



Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable future

A MODESTO
PEACE/LIFE
CENTER
PUBLICATION

SEPTEMBER, 2021
VOLUME XXX, NO. 1

Vote in the Recall Election by Sept. 14

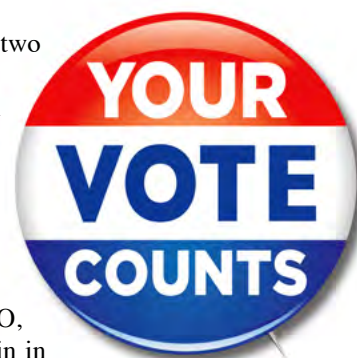
All California active registered voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot for the September 14, 2021, Recall Election. Your county elections office began mailing ballots on August 16, 2021.

The recall ballot asks two questions:

1. Do you want to recall Governor Newsom? and
2. If the governor is recalled, who do you want to replace him?

If 50% or more vote NO, the governor would remain in office.

If more than 50% vote YES, the governor would be removed from office and the person with the most votes would replace him.



Voters can vote on either one or both parts of the recall ballot.

Return your vote-by-mail ballot by mail with prepaid postage as long as it's postmarked by September 14, 2021, or in-person to a secure ballot drop box, to a voting location, or your county elections office by 8:00 p.m. on September 14, 2021.

Information from the Stanislaus County Registrar of Voters here: <https://www.stanvote.com/pdf/voter-guides/20210914.pdf>

List of positions on the CA Governor Recall Election

NO on Recall: California Democratic Party; Sierra Club California; ACLU; California Labor Federation; California Teachers Association; California League of Conservation Voters; Joe Biden; Bernie Sanders; Dolores Huerta

YES on Recall: California Republican Party; Republican National Committee

Valley Water Belongs to the People

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

Much of the history recounted below is from David Igler's "Industrial Cowboys" and Mark Arax's "The Dreamt Land." Much appreciation to both. Also, kudos to Lois Henry for journalism in the great tradition.

From the very beginning, water in the San Joaquin Valley has been manipulated, controlled and adjudicated by the wealthy and powerful. Its history is a story of exploitation, mostly through the use of serf labor, the courts, and public subsidies.

The founding principle that made it possible for the powerful few to extract huge profits from a public resource was, "first in time is first in line." When applied to law, the corollary to the "first in line" principle became, "first in right."

The major players in establishing water law in the San Joaquin Valley, and, by extension, in the entire state — those who were "first in line" — were George Lux, Henry Miller, and James Ben Ali Haggin.

Lux and Miller were San Francisco butchers who be-

came business partners. By 1870, they had achieved one of the earliest examples of vertical integration in the west by owning every aspect of the meat business, from the land, to the cattle, to the packinghouse, to the shop that sold the product.

James Haggin arrived in the San Joaquin Valley at almost the same time as Lux and Miller. Instead of cattle, however, he raised crops. He was the first in the Valley to use irrigated agriculture on a large scale.

As early as the late 1870s, Haggin owned over 160,000

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Modesto needs a Police Review Commission with an Independent Police Auditor

A Civilian Review Committee composed of representatives from various community organizations, including the Modesto Peace/Life Center, has prepared specific proposal documents, modeled upon the City of Davis' successful police review process, which have been sent to each member of the Modesto City Council. Please contact your councilmember and urge support for a Civilian Police Review Board with an Independent Police Auditor To receive a copy of these documents, email Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org

A Community Forum on Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement for Modesto, with recognized experts on this issue, was held on February 27, 2021. Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39G3jn10uHU>

Supported by the following groups: Modesto/Stanslaus NAACP, ACLU Stanislaus, Latino Community Roundtable, North Valley Labor Federation, Modesto Peace/Life Center, Faith in the Valley, Democratic Women's Club of Stanislaus, Valley Improvement Projects, Indivisible Stanislaus, Turlock Black Lives Matter Movement, Stanislaus & Tuolumne Central Labor Council, United Domestic Workers of America UDW/AFSCME 3930, Advocates for Justice, DSA Stanislaus, Modesto Church of the Brethren.

