

Modesto High club works to inform the community about landmines

By KELSEY MESA
IB student, Modesto High School

Every 22 minutes, someone is killed or maimed by a landmine and ninety percent of these victims are civilians. What are you doing about it?

Some teenagers are trying to do something about this. In addition to the creation of the program, "That Landmine Thing," a program for middle school and high school aged kids, IB Students Against Landmines was the brainchild of the International Baccalaureate program and publicized by

former Beatle Paul McCartney. This international organization came to life as a community service group for high school students around the world who were a part of the International Baccalaureate Program (or IB), an honors program that focuses on an international approach to learning and learning for the sake of learning.

The IB program at Modesto High School joined the movement, but the club was soon extended to include all

Landminescontinued p. 11

Kathy Kelly and David Smith-Ferri: Witnesses Against War

Co-founder of Voices in the Wilderness, and co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org), Kathy Kelly will speak at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave. on Sunday, September 28th at 9:30 a.m., and again at the College Avenue Congregational Church, Orangeburg and College Avenues at 4:00 p.m. She will be joined by her friend, poet David Smith-Ferri.



In recent travel to Amman, Jordan, Kathy spent seven weeks living amongst Iraqi families displaced by U.S. war and occupation. She and other Voices for Creative Nonviolence activists have worked to end funding for the war and to assist grassroots groups with analysis, eyewitness accounts, and nonviolence training as they campaign to end

military and economic warfare against Iraq. An organizer who hosted one of Kathy's presentations during a recent tour in upstate New York had this to say: "Having visited Iraq 24 times in the past ten years, Ms. Kelly gave a uniquely personal face to the suffering of civilians in the war zone. Her stories were both harrowing and very moving, and several in the audience expressed a desire to do more to end the occupation of Iraq."

David Smith-Ferri is an activist poet, whose newly released book, *Battlefield without Borders*, portrays his encounters with Iraqi people and the events that have shaped their lives over the last eight years. Many of the poems were written in the Middle East: in Iraq during two visits to the country with Voices in the Wilderness, and recently in Amman, Jordan.

Kathy Kelly has written, "In these poems, David Smith-Ferri's creative intelligence focuses on insidious forces of war, forces that often cause people to shrink in fear. He appeals to our best instincts, urges us to overcome fear, and dares to offer trust and friendship as the basis for creating better social structures. In this sense his poetry is utterly useful and necessary, akin to a brilliant blueprint, beckoning builders."

ACTION: Admission is free. For information, contact Shelly Scribner, 521-6304, ShellyS833@aol.com

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See the world on a Global Exchange Reality Tour

From SHELLY SCRIBNER

Global Exchange Reality Tours have helped thousands connect firsthand with other peoples and cultures, then return home with a deeper understanding of other people, a sense of empowerment, and the tools to effect change here.

You are invited to join an upcoming delegation which offers participants a deeper understanding and engagement with the communal processes of coping and healing after conflict, of the role and responsibility the United States has played in the creation of conflicts abroad, and of the tremendous successes that courageous and resilient communities worldwide are having in the formation of strong and healthy post-conflict societies.

Viet Nam: The Legacies of War & the New Viet Nam: October 10, 2008 - October 23, 2008; approximate cost: \$1950.

Jordan And Syria: War & Displacement in The Middle East: November 26, 2008 - December 06, 2008; approximate cost: \$1875

Afghanistan: Women Making Change: March 02, 2009 - March 11, 2009; approximate cost: \$1750.

All Global Exchange Reality Tours are coordinated by locals working in the host communities we visit and are directed by qualified trip. Regardless of age, background, or your knowledge of particular issues, we invite you to join us on a Global Exchange Reality Tour and learn first hand about global issues.

ACTION: To learn about these and other tours, visit <http://www.globalexchange.org/tours/index.html>

Are you ready to reach Slam Nirvana?

SLAM ON RYE happens on the 2nd Wednesday of Every Month (except July)

LOCATION: Prospect Theatre Project, 520 Scenic Dr. Modesto, CA, 95350

DOORS OPEN / POET SIGN-UP: 6:30 PM

SHOW STARTS: 7:30 PM sharp!

COST: \$5.00 for general admission & competing poets. Admission is limited to the first 100 people.

NOTE FOR POETS: There is a TEN (10) poet limit per night. The first 7 poets to sign up are in and the last 3 poets are drawn at random from the remaining poets who signed up to read. Cash prizes are awarded to the top 2 poets.

NOTE: The theatre seats 75 with room for 20-30 more on the stage and in the aisles. Be there early for a seat or bring a blanket, pillow, or comfortable attire for a seat on the floor. Seriously. It gets very cozy inside.

INFO/SLAM MASTER: Sam Pierstorff (pierstorffs@mic.edu); www.slamonrye.com

Explore the world through music with Sunday Afternoons at CBS

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Sunday Afternoons at CBS continues to introduce the best of world beat, acoustic, classical, jazz and other multicultural music genres to the Modesto/Stanislaus County area during the series' **17th Annual Anker Memorial Concert** season. Music lovers from throughout the area are invited to the community-based Sunday concerts, all of which begin at 3 p.m. in Congregation Beth Shalom, 1705 Sherwood Avenue, Modesto.

The 2008-09 season includes:

KAWEH, OCTOBER 12, 2008: KAWEH (pronounced Ka-veh) performs Spanish Guitar Rumba Flamenca with Latin, Brazilian, Mediterranean & Middle Eastern influences. Most of the group's repertoire consists of original upbeat compositions and easy listening romantic pieces, cover songs by the Gypsy Kings, and Latin and Italian standards. (www.kaweh.com)

RUDOLF BUDGINAS, NOVEMBER 9, 2008: The multi-award winning Budginas (pronounced bud-guinness like the two beers) says, "I want to keep my audience constantly surprised and excited throughout a concert." He brings a spectacular cutting edge piano virtuosic mix of classical, pop, jazz and world music with a Prairie Home Companion sense of humor, which has received critical praise throughout Europe and the United States. (www.rudolfpiano.com)

VIOLINJAZZ, JANUARY 11, 2009: Contemporary violinist Jeremy Cohen of Grammy nominated Quartet San

Francisco will perform with VIOLINJAZZ, Cohen's own mix of jazz & classical music with blues, pop, country and swing-era sounds. Cohen's eclectic style, honed by more than 20 years of performance, reflects his training with Itzhak Perlman and his admiration for violinists ranging from Fritz Kreisler to Joe Venuti. (www.violinjazz.com)

GRACELIEBERMAN and FRIENDS: A VALENTINE TRADITION, FEBRUARY 8, 2009: Grace brings together some of the area's finest local performers for our annual Sunday Afternoons at CBS musical Valentine gift to the community. There is always a full house on hand each year to enjoy this crowd pleaser

ANDY STATMAN, MARCH 22, 2009: Andy, David Grisman's finest mandolin student, was featured on Itzhak Perlman's "In the Fiddler's House" CD, and has performed with Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia and Bela Fleck. Attracted to all things ethnic, he returned to his Jewish roots as one of the key klezmer revivalists of the 70s and early 80s. A premier mandolinist and clarinetist, Andy's calls his spontaneous

American-roots style "very personal, prayerful Hasidic music with a focus on BlueGrass, Jazz and Worldbeat." Get ready for an upbeat afternoon with lots of surprises. (www.andystatman.org)

ACTION: Season tickets are \$60 adults, \$50 seniors and students, and \$5 for each child when accompanied by a paid adult season subscriber. Individual concert tickets and group rates also are available. For more information go to www.cbsmodesto.org or call 571-6060 or 575-4299.



PRIDE Day 2008 will be held at Graceada Park on September 27th

From e-PRIDE news

Join the Stanislaus PRIDE Center and the local gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community for the area's third annual pride celebration on Saturday, September 27, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Graceada Park in Modesto.

The theme for Pride '08 is "Live. Love. Be." In addition to food, family, friends, and fun, event-goers can expect quality live music by local performers and other entertainment on the park's Mancini Bowl stage. The festival is FREE to attend, and open to all ages. Approximately seventy-five (75) vendors will fill the park, and a beer and wine garden (adults 21-and-up only; double ID check) will be staged.

Stanislaus PRIDE Day 2008 is a celebration of gay pride in the greater Stanislaus County area; it is the only annual pride event to be held between Sacramento to Fresno. The 2006 event drew 450 attendees, and the 2007 event drew 2,000. Growing in popularity each year, another sharp increase in attendance is expected in 2008.

Visit the official Pride '08 web site: <http://www.spcpride.org>

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Who are the Pagans?

By PAMELA MORGAN

Like many words, "Pagan" was a pejorative used by Christians to describe those who were from the country and still followed old spiritual practices. Broadly, the term meant anyone who followed a spiritual practice that was non-Abrahamic. In short, if you were not a Christian, a Jew or a Muslim: you were a "pagan."

Today, those who might be called Pagans (or practicing one of the Pagan traditions) are largely a group who prefer to defy categorization by definition. Generally, Pagans follow a spiritual practice that retains the ancient reverence for the Earth as the source of all life. Pagans hold that the Earth is the original Female principle and a Divine Goddess. In consort with the Divine Goddess is the God, who is equally divine.

