



Don't Miss the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team Play in Modesto!

By **JAMES COSTELLO**

The league champion Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team, sponsored by the NBA Golden State Warriors, will visit Modesto for a fundraising event for KCPB Community Radio 95.5 FM.



This one-of-a-kind audience-interactive event takes place from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Modesto Junior College

Gymnasium, 435 College Avenue, Modesto, on Saturday, March 23, 2024.

You will witness the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team play top-level basketball, all from their wheelchairs! The strength and determination

of these players will surprise and inspire you! Bring your friends and family out for an uplifting, fast-paced, fun-filled day.

The total experience will consist of the Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team versus school basketball team members and various community celebrities. Audience members will play in wheelchairs and experience the sport. There will be a silent auction, raffle prizes, and entertainment. Modesto Junior College's concession stand will be open.

ModestoView and KCBP's SKA dynamic musical expert, Middagh Goodwin, will MC.

The public is invited to attend. Tickets are \$5 per person, \$1 for students, and \$3 for veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities. Call Jocelyn Cooper at 209-422-0119 or email jocelyncooper2012@gmail.com

for more information and sponsorship opportunities.

What the Armchair Experts Get Wrong about Homelessness

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

Rachel Sheffield's widely published OP/ED piece on homelessness earlier this month offers a prime example of misunderstanding the problem. A research fellow for Heritage Foundation, Sheffield recycles the old "treatment first" tactic that has impeded efforts to manage homelessness for decades.

Sheffield is correct when she argues that current versions of "housing first" tactics have failed to reduce homelessness in California; however, her explanation of why it has failed is absurd. She writes,

"... between 2010 and 2019 California increased its number of permanent supportive housing units by 25,000, but the number of unsheltered homeless people in the state rose by 50%. How can this be?"

The number of homeless people increases when the number of new housing units is insufficient to keep pace with the demand for housing, that's how "this can be."

For example, in Ventura County alone, "Home construction has run 12.5% short of local needs (a gap that ranks No. 1 in the US). The deficit translates to the underproduction of 36,161 residential units."

Statewide, California's housing shortage amounts to hundreds of thousands of units each year. Even with recent population declines, state officials have estimated a need of 148,000 units per year as a baseline need if we're to ameliorate out severe housing crisis.

Housing shortages tend to have a

cascading effect that begins slowly, then escalates. For example, gentrification in cities like San Francisco has led to severe shortages of affordable housing, including and especially the rooms in cheap hotels



that once sheltered hundreds of low-income people with nowhere else to go.

Disabled on the streets of Modesto

In Chinatown, when 1700 residential units were converted to office space, the loss of housing wasn't mitigated, nor were the losses in the Mission District when the dotcom boom attracted highly educated workers whose needs for housing drove rental prices up.

Rising housing costs in the Bay Area led to an exodus of workers to Valley towns like Stockton, Manteca, and Modesto where housing prices have risen far beyond the means of many local residents, whose incomes average much lower than those of Bay Area commuters. The demand created by these commuters resulted in the construction of large family homes, which have higher profit margins than apartment buildings or affordable housing of any kind.

continued page 8

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

LOCAL	2
ECOLOGY ACTION	3
A BIG RISK!	4
FORGED BY FIRE	5

OUTSTANDING WOMEN

POETRY	8
GATHERING OF VOICES	9
KCBP RADIO	10
IMMIGRANTS HELP US	11

READERS! Sign-up for our e-edition!

Get the latest e-edition of Stanislaus Connections delivered right into your email box!

Can enlarge text to read more easily! Print out if desired!

To sign-up, send your email address to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org

If you do not have Adobe Reader, download it free from

<http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>

AARP Tax-Aide Sites in Stanislaus County

Taxes are done for free. Program open to taxpayers of all ages. AARP membership is not required.

Feb. 3rd through April 15th, 2024

King-Kennedy Memorial Center
601 S Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto
Mondays 10 AM to 3 PM

Stanislaus Veterans Center
3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto
Saturdays 10 AM to 3 PM

Turlock Library
550 N Minaret Ave., Turlock
Wednesdays 12 PM to 3 PM
(except 3/6)

Information: For site information: 1-888-227-7669.
Barbara Baylard, AARP Volunteer, (209) 988-6178.

SPEAK UP WITH THE
California Audio Roots Project

California Audio Roots Project (CARP)
invites the **95354** area to share your poetry, stories &
music about our community and social justice!

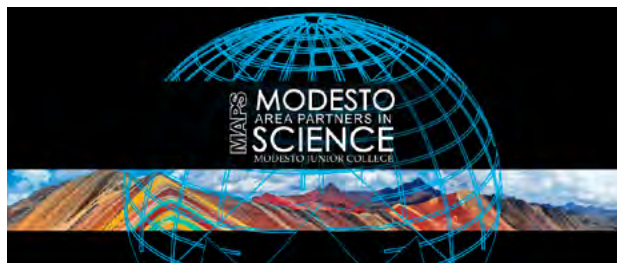
Sign up & find out more by calling
(209)573-0533 or visit ModestoSound.org
Project Director: Janet Seay
Producer: Lucky Lew

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE PAID FOR THEIR TIME
Flexible scheduling - can accommodate any schedule
Physically accessible to all

CARP's sponsors & partners include:

California Audio Roots Project
SHARE YOUR STORY!
KDA creative corps
KCBP RADIO.ORG
104.9
PEACE/LIFE
COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY
CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Modesto Sound
LIVE
Recording | LIVE Sound | Education



The Modesto Area Partners in Science (MAPS) lecture series fosters science education in our community for youths through adults. Once a month during the academic year, MAPS offers stimulating free science programming, bringing educators and local citizens into contact with scientists and mind-expanding ideas.

SPRING 2024 Schedule

Presentations will be held LIVE in the MJC West Campus Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 p.m. unless noted otherwise.*

Fri., March 22: Dr. Priya Shukla, UCD, *From Cradle to Plate: An Oyster's Journey*. From artwork to adaptation, fossils to fantasy, and experiments to expeditions, this talk will explore the culture and science concerning farming oysters and restoring oyster reefs in an ocean affected by climate change. <https://priyology.github.io/>; <https://marinescience.ucdavis.edu/news/bodega-marine-laboratory-graduate-student-priya-shukla-wins-uc-davis-dissertation-year>

MAPS receives funding and support from Modesto Junior College, MJC Foundation, Stanislaus County Office of Education, Modesto Teachers Association, Great Valley Museum. To make a fully tax-deductible donation in support of MAPS, click [here](#) and select Modesto Area Partners in Science (MAPS) under "My donation is for..."



Modesto Science Colloquium Spring Semester 2024

Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 pm, MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free and Open to the Public. Check our website for updates, live, and recorded talks: <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/colloquium.php>

March 6: Linda Brzezinski, Professor of Chemistry, MJC. *The Great American Eclipse II - Sequel*. Did you miss out on the total eclipse in 2017? Get details on the upcoming total solar eclipse of April 2024 so you know where, when and how to safely observe.

March 20: David Dow, Professor of Music, MJC. *Serendipity and the Creative Process*. Electronic and computer music composition is a very individualized process. It can be as varied as the composers pursuing it. I will explore the musical creative process from my standpoint and how I compose my music often with the use of serendipitous events.

April 3: Sarah Davis, Instructional Support Specialist – Life Sciences & Adjunct Professor of Biology, MJC. *Miles of Reptiles: Exploring the Mojave Desert by Way of Zzyzx*. A discussion of Mojave Desert reptiles, graduate school fieldwork, and what's really at the end of Zzyzx Rd. (Hint: It's not a ghost town!).