ACTION: Get your local organization to sign on to this effort. How? Email Jim Costello at jcostello@igc.org for information.

Follow closely "Forward Together"—An initiative focused on police-community relations started by the City of Modesto at <https://www.modestogov.com/forwardtogether>. And watch for news about Sheriff Dirkse's "Project Resolve."

KCBP Community Radio Seeks Volunteers

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's Community Radio Station the "Voice of the Valley" KCBP 95.5 FM needs volunteers to help develop the following programs:

Children • Art • Poetry • News/Journalism
• Education • Health • Science • Social Justice • Multicultural • Music/All Genres

Other Opportunities: Underwriting • Fundraising/Event Committee • Community Outreach.

Contact Jocelyn Cooper,
KCBP Development
Director, (209) 422-0119
kcbpvolapp@gmail.com



Yokuts Members and Friends Social

Friday September 17, 6 PM - 7 PM
La Loma Native Plant Garden

Reconnect with Yokuts Group members at the local La Loma Native Plant Garden. The garden is located across the street from La Loma Jr. High School, corner of Encina and Phoenix in Modesto (just west of Oakdale Rd.).

Rhonda Allen, Garden Manager, will give a short presentation about the garden at 6:30 PM. Bring a chair. We will provide snacks and beverages.

We have been looking forward to seeing you again!
Contact Elaine with questions, vevado@yahoo.com.

Merced Pride Event Sat., September 18th

Merced Pride 2021 will be Saturday, September 18th from 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

Main St. from K to M St will be blocked off to traffic along with Bob Hart Square and Canal St. to 18th St. This will be a street fair event with multiple organizations, businesses, FOOD TRUCKS, vendors and artists present.

Live entertainment will be on stage at the intersection of Main and Canal St. Official Merced Pride 2021 DRAG SHOW hosted by Katalina Zambrano and Gigi Banks. PRIDE RIOT Professional Wrestling Show by Ultimate Riot Wrestling, Singer Josh Diamonds and his backup dancers, singer and keyboardist Melynda Rodriguez and other local artists will perform throughout the day with a Community EDM Dance Party finishing off the night.

Merced Pride 2021 KIDS' Zone will be in Bob Hart Square, complete with carnival games, prizes, character performers, face painting and a bounce house. Fun for the whole family!

Interested in volunteering or getting a booth/vendor spot for your business or organization? Email info@mercedlgbtq.org

KD

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MAPS offers free, informative, and engaging community science programs



7:30 pm. Participate by logging on to an Internet Link: <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/maps.php> to sign up for notification of the link.

For archived MAPS talks: <https://share.yosemite.edu/view.aspx?i=1E7L> 10/22 might be live in Sierra Hall 132

Fall 2021 MAPS Schedule

Friday, Sept. 24, 2021. CRISPR Zoom/YouTube: **Dr. Gokul Ramadoss** (Ph.D., UCSF) was recently named a "Discovery Fellow," an advanced Ph.D. student chosen to serve as an ambassador for basic science education because of his leadership potential, excellence in research, and communication skills. Talk focuses on the development of safer and more precise CRISPR tools for therapeutic genetic/epigenetic editing. He is interested in applying these tools to treat neurodegenerative diseases.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxKYZHOIuIE>

Friday, Oct. 22, 2021. Live or Zoom, TBD. **Dr. Evan Reed**, (Associate Professor of Materials and Engineering, Stanford Univ.) **Battery Technology: Today and in the Future.**

Friday, Nov. 19, 2021. Dr. Steve Farmer. Zoom, with group meeting and free candy. **The Chemistry of Candy.** <http://www.acs-sacramento.org/strange-chemistry-with-steve-farmer/>

Friday, Dec. 10, 2021. Zoom/YouTube. **Dr. Margaret Turnbull** (Ph.D. Univ. of Arizona, SETI Inst., NASA Ames), discusses planetary systems capable of supporting life as we know it. She developed a Catalog of Nearby Habitable Systems for use in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI). Dr. Turnbull will address the recent abundance of UFO news appearing on the popular media.