Pagans adhere to The Wheel of the Year, which marks the passing of Equinoxes and Solstices and well as the other three Sabbats. The Wheel of the Year follows the story of the life, death, and renewal of the God as the seasons change. The Sabbats are considered especially powerful times to work magic and offer worship to the deities. Sabbats are celebrated according to the tradition one follows and may include telling or acting out the relevant seasonal story, worship of the deities, working magic appropriate to the Sabbat, and sharing blessed cakes and drinks. Practitioners may celebrate a Sabbat ritual in street clothes with nothing more than a few candles and ritual tools, or the Sabbat celebration may be as complex as the most complicated Catholic Mass.

Paganism allows for polytheism, the belief in multiple deities, and acknowledges the validity of many spiritual paths. As one of the fastest growing spiritual paths worldwide, Paganism is a broad umbrella term for those who may call themselves Neo-Pagans, Witches, Druids, and Wiccan. These distinctions are the result of differences in the traditions followed by practitioners. Some Pagans follow traditions that are consistent with their familial heritage such as the Native American, Celtic, Greek, and/or the Egyptian paths. A Pagan following the Egyptian religious tradition would choose to honor the Divine by learning traditional Egyptian Goddesses and Gods and the appropriate ways of working with them.

While some Pagans learn and practice in a community setting, a Grove or Coven, for example, many Pagans are solitary practitioners and self taught as the Solitary practitioner is often unable to find a community with which to practice. Solitary practitioners often stay closeted since being openly Pagan frequently leads to discrimination. Learning

about Paganism is as easy as checking out any number of excellent resources from the library, but practicing magic involves a deeper understanding of the responsibilities that come with it. One must understand that the outcome one seeks while working magic comes with consequences. If one uses only positive magic, and never practices, not even beneficial spells, on the uninformed, the consequences for the practitioner will be positive. On the other hand, if one works with ill intent either generally or towards an individual, or if the practitioner seeks personal gain at the expense of others, what he or she will reap are negative consequences.

The Golden Rule teaches that one should do unto others as s/he would have others do unto them. The Three-Fold Law teaches that whatever one does will return to oneself three fold. If a Pagan practitioner tries to use magic to force someone of the opposite sex to love them, the practitioner may find s/he has a more dull social life than before the spell. A more positive use of magic may be a spell or ritual designed to help the practitioner get a better job or a raise. In this case, the goal would not be to force a prospective or current boss into doing anything, the goal would be to let the employee's best attributes shine forth.

Pagans use magic in the same way the Abrahamic and Buddhists use prayer to influence the world. Meditation is a central part of the practice as one must learn to control one's thoughts and clear the mind in order to reach out to the Divine to ask for aid. Pagans work magic for many of the same reasons that a Christian may say a prayer: to aid an ill family member, secure a new job, recover from a personal tragedy, and to influence the world towards peace and harmony.

In an effort to facilitate knowledge and therefore understanding of the Pagan community, Stanislaus County Pagan Pride, an affiliate of The Pagan Pride Project, is holding their second annual Pagan Pride Day on September 13, 2008.

Stanislaus Pagans invite all to family harvest festival

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

The Stanislaus County Pagan community presents great music, belly dancing, luscious food and lots of vendors "mystical and magical" at its family friendly Stanislaus Pagan Unity Festival October 4 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in Graceada Park near Downtown Modesto.

Activities will include an abundant harvest ritual celebration and workshops by several world renown Pagan authors, including Zell Oberon, Z Budapest and Macha Nightmare.

The event is free and open to all ages. Non-perishable food items will be accepted for the Pagan food bank.

Further information about the event is available at the Association of United Pagans website, www.paganunityfestival.com or by calling (209) 579-7242.

2nd Annual Stanislaus

★ Pagan Pride Day ★

Saturday, 9/13/08

Tuolumne River Regional Park
Picnic Area A

Revel in a day of education and magic as Pagans celebrate religious understanding with nationally recognized guest speakers, local entertainment, vendors, food, and a play area with activities and story telling for the kids!

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or
myspace.com/stanislauspaganpride

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Carrot research

By ANNE SCHELLMAN, Horticulture Associate
University of California, U.S. Department of Agriculture
and Stanislaus County, Cooperative Extension

As both a horticulturist and a gardener, I'm constantly on the lookout for new and exciting vegetable varieties. An article in *Small Farm News* (Volume 2, 2007) regarding carrots by Aziz Baameur, recently caught my attention. The University of California Cooperative Extension is researching the performance of various carrot types to determine their yield in a small farm setting. The carrots in the study include shades of white, red, green, yellow, purple and almost black. The reason carrots in grocery stores today are orange dates back to the 15th century. During this time, the Netherlands was in a struggle for independence. The House of Orange developed the orange carrot as an emblem of its struggle. The color stuck and remains the most popular carrot color in the Western part of the world.

I visited several nurseries and garden centers looking for unusual seed colors. However, the only one I could locate is a type called "Rainbow."

This packet has a blend of orange, white and yellow carrot varieties.

However, nursery people assured me that colorful carrot seeds can be ordered upon request.

For gardeners who wish to find carrot seed online, try Kitchen Garden Seeds, Territorial Seed Company or Kitazawa Seed Company. Each of these companies features a selection of various colored carrots.

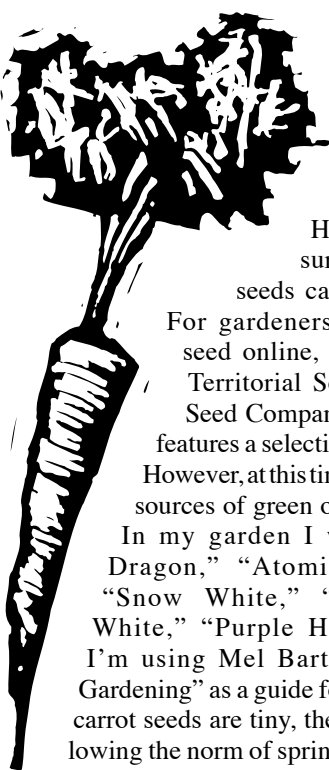
However, at this time I have been unable to locate sources of green or black carrot variety seeds.

In my garden I will be growing "Purple Dragon," "Atomic Red," "Yellowstone," "Snow White," "Solar Yellow," "Lunar White," "Purple Haze," and "Kyoto Red."

I'm using Mel Bartholomew's "Square Foot Gardening" as a guide for planting carrots. Although carrot seeds are tiny, the author does not advise following the norm of sprinkling them along a row. This is because once seeds sprout, many gardeners are overwhelmed with the chore of thinning. The author divides gardening space into 4' squares, lining them with 1' boards for easy walking/planting access. The divisions prevent gardeners from overplanting, which often happens when planting seed. So for carrots, in a 4' square, use a finger or string to divide it into 16, 1' squares, then, each of these squares into 16, 3." Add a single seed to each small square and covers it lightly.

Carrot seeds germinate best when soil has good drainage and is free of dirt clods. Add compost to the soil and mix to a depth of at least 12 inches. Keep soil moist while seeds sprout, as this can take up to 2 weeks. Carrot seeds can be easily washed away, so water lightly. During this warm month of August, do not let the soil crack or crust over.

We will be installing a school garden demonstration plot here at the Cooperative Extension behind our building. I'll be blogging about its progress as well as the carrot patch at http://cestanislaus.ucdavis.edu/Gardening/Garden_Blog.htm. Please feel free to make comments or detail your experiences with growing carrots or gardening in general. Or send me an e-mail at aschellman@ucdavis.edu



Visionary farmer will speak at CSU Stanislaus, September 1

By DAN ONORATO

With local farmers' markets and farm-to-consumer food coops, the Slow Food Movement is alive and well in Stanislaus County. But it will get a boost on Monday afternoon, September 1, when Joel Salatin speaks at California State University, Stanislaus. Central Valley organic vegetable farmer Tom Willey, organizing the event with organic dairy farmer Rosie Burroughs, calls Salatin "the apostle of grass" (no, not the kind you smoke!), an animal farmer with a mission—"engaging, dynamic, passionate, and funny." Michael Pollan in his book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, calls Salatin's farm "one of the most productive and influential farms in America."

An excerpt from Pollan's *Mother Jones*, May-June 2006 article, "No Bar Code: the Next Revolution in food is just around the corner," is enough to make me show up in Turlock and listen to this extraordinary trailblazer.

Here's Michael Pollan writing:

"I might never have found my way to Polyface Farm if Joel Salatin hadn't refused to FedEx me one of his chickens. I'd heard a lot about the quality of the meat raised on his "beyond organic" farm, and was eager to sample some. Salatin and his family raise a half-dozen different species (grass-fed beef, chickens, pigs, turkeys, and rabbits) in an intricate rotation that has made his 550 hilly acres of pasture and woods in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley one of the most productive and sustainable small farms in America. But when I telephoned Joel to ask him to send me a broiler, he said he couldn't do that. I figured he meant he wasn't set up for shipping, so I offered to have an overnight delivery service come pick it up. "No, I don't think you understand. I don't believe it's sustainable—"organic," if you will—to FedEx meat all around the country," Joel told me. "I'm afraid if you want to try one of our chickens, you're going to have to drive down here to pick it up."