IN MEMORIAM

DEXTER SCOTT KING

January 30, 1961 - January 22, 2024

ALEXEY NAVALNY

June 4, 1976 - February 16, 2024

California Audio Roots Project

AN OPPORTUNITY: The California Audio Roots Project (CARP) is designed to involve community members in recording stories, poems, and songs about their lives and living in California. This season is focused on **social justice and community engagement**. Modesto Sound is looking for people to interview and will pay interviewees \$150. The interviews are playing on KCBP 95.5 FM and are archived on SoundCloud, Spotify, etc.

To participate, call 209-573-0533, or visit www.modestosound.com



MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER

Working for **peace, justice**
and a **sustainable future**

Connections is published monthly except in August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center

829 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354

Open by appointment.

Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,
Modesto, CA 95353

209-529-5750 / stanislausconnections.org

In Memoriam – Cliff Humphrey

Clifford Clark “Cliff” Humphrey, a founder of the modern environmental movement, died January 3, 2024, in Truth or Consequences, NM. Cliff was born January 11, 1937 in Pasadena, California, to Eunice Clark and Gleason Humphrey.

As a youth Cliff was active in the Boy Scouts of America, attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. He attended Stockton Junior College (San Joaquin Delta College) before enlisting in the army where he was assigned to Post Finance at Fort Devens, MA (1961-1963). Cliff married his first wife, Mary Pacios Taylor, on December 29, 1962, in Boston, MA, and became a dedicated father to her three children, William Paul Taylor, Marilyn Taylor, and Janice Taylor. Under the “Cold War G.I. Bill”, Cliff attended Merritt College, Oakland, CA, before transferring to the University of California, Berkeley. Cliff received his BA from California State University, San Francisco (c. 1969).

Cliff, with Betty Schwimmer, Chuck Herrick, and his then-wife Mary Pacios Humphrey, co-founded Ecology Action (1967), a grassroots organization that spawned over 240 Ecology Action groups throughout the United States prior to the first Earth Day (1970). The organization set up the first citizen’s recycling program in the U.S. since World War II (1967). Cliff continued his pioneering recycling efforts in Modesto, CA with the non-profit Ecology Action Institute (1970-1980), setting up the first curbside recycling program in the country. The Ecology Action and Ecology Action Institute papers are housed in the Special Collections, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

A charismatic speaker, Cliff lectured and gave workshops on college campuses throughout the U.S. At a recycling conference in San Francisco, Cliff received the “Recycler of the Decade” award from his peers. His first book, a supplementary high school text, was based on his essay, “A Unifying Theme” (c. 1967). His second book, a bicycle handbook, was based on Cliff’s bicycling experience and expertise (c.1969).

Cliff was declared indigent upon his death; his body to be claimed by the state which would have his ashes buried in an unmarked grave. His out-of-state family members and friends, including those from Truth or Consequences, NM, raised the money to have a proper cremation at the Kirikos Funeral Home, Truth or Consequences, NM. The ashes of Cliff Humphrey will be scattered in the wilderness he loved, the exact place and time to be determined. He will not only be missed for his overwhelming perspective of humanities’ responsibility to take care of the earth, but too, for his own genuine nature and loving spirit for all life.

If you would like to contribute to Cliff Humphrey’s funeral expenses, please send your contribution marked “Clifford Humphrey Funeral Fund” to Mary Pacios, 1430 12th Ave, Apt 1602, Portland, OR 97201.



State Rejects Groundwater Plan for Modesto Subbasin

By **ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen**

The late Vance Kennedy was appalled when he learned tens of thousands of groundwater-dependent acres had been planted with almond orchards in the foothills on Stanislaus County’s east side.

“That groundwater is our savings bank,” said Kennedy, then a resident of the City of Modesto. “That’s our reserve in case of an extended drought.”

Kennedy, an award-winning hydrologist and geologist during his career at the U.S. Geological Survey, thought the thirsty almond orchards could ultimately threaten the viability of the entire Modesto Subbasin, which supplies water to cities throughout the county. In fact, the only city in the county that receives significant volumes of surface water is Modesto, which still relies on groundwater for almost half its needs. Cities like Oakdale, Riverbank and Waterford rely solely on groundwater.

At the time, over ten years ago, the State of California was one of the few in the nation that had no groundwater management plan. Shortly thereafter, on September 16, 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

Kennedy’s hopes for wiser water use rose a bit after SGMA, and he was initially optimistic when the Stanislaus County Water Advisory Committee began meeting in December of that same year. Its mission statement suggested



Vance Kennedy, PhD

a mandate “to identify and develop programs and practices that ensure a reliable and sustainable groundwater supply...and to make recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors to adopt public policy that empowers such identified actions.”

Pumping in eastern Stanislaus County foothills

After over a year of attending meetings, Kennedy’s hopes waned. SGMA regulations had given authorities throughout the San Joaquin Valley over twenty years to achieve groundwater sustainability, even though many Valley aquifers were already severely depleted. The aquifer in Stanislaus County’s eastern foothills was one of the last viable groundwater sources in the Valley; Kennedy feared it would be severely depleted before authorities could act in time. He didn’t see what he considered an appropriate sense of urgency on the water committee. He felt the aquifer was a lost cause.

While the water advisory committee theoretically has influence on local water policy, the task of developing the official Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) in the Modesto Subbasin falls to the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers Groundwater Basin Association (STRGBA). Members of STRGBA include the Cities of Modesto,

Oakdale, Riverbank and Waterford, as well as Stanislaus County. Modesto and Oakdale Irrigation Districts are also members. Together, these entities form the official Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for the Modesto Subbasin.



Last month, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) notified the association that its current sustainability plan “does not satisfy the objectives of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) nor substantially comply with the GSP Regulations.”

In rejecting the STRGBA plan, DWR warned that unless the agencies can develop an acceptable alternative, the state may have to intervene. Among the more alarming details in the DWR report was the discrepancy between STRGBA’s projected baseline overdraft estimates and actual overdraft figures reported to DWR for 2021 and 2022:

“...negative change in groundwater storage (i.e., overdraft) reported for water year (WY) 2021...was -132,500 acre-feet (AF) and -172,300 AF for WY 2022. In contrast, the GSP’s estimate of projected overdraft is more than ten times less at only 11,000 acre-feet per year (AFY)... Assuming Plan implementation proceeds according to the modeled scenario, the expected cumulative effect to groundwater in storage would be an increase of 70,000 AF

White Knuckle Risk: High Scaling and the Building of Donnells Dam

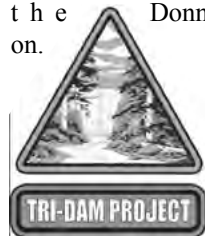
By JENIFER WEST

The year was 1955. Dwight D. Eisenhower was in the White House, World War II was about a decade in the rearview, and the US economy was booming. Gas would set you back \$.17 a gallon. Large-scale infrastructure projects, mostly highways and dams, were in progress all over the country.

And my Dad, at the ripe old age of 19, was working his first real job on the Tri-Dam Project.

The Tri-Dam Project is a trio of hydroelectric facilities that starts near Pinecrest and covers approximately 60 miles in the Strawberry — Sonora — Knights Ferry areas on the Stanislaus River and consists of the Donnells, Beardsley, and Tulloch, dams. More than three thousand men worked on the project which took two years to complete, with shifts often running 24 hours a day.

The site was so remote that a lot of preliminary work had to be done before construction on the dams could actually begin. In fact, it took four months to cut in the road to the Donnells Dam, the project my father worked on.



At the end of that road, the gorge where the Donnells dam would be built was only accessible by cable. This meant that everything: workers, materials, and equipment, including a bulldozer weighing more than 16 tons, had to be picked up by a very skilled boom operator and carefully lowered in.

The project must have appealed to an avid outdoorsman like my Dad. His first position was on the order of a day laborer, making all of \$2.175 an hour (half-penny wages were not unusual in those days), which works out to just under \$25 an hour in today's dollars. An acceptable wage at the time, but Dad had greater ambitions.