MAPS is grateful to the MJC Foundation, SCOE, MJC, the MTA (Modesto Teachers Assn.) and the Great Valley Museum for generous support.

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Climate Justice Action Now – Stanislaus works for local environmental change

By **MORGAN HAYDOCK**

Climate Justice Action Now - Stanislaus (CJAN) is a community group founded by The Valley Improvement Projects and the Modesto Peace/Life Center that is dedicated to acting against climate change in the Central Valley. The group was formed by people who wanted to make a difference in their community. They wanted to accomplish this by advocating for changes that would make Stanislaus County more climate resilient and would ensure that those most affected by climate change have the resources they need to adapt.

Justice is one of the founding principles of Climate Justice Action Now. The impacts of climate change will not affect all members of our community equally, and often, those who are not able to adapt to these changes will be hit the hardest. One of CJAN's founding beliefs is that any action taken to mitigate climate change or to make the community more resilient must take into account the unequal nature of the impacts.

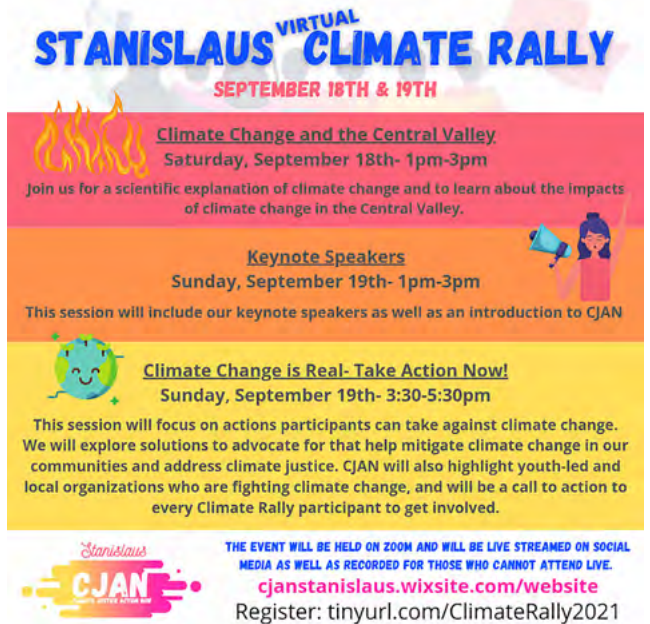
CJAN believes that local action is the foundation of the movement for environmental justice, and that through local action we can better our own communities as well as give more power to the larger national and international movements. By making changes at a local level, we can empower more people to act.

CJAN's first major project will spread awareness about the necessity of climate justice and the importance of local

action in attaining meaningful change in our community. The project is a virtual climate rally starting on September 19th and spanning the rest of the week. The event will highlight various individuals and organizations in Stanislaus County that are taking action against climate change in various ways. CJAN's overarching goal is to create a space where organizations can connect and share their work with the community. By doing so we will be able to form a coalition of like-minded individuals and organizations who can work together on projects to help our community.

We will also highlight youth involvement in the climate justice movement by including youth speakers, youth organizations, and a youth climate art exhibition. Throughout the week of the 19th, CJAN will host a variety of events to spread awareness about climate justice and to teach the community what individuals and groups can do to fight back on a local level against climate change. These events will include presentations about the impacts of climate change on the Central Valley, how young people can get involved in the climate justice movement, and what actions individuals can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

Climate Justice Action Now - Stanislaus is excited to invite the community to Stanislaus County's first virtual climate rally. Together, we can make a difference in our community.