This man was serious. He went on to explain that Polyface does not ship long distance, does not sell to supermarkets, and does not wholesale its food. All of the meat and eggs that Polyface produces is eaten within a few dozen miles or, at the most, half a day's drive of the farm—within the farm's "foodshed." At first I assumed Joel's motive for keeping his food chain so short was strictly environmental—to save on the prodigious quantities of fossil fuel Americans burn moving their food around the country and, increasingly today, the world. (The typical fruit or vegetable on an American's plate travels some 1,500 miles to get there, and is frequently better traveled and more worldly than its eater.) But after taking Joel up on his offer to drive down to Swoope, Virginia, to pick up a chicken, I picked up a great deal more—about

the renaissance of local food systems, and the values they support, values that go far beyond the ones a food buyer supports when he or she buys organic in the supermarket. It turns out that Joel Salatin, and the local food movement he's become an influential part of, is out to save a whole lot more than energy.

In Joel's view, the reformation of our food economy begins with people going to the trouble and expense of buying directly from farmers they know—"relationship marketing," the approach he urges in his recent book, *Holy Cows and Hog Heaven: The Food Buyer's Guide to Farm Friendly Food*. Joel believes that the only meaningful guarantee of integrity is when buyers and sellers can look one another in the eye, something few of us ever take the trouble to do. "Don't you find it odd that people will put more work into choosing their mechanic or house contractor than they will into choosing the person who grows their food?"

Joel, who describes himself as a "Christian-libertarian-environmentalist-lunatic farmer," speaks of his farming as his "ministry," and certainly his 1,000 or so regular customers hear plenty of preaching. Each spring he sends out a long, feisty, single-spaced letter that could convince even a fast-food junkie that buying a pastured broiler from Polyface Farm qualifies as an act of social, environmental, nutritional, and political redemption.

"Greetings from the non-barcode people," began one recent missive, before launching into a high-flying jeremiad against our disconnected "multi-national global corporate techno-glitz food system" with its "industrial fecal factory concentration camp farms." (The dangerous pileup of modifiers is a hallmark of Joel's rhetorical style.) Like any good jeremiad, this one eventually transits from despair to hope, noting that the "yearning in the human soul to smell a flower, pet a pig and enjoy food with a face is stronger now than anytime in history...."

Pollan's whole article is worth a read. You can find at http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2006/05/no_bar_code.html

Salatin will speak from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Bernel & Flora Snider Music Recital Hall at the university. Tickets must be purchased in advance from www.brownpapertickets.com. For more information, call 209-874-1309 or 559-706-9552, or check out www.slowfoodmadera.org.

Our whole civilization is in a profound crisis. We need to change at fundamental levels. Practical visionaries are pointing the way. Salatin is one of them. Listening to him could be a step toward that change.

For more information on sustainable farming, read Barbara Kingsolver's book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

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Rivers of Birds, Forests of Tules: Central Valley Nature & Culture in Season

By Lillian Vallee

47. Sweetgrass Summer

A small group of poetry lovers (and friends of poetry lovers) is sitting in a stable at the Lazy S Ranch in Oakdale listening to poet and artist Manny Moreno read his poetry and tell his stories. The smoke of white sage lingers among the listeners—the space has been purified, made sacred by this plant—and our hearts are still beating to the rhythm set by the drummers who came all the way from Fresno to drum and to sing old California Indian songs for the poet. A full moon is on the rise and as Moreno speaks; an all white Kentucky mountain horse named Appalachia, her mane braided like sweet grass, glides back and forth like a twilight apparition in the corral visible through the open doors. The other horses in the stalls are quiet and calm, undisturbed by the drumming or singing.

Jim Chlebda is also in the audience. He is the indefatigable owner/editor of Back 40 Publishing which has produced many volumes of Central Valley writing, perhaps most notably eleven volumes of Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel's poetry and prose. He has just published Moreno's first book of poems, *The Bridge is Gone*, with photos and reproductions of some of Moreno's intricate art work, and the mood is celebratory. Cultural Commissioner Cleo Griffith, who has been animating Modesto's poetry scene with tremendous gusto and finesse lately, had been seeking a venue for the reading when sculptor Betty Saletta graciously offered the ranch stage (often used for live music and dancing). The Salettas are also present. As are Cleo's husband, daughter, and other members of the cultural commission who organized the publicity and helped set up a refreshment table. The front row is filled with lovely women—the poet's relations.

I have written elsewhere that with the publication of *The Bridge is Gone*, the Central Valley acquires another authentic voice. Until recently Moreno's work was in storage, and this first volume lets the reader in on a hard life examined without sentimentality. The cover photo—with its elongated image of a two-year-old Moreno set apart from his playmates by a worried mien—hints from the start that this will be a voice well acquainted with the sorrows of the world, with its beautiful gravity.

Livingston is Moreno's home ground, the place in which his dead and his heart are buried, and he has described the Merced River as his place of refuge. Of Yaqui/Tarascan descent, Moreno's people fled the near genocide of Yaqui Indians in Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century and settled in Livingston. The poet is an observer and champion of the working people who put food on our table: "Onions

topped/on hot windy/afternoon/ pennies for each full sack/I observe others/families/race to get/as many as humanly possible/dinner depends on this/rent gas clothes/depend on this...." When Moreno describes his mother's efforts to raise her children after the accidental death of their father, or describes a dog saving a drowning chick, Moreno reminds the reader of McDaniel, another Central Valley recorder of valiant daily lives: "Who will ever know/we patched our soles/with cardboard/until summer was over/and school began again?"

The vision of Central Valley cities in his poems is sometimes so bleak as to be unbearable, whether it is street life in Stockton or the homogenization/overdevelopment of rural Livingston. Moreno's urban underworld often resembles hell: "...where pitiful ol'/bagladies try to snooze/curled up on metro bus benches bundled in ragged/tattered quilts/gotta be somebody's grandmas...where cold-blooded/cowardly slimy/degenerates jack roll/don't-bug-nobody/ol' drunks/rip their flesh/rob them clean...."

Moreno contrasts the harshness of this world with poems about his grandmother handing out sandwiches to hobos during the sixties and with memories of inexhaustible family love. And it is in poems like "Cressey Bridge" and "The Rebound" that Moreno's lyric power expresses the delicate compassion and understanding that are hallmarks of the poet's work: "And here I go/on the rebound/in a town that/ was what it was/and now is/what it is: streets of ghosts/new buildings/new people/starting all over."

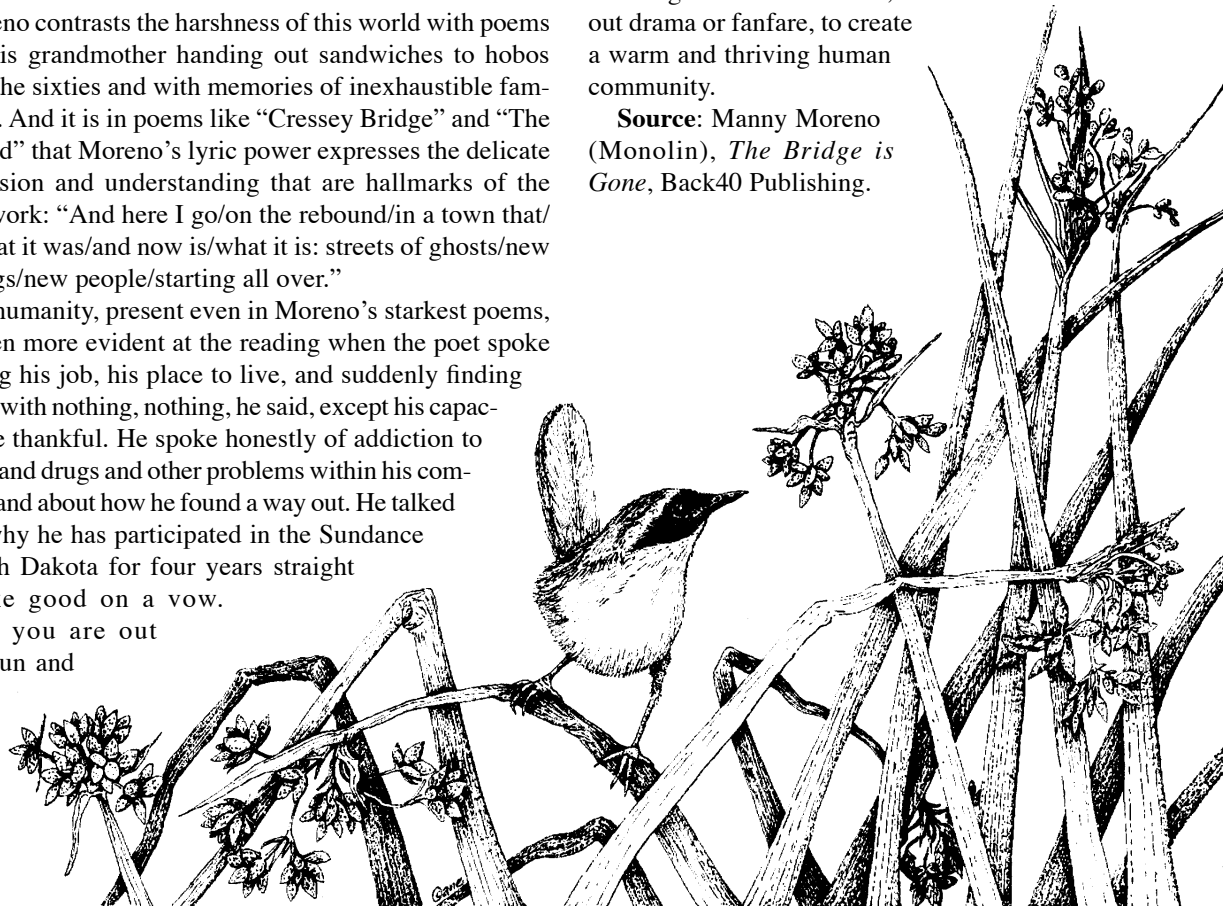
The humanity, present even in Moreno's starkest poems, was even more evident at the reading when the poet spoke of losing his job, his place to live, and suddenly finding himself with nothing, nothing, he said, except his capacity to be thankful. He spoke honestly of addiction to alcohol and drugs and other problems within his community and about how he found a way out. He talked about why he has participated in the Sundance in South Dakota for four years straight to make good on a vow. "When you are out in the sun and have

had nothing to eat or drink for four days and are in agony, you look around and you see that others are suffering, too. And you realize that you are not alone in that circle of suffering. And you realize that this is how you join the circle of people suffering everywhere, in the whole world, that you cannot be apart from them." He writes in his poem on the Sundance that the offering of self-mortification makes even the grass come alive.