So later, despite having no idea what might be involved, he bluffed his way into a job that paid much better: high scaling. "I said I could do it," he said simply.

The job turned out to involve rappelling. And packing dynamite, wielding a 44-pound jackhammer and 20-foot lengths of something called drilling steel.

A guy could do a thing like that in those days before OSHA: talk his way into the most dangerous job on a construction site despite having zero training and learn it on the fly. Asked about his reaction when he realized what the job required, his response was typically understated: "Well," he said, "I was a little dubious, at first. But," he added, "I figured, if those other guys could do it, so could I."

And so he did.

Not that it was easy. At first, it was terrifying. The task was cutting out the keyway (a notch in the sloping sides of the gorge for concrete to be poured into), blasting away rock to widen the gorge in sections spanning 24 vertical feet, slowly working their way several hundred feet down. "The first time I came up out of that hole (where he'd been suspended by a rope, jackhammering holes into the rock on the side of the gorge and packing explosives into them)," he said, "I couldn't hardly turn loose of the rope — my hands

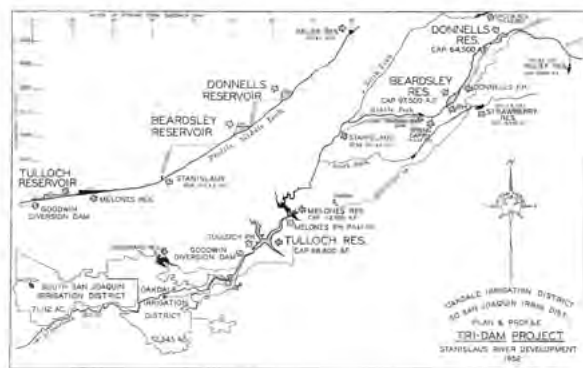
were cramped up from holding on so tight." He paused, looking at them. "It's a wonder they aren't still cramped — I was hanging on for dear life!"

But then, once he'd learned the ropes (literally), he had a blast (also literally). It was noisy, dirty, exhausting work — and he loved it. Making good money for swinging on a rope out over empty space, drilling holes, and planting dynamite to blow things up, working his butt off seven days a week, and living in a tent in the wilderness. What more could a guy want?

High scaling, it turns out, really was the riskiest job on dam and other construction projects. Which is why it paid \$2.875 an hour (\$33.14, in 2024 dollars). This was long before OSHA when all that stood between a high scaler and death were good instincts and a strong rope. Dad saw guys get hurt. High scalers on other projects did actually lose their lives. And there's a story from the construction of the Hoover Dam about an engineer who fell off the rim and was saved by two of them. One caught him by the leg, and the other pinned him to the rock wall until a rope could be tossed down so he could be pulled up, shaken but unhurt, to safety.

There's even a statue at the Hoover Dam depicting Joe Kine, who was, at the time the statue was created in the late 1990s, the last living high scaler from the 1930s.

It was dangerous work, but that's where the money was, so that's where my Dad was.



As it was so remote, the guys lived on the site. There was some housing available, but my Dad didn't stay there. At first, he stayed in a buddy's cabin. Later, he pitched a tent near the mess hall.

The tent served him well, but it did have one major vulnerability: it was not bear-proof. Dad was dating my mother at that time, and he'd drive the hour and a half on Sunday mornings to spend the day with her, arriving back at his camp just in time for his graveyard shift Sunday night.

One fateful day, after the welcome respite of a visit with his then-sweetheart, he arrived to find his camp in disarray: the tent in tatters, and the remains of what had been a very nice ice chest, with a padded top that doubled as a comfortable seat, ripped apart. Comfort is rare on a construction site, and in those days before the advent of modern gear, the loss of the tent and that padded ice chest must have hurt.

And out there in the wild country, over an hour from



any store or restaurant, Dad's food for the week had been safely tucked away in that cooler. Or so he thought. But the loss of his provisions wasn't the biggest reason he was peeved. The thing that really got to him was the Almond Joys

which were pretty new on the market at the time. He'd had a whole box — 36 delicious bars — and hadn't had a chance to unwrap a single one. But the bear did. It must have enjoyed them, too — it ate every last one of them — leaving him just the last half of the last bar. Nearly 70 years later, it still rankles.

But I never would have known about the bear, or how much he loves Almond Joys, or his job as a high scaler (or even that there was such a job back then), if he hadn't spontaneously started telling me about his younger days. He was temporarily confined to a hospital bed, and I was a captive and captivated audience. I still don't know what spurred him to start sharing, but it allowed me and the rest of the family an opportunity to see facets of Dad that we'd never even suspected existed.

And later, when I'd had time to think about it, I was floored — how could I have known this man all my life, and have no clue he'd had such adventure in his youth?

This shows that there really is no such thing as an ordinary life. There's something special about each of us, and each life touches countless others — all it takes to find it is someone who's willing to listen and maybe take notes or, these days, flip on a recording app. As he was telling me about his life, my Dad expressed regret at not having learned

continue next page

Be informed!

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

MRB

MICHAEL R. BAUDLER

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

mb@modestocpas.com

Michael R. Baudler, CPA

TELEPHONE
(209) 575-2653 ext 303

FACSIMILE
(209) 575-0629

1120 14TH STREET, SUITE 2
MODESTO, CALIFORNIA 95354

Forged by Fire: The Heartbeat of the Hood

In the heart of Stanislaus County, where the soil is rich with the sweat of the working poor, a different kind of crop is nurtured — the indomitable spirit of its people. This is where the legacy of giants like César Chávez, Fred Ross, Larry Itliong, and Dolores Huerta is interwoven with the fabric of our daily lives. Their footsteps, though silent now, echo in our march towards justice and equity.

Life in the shadows of welfare and food stamps isn't a story of mere survival; it's a masterclass in resilience. Here, thriving isn't an act—it's a habit. It's a daily grind, a hustle that doesn't stop just because the odds are stacked against you. Here, in the most unforgiving of environments, we don't just endure; we transform necessity into innovation and barriers into stepping stones. We are the bloom in the concrete.

White Knuckle Risk

more about his own parents while they were still around.

That doesn't have to happen to you. If there's someone older in your life, find out what life was like in their youth. All it takes is a little time. Ask questions, and really listen. Do some research. Share photos or video if you can find them — you just might be surprised at the memories that bubble up. It took a little effort, but I eventually found some videos made during the construction of the Tri-Dam Project. Finding footage of high scalers was a little more challenging, but the search eventually led me to some excellent footage of the construction of the Hoover Dam, along with a brief, very informative article (PBS, [Bureau of Reclamation](#)). That's the beauty of living in an age where information about pretty much anything and everything is just a quick search away.

And if you're doing the sharing, the story doesn't have to involve rappelling down a mountain carrying dynamite or losing a month's worth of chocolate bars to an ursine candy thief. Life is radically different for every generation, and what were once ordinary experiences just might, one day, turn out to make for some fascinating stories to share.

Right now, today is the perfect time to make sure those memories of what life was like in earlier times don't slip away. The conversation is sure to be enjoyable for all concerned. And who knows — you just might find out something about someone in your life that surprises you, too!

For more information about the Tri-Dam Project, visit <https://www.tridamproject.com/>



As we honor International Women's Day, we reflect on the courage of figures like Dolores Huerta who famously said, "Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world." These words are a clarion call to us all, reminding us that our actions ripple far beyond our immediate circles.

My journey has been one from the fields to the frontlines, from the margins to the center stage of advocacy. As a daughter of fieldworkers, deported with my family, wrestling with a language that once felt alien, I've known the sting of being "othered." Yet, here I stand, a product of that same "hood" — a community hustler, because hustling is not just about making an income, it's about making a difference. It's about honoring the legacy of those who marched before us, by marching alongside those still fighting for a seat at the table.

