our neighbors, like this old woman who, even as she struggled through this terrible day, carried about her a sense of dignity and strength, a pilot flame to keep pushing on. We talked on for a few minutes. I asked the woman if she had a place to go. She said no. That silenced me even more. I started thinking of shelters that might be open on Sunday, mentioned the Salvation Army downtown, but couldn't remember the cross streets, or if it was open on the weekends or this time of day. The woman smiled, said she just wanted to sit on the bench and "rest my bones for a while." I listened, nodding to what she was saying, groping for words I could never find.

A moment later, the 32 braked at our stop. I got up off the bench, glancing down at the woman as I steadied myself with my walking cane, sliding a little money into her shopping bag. She smiled her thanks, but I was ashamed I couldn't give her any real help. The wooden bench glared like polished metal from the sun, and she seemed smaller now as I stood over her. "All the best to you," I said. "You too...bless you for listening," the woman replied, her eyes blinking as she nodded at the bus driver to go on without her. The bus doors

closed, and we did indeed go on without her.

Almost six months have gone by since I had that brief conversation with the woman on that bench. The relentless heat of summer has given way to the damp and cold of late autumn. Whenever I catch the bus at that stop, I think back to that day and the dire circumstances the woman was facing and wonder what became of her. Was she able to resolve the crisis of that moment within days, perhaps weeks, and find another home, or is she still battling just to survive out on the streets? If the latter is the case, what have the months of scrounging for food and shelter and clothing done to her health, to her spirit? What would happen to any of us if we were suddenly cut off without a home or resources, particularly if we were alone as this woman all but admitted she was? Would we possess the grace and strength she displayed that afternoon?

As another winter approaches, many in our community are hopeful that the new 182-bed shelter at the Salvation Army's Berberian Center will be a truly positive development in addressing the housing and other desperate needs of so many of our neighbors. One step among many still needed, no doubt. But as long as we remember that we can all fall victim to circumstances beyond our control, as long as we embrace the fact that we are all neighbors, everyone one of us in this community, striving for so many of the same goals, then there really is hope. The pilot flame is still lit.

Only Bridging Can Heal a World of Breaking

Meaningful bridging—like real integration—must acknowledge, respect, and appreciate difference as a starting point.

By JOHN A. POWELL

At a time of heightened polarization and intense inequality in the United States and around the world, social differences run the risk of being turned into fault lines and exploited for divide-and-conquer politics. As political scientists Rose McDermott and Peter K. Hatemi recently observed, inflammatory us-versus-them rhetoric "instigates neural mechanisms from the evolutionary desire to be part of the group."

Diversity can be a great strength, but it is susceptible to

manipulation when not accompanied by community leaders from all backgrounds willing and able to bridge across difference. The idea of "bridging" provides a path to healing the practices of "breaking" across communities of difference that are so prevalent today.

Now used more broadly, bridging originates in social capital theory. It's a concept used to investigate trust and social cohesion, as well as reciprocity and civic bonds. It describes relationships between and among different groups of people in society, and is a form of social capital, which examines connections that connect people across a cleavage that often divides society (such as race, class, or religion). Bridging occurs when members of different groups reach beyond their own group to members of other groups. Examples of this would be moving into integrated neighborhoods or joining sports clubs or places of worship where people hold different identity markers from oneself.

Several years ago, here at the University of California, Berkeley, we began to examine bridging through the lens of "othering and belonging." "Othering" occurs when a person or group is not seen as a full member of society, as an outsider or "less than" or inferior to other people or groups. It happens at an interpersonal level across many dimensions such as race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and others, but is also expressed at the group level. When governments and other elites participate in the othering of certain groups, othering reaches its most dangerous level, and can lead to violence, and even genocide.

One of the mechanisms of othering is the practice of break-

ing—the antithesis of bridging. Breaking occurs when members of a group not only turn inward (known as "bonding," in social capital terms), but also turn against the "outsider" group or the other. The otherness and threat of the out-group can be used to build psychological or physical walls. It tells the other, "You are not one of us. You don't belong and you should not get the same public resources or attention and regard that my group gets." Breaking emerges from a belief that people who are not part of the favored group are somehow dangerous or unworthy. It is largely based on fear, and a feeling of insecurity. These emotions may be grounded on a belief that "those people"—whoever they are—are stealing our jobs, harming our neighborhoods, or that they pose a threat to our sacred values and norms.

In the U.S. political environment today, there are multiple "others." Immigrants, Muslims, and people of color are prominent "others," and our current administration advances breaking policies and employs divisive rhetoric that enflames fear of these others. But even well-meaning liberals undermine bridging and perpetuate othering through strategies such as assimilation.