Back in Modesto after the reading, a group of us sat on my patio, sipping coffee and listening to the first liquid trills of a screech owl that arrives like clockwork to exchange calls at nightfall. We sat in a soft, syncopated shower of jumping ball galls dropping by the millions to the Valley floor. It felt and sounded like an unearthly, beneficent rain.

Every once in a while a person is given the gift of a summer brimming with healing sounds and scents and voices, and the summer of 2008 will forever fix itself in my memory for the generosity and tenderness of Valley artists and poets reaching out to one another, without drama or fanfare, to create a warm and thriving human community.

Source: Manny Moreno (Monolin), *The Bridge is Gone*, Back40 Publishing.



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The Patriot Act's war on charity

By MAYA SCHENWAR
truthout | Report

Since the PATRIOT Act's passage almost seven years ago, many of its adverse effects on activist organizations and peace groups have become plain. The law grants the government broad new surveillance privileges and access to private property, and protests and demonstrations have been heavily monitored and contained in the wake of 9/11. But according to a new report, the worst effects on nonprofit organizations have garnered little attention. New powers granted to the Treasury Department currently allow the government to shut down charities based on unfounded claims; to bar nonprofits from operating in some international disaster zones, and to freeze the assets of "designated" charities, leaving large sums of money intended for humanitarian causes to fester indefinitely in Treasury vaults.

Post-9/11 regulations forbid any organization to provide or attempt to provide "material support or resources" to groups or individuals designated as "terrorist." It's also prohibited to "otherwise associate" with groups labeled "terrorist." No charges need to be filed for the government to take action: If the Treasury Department has a "reasonable suspicion" that an organization is violating these rules, it can seize its assets and shut down the group.

"U.S. nonprofits operate within a legal regime that harms charitable programs, undermines the independence of the nonprofit sector, and weakens civil society,"

states the recent report, co-authored by the watchdog organization OMB Watch and the philanthropic network Grantmakers Without Borders (GWB).

Seven US nonprofits have been completely shut down for "supporting terrorism."

According to Kay Guinane, OMB Watch's director of nonprofit speech rights and one of the report's co-authors, the government has a free hand to act based purely on suspicion when it comes to the nonprofit sector. Executive Order 13224, which outlaws contact with "terrorist organizations," is vague about the criteria for how the "terrorist" label - or the "terrorist supporter" label - is to be designated or investigated.

In fact, Guinane told Truthout, "The PATRIOT Act itself allows organizations to be shut down 'pending an investigation.' One such organization, Kind Hearts for Charitable Human Development, has not even been designated as a supporter of terrorism, though it was shut down a year and a half ago.

All of the organizations shut down by the government have been Muslim-affiliated charities, according to Guinane.

The PATRIOT Act and its cousins deal a particularly hard blow to US charities that operate internationally.

The OMB Watch/GWB report notes that after the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, groups attempting to distribute food and water in areas controlled by the Tamil Tigers risked violating the executive order, which forbids providing "material support" to members of terrorist organizations.

For the nonprofit Humanitarian Law Project (HLP), counterterrorism laws hit at the core of some of its goals, such as introducing conflict resolution techniques and human rights practices to groups like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a designated organization. HLP has fought the PATRIOT Act since its inception. According to attorney David Cole, who has argued for HLP's rights to operate in "terrorist"-controlled areas, counterterrorism legislation often criminalizes purely humanitarian aid.

"This law is so sweeping that it makes it a crime for our clients to provide medical services to tsunami survivors in Sri Lanka and to provide assistance in human rights advocacy to the Kurds in Turkey," Cole said during a 2005 hearing.

Moreover, according to the OMB Watch/GWB report, for some groups, counterterrorism laws make it tough to adhere to their ethical and moral codes. The principles of the International Red Cross state, "The humanitarian imperative comes first. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone." However, if an organization must avoid the possibility of granting humanitarian aid to anyone affiliated with a terrorist group, priorities can take a very different shape.

Some experts, such as Jim Harper of the libertarian Cato Institute, argue that the PATRIOT Act and laws like it are directly counterproductive, due to their stifling effect on nonprofits.

"For only a remote chance of affecting terrorist activity, the US counterterrorism regime may be interfering with

charitable work that would weaken the impetus for terrorist activity in the first place," Harper said during a press briefing in mid-July. "That's penny-wise and pound-foolish."

Particularly pound-foolish, according to the OMB Watch/GWB report, is the way in which the Treasury Department deals with funds seized from "designated" nonprofits. When a nonprofit is deemed to be supporting terrorists, the government can freeze all of its assets indefinitely.

Several organizations whose funds were seized have asked that that money be released and put toward government-approved charities. For example, the Islamic American Relief Agency, barred access to its funds, requested that they be used for humanitarian purposes, such as aid programs to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina and of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Those requests were categorically denied.

According to Guinane, the amount of money seized from nonprofits under counterterrorism laws has not been disclosed by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), although OMB Watch has repeatedly asked for the information.

OFAC did not return Truthout's requests for comment.

This type of secrecy is typical of the government's post-9/11 treatment of nonprofits, according to the OMB Watch/GWB report. To shut down an organization, OFAC need not explain the reasons for its actions, or back them up with evidence. No independent review is granted to charities that attempt to challenge their terrorist designation, and most of their due-process rights are denied. They do not have a chance to present their own evidence to counter the government's accusations. What's more, the government has no obligation to notify an organization before it is deemed a terrorist supporter and its funds are seized.

Under the PATRIOT Act, the whims of the administration take precedence over nonprofit groups' constitutional rights, according to Cole.

"The legal regime employed in the name of cutting off terror financing gives the executive branch a 'blank check' to blacklist disfavored individuals and groups, imposes guilt by association, and lacks even minimal attributes of fair process," Cole said during a July press briefing.

So far, Congress has not moved to keep the administration's counterterrorism programs in check. According to the OMB Watch/GWB report, in order to repair the PATRIOT Act's damage to the nonprofit sector, Congressional action is a first step.

"Congress should conduct effective oversight and re-assess the current approach to charities, grantmakers and other nonprofits," the report states.

Maya Schenwar is an editor and reporter for truthout at <http://www.truthout.org/article/the-patriot-acts-war-charity>

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ACLU local presidents take on Nov. propositions

By FRED HERMAN

American Civil Liberties Union policy precludes endorsing candidates; more on that later.

The Northern California ACLU (ACLU-NC) does have official views on issues. Of 11 initiatives on the fall ballot measures, it opposes four and endorses one.

ACLU-NC says no to two attempts to amend the state constitution:

Proposition 4. A 48-hour waiting period and parental notification before an un-emancipated minor may obtain an abortion, waived if a judge decides it in the girl's interest. An assault on reproductive rights by well-financed opponents of condoms and real sex education. They tried this and lost in '05 and '06. Justice Blackmun, a Nixon appointee, specified no age in his 1973 *Roe v Wade* opinion. Parental consent laws could allow girls to be killed who are unable to communicate with [violent] parents in dysfunctional homes, may be impregnated by step-parents or relatives who then punish the victims with forced motherhood. Planned Parenthood and NARAL speak of Becky Bell, an honor student who died in a back alley butchery after she couldn't tell her parents.

Proposition 8. Redefining marriage as between a man and a woman. I needn't belabor this, except to note that marriage to your partner of choice is the very cornerstone of all human rights, and bigotry really has no place in our state's basic legal document. Voters deserve no more say on my marrying a man, a woman, a poodle or the Mormon Tabernacle Choir than they do on my carrying a pregnancy to term or my pulling the plug on an unendurable life. Our state courts, may be ahead of the masses on this one, have ruled that law and basic human decency apply to everyone

The ACLU opposes two other attempts to legislate by initiative:

Proposition 6. Gangs. Money for cops, prisons and parole systems, stiffer meth penalties. Poorly defined "gang" labels peril freedom of association. What's a gang? Is Skull And Bones one? Is it okay to ban red or blue clothing from schools? This so-called Marsy's Law, subtitled the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights Act of 2008, ostensibly provides tools to convict and gives parole boards power to deny convicted killers parole for five, 10 or 15 years. I decided to vote "no" well before the ACLU acted.