Groundwater Plan

over the 50-year period. However, this projected maximum gain in storage is less than a quarter of the storage loss reported to have been experienced...in just two years of annual reporting (i.e., a cumulative loss in groundwater storage of 304,800 AF)."

While most citizens are aware that wells have been going dry throughout the Valley for over a decade, the loss of 304,800 acre-feet of water in only two years in one basin has to come as a shock to most everyone. That kind of loss is especially disturbing when one considers the many out-of-basin water sales local districts and private parties have made in recent years, including drought years.

Thirsty orchards

The sales have enabled local farmers to receive their water allotments at bargain prices, sometimes even below the cost of delivery. Justification for the sales has almost always been in terms of the belief that the exported water was "surplus" water. It's now clear that those water sales, along with pumping throughout the basin, have come at the expense of a declining aquifer.

Anyone wishing to know the consequences unless STRGBA can devise and implement a plan for a sustainable

Our march is for economic prosperity—not just for the impoverished but also for the privileged, recognizing that progress is not hindered by time but by the fear of change and the clinging to power. We push forward, stepping out of our comfort zones and walking side by side with the families struggling to make ends meet, creating plans "by the people, for the people," from the very streets that have taught us tenacity and grit.

Innovation isn't born in boardrooms; it's crafted in the hood. It comes from survival mode, from the deep well of trauma that poverty inflicts on the body, spirit, and community. But from this space, we rise. We hustle — paid or unpaid — for those absent from the tables of influence because I am of the hood, by the hood, and for the hood.

So, let's take a page from the playbook of César Chávez, who taught us that "*Si, se puede*" (Yes, we can) is more than a slogan; it's a lifestyle. Let's break down barriers not only for the poor but also for the privileged, using our collective experiences as a bridge to a more equitable future.

The heartbeat of the hood beats strong. It's a pulse of hope, courage, and love that dances to the rhythm of change. As we move into the future, let's carry the legacy of our heroes and heroes, ensuring that the flames of social justice they ignited continue to burn bright in the actions we take and the communities we uplift.

In solidarity, let's march on, not just in remembrance, but in active pursuit of the prosperity and dignity that every person deserves. Let the heartbeat of the hood be your guide.

Con amor (love), *fuerza* (strength) y *esperanza* (hope),
Karlha Arias IG: @konkorazon

aquifer need only look to the southern part of the Valley where recent estimates indicate between five-hundred thousand and a million acres of farmland will have to be fallowed due to failed aquifers and diminishing supplies of surface water. The economic consequences of such losses will spread throughout the Valley, affecting almost every resident.

As for the Modesto subbasin, STRGBA will have to produce an acceptable plan for sustainability soon or the state will intervene. Meanwhile, Vance Kennedy's worst fear has yet to materialize, even though it seems more and more likely:

"What are we going to do when the state orders severe reductions and the farmers sue," said Kennedy years ago. "They'll keep pumping while everyone's tied up in court."

Kennedy's initial fear — that Modesto's aquifer would suffer serious decline — has already proven true. Local citizens have to hope there's still a chance to devise a plan that will prevent the kind of catastrophe confronting their neighbors to the south. The costs are too dire to contemplate.

KD

UR

LAW OFFICES OF
KELLY, DUARTE, URSTOEGER & RUBLE, LLP

Sharon E. Kelly
Jeffrey R. Duarte
Markus R. Urstoege
Megan E. Ruble

Workers' Compensation and Social Security Disability Attorneys

Know your rights
Call today (209) 521-2552

1600 G St
Suite 203
P.O. Box 0142
Modesto, CA

Stanislaus Celebrates Outstanding Women



Marjorie Derby:

A lifelong resident of Stanislaus County, former Ceres teacher Marge Derby is dedicated to ensuring equal access to education, activities, and safety for disadvantaged youth and families, those living with a disability, and the elderly. She is active

with Salvation Army's Red Shield Center and Friends of the Ceres Library, and volunteered in earlier years with Omega Nu, the county children's Mental Health Board, Howard Training Center, United Cerebral Palsy, and many other organizations. She was a CASA volunteer and served on the oversight committee to build the Susan Burris therapeutic pool at Sonoma School. Mrs. Derby is a key fundraiser for many Red Shield projects and recreational activities, including the Steven Derby scholarship, named for her son.



Amanda Hughes:

Amanda Hughes lives and works in her hometown, Modesto, and has developed deep connections within the community. She also understands the problems of Stanislaus County, especially the issue of poverty, which affects

the community's health, education rates, economic development, and natural environment. Ms. Hughes served as the program director at Stanislaus Community Foundation and was instrumental in SCF's participation in the Stanislaus READS! Initiative. Now she is the Executive Director of Stanislaus 2030, the public and private partnership designed to revitalize the local economy. Amanda is a past president of the Stanislaus County Commission for Women and has served on the board for 11 years.



Allison Jeffery:

Turlock resident Allie Jeffery is an Associate Director at Legacy Health Endowment, dedicated to **increasing access to healthcare services and educating people about healthy lifestyle decisions, so that residents' quality of life is improved.** She

also volunteers in the health field as a board member, raising awareness of mental health, emergency shelter, and suicide prevention issues in the community. She serves on the Stanislaus Health Foundation, Stanislaus County Emergency Food and Shelter Program Advisory Board,

Turlock Community Development Block Grant Committee, and Kiwanis of Greater Turlock. She volunteers at schools as a career day speaker and served on PTA and other school committees. Allie was also a Recreation Commissioner for Turlock and recognized as a Healthcare Hero for her dedication to improving healthcare access in the Central Valley.



Amy Abid Jeffries: As a founding board member of Modesto Children's Museum, Amy Jeffries spent a number of years volunteering her time to create the museum in her hometown, which opened in doors last September, as a place for children to

learn through creativity and adventure. She spearheaded the organization's development, served as secretary, and will be its president in July 2024. She serves on the board of Modesto Chamber of Commerce and on the Asset Development Committee for the Stanislaus Community Foundation. Ms. Jeffries is the first female shareholder at Gianelli & Associates. In 2021, she was named a Rising Star of top women attorneys in Northern California by San Francisco Magazine.



Betty Julian: Turlock resident Betty Julian advocates for women and children in our county and has done so for more than 20 years. An attorney who specializes in Family Law, she is the vice president of the Stanislaus County Bar Association. Ms. Julian is also on the board of

directors for the Family Justice Center, where comprehensive services are provided to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. She is a member of the Turlock Chamber of Commerce and a partner at McCormick Barstow in Modesto. Turlock's Letter to Santa program raises funds to provide coats and other clothing, toys, and a turkey dinner to children and their families. As a board member, Betty helped raise more than \$200,000 last year for the program, helping thousands of Stanislaus County needy residents.

Outstanding Women of Stanislaus County 2024

Marjorie Derby
Amanda Hughes
Allison Jeffery
Amy Abid Jeffries
Betty Julian
Ruth Luman
Colleen Preston
May Rico

Outstanding Young Women

Damaris Diaz
Reece Riley
Audrey Rosenow

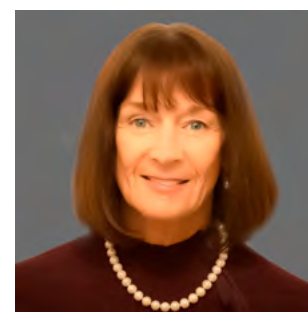
Bette Belle Smith Award

Amy Wolfe



Ruth Luman: MJC faculty member and Modesto resident Ruth Luman is dedicated to assisting refugees and immigrants who are learning English and navigating the complex world their new home. She trains her colleagues to

understand how to best serve students experiencing culture shock as they attend schools here for the first time. She also worked with high school teachers to establish a language institute. Ms. Luman partnered with agencies such as World Relief (where she also serves on the community board) to provide English classes for women who recently arrived from Afghanistan, including offering childcare. She helped establish a women's sewing circle at MJC where new skills are learned, and refugee women feel safe on campus.