For example, the notion of "not seeing difference" or assuming that one group is just like another, more favored group, can undermine the building of bridges. Saying that "Muslims are just like Christians even though they attend a mosque instead of a church" erases any differences, and tries to assimilate the marginalized group into the dominant one.

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Young environmentalist in the United Arab Emirates invents robots to help protect nature

From the UN Environmental Programme

Asked about the role of children in creating a positive impact on the environment in the United Arab Emirates, 11-year-old Sainath Manikandan passionately says: “the backbone of a nation is its youth. We have the power to bring about a change in our schools, homes and environment, and together we can create a wave of change.”

Manikandan is a young environmentalist leading the way in finding innovative solutions to some of the environmental challenges in the United Arab Emirates, through raising awareness within his community of how individual action can drive far-reaching, positive change. Having developed a passion and determination for championing environmental causes from a very young age, he has been supported by his family and the wider community in pursuing his goal of creating positive and enduring impact on the environment.

For Manikandan, technological innovation is at the heart of environmental protection. “As a green activist, I strongly believe that we can change our existing practices into green and sustainable solutions using technology,” he argued. Inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals, and the UN Environment Programme’s Clean Seas and Beat Plastic Pollution campaigns, Manikandan created two prototypes of robots that support the principles and practices expressed under goal 14—Life Below Water, and goal 2—Zero Hunger.

MBot, the ocean cleaning robot

The Marine Robot Cleaner, or the MBot Cleaner, tackles the global issue of marine litter. “The MBot Cleaner is a prototype robot that can remove floating waste from water surfaces. I have designed an app, the Plastic Cleaner App, to send start and stop signals to my MBot Cleaner, which will be available on the coastlines and in different locations across the seas and oceans. As soon as the signal from the Plastic Cleaner App reaches the nearest MBot Cleaner, it moves to that particular location in the ocean to collect plastic waste,” explained Manikandan.

He recalled his visits to various cities in his home country, where he was able to see the plastic waste crisis firsthand, as a defining experience in his journey towards becoming an active, outspoken environmentalist. Manikandan received a lot of recognition and won several awards related to the MBot Cleaner, but what motivates him to find creative solutions to pressing environmental challenges goes far beyond. “Plastic pollution is an important global issue. I want to change the world’s attitude towards plastic within a generation because if the same trend continues by 2050, there will be more plastics in the seas and oceans than marine species. I want us to preserve and conserve our marine environment,” stated Manikandan.



Manikandan at the “INNOVATOR 2018” event in Abu Dhabi, UAE in February 2018. His innovation, the Marine Robot Cleaner, won the first place as Best Technology Project.

Agribot, the farming robot

His second robot prototype, targeting goal 2—Zero Hunger, specifically through promoting and supporting sustainable agriculture, is called Agribot. It is estimated that 821 million people were undernourished in 2017, and goal 2 aims to end all hunger and malnutrition by the year 2030. At the heart of achieving these targets is promoting sustainable agricultural practices and ensuring access to resources that can nourish and sustain the global population. Manikandan hopes that his agricultural robot can provide a form of support for pressured farmers in plowing the land, sowing the seeds and covering the seeds with soil. Agribot will greatly benefit the farmers as it is easy to control and programme as per the farmers’ needs. “I hope that through this initiative I can help remove hunger from our society. I want to help our environment by developing my prototype robots on a bigger scale,” he added.

Despite being an ardent supporter of the role technological innovations can play in tackling environmental challenges, Manikandan recognizes that a social shift is necessary for the achievement of large-scale change. He has been heavily involved in community-level activism and has been raising awareness about plastic pollution and the actions that individuals can take to minimize the plastic waste they generate.

“I have started my own campaign, called the PEPC Campaign, to inform people about the importance of recycling and to put an end to single-use plastics. I am collecting paper, electronic waste, plastics and cans for recycling from my neighborhood. I want to motivate my community to be a part of environment protection movements and engage them to heal the environment and love the planet,” Manikandan explained. The awareness-raising campaign revolves around promoting the 6 Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Rethink, and Refuse.

“We can learn a lot from children and youth,” says Mohammed Angawi, focal point for the United Arab Emirates at the UN Environment Programme’s (UNEP) West Asia Office. “It is critical to empower them and give them the space for creativity and innovation. Young people can influence behavioural change in adults, which can then lead to better decision-making. With the right awareness, tools, and pro-environment attitude, they can lead us all towards a healthy, vibrant planet.”

Beyond the PEPC campaign, Manikandan regularly carries out presentations and talks, and writes articles for magazines discussing environmental issues and the role people can play in creating a more sustainable environment. He has already begun to notice the positive impact his activism is having on the wider community. There has been a lot of interest from his peers and friends in participating in his campaign, and many began making small changes in their daily lives such as carrying refillable bottles, refusing plastic straws and bags, planting trees, and walking or taking public transport to school or work when possible.