STANISLAUS VIRTUAL CLIMATE RALLY
SEPTEMBER 18TH & 19TH

Climate Change and the Central Valley
Saturday, September 18th- 1pm-3pm
Join us for a scientific explanation of climate change and to learn about the impacts of climate change in the Central Valley.

Keynote Speakers
Sunday, September 19th- 1pm-3pm
This session will include our keynote speakers as well as an introduction to CJAN

Climate Change is Real- Take Action Now!
Sunday, September 19th- 3:30-5:30pm
This session will focus on actions participants can take against climate change. We will explore solutions to advocate for that help mitigate climate change in our communities and address climate justice. CJAN will also highlight youth-led and local organizations who are fighting climate change, and will be a call to action to every Climate Rally participant to get involved.

THE EVENT WILL BE HELD ON ZOOM AND WILL BE LIVE STREAMED ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS WELL AS RECORDED FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT ATTEND LIVE.
cjanstanislaus.wixsite.com/website
Register: tinyurl.com/ClimateRally2021

ACTION: To find out more and join CJAN in its efforts. Join us for our general meeting on the first Tuesday of each month, or contact us at our website: <https://cjanstanislaus.wixsite.com/website>

Fridays for Future: The Children, Most at Risk, Bear the Brunt of Climate Change

From "The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: *Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*"

Signed, Adriana Calderón, Mexico; Farzana Faruk Jhumu, Bangladesh; Eric Njuguna, Kenya; Greta Thunberg, Sweden

FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

Three years ago, with a lone protest by a single child, Fridays for Future began. Within months, that lone protester would grow to over a million in more than 120 countries. Young people, from all corners of the globe, uniting in a global call to save the planet, and save their future.

Climate change is the greatest threat facing the world's children and young people. We have known this for some time – based on what science told us, what the stories we heard from around the world have illustrated, and what we have witnessed with our own eyes – but today, we have the

first analysis of climate risk from the most important perspective on this crisis – ours.

UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index reveals that 1 billion children are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of climate change. That is nearly half of all children. And it is happening today.

Children bear the greatest burden of climate change. Not only are they more vulnerable than adults to the extreme weather, toxic hazards and diseases it causes, but the planet is becoming a more dangerous place to live.

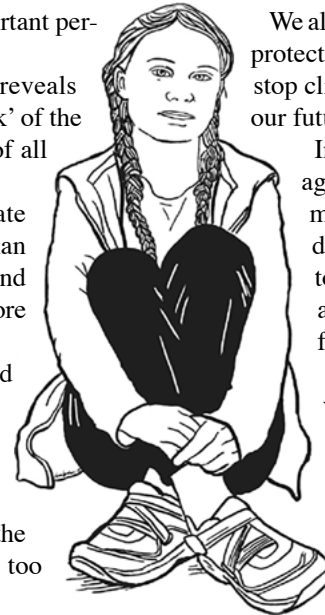
Increasingly catastrophic droughts, fires and storms are forecast to become even worse as our planet continues to warm. Important food and water systems will fail and entire cities are expected to succumb to destructive floods.

Climate change is the greatest threat facing the world's children and young people. And so we too are rising.

In Bangladesh, exposure to cyclones, droughts, floods, salinity and river erosion moved Tahsin to action. He is raising awareness of waterways choked by plastic waste and dangerous erosion at river edges.

In the Philippines, Mitzi is leading youth in the fight for climate justice. Recently, she spent two dark days in a house without power separated from her family during a typhoon – not knowing whether her home had been consumed by the floods, or if her mother was safe.

In Zimbabwe, Nkosi wants to know how he can be expected to attend school "under a scorching sun". He has been a vocal climate activist for years but fears his efforts might be in vain.



We all share this fear. Governments said they would protect us, but they are not doing nearly enough to stop climate change from devastating our lives and our futures.

In 1989, virtually every country in the world agreed children have rights to a clean environment to live in, clean air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. Children also have rights to learn, relax and play. But with their lack of action on climate change, world leaders are failing this promise.