Colleen Preston:

Lifelong Modesto resident Colleen Preston volunteers her time and expertise to many organizations, many of them related to health education. She helped Davis High School write a grant that resulted in receiving \$75,000 to

address food insecurity and student health and well-being. A food pantry was established for Davis students and their families and the Spartan Center was created to promote social and emotional health through counseling and peer mentoring. During 2023, the center supported more than 2,000 students. Ms. Preston retired from Kaiser Permanente, after serving as a neonatal intensive care nurse, hospice nurse, and eventually Chief Nursing Officer, receiving

accolades for her work. She was on the 2021-22 Civil Grand Jury and now volunteers for the League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County.



May Rico: Since 1993, May Rico has dedicated herself to serving survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking in Stanislaus County, all at one organization, Health Alternatives to Violent Environments – HAVEN.

She began there as a student intern and became a Legal Program Assistant, then Legal Program Director, Program Manager, Associate Director, and finally, Executive Director, which she has held since 2015. Under May's leadership, HAVEN expanded services to include educational programs for teens about healthy relationships. She also focused on social justice issues, supporting LGBTQ and immigrant rights, among others. She speaks regularly to city councils and county supervisors about HAVEN's work. Ms. Rico serves on the board of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and also received an outstanding woman award from Soroptimists of Oakdale.



Bette Belle Smith Award

Amy Wolfe: Amy Wolfe dedicates herself to the community as a member of Modesto Rotary, for which she is the president-elect. She is on its foundation board, whose purpose is to

donate funds to organizations, such as, Modesto Children's Museum, Learning Quest, HAVEN, and Center for Human Services. She is on the board of the League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County and of Protected Harvest, a non-profit organization that certifies crops as sustainably grown. Ms. Wolfe is active in her daughter's school Parent Teacher Organization and was a Girl Scout leader. Other volunteer board service and leadership includes the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Modesto Chamber of Commerce, and United Way of Stanislaus County. She co-owns Mujeres Poderosas, a public relations firm of three women who work with non-profits and small businesses and was previously the president of Ag Safe, a non-profit organization providing health and safety education to the agricultural community.

Outstanding Young Women



Damaris Diaz: Riverbank High senior Damaris Diaz serves as the student representative to the Riverbank school board. As a community leader, she listens to fellow students and relays their concerns to the school district. She is active in many school clubs, such as Future Farmers of America, Women's Empowerment Club, and California Scholarship Federation. She is also the historian for SkillsUSA, a career technical student organization. She is active in her church and volunteers to provide meals to unhoused individuals.



Reece Riley: Oakdale High senior Reece Riley volunteers in the school's Senior Mentor program to help freshmen students navigate high school. She creates and teaches lessons to the younger students, tracks the progress of 45 individuals, and offers

them advice and friendship. She demonstrates patience and positivity. Ms. Riley also is a peer counselor at her church. These experiences have cemented her future plans to become an educator.



Audrey Rosenow: At Beyer High, Audrey Rosenow has been active on the Robotics team since she was a freshman, eventually becoming the team captain and helping her team secure a spot in the national competition. She served as a STEM camp counselor and on an

outreach team to Tuolumne School in Modesto, sharing her love of robotics with students. She has volunteered hundreds of hours with younger students at Downtown Modesto Partnership events, Trades Day at MJC, and Modesto Chamber of Commerce's Inspire Youth Inspire Dreams event.



Join us on **Saturday, March 9** at 10:00 am at Greens on 10th in downtown Modesto as we gather to honor and celebrate these Outstanding Women, Outstanding Young Women, and our Bette Belle Smith Award winner.

Purchase tickets for the brunch at our 2024 Outstanding Women event at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/45th-annual-outstanding-women-of-stanislaus-county-awards-brunch-tickets-807004170197?aff=oddtcreator>

Lift Every Voice & Vote

Freedom Fund Banquet & Community Service Awards

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2024
Modesto Centre Plaza | 1000 L St. | 6pm

SCAN TO

- BECOME AN EVENT SPONSOR
- PURCHASE TICKETS
- MAKE A DONATION

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS, VISIT:
MS.EVENTS@NAACPMODESTOSTANISLAUS.ORG
CALL: (209) 896-9196

NaacpModestoStanislaus.org/join

29th Annual Aileen Jaffa Young Poets Contest

By LYNN M. HANSEN, Contest Chair: National League of American Pen Women & MoSt Poetry Center

Co-sponsored by MoSt (Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center) and the National League of American Penwomen (NLAPW), Modesto chapter.

This contest is offered to encourage young writers throughout Stanislaus County and to remember poet Aileen Jaffa, the founding President of the Poets of the San Joaquin and member of the Modesto Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

Eligibility and Deadline: Any student enrolled in a Stanislaus County school, grades K through 12, is eligible to submit up to 3 entries, at \$1 per entry. Each entry, except for typing, must be the original creative work of the student, although parents or teachers may provide

encouragement. Postmark deadline for submissions is **April 5, 2024**. Mail submissions to **MoSt Poetry, P.O. Box 578940, Modesto, CA 95357**. Find the entry form at <https://www.mostpoetry.org/contests/jaffa>. Information: info@mostpoetry.org

Categories: Poems will be placed in categories according to the student's year in school.

Grades K – 3 2. Grades 4 – 6 3. Grades 7 – 9
4. Grades 10 – 12

Judging and Entry specifications: Poems will be judged by adult poets who are knowledgeable about young people's work. Any poem that shows evidence of plagiarism will be disqualified. No simultaneous submissions. The poems you enter must not be submitted to other contests at the same time. Poems must not have been published nor winners in other poetry contests. Poems may be in any style, but no longer than 24 lines. Two copies of each poem must be submitted: one copy should contain the title and poem, but no identification of the author; the other copy should contain the student's name, a copy of the entry form, and the \$1 entry fee.

Awards and Recognition: First, second, and third-place winners in each category will receive cash awards from the **MoSt Poetry Center**. Prizes are: First Place \$25, Second Place \$15, Third Place \$10. In addition, the **Modesto Branch of the National League of American Pen Women** will award a *\$60 Aileen Jaffa Outstanding Poem* award in each of two combined categories, Categories 1 and 2, and Categories 3 and 4. The current president of the NLAPW Modesto chapter will present the awards, and the winning poems will be read at an **Awards Ceremony at 2 P.M. on Sunday, May 11, 2024, at the Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock.**



Mid Winter McHenry Avenue 2024

A February storm chases me to McHenry & Bowen
shoelaces unravel like strings of spaghetti
one shoulder grows humped above the other
more awkward than painful

the weedy sidewalk
sprinkled by motor oil and graffiti
flimsy signage hawking free cell phones

a banana peel I slap away with my cane

I pass a broken walker abandoned by a bus shelter
its wheels stripped bare of rubber
a green sweater heaped beside it, muddied by rain
crumpled cans of Red Bull litter the soil
where a ginkgo stands naked till springtime

the headlight from a car crash sits in the gutter
bulb shattered, pillowed by throwaway plastic bags

bits of invisible lives gone broken

as I retie my shoelaces, I spot
a carton of milk, package of cheese and nuts
a tray of chocolate chip cookies
left on the wet bench by a tender heart
for anyone in need –

McHenry Avenue doesn't seem quite
the grey, desolate place
it did a moment ago

Tom Portwood

Book of Gratitude

A friend tells me that each morning
she writes three things in her gratitude book
small things, say, like the morning dew on a rosebud
she notices
as she goes out to start her car or
the slip of sunlight beaming above a cloudbank
or catching the hummingbird sipping at the feeder
on her patio
bigger things, too, about family, the beauty of being alive

each morning, and each evening, too
she commits a few moments to this task
which, she admits, is sometimes easy, sometimes not –
but just in the doing of the task you can find beauty, you
can find peace -
to begin and end
each day
with gratitude

with gratitude
I humbly thank her for this lesson in life

Tom Portwood

What the Armchair Experts Get Wrong

from page 1

Rising prices exerted downward pressure on housing of all kinds, including hotel and motel rooms.