Manikandan is an active member of the Emirates Environment Group in Dubai, a UNEP-accredited environmental professional working group that has been using education and action programmes, projects and campaigns, and community-level engagement to highlight and address key environmental challenges facing the United Arab Emirates and the region. The group has been extremely active in raising awareness and promoting best practices, supporting government agencies, and being a part of national delegations participating in regional and international summits. The Emirates Environment Group has also empowered youth, such as Manikandan, to pursue their passion for environmental causes.

From <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/young-environmentalist-united-arab-emirates-invents-robots-help-protect>



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COP25 Ends with a Whimper: A Few Takeaways

By JORDAN DAVIDSON, EcoWatch

The longest UN climate meeting in history extended two extra days for a marathon bargaining session but ended early Sunday morning with little accomplished. Policy makers mostly decided to punt strengthening their commitments to lower emissions and to a market for carbon emissions, until COP26 in Glasgow next December, the [AP](#) reported.

Protestors denounced polluting nations for sacrificing the health of future generations. Policy makers shirked the calls from demonstrators, youths and scientists who said the only way to skirt a global catastrophe is a drastic and coordinated reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as [CNN](#) reported.

The UN secretary general tweeted his frustration early yesterday morning. “I am disappointed with the results of #COP25,” wrote António Guterres. “The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the [climate crisis](#). But we must not give up, and I will not give up.”

His disappointment was echoed by other conference leaders, including Chilean environment minister and conference president, Carolina Schmidt, who said, “The consensus is still not there to increase ambition to the levels that we need. Before finishing I want to make a clear and strong call to the world to strengthen political will and accelerate climate action to the speed that the world needs. The new generations expect more from us,” as the [BBC](#) reported.

And Alden Meyer, a policy expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said, “Never have I seen such a disconnect between what the [science](#) requires and what the climate negotiations are delivering in terms of meaningful action. Most of the world’s biggest emitting countries are missing in action and resisting calls to raise their ambition,” as the [BBC](#) reported.

Here are a few takeaways from the conference:

Carbon Emitters and Fossil Fuels Prevailed

The U.S. and several other prominent polluters blocked a voluntary measure that would have set more ambitious targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions next year, as [The New York Times](#) reported. Rather than seek consensus and show generosity on the world stage, the [Trump](#) administration pushed back against an agreement that would compensate the world’s poorest and most vulnerable countries for climate-crisis induced [extreme weather](#), including storms, droughts, floods and rising seas, according to [The New York Times](#).

The U.S. was not alone in obstructing progress. Brazil and Australia were also identified as main culprits in blocking action, along with Saudi Arabia and Russia. China and India also resisted improving their carbon emissions goals.

“Most of the large emitters were missing in action or obstructive,” said Helen Mountford, a vice president at World Resources Institute, as [The New York Times](#) reported. “This reflects how disconnected many national leaders are from the urgency of the science and the demands of their citizens.”

Activists Are Angry Over Inaction

Toward the beginning of COP25, nearly 500,000 protestors



took to the streets of Madrid to demand action on the conference’s first Friday. The protest coincided with a [Fridays for Future](#) protest and was led by the face of the movement, Greta Thunberg, who reminded the crowd, “The change we need is not going to come from people in power,” said Thunberg to the crowds, as the [BBC](#) reported. “The change is going to come from the people, the masses, demanding change.”

Protestors continued to march on the streets throughout the conference and Extinction Rebellion blocked roads and camped out by the conference hall, demanding protections for indigenous people in Brazil’s rainforest, as [Vox](#) reported. That same day protestors from Latin and North America held an impromptu protest, blocking the gates of the main hall, as the [AP](#) reported.

Youth protestors took over the stage on Wednesday, as the executive director of the United Nations Environment Program [tweeted](#). Then protestors took over the hall in the waning moments of the conference

When Thunberg and other youth activists from around the globe addressed the conference the following, they had grown impatient with the inaction the nearly two-week conference had netted.

“Finding holistic solutions is what the COP should be all about, but instead it seems to have turned into some kind of opportunity for countries to negotiate loopholes and to avoid raising their ambition,” Thunberg told conference members, as [Vox](#) reported. Several activists, including Hilda Flavia Nakabuye, joined Thunberg on the dais. Nakabuye accused the representatives of failing her generation as they have negotiated in vain for the last 25 years.

“So I’ve been taking part in these COPs for 25 years, and I’ve never seen the divide between what’s happening on the inside of these walls and what’s happening on the outside so large,” said Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace, according to [Vox](#).