Proposition 9. Notifying crime victims of hearings - bail, pleas, sentencing, parole. Too much room for irrelevant emotions. State Sen. George Runner (R) and billionaire Henry Nicholas say this would increase public safety. The legislative analyst estimates it could cost the state \$1 billion in its first year to pursue these failed policies. Instead of community-based solutions to crime and violence, the initiative will divert money away from schools toward prisons as California gets ever closer to bankruptcy. No.

It favors Proposition 5, the Nonviolent Offenders Rehabilitation Act (NORA) of 2008. This requires increased funding to rehabilitate drug offenders, limits incarceration, provides for a three-tiered parole system, seals records after probation, shortens parole for most drug offenses, creates reporting requirements for treatment and changes certain marijuana misdemeanors to infractions, like parking tickets. The "war on drugs," as gross as "the war on terror," has been condemned by thinking folks everywhere. I cannot end drug laws, but ACLU and I can vote "yes" on this one.

As for the six others, these are my views, not the ACLU's:

Proposition 1. High speed rail. Environmentalists may ask about fuel, but as an alternative to the globally warming internal combustion engine, a probable "yes" for me,

Proposition 2. Tethered farm animals must be able to extend limbs or wings, lie down, stand up or turn around. Sounds right. Even animals deserve ACLU-type rights.

Proposition 3. Children's hospitals. Sure. I hope all children will be able to afford them.

Proposition 7. Requiring utilities to generate 20 percent of their energy from renewable sources (sun, wind) by 2010. Not a civil liberties issue, but a goal worth pursuing.

Proposition 10. \$5 billion in bonds to subsidize buyers of alternative energy and fuel-efficient cars. Why not? Is it good for the poor?

Speaker details voter fraud

By FRED HERMAN

Author (musician, activist and scientist) Richard Hayes Phillips, Ph.D. (geology), spoke in a recent computer-illustrated presentation for the Central Valley Democratic Club. The meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County was cosponsored by the Stanislaus ACLU. He chronicled the "Great Ohio Theft" of 2004, which stole the election from Kerry and seated Bush for four more years of war and plundering the nation.

Phillips strove to make a variety of points detailing how and why the election was "lost" by John Kerry. He noted some of the reasons for Kerry's loss included him conceding too soon [as Al Gore surely did] to establishing that 248,000 Ohio votes went uncounted for varied reasons, many of which were certainly questionable. Bush won Ohio by 118,000 (51% to 49%), to gain his final 20 electoral votes.

The youthful, bearded Phillips' painstaking research demonstrated evidence of tinkering with ballot positions from precinct to precinct in "blue" counties, resulting in 30-40 percent of votes for otherwise minor candidates who couldn't get one quarter of a percent statewide. (Shades of "Jews for Buchanan" in 2000 Florida.)

Phillips pointed out numerous "irregularities" of the 2004 presidential election, which he recorded in his book *Witness to a Crime*. Some of them include facts such as:

- Voting machines were withheld in heavily Democratic precincts, so waits in line, often in the rain, of up to four hours to vote resulted.
- One Republican County reported 19,000 votes cast after a 100% turnout was achieved. Akron had a 110% voter turnout.
- When Kerry buttons were pushed on some voting machines, the name Bush lit up.
- Up to 30 percent of voters in blue Cleveland (think Kucinich), the most heavily Democratic area, were purged. More votes were purged in what were "Gore counties" than "Bush counties" in 2000.
- Precincts going 98% in 2000 for Gore went 30-40% for minor parties in 2004.
- Kerry often failed to even match votes cast for a liberal State Supreme Court candidate or votes in gay-friendly areas against a ban on same-sex marriages.
- Some machines were programmed so ballots with no vote at all for president (other races and propositions only) went to Bush by default. Other ballots had the Bush name

Proposition 11. Redistricting by a 14-member commission. As a pragmatic Democrat, I'd keep district lines in legislative hands. No.

So, freedom may hang in the balance, but ACLU does not endorse people. The high court's Fascist Four are solidly entrenched. Scalia, Roberts, Alito and Thomas will NEVER oppose torture or limit guns. With four moderates, the country is REALLY run by Anthony Kennedy, the swing vote in 5-4 cases.

ACTION: The Stanislaus ACLU chapter's annual meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 16, in the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto will feature a panel on Prop. 8 issues. All welcome. The chapter board needs new blood. Yours? Contact fred.herman@sbc-global.net or 522-1571.

already marked. Some punch cards were pre-punched for Bush.

- Photos showed Kerry ballots deliberately spoiled by smearing names of minor candidates, and signatures that didn't come close to matching those on record.
- Hundreds of Bush ballots were sequentially recorded, a huge statistical improbability; there were machines that started the count at Bush +50 and Kerry -50 (to make it come out even); "security alerts," planned ten days before the election, were instituted by local elections officials to lock out heavily Democratic voters; "gay-friendly" areas were reported to have voted heavily in favor of Bush or minor (non-Democrat) candidates.
- GOP judges went out of their way to impede voter verification.
- There were three-hour "dead" periods in which ballot boxes were left untended and unguarded, allowing time to tamper with the results.

Instances of other inconsistencies and irregularities, too numerous to detail here, occurred in a many different places across the country. There's a word for this, said Phillips, "Conspiracy."

So what does this history ("get over it, awreddy") mean in a state where Change You Can Believe In is 24 percentage points up on McMore Of The Same? A country that stodgily continues with paper ballots? A country where new irregularities are predicted ... for Pennsylvania?

What does the knowledge of this errant history mean for this upcoming election? That we should be vigilant regarding the voting process in our own localities. A veteran poll official stated the need to keep insisting on paper trails, ballots that can later be counted, and never rely on machines-only "black box" electronic voting. Also, that it would be prudent to supervise local officials and precinct workers. Keep an eye on OUR precinct workers too. Most are older than McMore. They also can make mistakes. In short, don't take for granted that "the system works" without verifying the process.

EDITORS' NOTE: *There has never been a recorded incident of voter fraud in Stanislaus County. Where voting machines are used, paper ballots are required as a back up. All precinct workers must attend a training prior to working at the polls. Virtually all precinct workers are dedicated citizen volunteers (who get paid a pittance for their 15+ hour day) who are committed to the democratic process. County Clerks are responsible for voting procedures in California, whose voting systems must be approved by the Secretary of State. We should applaud California's system, yet strive to make it better.*

— Myrtle Osner

Free Civic Engagement Film Series offers six fall films

The Modesto Junior College Civic Engagement Project presents a Fall Film & Lecture Series on Thursdays at 7 p.m. in Forum 110 on East Campus. The presentations are free and open to the public, and each of the six films will be followed by a discussion. This fall's exciting film line up includes:

September 11 - *Lions for Lambs*: This is 2007 dramatic feature film, directed by Robert Redford, offers three interconnected stories about possible responses to America's post 9/11 security concerns and the ambiguous nature of civil engagement. This thought-provoking film raises critical questions about individual conscience and what constitutes patriotic duty in the case of our contemporary Middle East conflicts.

September 25 - *The Power of Song*: The Power of Song chronicles the life of one of America's most inspiring folk musicians and political activists, the legendary Pete Seeger. Following the film, Seeger's message for social justice will be updated by three local SLAM poets.

October 9 - *The Business of Being Born*: Celebrity Ricki Lake questions how women are having babies in the United States. Birth is a miraculous and life-changing experience that is, at the same time, a natural and daily occurrence. Yet, birth is often treated as a medical emergency in a culture of big business. The film weaves together several birth stories

with research done by Lake and the film's director, Abby Epstein.

October 20 - *Shakespeare Behind Bars*: What happens when prison inmates are given the chance to study art, drama, and literature? This documentary film follows a group of convicted felons as they go through the process of putting on a performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and it suggests that if we are to view prisons as rehabilitation facilities then the art of Shakespeare has something beneficial to offer.

November 6 - *Ripe for Change*: This documentary explores the intersection of food and politics in California over the last 30 years. It illuminates the complex forces struggling for control of the future of California's agriculture, and provides provocative commentary by a wide array of farmers, prominent chefs, noted authors and scientists.

November 20 - *The 11th Hour*: Narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio and featuring commentary by over 50 well-known scientists, sustainable design experts, and leaders argues that the earth's ecosystems are perilously close to a tipping point due to overproduction of non-sustainable manufactures, immense waste, and an unsupportable population.

For more information on MJC's Civic Engagement Film & Lecture Series visit <http://www.mjc.edu/news/civicingagementfilms.html>

Catherine Hendy

Poet Catherine Hendy says of the poems that follow, "Catherine Hendy intends to increase awareness of issues through poems and personal stories wherever possible. There have been times when angry rants have left her lips, but studying the Course In Miracles, and other similar works on the practice of love, continues to inspire her to focus on the positive intentions behind self-destructive thinking and behavior. It has been an ongoing lifetime journey to become awake and not take on the characteristics of her fearful assailants."

Found in The Modesto Bee Licensed to Wed

WARNER-CARLOS — Robert and Christy
TILTON-STEPHENS — Roger and Gordon
HENDERSON-BUXTON — Clarissa and Amanda
BECERRA-RIOS — Efren and Josefa
ZADO-TOMA — Paul and Nahrain
LONG-OLLIS — Karen and Nancy
Just business as usual.
JUST business as usual.