When the City of Modesto condemned an apartment building at 624 Ninth Street in 2017, the city and Stanislaus County made a valiant effort to secure housing for displaced residents. Nonetheless, some of those residents have experienced periodic homelessness ever since. Volunteer outreach worker Frank Ploof tracked one such resident for almost six years; he found her living under a tarp attached to a chain link fence earlier this month, disabled and wheelchair-bound.

Like most everyone who argues in favor of treatment first tactics for managing homelessness, Rachel Sheffield stubbornly refuses to acknowledge the obvious consequences of severe housing shortages. Consider the following:

“The federal government should stop prioritizing the costly and inefficient housing first approach. Instead, funding for programs addressing homelessness should be tied to improved outcomes, such as reduced substance abuse, better mental health, moving people into self-supported housing, and reducing overall rates of homelessness.”

Assisted living?

Most anyone who has worked with homeless people over time knows that “reduced substance abuse” doesn't necessarily lead to “reducing overall rates of homelessness” for many reasons. Sixty or ninety days in a drug treatment program may help end addiction, but it doesn't miraculously end housing shortages, nor does “better mental health.”

continued page 11



debee loyd: Deep Roots in the Central Valley

debee loyd, M.M. has deep roots in the Central Valley; 2 or 3 pet peeves; can't stand Brussel sprouts or bigotry; feels things deeply but doesn't let on; plays *at* about a dozen instruments in the roots music tradition; owns a painting of the original *California Zephyrs* spends a bit of every day navigating at least 1 new thing; will never leave the valley; or stop thinking of Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel at least once a day.

Ms. loyd served as Modesto's Poet Laureate from 2000 to 2004. *A Gathering of Voices* is very pleased to publish some of her more recent work in this issue.

chin yu

with a boot on her fractured foot she
drove from san diego

solo. Did contra for the first time, which
was a dream dance
for her.

it did not matter how screwed up the
women in our square

how backward, off center
just look for the waving happy hands
and the smile
welcoming you
happy tears
yes, happy

consolidation....

between the Rings of Saturn

"Cassini survives trip
between Saturn and rings"
the *Modesto Bee*

maybe that is where I will finally feel
safe.

there – inside the rings of Saturn
in some imaginary craft, the planet
reachable now.

deep space complete blackness
like I knew, that time during
the teenager plague, dreaded
mononucleosis

I fainted, pulling the plate of spaghetti
over with me. I was sick.
so sick.

You, so eager for me to go
so you could have your shot at life

did you really want to move to Reno?
"before I get too old"
or was it a bluff?

I wish you had gone.
followed your turn
inside the rings of Saturn

my sickness hung over us
my *infirmity*
my weakness
keeping me from
life

you set my bags
on the porch



consolidation.....

folk dancing statewide festival 2022

i always thought if i gave in to my alter
ego – like wearing a costume from the
Magic Flute billowing white sleeves
....a chocolate vest....fitting as if his chest
had been dipped in it

they know all the names of the dances
songs they are not
too many vowels
these old crows on a wire never miss
a step
now i am one
old crow

the steps elude me from dance to dance
i never did spend the time it takes
just bounced in and out again

kangaroos and crickets
it is the way they move
even their heads bob
insects

chiffon
nothing like it
where else can you wear a delicious
dessert? there is every color
every style – sleeveless, long, layered –
pleated, stiff – but soft

the bowlegged Hungarian cowboy
filling out the 501's
no soft-shoe sandal-wearing for this guy
hard-soled leather shoes slap the floor
ramrod straight spine
hands in pockets
confidence like musk on him
executing every perfect step

condensation..... part 1

i see things clearly from the dance floor
my musical self
my movement self my other self
that wonderful, wicked queen of the night
and some roller coasters,
jackie may

of course she is resurrected for this

encore

i found her in a box
on a shelf
in the hallway closet

all of her dance shoes were there
pumps, flats, ballerina slippers
day wear, evening and
late night

nightgown worn over leotards
for a costume ski day
jackie wanted to wear only
the pink flowing thing
maybe i should have let her

a witch in the wind

dloyd
writing with gordon, spring 2023

questions from Neruda

*what is it that upsets the volcanoes
that spit fire, water and rage?*
pablo neruda

i peel time
bark from a
dead tree

push the
minute hand
repel the face
gather the fog
of ennui

retreat in reverie
hold the looking glass
to the light
call out for
Dali

no i cannot answer
a cloud forms above
my eyebrow
east of mars

i empty my
pocket

dloyd
15 OCT 20

Great Programs on KCBP 95.5 fm, The Voice of the Valley

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

Confetti Park - Music, stories New Orleans style, Saturdays at 8:00 am; & Sunday's 12:30 pm.

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

SCIENCE

Radio Ecoshock – the latest scientific information on Climate Change – Saturdays, 9:00 am.

Explorations – Science explained with Dr. Michio Kaku - 9:00 am Sundays.

Big Picture Science - 1:00 pm Sundays.

Planetary Radio – 2:30 pm Sundays.

Got Science – 4:00 pm Sundays

PROGRAMS

Ukraine 2.4.2 - a collaboration between Anne Levine, WOMR, the Pacifica Network, and Kraina FM, a 26-city radio network in Ukraine that arranges weekly cutting-edge and exclusive interviews with key people in Ukraine – Thursdays, 10:00 am.

Beethoven to Bernstein - Classical music ranging from Beethoven to Bernstein. Big hits from well-renown composers - Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Ravel, Copland - and many more, mostly in the form of orchestral, chamber, and piano music - Saturdays, 10:00 pm.

The Not Old – Better Show - fascinating, high-energy program of big-name guests, inspiring role models, interesting topics, with entertaining host and former Modestan, Paul Vogelzang – Fridays, 2:00 pm, Saturdays, 12:30 pm.

Down on the Farm - topics important for our San Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom

Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

Sounds Irish Music from County Wicklow - Saturdays, 7:00 pm.

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

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

Attitude with Arne Arnesen – 3:00 pm. Political and social issues.

Sojourner Truth - 4:00 pm – Tuesdays. Interviews and panels focus on issues that affect people of color.

Democracy Now! - 7:00 am, Monday thru Friday. Reporting by veteran journalists Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzalez.

Flashpoint Magazine - 10:00 pm, Monday thru Friday. Politics, social issues, from KQED's Dennis Bernstein.

Alternative Radio – 4:00 pm, Mondays. Interviews with prominent political and social people.

Julian Taylor's Jukebox – 4:00 pm, Thursdays and Fridays. Eclectic, contemporary music.

Nuestra Música – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays. Eclectic, Latin-flavored music with a beat!

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

Triumphant Tuesdays – Noon, Tuesdays. Inspirational thoughts & music with Catrice.

Sports Talk Modesto - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes. Snappy banter to catch

up on everything happening in the sports world. – Thursdays, 5 pm.

Vib'n with the West Modesto Collaborative - Jasmine Corena and Likhi Rivas. Engage, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the West Modesto Community. Showcases Voices of the West Modesto Community – Wednesdays, 7 pm.

AREA 5150 UFO RADIO – Spooky music & sounds out of this world, Friday night, 11:00 pm.

Cyber Stallion: Bucks Stallion's Radio Transmission Emporium – Cyber Acoustic Music - Saturdays, 12:00 am, Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m.

I-On-Modesto - John Griffin interviews local people who reveal their inspiring stories. Mondays & Fridays, 10 am and Wednesdays at 9 pm.