Brazil Is the Big Loser

The winner of the ignominious Colossal Fossil award was Brazil. The satirical award for the worst climate offender is given out by the activist group [Climate Action Network](#), which cited Brazil for “destroying the climate concretely on

the ground and in the negotiations, attacking and killing the very people who are protecting unique ecosystems: [indigenous people](#),” [Climate Action Network](#) wrote:

The U.S. took home several Fossil of the Day awards for its refusal to help vulnerable populations and its refusal to accept the science around the climate crisis. Russia, Australia and Japan also won a few for their addiction to [fossil fuels](#), especially coal, which they all refused to speak against.

Bad Timing

The conference fell at an awkward time for many countries. The U.S. is in the midst of impeachment hearings. China, Chile and France are all facing domestic unrest that threatens to undermine their climate priorities. Parts of Australia are crippled by brushfires and water shortages. And the UK went through a general election during the COP25 conference.

A European Bright Spot

At the opening of the conference, Spain’s prime minister derided [climate deniers](#) and called for Europe to lead the way in fighting the climate crisis.

“If Europe led the industrial revolution, Europe must lead the decarbonization [effort]. At a moment marked by the silence of some, Europe has a lot to say,” said Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, at the start of the conference, as [El País](#) reported. “The battle against climate change requires moving from words into action.”

Back in Brussels, the EU commission laid the groundwork for the world’s largest economic bloc, the European Union, to be carbon-neutral by 2050 with a massive overhaul of infrastructure and the economy, as [EcoWatch](#) reported.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? The websites below have resources around future Climate Strikes. Apparently, there is a world-wide 3-day strike planned for April 2020, no details yet.

Global Climate Strike: <https://globalclimatestrike.net/>

Fridays For the Future: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>. An important site with lots of resources for young people to use to organize. A registration section should be used once a local event is organized. Also check out Fridays For the Future’s Facebook page.

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



Please Join Us for
Our 8th Annual POETRY FESTIVAL!

MoSt POETRY
Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center

featuring our popular
Workshop, Luncheon and Poetry Contest!
with Special Guest Author/Poets & Workshop Leaders...

Lee Herrick has authored three poetry books, *Scar and Flower*, *Gardening Secrets of the Dead*, and *This Many Miles from Desire*. His poems have also appeared in numerous literary magazines and anthologies.

Camille Norton's first collection of poems, was a National Poetry Series winner in 2004. She is Professor of English at University of the Pacific in Stockton and has co-edited *Resurgent: New Writing by Women*, featuring experimental writing by women in literature, film, and the visual arts.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2020
9:30 am to 4:00 pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
1528 Oakdale Rd., Modesto

Cost: General \$35; MoSt Members \$30; HS/College Students \$10.
Questions? info@mostpoetry.org or Karen Baker: rkb2516@gmail.com

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Draining the Last Great Aquifer

from page 1

too dependent on its one major player. History usually offers the best lesson, and the history of water use in the Valley is especially instructive.

After draining the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, farmers reduced the San Joaquin River to vast stretches of summer sand, then took enough water from the Sacramento River to imperil the ecology of the San Joaquin Delta and San Francisco Bay. Today, under the direction of Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt, Westlands Water District and its partners in the southern part of the Valley are trying to secure rights to even more water from up north. Bernhardt, a former lobbyist for Westlands, appears to have become a far more effective promoter for Big Ag since his ascent to power in the Trump administration.

For a classic object lesson in how easy it is to dismiss sustainability as a viable tactic for water use in the Valley, just consider the one Valley aquifer that isn't critically overdrafted. Located in the eastern foothills of Stanislaus County and including the Modesto, Eastern San Joaquin, Turlock and Delta-Mendota subbasins, the last aquifer is said to be especially productive because its "black sand" in the Mehrten Formation isn't just especially permeable, it's fed by three nearby reservoirs.

Once knowledge of these special and likely unique geological features got out, the rush to convert the rolling hills of what was once pasture and rangeland to nut orchards included not just local farmers but Bay Area investment giants like Trinitas Partners. Almost before anyone could blink, nearly 50,000 acres of trees had covered the ground, virtually every one dependent on groundwater.

Early on after Governor Brown signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014, hopes ran high that the state would at last put a halt to the wanton depletion of groundwater reserves, especially in the Valley. Those

who looked at the fine print were not encouraged; SGMA left management of groundwater to local authorities and offered a twenty-plus year window of compliance.

Given that every aquifer save one in the San Joaquin Valley was already critically overdrafted, SGMA's twenty year period of grace seemed ludicrous to anyone familiar with the history of Valley agriculture, especially those who knew that farmers have routinely added irrigated acreage in the Valley during every drought on record.