Our futures are being destroyed, our rights violated, and our pleas ignored. Instead of going to school or living in a safe home, children are enduring famine, conflict and deadly diseases due to climate and environmental shocks. These shocks are propelling the world's youngest, poorest and most vulnerable children further into poverty, making it harder for them to recover the next

time a cyclone hits, or a wildfire sparks.

The Children's Climate Risk Index ranks countries based on how vulnerable children are to environmental stresses and extreme weather events. It finds children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau are the most at risk.

And yet these countries are among those least responsible for creating the problem, with the 33 extremely high-risk countries collectively emitting just 9 per cent of global CO2 emissions. In contrast, the 10 highest emitting countries col-

stanislaus
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
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2022 Peace Essay Contest



"I have learned you are never too small to make a difference. You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up is never an option."

Greta Thunberg

Winner of the 2019 International Children's Peace Prize



Division I (Grades 11-12) & Division II (Grades 9-10): 500-1000 words
Division III (Grades 7-8) & Division IV (Grades 5-6): 250-500 words

The August 2021 report from the United Nations says that the changes in climate to date have little parallel in human history. The impact of these changes on our planet is causing significant damage to its habitats and ecosystems. Ocean levels have risen 8 inches on average over the past century. Heat waves have become hotter and last much longer around the world. Wildfire weather has worsened across large areas of the globe. Bursts of extreme heat in the ocean – which can kill fish, seabirds and coral reefs – have doubled in frequency since the 1980's. (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>)

While people and ecosystems around the globe are experiencing the results of these changes in our past climate patterns, certain populations will be especially vulnerable as the consequences of these changes impact their very existence. Due to the impact on food supplies, livelihoods, lands and health, peace among peoples around the world could be severely threatened as people struggle to survive.

When each of us embraces a deep reverence and gratitude for the earth that sustains us, we must also encourage others to do the same. "Inclusive and green economies, prosperity, cleaner air and better health are possible for all, if we respond to this crisis with solidarity and courage" says the UN Secretary-General António Guterres. (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097362>)

The 2022 Peace Essay Contest invites you to study and learn about some of the environmental extremes we are experiencing around the world due to the changes in our climate. Especially take note of those whose lives are (or will be) negatively impacted by these changes.

In your essay*

- Identify and describe one of the negative environmental changes you studied.
- Explain who bears the consequences of the change and the effect it could have on their lives. For example, how does, or could, it affect their food supply, land, livelihoods or health?
- Tell what scientists believe has caused the negative change and what needs to happen to make it better or keep it from getting worse.
- Close by sharing your view about the importance of caring for our world and helping all people to live in a safe and sustainable way, thereby promoting peace and well-being around the world.

*Please, write in your own words. Do not cut and paste or copy directly from source material.
 A very limited amount of directly quoted words may be used if cited properly.

See 2022 Peace Essay Rules and Submission Directions for complete information.

Deadline for Entries: November 15, 2021 Notification of Winners: Late February, 2022

AWARDS	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place	Honorable Mention
Division I and II	\$300	\$200	\$100	\$50
Division III and IV	\$150	\$100	\$50	\$25

Download the flyers/instructions at <http://peaceessaycontest.weebly.com/>
 Email questions to peaceessay20@gmail.com

SHARE: A Unique Program Addresses Homelessness in Stanislaus County

The Stanislaus Homeless Advocacy and Resource Enterprise (SHARE) believes that all people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, including people experiencing homelessness in our community.

As an organization, SHARE will accelerate the involvement and education of the community. In order to move forward together, we will employ strategies which identify and solve problems using our valuable human resources and civic resources, to boost civic engagement, create opportunities and offer equitable access to all public and private resources within our community. Funds we raise each year will be granted solely to this end. Working 100% to propel our mission forward.