Proposition 8

ELIMINATES RIGHT OF SAME-SEX COUPLES TO MARRY. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Changes California Constitution to eliminate right of same-sex couples to marry. Provides that only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Fiscal Impact: Over the next few years, potential revenue loss, mainly sales taxes, totaling in the several tens of millions of dollars, to state and local governments. In the long run, likely little fiscal impact to state and local governments.

So the State says, and then others added:

Social Impact: Minimal to none for heterosexual couples. Decreases safety and financial security for same-sex couples. For same-sex couples, loss of benefits and family financial stability totaling in the tens of millions of dollars.

Legal Impact: Minimal to none for heterosexual couples. For same-sex couples, significant and extraordinary in every aspect of their lives.

Religious Impact: Minimal to no impact on those religious institutions practicing agape love. For religious institutions accepting same-sex couples, immediate loss of wedding revenue and congregation stability. In the long run, likely little impact on religions in general.

Spiritual Impact: Minimal to no impact on the spiritual awareness of heterosexual couples. For families with same-sex couples, likelihood of greater sadness and disillusionment.

— Catherine Hendy

City of Modesto

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• Brush	• Junk Mail	

Now you can fill me up with all these organic items!

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- Wood Scraps
- Wood Products

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- Plastics
- Concrete
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- TV's or Computers
- Animal Waste
- Dead Animals

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Hiding Out in Glenn County... Shhhh

In Glenn County they vote no.
Say it shouldn't be so.
Even though,
All five thousand or so
Claim with certain pride that they don't know,
Anyone who would dare to go
And be gay.

Regression takes possession

When Stacey regressed in her old age
To an earlier childhood phase,
The catechism she learned on Sister Mary's knee
Was conveniently dramatized on her TV.
(
Morning, noon and night she was mesmerized
By Mother Mary and other things she idolized.
Jesus saves but just a few,
Especially those who only do
What they think should be done.
If not you won't find your place in the Son.

Stacey got tied up in "nots."
"I feel guilty loving you,
Now you and I are through,"
She told her partner of 40 years,
Who listened while drying endless tears.
(
They had been thoughtful with their friends,
Generous with their families,
Kind to strangers, Loving to animals,
Gentle with each other(.)
Freely giving their time to care(.)
Couldn't find a better pair(.)
(New verse)
But years of shunning took their toll,
Ambiguities became too much to hold,
Stacey's withering mind and body turning old,
Left her vulnerable for a church to steal her soul.

The Doves Have It

The life-long bond of the cooing dove
Resonates with our idea of love
It's springtime ritual says to everyone
This is the mate to which I belong
I'd like to dance 'round my wedding cake
And have a photographer to take
A picture of us with our relatives
And those that have hearts to give
To acknowledge our union for eternity
For all to see that I love you and you love me
But the state says no and the church door's locked
They say your handicap must be mocked
Paraded around as a distortion
Unfurling raging words of caution
As if we had another option

No Place To Grow

Inch by inch
Row by row
They made their gardens grow
Year by year
Herbs for healing
Day by day
Fruits for canning
Dollar by dollar
Vegetables to market
Strategy by strategy
Their farm they grew
It outgrew its pants
Became a glorious ranch
Through the years they grew too,
Studying law these same-sex partners knew
When one's no longer here to see the other through
The other might have a life of 'make do'
While living on the ranch is grand
There is no legal way to transfer this land
Without paying a hefty cost
When they can legally marry there will be no loss

ABC

Miss B bought a house with Miss C
There they lived for many years
Happily beneath their giant redwood tree.
Through many a spring, summer and fall
The tree grew green and strong and tall(.)
There was tragedy one day
When Miss C had a spell
She was taken to a home
Then things didn't go so well.
The home where she was taken put them in arrears,
Even though plans had been made for their leaving years.
Miss B could see she had to buy out Miss C
But the marriage that was theirs was unseen by law,
The loss in tax dollars was quick and raw
As they watched helplessly and saw
The pending winter with no thaw...

Slimy from the South
He was a n'er-do-well of the slimy kind(.)
He drove into town just in time
To have the will read
And find some loopholes where it said
Something about the certificate of deposit.
You girls should have stayed inside the closet
Where your kind belong.
My sister's wealth is now mine; so long.
The other, astonished that this could happen,
Was in shock. It's not like she'd been nappin'.
Lawyers and chiefs had promised protection,
But in the end only a legal marriage would have prevented
this dissection.

But My Brother Has One

The problem here is that you really shouldn't have fallen in
love with an Australian
You just simply cannot bring him to the USA
You should have found a Texan before you gave your heart
away

We understand completely that your brother fell in love with
a Taiwanese girl
Married her and brought her to Austin
But in your case you may as well have fallen in love with
a Martian

How about an Ohioan, Idahoan, Californian, Floridian, or
New Yorker
You are just not quite as free
As your brother seems to be

Pretend... please

It's just those outside I fear
There's no gay person in here
Not your physician or her nurse perhaps
Don't make me have to lapse
Into a homophobic tirade
Please pretend you are heterosexual
So I won't have to be afraid





Thanks for Iraq War statement

Thanks to the Board of Directors of the Peace Life Center for its comprehensive, principled and courageous Iraq War position paper. As an opponent of the Iraq war since before its dubious inception, it was gratifying to read the Board's articulate message. You can count on my continued support.

Llewellyn Boyle
Turlock, CA

Seven Straight Nights for Equal Rights in Modesto

By LUELLA COLE

For seven straight nights, September 14 through 20, five Modesto congregations will host events advocating justice and equality for LGBTQ persons. The brainchild of national nonprofit advocacy organizations Soulforce and Atticus Circle, Seven Straight Nights for Equal Rights offers heterosexual persons a venue for expressing their support of LGBTQ equality. Atticus Circle educates and mobilizes fair-minded straight people to advance equal rights for LGBTQ partners, parents and their children. Soulforce operates as an ecumenical network of staff and volunteers committed to teaching and applying the principles of nonviolence on behalf of sexual minorities, especially targeting sincere but misinformed religious leaders. The Seven Straight Nights website notes that in 2007, the project's inaugural year, a week of nighttime vigils lit up 36 American cities in 25 states, providing unprecedented visibility for straight people standing in solidarity with the LGBTQ community.

This year, Seven Straight Nights events will again provide a unique venue for straight Americans across the nation to express their support and hone their advocacy skills—now, amidst a changing cultural and political landscape. According to a recent Newsweek poll, 57% of adults believe that gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry or form civil unions, up 10% since 2004. In addition, a July 2008 Washington Post poll found that 75% of Americans now support allowing gay and lesbian soldiers to serve openly in the U.S. military.

Modesto's first annual Seven Straight Nights will begin on Sunday, September 14. On each of the next six consecutive nights, a forum will be held at one of the participating houses of worship. The organizing committee's purpose in creating this event is stated in part: "...We are hosting this series of events in order to foster dialogue and education within our faith communities and the broader community in support of equal basic human rights for members of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer community, and particularly in striving for equality in affirming civil marriage for all couples." Each evening's forum will conclude with "Five Faith Reasons to Vote NO on Proposition 8".

Each evening's topic and location are as follows:

Sunday, September 14	First United Methodist Church 16th and I Streets, Modesto	Why Marriage is Important
Monday, September 15	Congregation Beth Shalom 1705 Sherwood Avenue, Modesto (between Granger & Briggsmore)	Why Faith Communities Struggle with Same Gender Marriage
Tuesday, September 16	College Avenue UCC College and Orangeburg Avenues, Modesto	Faith Communities Should Stand for Justice
Wednesday, September 17	College Avenue UCC College and Orangeburg Avenues, Modesto	Youth Night: Violence and Hate Toward LGBT Youth
Thursday, September 18	Stanislaus UU Fellowship 2172 Kiernan Road, Modesto (between Carver and Dale)	How to Become an Advocate
Friday, September 19	Modesto Church of the Brethren 2301 Woodland Avenue, Modesto (1/2 mile west of Carpenter)	Film: <i>For the Bible Tells Me So</i> Discussion following
Saturday, September 20	Stanislaus Pride Center 201 Needham Avenue, Modesto (lower level)	Becoming Allies: Resources and Needs of the Pride Center

All events begin at 7:15 p.m. For more information about these events, call Russ Matteson at the Modesto Church of the Brethren, 523-1438, russ@modcob.org

ACTION: Attend as many of the Seven Straight Nights events as possible; visit the following websites for more information on the background of Seven Straight Nights.

<http://www.sevenstraightnights.org/index.php>
<http://www.soulforce.org/index.php>
<http://www.atticuscircle.org/>

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OPINION: Uncaging the truth

By WAYNE PACELLE

CEO, Humane Society of the United States

Submitted by Michelle Setaro

This past week, I campaigned in California for Proposition 2—the November ballot initiative to combat the intensive confinement of certain animals on factory farms. In the middle of the trip was a public forum in San Luis Obispo before several members of the Senate and Assembly Agriculture Committees, led by Senator Abel Maldonado and including Prop 2 supporter Senator Dean Florez.

I testified in favor of Prop 2 and had two other outstanding advocates by my side in state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell and veterinarian Sherstin Rosenberg.

About 30 other Prop 2 backers also showed up to voice their support.