Thus, when the state proposed increased flows along Valley rivers to protect endangered fish and fragile ecosystems, it was no surprise that farmers and their spokespeople responded with threats to pump even more groundwater. They knew SGMA had no teeth and knew also that even if it did, local authorities would never act against their own interest.

Even more revealing of the forces driving groundwater policy in the San Joaquin Valley are persistent attempts to sell water by the two districts closest to the last viable aquifer. Though thwarted by public outcry, Modesto Irrigation District proposed water sales to San Francisco several years ago. The Oakdale Irrigation District relies on water sales to buyers in the southern Valley to balance its books. Both districts prefer water sales outside the region to saving their aquifer with applications of local surface water.

And even though it's almost certainly unique in that its combination of highly permeable sands and gravel are gravity-fed by seepage from New Melones, Woodward, and Modesto reservoirs, the Valley's last viable aquifer is virtually certain to be critically overdrafted long before SGMA deadlines are met. Try as we might, nothing yet has been able to overcome the mathematical certainties dictated when outflows are greater than inflows—not even the Valley's great aquifers.

Love Music?

Want to help kids in your community grow and prosper through music?

At Modesto Sound we empower youth with real-world job skills to create music and artistic media.

Consider joining our monthly board meetings where decisions are made on things such as the best way to serve the community with grants received from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council.

Since 2005 Modesto Sound

- Recorded 685 artists
- Trained 248 youth on audio and job skills
- Held hundreds of concerts

Where: Media Building on the corner of Santa Barbara and Yosemite Boulevard (110 Santa Barbara Avenue, Modesto)

When: The second Tuesday of every month 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Get a warm welcome from Janet Seay, Executive Director of Modesto Sound, who welcomes your ideas! No RSVP required. It's OK to just show up.

Why

- Network in the music industry
- Great for the resume
- Help others

More Information

209-573-0533 janet@modestosound.org





POET: Lee Herrick

Lee Herrick is the author of three books of poems, *Scar and Flower*, *Gardening Secrets of the Dead*, and *This Many Miles from Desire*. His poems appear widely in literary magazines, textbooks, anthologies, including *Columbia Poetry Review*, *The Poetry Foundation*, *Indivisible: Poems of Social Justice* and *Here: Poems for the Planet*, with an introduction by the Dalai Lama. He is co-editor of *The World I Leave You: Asian American Poets on Faith and Spirit* (forthcoming in Spring 2020 by Orison Books).

Born in Daejeon, Korea and adopted to the United States, Lee attended Modesto Junior College and received a BA and MA from CSU Stanislaus. He served as Fresno Poet Laureate (2015-2017) and teaches at Fresno City College, where he is working to establish a Social Justice Center, and the MFA Program at Sierra Nevada College.

Note: All of the poems on this page appear in Lee's book *Scar and Flower*. "Flight" and "What I hear when I hear you in my head" first appeared in *Daily Gramma*.

What I hear when I hear you in my head

is the little whisper, the aggregate sorrow, the father's heavy weeping as the son's heavy weeping. What I hear is your artistic response after the massacre, the family of clasped hands, Black hands, Brown hands, a small child whose brother never had a chance, who holds her father's tearful face and says, "Your eyes are like the moon," is what I hear when I hear you in my head this evening, your laughter like tiny harps. I hear your fatigue as another way to say: deprivation. I hear recount, re-tally, a retaliation is what I hear when I hear you in my head is the grace, the charm, the dead, the boy, the dead boy, the boy who died because of the fear, the forest in the other man's heart, the gun, the heartbreak is the sound I hear when I hear you in my head is how we each sigh with distinction, where fatigue meets fire, where we wake and wonder: if we all go out to a field tonight, sit by a fire, say the most honest thing you have ever said in your life, would any dead boy or girl reappear, not like a mirage but reappear, not like a voice in my head but a body in this room, with flesh and bones, with his big smile, orange blossoms in his billowing hair?

First appeared in *Daily Gramma*.

How Music Stays in the Body

Your body is a song called birth or first mother, a miracle that gave birth to another exquisite song. One song raises three boys with a white husband. One song fought an American war overseas. One song leapt from fourteen stories high, and like a dead bird, shattered into the clouds. Most forgot the lyrics to their own bodies or decided to paint abstracts of mountains or moons in the shape of your face. I've been told Mothers don't forget the body. I can't remember your face, the shape or story, or how you held me the day I was born, so I wrote one thousand poems to survive. I want to sing with you in an open field, a simple room, or a quiet bar. I want to hear your opinions about angels. Truth is, angels drink, too—soju spilled on the halo, white wings sticky with gin, as if any mother could forget the music that left her. You should hear how loudly I sing now. I've become a ballad of wild dreams and coping mechanisms. I can breathe now through any fire. I imagine I got this from him or you, my earthly inheritance: your arms, your sigh, your heavy song. I know all the lyrics. I know all the blood. I know why angels howl into the moonlight.