SHARE's mission:

Utilizing a dedicated group of volunteers who work with people currently experiencing homeless and/or ones who need assistance after they have obtained housing, to fulfill their agreed sustainability goals.

Involve and educate the community at large on the many issues relating to homelessness and engage them to develop solutions.

Attempting to assist as many families and citizens out of homelessness, and its many symptoms and causal effects, toward a gratifying and safe lifestyle.

SHARE's volunteers will be paired with individuals based upon a well-defined matching process and assist them, as long as they are needed or wanted, to advance them along a defined and agreed plan of action.

Our most valuable assets are the citizens in our community and their willingness to help our most vulnerable, among them the people experiencing homelessness within our community.

We know that reaching out and getting involved with all residents of a community builds a safer and more secure living environment for everyone. We invite you to get involved.

For more information contact:

Steven Finch – sfinch@fisherwireless.com

Frank Ploof – fwploof@gmail.com

Frank Damrell - frank.damrell@gmail.com



Valley Water Belongs to the People

continued from page 1

acres of Kern County land north and south of Bakersfield alone. By the 1880s, Haggin's Kern County Land Company had increased its holdings to over 370,000 acres. At the same time, Lux and Miller claimed over 120,000 acres of Kern County land, acreage that amounted to only a small portion of their huge land holdings in the vast Central Valley.

The dispute between the two agricultural giants arose over Haggin's diversion of water from property he owned along the Kern River to feed his crops. When he steered water away from its natural course, land owned by Lux and Miller dried up. In 1877, Lux and Miller lost almost 10,000 head of cattle as a result.

The lawsuit that ensued, "Lux v. Haggin," established two principles that many argued, "created chaos by shackling the state with two fundamentally incompatible water allocation systems." The "fundamentally incompatible systems" pitted "appropriative rights" against "riparian rights."

In their first suit against Haggin, filed in 1879, Lux and Miller argued that the slough that watered their land was a natural watercourse that provided riparian rights established as far back as English common law. Though they lost that first suit, by 1881, the courts had decided in their favor, but only through a convoluted decision that also asserted that because he owned land along the Kern River, Haggin had "appropriative" rights to "reasonable" water use as long as his usage did not infringe on the riparian rights of others. The ruling thus permitted Haggin to divert water from the river for his own use, as long as there were no negative impacts to the rights of others.

Lux v. Haggin established precedents that did indeed create "chaos." Among other things, the decision tied water usage and rights to land ownership, implying that ownership of land was a prerequisite to water rights.

One-hundred years later, another historic suit, *National Audubon vs Superior Court* (1983), illustrated the harm that can ensue when water is appropriated to increase land values and promote growth. This case came about after the City of Los Angeles had acquired water rights to four out of the five tributaries that fed Mono Lake, a highly saline body far to the north and east of Los Angeles.

Water from the tributaries became necessary when Los Angeles's demand for water grew beyond its supply from the Owens Valley, rendering the formerly fertile Valley useless for agriculture. Owens Valley water had been conveyed to the growing city via the Los Angeles Aqueduct, which was considered an engineering marvel when it became operational in 1913.

By the 1960s, powerful citizens in Los Angeles were promoting public construction of the Second Los Angeles Aqueduct, which was completed in 1970 and immediately added an additional 110,000 acre-feet into Los Angeles's water system. By 1974, water exports from the Mono Basin via the Second Aqueduct had reached 450,000 acre feet per year.

The Audubon lawsuit, which began as a suit against the City of Los Angeles before rising to the Superior Court, argued that diversions from the Mono Lake tributaries had caused environmental damage, especially to Mono Lake. Audubon was joined by a host of other environmental organizations, including CalTrout, which became engaged after world class trout fisheries disappeared from Lee Vining and



Rush Creeks.