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

Women of the Valley with Linda Scheller and Laura Stokes - 8:00 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00 am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwtv> and on Spotify.

Modesto Sound - California Audio Roots Project (CARP) – Tuesdays 5:30 pm, Wednesdays 11:30 am, & Sundays 11:00 am & 4:30 pm.

Sunday Cruisin' with your host, DeeJay Rig! Oldies hits from 1959 to 1999 – Sundays, 5:00 p.m.

Faithful Fridays – inspirational music and thoughts with Catrice – Fridays, 7:00 p.m.

Why Not Nice? - Showcases unique music from unique cultures and thinkers worldwide, focusing on world/academic/jazz and roots music – Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

Mars Radio – Hip-Hop Show - Music, interviews from local & regional artists - Fridays, 8:00 pm. A new, second show plays on Saturday nights at 8:00 pm, with a third at 8:00 pm Sundays.

Modesto Area Music Awards (MAMA) with Middagh Goodwin – Mondays 5:00 pm; Fridays 9:00 pm & Saturdays 6:00 pm.

Freak Radio with Christian E. Boyett, 6 pm Thursdays. Replays Saturdays, 9 pm & Tuesdays 11 pm.

This is SKA with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11 pm; Sundays, 5 am to 7 am.

I'll Take You There - A musical journey with Modesto's El Comandante - Saturday, 5:00 pm; Sundays, 9:00 pm.

Penny Bloods – Fun, Victorian melodrama radio plays, often performed by local actors, written by Arnold Anthony Schmidt, CSU, Stanislaus. As scheduled.

PSAs in English and Spanish produced by the West Modesto Community Collaborative.

LISTEN TO OUR MUSIC PLAYLISTS AT SPINITRON <https://spinitron.com/KCBP/calendar>

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

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY RADIO STATION: Donate here: <https://kcbpradio.org/donate/> Please consider a recurring monthly donation.





Preorder a copy of the next issue:
Elements coming in April 2024
lindaknollart.com/store

Immigrants are not hurting U.S.-born workers: Six facts to set the record straight

By Daniel Costa and Heidi Shierholz,
Economic Policy Institute

The immigrant share of the labor force reached a record high of 18.6% in 2023, according to our analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.¹ Anti-immigration advocates have been out in full force, using this as a talking point for deeply misguided commentary and analysis that roughly translates to “immigrants are taking all our jobs.”

The reality is that the economy does not have a fixed number of jobs, and what we see today is a growing economy that is adding jobs for both immigrants and U.S.-born workers. **Here are six key facts that show immigrants are not hurting the employment outcomes of U.S.-born workers.**

The unemployment rate for U.S.-born workers averaged 3.6% in 2023, the lowest rate on record. Obviously, immigration is not causing high unemployment among U.S.-born workers.

The share of prime-age U.S.-born individuals with a job is at its highest rate in more than two decades. In 2023, the prime-age (ages 25–54) employment-to-population ratio (EPOP) for U.S.-born individuals was 81.4%, up from 80.7% in 2019 and now at its highest rate since 2001.^{2, 3}

The prime-age labor force participation rate (LFPR) for U.S.-born individuals is also at its highest rate in more than two decades. In 2023, the LFPR for prime-age U.S.-born individuals was 83.9%, up from 83.3% in 2019 and now at its highest rate since 2002. Further, the increase in the U.S.-born prime-age LFPR over the last year was the second highest on record—below only the increase that occurred the year before last.^{4, 5}

The prime-age LFPR of U.S.-born men without a

bachelor’s degree grew at a record pace in each of the last two years and is above its pre-COVID trend. We focus here on prime-age men without a bachelor’s degree because though the immigrant population is comprised of men and women of all education levels, immigrants are somewhat disproportionately concentrated among men without a college degree (in 2023, the immigrant share of the overall labor force was 18.6%, but it was 20.0% of men without a college degree). That means that if recent immigration were affecting labor market outcomes of U.S.-born workers, it would be more easily detected among workers in this group. However, the LFPR of these workers is also beating expectations. *It is clear the labor market is both absorbing immigrants and generating strong job opportunities for U.S.-born workers, including those in demographic groups potentially most impacted by immigration.*^{6, 7}

Though the immigrant share of the labor force reached a record high in 2023, immigrant labor force growth is not occurring at an unprecedented rate. From 2019 to 2023, the immigrant labor force grew 2.3% annually on average, according to our analysis of CPS data. That is strong growth, but it’s roughly one-third the rate the economy experienced between 1996 and 2000 (which, just like 2022 and 2023, was a period of very low unemployment—and strong employment growth—for U.S.-born workers). Immigrant inflows into the labor force over the last year alone were also not unprecedentedly high—for example, the pace was slower than in 2022 and slower than three of the years from 1996–2000.

Immigrants are an integral part of our labor market, filling gaps caused by demographic changes in the United States and contributing to strong economic growth. The immigrants that make up 18.6% of the U.S.

Economic Policy Institute

labor force are playing key roles in numerous industries and are employed in a mix of lower, middle, and higher-wage jobs. And as the Congressional Budget Office recently reported, immigration is contributing to strong economic growth—with future immigration forecasted to boost real gross domestic product by 2% over the next 10 years—as well as increasing government revenue. Immigrants are also complementing U.S.-born workers by contributing to overall population and workforce growth. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that if the U.S. were to have lower-than-expected immigration levels, the population would begin to decline in 20 years, and if there were suddenly zero immigration, the population would begin to decline next year, deeply harming economic growth.

As these six facts show, the idea that immigrants are making things worse for U.S.-born workers is wrong. The reality is that the labor market is absorbing immigrants at a rapid pace, while simultaneously maintaining record-low unemployment for U.S.-born workers.

Claiming that immigrants are making things worse for U.S.-born workers is often used as an intentional distraction from dynamics that are actually hurting working people—such as weak labor standards and enforcement, anti-worker deregulation, weak labor law that fails to protect workers’ rights to unions and collective bargaining in the face of coordinated and well-funded attacks, and other dynamics that result in too much power in the hands of corporations and employers.

While there’s no question that the immigration system desperately needs updating so that workers are adequately protected, it’s important to remember that it is employers that underpay and exploit workers based on their immigration status—committing workplace violations against those who lack status at a vastly higher rate than U.S.-born workers. And it is employers that regularly and even systematically steal wages from workers who only have a temporary, precarious status provided by a work visa. The resulting two-tiered system of rights in the workplace prevents immigrants from asserting and enforcing their rights. Reform efforts in Congress and the executive branch should thus focus on providing status and work authorization to those who lack it and compelling employers to follow the law, rather than more funding for, and draconian measures on, border enforcement, deportations, and detaining immigrants.

If those who mischaracterize immigration as bad for the economy and for U.S.-born workers really care about improving wages and working conditions for U.S.-born workers, they should focus on pushing for labor law reform and strong labor standards and helping ensure that all workers—regardless of immigration status—have equal and enforceable rights in the workplace.

Visit https://www.epi.org/blog/immigrants-are-not-hurting-u-s-born-workers-six-facts-to-set-the-record-straight/?mc_cid=fd831cc006&mc_eid=1c650e6f80

What the Armchair Experts Get Wrong from page 8

People often emerge from treatment only to find they have nowhere to go but back to the streets.

Moreover, California doesn’t just have a catastrophic housing shortage, it also has severe shortages of staff and infrastructure for drug and mental health treatments, not to mention shortages of assisted living facilities.

Sheffield is right when she argues that housing first policies alone won’t end homelessness. For the many homeless people who are disabled, mentally ill and severely traumatized, assisted living will be a necessary component for getting off the streets.

As for, “moving people into self-supported housing,” Sheffield again ignores reality. Of the thousands of Bay Area people living in cars, trucks and motor homes, many are employed. Most don’t earn enough to afford local rents, and even when they do earn enough, there aren’t enough rooms and apartments to serve everyone’s needs.