A Translation for My Korean Name

At 21, I wanted to write a manifesto about the ocean, the revolt of the tides, the wild trees' outlandish demands, alone with the moon at the beach, translating my name: dreamer, ascendant, savior, ally. My Korean name means bright light, what you look for during despair, how you write Koran instead of Korean and think of your friend who worked Gibran into his wedding vows, how love is the water between two beaches, one a country where your name was Lee Kwang Soo, one a country where you are renamed Lee Herrick, and you are what you always were, a question, the answer, the story, the dreamer imagining the revolt.

Flight

The in-flight magazine crossword partially done, a corner begun here, scratched out answers there, one set of answers in pencil, another in the green. The woman with the green ball point knew the all-time hit king is Rose and the Siem Reap treasure is Angkor Wat. The woman, perhaps en route to hold her dying mother's hand in Seattle, forgot about death for ten minutes while remembering husband's Cincinnati Reds hat while gardening after the diagnosis. Her handwriting was so clean. Maybe she was a surgeon. Maybe a painter. No. What painter wouldn't know 17 down, Diego's love, five letters? In a rush, her dying mother's voice came back to her, or maybe she was Chinese and her mother's imagined voice said, *wo ai ni*. At 30,000 feet, you focus on 33 across, Asian American classic, *The Woman* _____, when a stranger in the window seat sees the clue, watches me write in W, and she says *Warrior*, and for a moment you forget it is your favorite memoir, and she reminds you of lilies or roses, Van Gogh or stems with thorns, art galleries in romantic cities where she is headed but you should not go. The flight attendant grazes my shoulder. The crossword squares, the letters, the chairs and aisles seem so tight in flight, but there is nothing here but room, really. Maybe the next passenger will know what I do not: 64 down, five letters, Purpose. And why do we remember what we do? We know the buzz of Dickinson's fly and the number of years in Marquez's solitude, but some things we will never know, as it should be: why the body sometimes rumbles like a plane hurtling over southern Oregon, how exactly we fall in love, or if Frida and Maxine Hong Kingston would have loved the same kind of tea.

Originally published in *Daily Gramma*.



How you can help support the Modesto Peace/Life Center

Visit our websites and click the Donate button:

Modesto Peace/Life Center: <http://peacelifecenter.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 other 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.



Modesto Read to a Dog & Authors at the Modesto Library

When: Saturday, January 25, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Where: Modesto Stanislaus County Library, 15th & I Sts.

It will be a very special Read to a Dog this month! Kids can read to a certified therapy dog and some special "doggie" authors will be joining us to share their stories as well!

Maricela Rocha, author of *Chikis the Chihuahua*, Major Mitchell, author of *I'm Molly*, and Erynn Lucas, author of *Carson's Story*, will read to you while you wait to read to a dog.

This program is designed for independent readers up to age 12 to practice reading.

Sponsored by Therapy Dogs Alliance. The Mission of the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) program is to improve the literacy skills of children by reading with a dog. The program utilizes registered therapy animals that have been trained and tested for health, safety, skills and temperament. These special animals volunteer with their owners as "pet partner" teams, offering children an irresistible opportunity to improve their reading in a setting which has proven not only effective, but fun! (See ad, this page.)

2020 AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference

Registration for the 2020 AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference is officially open. With all the critical electoral and democratic work ahead of us in the new year, our theme for the 2020 MLK Conference is "Give Us the Ballot," drawn from Dr. King's pivotal voting rights speech delivered at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom gathering in Washington, D.C., in 1957.

More than 60 years after Dr. King laid out for the nation the innumerable gains that would be made possible if every citizen had full access to the voting booth, we are still facing voter disenfranchisement at alarming levels.

We in the labor movement know that ensuring full voting access and a fair count of every ballot are the most important work we are doing. And I am hopeful that when we convene January 17-19 in Washington, D.C., we will come with our sleeves rolled up and ready to work!



Local Programming at KCBP 95.5 FM

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley - 8:00pm Mondays & Wednesdays

Women of the Valley - 8:00pm Thursdays

The Peril and the Promise - 12:30am Wednesdays, 8:30pm Fridays & 2:30pm Saturdays

Modesto Sound: California Audio Roots Project Season 1 - 11:30am Wednesday's, 11:30am & 5:30pm Sunday's

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, www.kcbpradio.org

What programming do you like or would like to hear? Contact us at programming@kcbpradio.org or call (209) 353-3066. Help put community into community radio! Interested in being part of our Community Advisory Board? Contact operations@kcbpradio.org or call (209) 353-3066.