The opponents trotted out their spokespersons, too. If you had heard their arguments, you wouldn't have had any idea that the measure — in addition to banning battery cages for laying hens — also bans confining veal calves and breeding sows in crates just barely wider than their bodies. Keep in mind that the opposition campaign is being bankrolled by some of the largest agribusiness giants in the country — many of whom have a documented history of animal mistreatment, consumer deception, environmental degradation, and labor problems.

The opponents, somehow with a straight face, argue that it's better for the birds to be crammed into cages so small they cannot move. They argue that cage-free hens suffer more leg and wing injuries because they are permitted to move. Well, that kind of makes sense, doesn't it? If you were kept virtually immobilized, and barely allowed to use your legs or arms, you wouldn't injure your limbs either.

I told the committee members that they wouldn't face much of a risk being in a car crash or being mugged if they were crammed side by side in an elevator for 12-15 months.

I also said that I was pretty sure they'd be willing to take their chances if it meant getting out of that elevator. People and other animals built to move should be allowed to move, and only in the reductionist world of factory farming can their avian welfare argument be viewed as even mildly logical.

But that wasn't the only doublespeak and hypocrisy on

display. The egg factory farmers denigrated cage-free housing systems, saying it was a public health menace not to raise birds in cages. The unbelievable irony is that almost all of the battery-cage egg producers also maintain cage-free operations.

So, if it's so dangerous to produce cage-free eggs, I had to wonder why these very farmers would produce and market eggs in this way. It seemed to be a pretty serious self-inflicted wound. But they didn't seem to notice.

They also promised that they'd shut down their operations if they were forced to stop confining birds in battery cages — even though Prop 2 gives them a full six years to convert to these alternative systems. Yet at the same hearing, they talked about how public health would be jeopardized with all of this cage-free egg production. Well, which is it? Are they going to stay in business and jeopardize the health of the public by raising cage-free hens, as they are doing now? Or are they are all going to close their operations, leaving not a laying hen in the state, and keeping the state bare of "menacing" cage-free hens?

And one more point. Let's also be clear that there are 9.5 billion broiler chickens raised in cage-free houses every year — for meat. The 280 million laying hens in the U.S. comprise less than 3 percent of that number. The idea that it is dangerous to raise birds in a cage-free environment is invalidated by this fact.

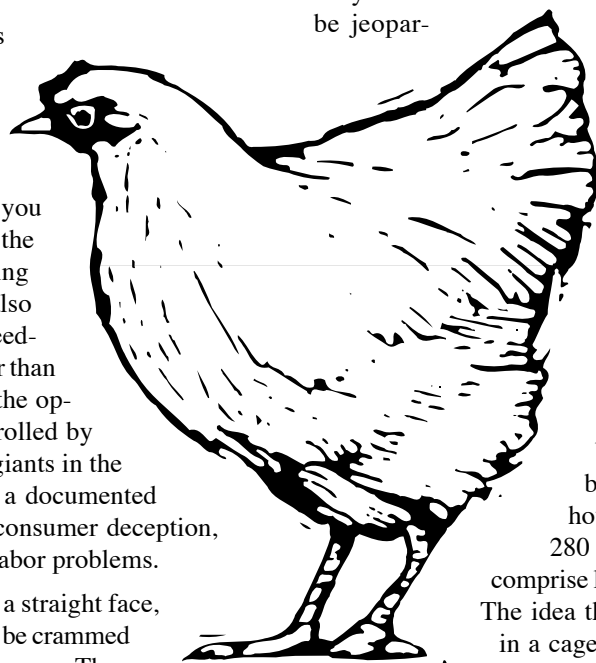
In my work through the years, I've heard every rationalization from people exploiting animals for fun or for profit. Whether it's dogfighters, cockfighters, puppy millers, horse slaughterers or others, they'll all have their excuses and their defenses of the status quo.

The factory farmers are no different — it's just that they make more money doing it than some of the other people exploiting animals. They can hire better consultants and trot out more scientists beholden to the industry.

The bottom line is that confining a million birds on a single battery cage factory farm isn't good for animals, for the environment, or for the health of the public. On my flight home last night, I ran through 10 arguments in favor of the ballot initiative to underscore the point.

Because agribusiness has millions of dollars to amplify its arguments — even though they may seem ludicrous on their face — we have to outwork our opponents and not let their claims go unanswered. Please share this information with every California voter you know and urge them to vote yes on Prop 2. You'll be hearing more from me on Prop 2 until election day. It's a battle we must win. Please visit YesOnProp2.org to find out how you can help.

This article originally appeared on the author's blog, A Humane Nation, at www.waynepacelle.org



Landmines

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Modesto High Students, not just those in the IB program. To reflect this change, The Modesto High club became Panthers Against Landmines. Today, it is a flourishing club with over 80 members and five officers.

The club has two main goals: the first is to raise awareness about the prolific usage of land mines used all around the world and the tragedies resulting from their detonation. The second is to do something about it. The students of the club this last school year donated \$1,000 each to Adopt-A-Minefield and Landmine Survivors Network. While Adopt-A-Minefield is a preventive program which provides trained personnel to de-mine land, Landmine Survivors Network provides medical care including prosthetic limbs or wheelchairs and training so that victims can try to live normal lives once more.

Unfortunately, this is a big job as landmines, and therefore landmine victims, are in one third of the world's countries, placed there during war time and left there active, long after the war's resolution. In fact, bombs left over from WWII are still killing and maiming people today.

While the victims that landmines create become a burden to the community, this is not the only way that these weapons affect the population. In many areas, the people there are starving because the fertile agricultural and grazing land is infested with mines and is, therefore, unusable. Young children are often victims because the left over mines are next to their houses where they run and play. In fact, between thirty to forty percent of landmine victim are under fifteen years of age.

Landmines don't just hurt people though. The mines cause environmental damage such as soil degradation and water pollution from heavy metals such as mercury, deforestation and the changing of entire species' populations due to destruction of habitat and altered food chains.

Clearing these areas is difficult because of the large amounts of mines and the cost of clearing them. While planting a mine costs less than three dollars, it can cost up to one thousand dollars to clear just one. In order to combat this horrific use of weaponry, the Mine Ban Treaty was ratified in 1999 and signed by 122 countries, promising to end the use of land mines in warfare. The United States refused to sign this treaty.

Panthers Against Landmines holds fundraisers and awareness raising events to try and do their part. Past events have included gift-wrapping at Barnes and Nobles for donations, ongoing t-shirt sales and having a booth at Earth Day. The students are currently working on a recycling campaign in local restaurants. All the proceeds go directly to the two organizations.

ACTION: If you are interested in donating, e-mail the club for more information at mhsal@gmail.com or send checks to Modesto High Panthers Against Landmines c/o J. Pereira, 18 H St., Modesto, CA 95351.



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





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

ACTIONS FOR PEACE • Sonora • Merced • Stockton • Modesto

TUOLUMNE COUNTY CITIZENS FOR PEACE: Courthouse Park, downtown Sonora. VIGIL, every Thursday, 6 p.m. Bring candle, sign. Regular meetings 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7 p.m. Call (209) 532-3516 for location.

MERCED CANDLELIGHT PEACE VIGIL: every Friday, 4:30 to 5:30 pm, at M and 21st Sts, Merced. Contact: David Hetland, (209) 388-1608, dhetland2003@yahoo.com

PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY: Info: John Morearty, 464-3326.

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER VIGILS: Monthly peace vigils are held THE FIRST FRIDAY of the month at McHenry Ave. and J St., (Five points), 5:00-6:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

PEACE LIFE CENTER MODESTO, OPEN EVERY WEDNESDAY: Noon to 2 pm. Come by for coffee or tea and just to chat or look at our book and magazine collection. Bring your own bag lunch; there may be films some days. 720 13th St. Call 529-5750, we'll get back to you with current info on activities.

SEPTEMBER, 2008

1 MON: "All Flesh Is Grass", visionary farmer Joel Salatin, 2:00 to 4:00 pm in the Bernell & Flora Snider Music Recital Hall. CSUS, Turlock. Tickets must be purchased in advance from www.brownpapertickets.com. Info: call 209-874-1309 or 559-706-9552, or check out www.slowfoodmadera.org. See article, this issue.

4 THURS: MJC Science Colloquium. Richard Anderson, Ph.D., MJC Biologist, "Antarctica: Life in an Ice Age: How Has It Changed?". 1:00 - 1:50 pm, Forum 110, East Campus. Sept. 11: Anthony Presto, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, "Monitoring and Cleaning Our Air". Sept. 18: Denise Godbout, MJC Biology Technician, "Hear & Now: Cochlear Implants". Sept. 25: Hugh Ellsaesser, Ph.D., Meteorologist, "Nature, Not Human Activity, Is Responsible for Global Warming"

12 FRI: Annual STANISLAUS CONNECTIONS Fundraiser potluck & Auction at the home of Tom & Alfa Broderick, 4 pm. Fun, potluck, swimming! All invited. WE NEED AUCTION ITEMS! Call Dan, 526-5436. See article, this issue.