The fundamental problem with treatment-first remedies for homelessness is the inconvenient truth: We don’t have enough housing. We also don’t have enough service providers for the ill and disabled, nor do we have sufficient staff and infrastructure to treat the mentally ill.

Until public officials throughout the state learn to accept the hard facts about homelessness, homelessness will only get worse. Drug use and mental illness didn’t create California’s dire need for treatment centers and assisted living facilities, nor did unemployment cause housing shortages. Self-supported housing can’t happen without housing, and we don’t have enough housing.

No one blames the passengers for sinking the Titanic, but too many people are willing to blame homelessness on the homeless, which is just as absurd an argument. Homeless people need temporary shelter and basic services now; “treatment first” tactics and arguments ignore those needs and contribute to ongoing suffering and harm for people on the streets.



calendar



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

march 2024

The **Kruse Lucas Art Gallery** is located at 525 Tully Rd., Modesto and is open Monday-Friday, 9 am -5 pm, except holidays. 209-529-9111.

Modesto Science Colloquium Spring Semester 2024. Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 pm, MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free and Open to the Public. Check our website for updates, live, and recorded talks: <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/colloquium.php>

March 6: Linda Brzezinski, Professor of Chemistry, MJC. The Great American Eclipse II - Sequel. Did you miss out on the total eclipse in 2017? Get details on the upcoming total solar eclipse of April 2024 so you know where, when and how to safely observe.

March 20: David Dow, Professor of Music, MJC. Serendipity and the Creative Process. Electronic and computer music composition is a very individualized process. It can be as varied as the composers pursuing it. I will explore the musical creative process from my standpoint and how I compose my music often with the use of serendipitous events.

April 3: Sarah Davis, Instructional Support Specialist – Life Sciences & Adjunct Professor of Biology, MJC. Miles of Reptiles: Exploring the Mojave Desert by Way of Zzyzx. A discussion of Mojave Desert reptiles, graduate school fieldwork, and what's really at the end of Zzyzx Rd. (Hint: It's not a ghost town!).

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm. unless noted otherwise.* Fri., March 22: Dr. Priya Shukla, UCD, From Cradle to Plate: An Oyster's Journey. From artwork to adaptation, fossils to fantasy, and experiments to expeditions, this talk will explore the culture and science concerning farming oysters and restoring oyster reefs in an ocean affected by climate change. <https://priyology.github.io/>; <https://marinescience.ucdavis.edu/news/bodega-marine-laboratory-graduate-student-priya-shukla-wins-uc-davis-dissertation-year>

The Prospect Theatre: 23/24 season has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/>

2 SAT: Modesto Peace/Life Center Annual Meeting, 9 am.

5 TUES: VIGIL: PEACE-ISRAEL-GAZA at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:00-5:00 pm. Call the Center for info: 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org NOTE DAY CHANGE.

7 THURS: Peace/Life Center ZOOM Monthly Board Meeting, 6:30 pm. Email jcostello@igc.org for login.

16 SAT: Lift Every Voice & Vote. NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet & Community Service Awards. Visit <https://www.naacpmolestostanislaus.org/event-details/2024-freedom-fund-banquet-community-service-awards>. Call 209-896-9196.

17 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society presents *Clueless* at 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/clueless-032024/>

23 SAT: Golden State Road Warriors Wheelchair Basketball Team, National Champions. Benefit for KCBP 95.5 FM Community Radio, 1 pm, Modesto Junior College Gym. See article p.1

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

D&D Champions Group, Noon. Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto.

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. All are welcome. For more information, please email charlie@imcv.org. Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County meets in person and on Zoom every Sunday at 10:30 am at 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto. Info: 209-788-3720; www.stanuu.org

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

Unity of Modesto meets in person every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. at 2467 Veneman, Modesto. Information: 209-578-5433

MONDAYS

Queer Cuts, last Monday of the month, 10 a.m., Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto, 209-408-8848.

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter meets on the second Mondays at 7:00 pm at 2201 Morill Rd., Riverbank. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in this support group for families whose children have died at any age, from any cause. Call 209-622-6786 or email for details: tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com; <https://www.modestoriverbanktcf.org/>

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

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. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

TUESDAYS

Women's Support Group for Women in all stages of life. Join us in a safe and judgment-free environment where you can give and receive support for the many issues that we struggle with as Womxn. Every Tuesday from 1 pm-2 pm at the Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto (Ages +18). Contact Sandra Vidor- 209.652.3961 or Kellie Johnson 209.918.0271.

Climate Action Justice Network-Stanislaus meets the first Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/CJAN-FirstTuesday>

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@moprider.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; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmolestostanislaus.org/> email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

Exploring Whiteness & Showing Up for Racial Justice Meetings, Fourth Tuesday, monthly 7:00 p.m., Central Grace Hmong Alliance Church, 918 Sierra Dr., Modesto. Info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/247655549018387/>

Pagan Family Social, third Tuesdays, Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, 6:00 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

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

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, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 829 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

WEDNESDAYS

Retired Public Employees Association. All seniors welcome! Meetings every third Wednesday. Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave. 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Call (209) 324-2060. Pay \$8.00 and order from the menu.

The Almond Blossom Sangha. Wednesdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, Zoom, and sometimes hybrid, for meditation and Dharma discussions. Call Anne at 209-404-4835 for more information.

The GAP. A place of support for Christian parents of LGBTQ+ or questioning kids every Wednesday 6:30pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1528 Oakdale Rd. Instagram: [thegapmodesto](https://www.thegapmodesto.org)

Ongoing meditation class based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have been doing for over a decade. Fun and Easy. JOIN ME! Donations accepted but optional. Call 209.495.6608 or email Orlando Arreygue, CMT RYT, orlando@arreygue.com

Merced LGBT Community Center offers a variety of monthly meetings and written materials. Volunteers, on-site Wed-Fri, offer support. Ph: 209-626-5551. Email: mercedboard@gaycentralvalley.org – 1744 G St. Suite 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/>

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

THURSDAYS

LGBTQ+ Senior (age +55) Coffee Club Every Thursday @ 1 pm. Weekly social group to provide connectedness and community inclusion for LGBTQ+ Senior Citizens. Refreshments, snacks provided. Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

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.

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

3rd Thursday Art Walk, Downtown Modesto, art galleries open – take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-8 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 529-3369, www.modestoartwalk.com

Valley Heartland Zen Group: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave.

Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

Pagan Community Meeting, 1st Thursday, Café Amore, 3025 McHenry Ave, Suite S., Modesto, 8 pm. Info: 569-0816. All newcomers, pagan-curious and pagan-friendly welcome.

FRIDAYS

Trans Support Group, 1 pm, Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

International Folk Dancing with Village Dancers, Friday 7:30-9:30 pm (Sept thru May) Carnegie Art Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock \$7. No experience or partner needed. 209-480-0387 for info.

Overcoming Depression: small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 pm. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd, Manteca, CA 95366, (209) 825-1220.

Funstrummers: A Fun-loving Ukulele group gets together live to practice and play. Play along with us or work up to playing out in gigs. Friday mornings, 10am to Noon at the Telle Classrooms, Trinity Presbyterian, 1600 Carver Rd., Modesto.

Latino Emergency Council (LEC) 3rd Fridays, 8:15 am, El Concilio, 1314 H St. Modesto. Info: Lynnette Lucaccini, (209) 338-5700. lluc@elconcilio.org

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

SATURDAY

First and Third Saturdays - **Gay Men's Group**, 1 pm. Positive Support Group for folks living with HIV, 12 pm. All at Central California LGBTQ+ Rainbow Resource Center, 1202 H St., Suite C, Modesto. Call 209-408-8848.

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, 11 am to 12:00 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. 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

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.