Bridging

from page 5

Meaningful bridging—such as real integration—must acknowledge, respect, and appreciate difference as a starting point, not try to erase differences. Bridging requires more than just acknowledging the other but listening empathically and holding space for the other within our collective stories. This, of course, is not easy. As author bell hooks reminds us, bridges get walked on.

There are different types of bridges. Short bridges require less effort, less risk, and less vulnerability to erect. Longer bridges are those that require more of us and our communities. They entail greater risk, but also greater reward.

To bridge requires strength and empathy, but it does not require that we sacrifice our values or our identity. It also entails vulnerability, as when Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern responded to New Zealand's mass shooting by affirming values of diversity, refuge, and compassion.

Bridging is so important because only bridging can heal a world of breaking, which is the dominant practice and discourse today. Breaking not only feeds off broad-scale social changes and polarization, it also propels them.

By imagining together, we can use bridges to hear the other and help construct a larger more inclusive "we" where no group dominates or is left out.

John A. Powell wrote this article for the Building Bridges Issue, the Winter 2020 edition of YES! Magazine. John is the director of the Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley, the Robert D. Haas Chancellor's Chair in Equity & Inclusion, and professor of Law, African-American, & Ethnic Studies, at UC Berkeley. Follow John on Twitter @[profjohnpowell](https://twitter.com/profjohnpowell).

Demonstrations and Marches – How to Make Protest Signs

“Making a sign and showing up to a protest is an act of saying that you matter and your voice should be heard. I don’t think it matters if it’s funny or original or not, it just matters that you’re there saying it.”

When doing demonstrations, protests, and counter-protests, one of the greatest tools at your disposal is the protest sign. A protest sign allows for immense creativity, can be used in just about any scenario, are often very cost-efficient to produce, and, as an added bonus, are capable of bringing a lot of added attention to any given activity.

The most important thing that a protest sign needs to be is eye-catching. In order for your sign to stand out, there are a number of important factors to consider when constructing the sign to make it more visible and attractive to the eye. These include deliberately selecting your colors, materials, and content, as well as making sure that the sign can be read easily from a distance.

Content: The content of a protest sign is absolutely crucial. Not only should it have a concise message, but it also needs to deliver the tone to passers-by. The content of just one protest sign can make the difference between someone walking away in disgust, taking a picture to share on social media, or even joining in on the protest. To this end, humor can sometimes be one of the most effective things to include on a protest sign, but if done poorly, can actively turn people away. Likewise, a warm message of inclusion will set a different tone for your activity than a fired-up call to action. It is crucial that thought is put into their content, and that they aren’t thrown together haphazardly. Be creative!

Readability: Sketch out what your message is going to look like on your sign. The number of words should be kept to a minimum in order to keep your statement concise and allow for plenty of room for large letters. The font of the text (whether printed or done by hand) needs to be both bold and large, and presented in such a way that your sign can be read from a distance.



Text-based posters have the most impact with a limited color palette. Your main text should always be well-contrasted against its background, even if that background is full of color.

Kerning plays a role in effectively communicating a message from across a crowd. If someone can’t read your sign because you ran out of space and smushed a bunch of letters together, you might as well not be holding a sign at all. Do a readability check by walking a fair distance away from your poster. Can you still read it, or did you have to squint?

Color: Certain colors specifically pair well together when trying to get someone’s attention. For instance, many movie posters will combine orange and blue: this is because they are considered “complementary” or “opposite” colors and make each other stand out.

Another way to effectively pick colors is to mimic the schemes of road signs and other learned attention-grabbing indicators: emphasizing white-on-red, black-on-yellow, and black-on-orange are all likely to catch the eyes of passers-by.

If you decide to use colors other than black, make sure the colors are not too light. Colors such as pink or yellow will be very difficult to read.

Materials

Foam Core Sheets: The recommended method of construction and most minimal. It’s a little more rigid, but still light enough to carry for an extended period, and you don’t really even need a post. If you would like a post, you can attach it to a cardboard tube with zip ties.

Cardboard from old boxes, which is free and easy to carry.

Poster board in any color you want (fluorescent is great); a piece of cardboard sandwiched by two pieces of poster board, on which you will write your message. The cardboard center increases the sturdiness. Sandwich the cardboard with the two pieces of poster board and staple the top and sides. Do not connect the bottom initially. Insert your cardboard tube inside of the sandwich of cardboard and poster board. Staple and glue.

If you are expecting your protest to receive any form of media attention, having a double-sided sign is much more effective in conveying your message. The media will likely cover the protest from an array of aesthetic angles, and at certain points it is likely that the protesters will not all have signs facing the same direction. Making a double-sided sign capitalizes on as many angles as possible and can greatly increase message visibility.