13 SAT: 2nd Annual Stanislaus Pagan Pride Day, Tuolumne River Regional Park, <http://www.stanislauspaganprideday.com>

8 MON: Robert Bowman, Ph.D., Lt. Colonel US Air Force (retired), speaks on "Follow the Constitution; Honor the Truth, Serve the People; End the Iraq Occupation; No Attack on Iran; What's the Truth about 9/11? - We Don't Know." Benefit for the Peace and Justice Network and San Joaquin Connections newspaper. Admission \$10. (Students free with I.D.) Grace Covell Hall, Univ. of the Pacific, 7 pm.

11 THURS: MJC Civic Engagement Film Series begins. Info: <http://www.mjc.edu/news/civiceengagementfilms.html>

14-20 SUN-SAT: Seven Straight Nights for Equal Rights. Support justice for LGBT persons. Event each night at different venue. See article this issue for times and locations. Info: call Russ Matteson, 523-1438, russ@modcob.org

28 SUN: Kathy Kelly, founder of Voices for Creative Non-violence, speaks about Iraq and Iraqi refugees, and David Smith-Ferri reads his poetry. Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., 9:30 am; and College Avenue

Congregational Church, Orangeburg and College Ave., 4 pm.

29 MON: Kathy Kelly speaks at Merced College, Leshner Student Services Building, Rm L-111, 7:00 pm.

LOOKING AHEAD

Saturday, October 4: Stanislaus Pagan Unity Festival, Graceada Park.

Saturday, October 11: MOFest, Fourth Annual PFLAG Modesto GLBT Film Festival. State Theater. More info: See Ad.

Sunday, October 12: KAWEH performs Spanish Guitar Rumba Flamenca with Latin, Brazilian, Mediterranean & Middle Eastern influences, (www.kaweh.com). Sunday at CBS Concert. Season tickets: \$60 adults, \$50 seniors and students, and \$5 for each child when accompanied by a paid adult season subscriber. Individual concert tickets and group rates available. Info: www.cbsmoesto.org or call 571-6060 or 575-4299.

Friday, October 24: Harvest Gathering. Benefit for Peace Essay Contest. Info: TBA.

Saturday, January 17, 2009: 15th Annual Martin Luther King Commemoration featuring teacher and civil rights activist, Robert Moses. MJC Auditorium, 7 pm.

Sunday, January 20, 2009: 7th Annual John McCutcheon Concert. Modesto Church of the Brethren, 7 pm.

ONGOING

CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL STAFF MEETINGS: Meets twice a month. New workers welcome. Call to confirm time and place. 522-4967.

NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES, Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto. Steering committee meetings (open to all), quarterly membership/program meetings, interest group meetings: dates to be arranged. Info: 577-0883 or robsch@fire2wire.com

GREAT VALLEY MUSEUM of Natural History: Classes for children. Museum exhibits and store open Tues. to Fri., 9 am to 4:30 pm. Info: 575-6196. Call for info about classes.

CENTRAL VALLEY ART ASSOCIATION AND MISTLIN GALLERY: Exhibits by local artists; poetry read-

ings third Sat. 4 pm. 1015 J St., in Tenth St. Place. Open 10 to 5, Mon. Through Sat. 529-3369.

ANDERSON ART GALLERY: 1323 J. St., Modesto. Open M - F, 10 - 6, Sat., 10 - 4. New shows each month.

A.R.T.S. EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER: All things recycled free arts materials for teachers, scout leaders, child care, artists for their projects. Open M - F 8 to 4:30, 917 Oakdale Rd. Modesto, Media Center behind Ross Store. Volunteers needed. Info: 567-4516.

CENTRAL VALLEY DEMOCRATIC CLUB: Monthly meetings in Modesto, Patterson, and Oakdale. For more information, visit <http://www.cvdemocrats.org/> or call Neil Hudson at 847-0540.

CHILDRENS STORY HOURS: Stanislaus County Library: Modesto, Mondays, 10 & 11 am. Toddler Time, 11 am, Book babies (prior registration required). Tuesdays, 10:30 am and 6:30 pm. and Wednesdays 10:30 ad 11:30 am. Cuentos en espanol Thursdays 6:30 pm. All 12 Library branches have morning story hours. Call your branch for info.

CHILD HEALTH MOBILE SERVICES: Maddux Youth Center, 3rd & Sierra Dr., Modesto. Fourth Fridays, noon to 4:30 pm. Call for appointment, 525-6282.

RE-STORE: gently used and new quality materials, donations from local sources, a part of Habitat for Humanity, Kearney Ave across from the Post Office, Modesto. Funds benefit homes built by Habitat in Stanislaus County for local income families.

STANISLAUS PRIDE CENTER: 201 Needham (Elm side of Great Valley Center), Modesto. Open 3: 00 to 7:00 pm Wed. through Sat. Library, snacks, sodas, FREE DSL computer access. FREE HIV Testing and FREE counseling for those who cannot obtain full-cost services elsewhere. Info: Desiree Holden, Center Coordinator, 221-5252 or coordinator@stanpride.org

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

FOOD NOT BOMBS: Turlock, 4 pm. Broadway Park.

Central Valley Radical Mental Health Discussion Circles every 2nd Sun., 4 pm, Queen Bean, 14th & I St., Modesto.

MONDAYS

YOGA WITH NEVA AND JOCELYN: 7 pm, Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Modesto. Info: 523-0155 or 524-3246.

TUESDAYS

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, first Tuesdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 7:00 pm, 529-5750.

ACLU Local chapter, third Tues. of the month, 7 pm. at the Peace Center, 720 13th St., Modesto New members welcome. Info: <http://stanaclu.org/> or stanaclu@earthlink.net

PFLAG Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays support group. 7 pm, 527-0776. First Mondays and Third Tuesdays. Emanuel Lutheran Church, 324 College Ave., Modesto.

PFLAG Merced, First Tuesday, Merced United Methodist Church, 899 Yosemite Park Way, Merced. 7 pm. Info: 341-2122.

PFLAG Mother Lode, third Tuesdays, 6:30 to 8 pm, Tuolumne County Library Community Room, 480 Greenley Rd., Sonora, Info: 533-1665. Info@pflagsonora.org

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS, Every Tuesday, 7 pm at 1320 L St., (Christ Unity Baptist Church). Info: Jeff, 527-2469.

WEDNESDAYS

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

SLAM on RYE: poetry readings, 2nd Wed. each month except July. Poet sign-up 6:30 pm, readings 7:30 pm. \$5 admission. Prospect Theater, 520 Scenic Dr., Modesto. Info: Sam Pierstorff (pierstorff@mjc.edu): www.slamonrye.com

BUDDHIST MEDITATION: Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Kathy, 480-5094 or Anne, 521-6977.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS GROUPS: 2nd Wed., 252 Magnolia, Manteca.

LATINO BAR ASSOC.: First Wed., Info: Ruben Villalobos, 529-1112.

THURSDAYS

MEDIA COMMITTEE of Peace Life Center, last Thursday of the month, 6 pm, Info: 765-3813.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS GROUP: 4th Thurs., at Unity Church, 2467 Veneman, Modesto, Help for bereaved parents. Info: 522-7149.

NAACP: King-Kennedy Center, 601 S M.L. King Dr., Modesto, 7 pm, 3rd Thursdays. 549-1991.

ART GALLERY WALK: downtown Modesto, third Thurs., 6:30 to 8 pm. Info: Anderson Galleries, 579-9913.

VALLEY HEARTLAND ZEN GROUP: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 573-8313 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

ASSOCIATION OF UNITED PAGANS: First Thursday of every month, 7 pm, business meeting, 208 Rowland Ave., Modesto. Second, fourth (& fifth, if there is one) Thursday, 7 pm, Coffee Social, Queen Bean, 14th & K Streets, Modesto. Third Thursday, 7 pm, Pagan Pizza Night, Round Table Pizza, Century Plaza, Oakdale Road. Info: 209-324-6671.

FRIDAYS

SONG CIRCLE: a Peace/Life Center Activity. Second Friday of each month. All ages and voices welcome. Potluck supper, 6:30 pm, sing at 7:30 pm. Call 529-5750 for location. Free.

Modesto Jr. College **OBSERVATORY ASTRONOMY OPEN HOUSE** 8:30 to 9:30 pm. Behind annex to the museum. Public Welcome. FREE. First Fridays.

VILLAGE DANCERS: Every Wed, Raube Hall, Ceres; Fridays: Sylvan School, 2908 Coffee Rd., Modesto. 7:30 to 10 pm \$5.00 per night, students free. Info: 480-0387.

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group, Call for more info on hikes and special events. Visitors welcome. Regular meetings, third Friday, Modesto Police Dept. Community Rm. 7 pm. Info: 549-9155.

MUJERES LATINAS, last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

HISPANIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, meets every Friday at 7:00 am, Terrace Cafe at Double Tree Hotel. Info: Balvino Irizarry, 575-1303.

SATURDAY

OAK APPLE NATURE WALKS, every first Saturday of the month, 10 am. Meet at Kewin Park Playground, 401 Buena Vista at La Loma Ave., Modesto.

SERRV: Saturdays, 10 - 2, and after church Sundays or by appointment: call Mary, 523-5178, or Lenore, 522-6497. Gifts from developing countries. Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland, Rm #4, Modesto.

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month. Submit peace, justice and environmentally friendly event notices to P.O. Box 134, Modesto, CA 95353, or email to jcostello@igc.org. Free listings subject to space availability and editing.

To access updated calendar items see <http://stanislausconnections.org/calendar.htm>