Other Supplies: Pencils, Poster paint, Cheap brushes, Permanent markers (in case the weather is bad, we don’t want ink to run), Clear packing tape and/or duct tape, Cardboard tubes for sign-carriers. Please do not use wooden sticks. Scanner and printer (or a copy machine).

Options: Print enlarged words on standard copy paper and glue onto foam core, pasteboard or plain cardboard assembling a message. If you want color, try printing letters in outline form and then coloring them in later. Use colored vinyl tape to create letters and words. Use sheets for large signs. Cut slits in them to let the wind through. Have poster commercially printed as photos with text or on vinyl to be weatherproof.

Wording

Generic: Stronger Together, Love Trumps Hate, Care more, Consume less, We Shall Overcome, Resist! You have the right to remain silent but I don’t recommend it, Democracy is not a spectator sport, The only minority destroying American is the rich, Standing for what is right is worth it; Keep the press free, If you aren’t angry, you aren’t paying attention, So bad even the introverts are here, Make America kind again, Tolerance does not mean tolerating intolerance, Build kindness not walls, Protest is Patriotic, Respect existence or expect resistance, We won’t give up, We won’t give in, We will not be silent, I don’t want you to think like me, I just want you to think.

Climate Change: Deny Trump, Not Climate, Denial is not a policy, Climate Solutions = Jobs, The earth needs thinks not deniers, The earth doesn’t have 4 years, Change the Politics not the Climate, There is no Planet B, Keep it in the ground, Put a price on carbon, Climate legislation now, System Change, Not Climate Change, Stop Climate Change (Stop Sign), The Climate is changing, why aren’t we? Our planet is worth more than oil company profits, We raced to the moon, lets race to clean energy, Which green do you see? (money or trees),

The ocean is rising and so are we, There’s no wealth on a dead planet, Don’t be Fossil Fuel-ish! Global Warming burns me up, Climate Justice, Jobs, Justice, Clean Energy, Every Day is Earth Day, No to Fossil Fuels, Yes to Clean Energy, Climate Change is a health crisis, Climate Action Now.

More at <http://bedfordvademocrats.org/how-to-make-protest-signs>



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

JANUARY 2020

Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., Science Community Center, Rm. 115, MJC West Campus. Free; \$2 parking fee. **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?* The Climate Crisis is real, serious and affecting California. It is critical and urgent that we all engage in this topic.

MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science). Free, engaging community science programs. Fridays, 7:30 pm, MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132. **Jan. 24:** Ian Faloona (UC Davis), Agriculture is a Major Source of Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) Pollution in California. Ian's research group investigates how trace gas emissions in marine and terrestrial boundary layers mix, disperse, and ultimately influence the Earth's climate. <http://lawr.ucdavis.edu/people/faculty/faloona-ian>

4 SAT: 20 for 2020 Kickoff Training and Info Session: Building Power for Working People. 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, North Valley Labor Federation 417 7th St., Modesto RSVP to tim@nvlf.org. See article, this issue.

8 WED: VIGIL: Justice at the Border, McHenry & J St., 4:00-5:00 pm. Note: there is no Vigil on January 1.

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

19 SUN: The Modesto Film Society presents Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*. The State Theatre, 1307 J. St., Modesto. 2:00 pm. <https://thestate.org/movies/do-the-right-thing/>. Join the State Theatre and get perks! Visit <http://www.thestate.org/Membership>

25 SAT: 5 Easy Steps to Become a Therapy Dog Handler. Downstairs auditorium, Modesto Library. 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. NO DOGS PLEASE. Information: www.paws4friends.com

25 SAT: Read To a Dog. Kids can read to a certified therapy dog and some special “doggie” authors will be joining us to share their stories. See article this issue.

31 FRI: 4th Annual Human Trafficking End It Summit at the Robert J. Cabral Agriculture Center, Stockton. Hosted by The San Joaquin County Human Trafficking Task Force and the San Joaquin County Office of Education, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. Tickets: \$25.00 or reserve tables of 8 for \$300.00. Purchase online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/85260453311>.

LOOKING AHEAD

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.most-poetry.org. Contest deadline: January 11, 2020; info@mostpoetry.org. See p.8.

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

Saturday March 28: The Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team returns to Modesto for a fun-filled event to support KCBP 95.5 FM. Modesto Junior College Gym, East Campus. Details to follow.

April 3: Peace Essay Contest Awards Ceremony. Roger's Student Center, Modesto Junior College, West Campus. 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/24765549018387/>

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

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.

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: merced-board@gaycentralvalley.org – 1744 G St. Suite H, Merced, CA. www.mercedlgbtcenter.org

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