The Audubon suit was based on Public Trust Doctrine, a principle that goes back to the laws of ancient Rome and the Emperor Justinian. It reads in part that,

By the law of nature these things are common to mankind—the air, running water, the sea, and consequently the shores of the sea. No one, therefore, is forbidden to approach the seashore, provided that he respects habitations, monuments, and buildings which are not, like the sea, subject only to the law of nations. 2. All rivers and ports are public; hence the right of fishing in a port, or in rivers, is common to all men.

The salient point of the lawsuit, that air and water are the common resources of mankind in general, was and still is in conflict with the concept that water rights are consequence of owning land near rivers, streams and lakes. One of the major consequences of associating water rights with owning land has been the rise of water sales, often euphemistically referred to as "transfers."

Diverting water from where it's abundant to where it's scarce is the principle behind dams, canals and aqueducts. The west couldn't have become thickly populated without such transfers. The California Aqueduct, yet another marvel of engineering, came about as the result of a \$1.75 million bond measure passed in 1960. It doesn't just help irrigate the San Joaquin Valley, it delivers as much as 2.5 million acre-feet to buyers in southern California, including Los Angeles.

However, over time, the practice of moving water great distances combined with the association of water rights with property has resulted in the commodification of a public resource by private enterprise. Now, even Wall Street investors are promoting an "open" water market, which would begin with investments in the Colorado River.

According to Matt Rice, Director of the Colorado Basin Program:

"The convergence of a multi-decadal, climate-fueled drought, a trillion-dollar river-dependent economy, and a region with growth aspirations that rival any place in the country has peaked speculative interest in owning and profiting from Colorado River water"... which ... "while extremely unlikely, would present a grave danger to rural communities, farms and ranches, clean, safe, reliable drinking water for people, and ultimately the health and sustainability of the Colorado River ecosystem itself."

Closer to home, the commodification of water has long been a *fait accompli*. Water sales from the north part of the Valley to the south are common.

Nearly everyone who promotes water sales offers as justification that transfers of surface water keep farmers and cities from pumping groundwater. It's a nice thought, but not always an accurate description of how transfers really work.

In the San Joaquin Valley, one of the largest miners of groundwater is the Boswell Company, a \$2 billion dollar operation with headquarters in Corcoran. Boswell has over eighty wells around Corcoran alone. Most are 1,000 to 1,200 feet deep. Some are over 2,000 feet deep.

Over the years, because of pumping groundwater by Boswell and others, land around Corcoran has sunk. In some areas, it has sunk four feet since 2015. Based on satellite data, one agency estimates Corcoran, "will sink another 6 to 11 feet over the next 19 years."

Not surprisingly, subsidence around Corcoran has been costly for its residents, most of whom are farmworkers. Thirty percent of them live in poverty. When the sinking land crushed the casings of four of the city's wells, tax dollars paid for redrilling the two that weren't covered by insurance.

In 2017, a levee built in 1983 had to be rebuilt because it had become inoperable due to subsidence. The \$10 million cost was paid for by increased property taxes.

One might think that Boswell would prefer to use surface water to continued pumping of groundwater, especially given that justification for sending surface water from the north to the south is to reduce pumping and subsidence. But Boswell, like any profit-seeking entity, looks first to maximize profits. That's why in 2015 and 2016, the Boswell Company sold 43,000 acre feet of surface water to a Fresno Water District for \$43.6 million.

Buying farmland to acquire water rights has become a favored strategy for today's investors, especially as climate change looms. One of the major players in the San Joaquin Valley is Trinitas Partners, a Bay Area investment firm.

Trinitas began purchasing land in and around the Oakdale Irrigation District (OID) in 2008, much of it grazing land for cattle which they immediately converted to orchards. By 2014, they had 7,000 acres of almonds. They also had what

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Homeless: One City, One County

By ERIC CAINE, The Valley Citizen

By October 1, 2015, homelessness in Modesto and Stanislaus County had become the region's most urgent social and political issue. That's when Stanislaus County Supervisors hosted their "Focus on Prevention" symposium to announce, "a ten-year journey of Stanislaus County toward community transformation and prosperity. A primary focus... is to reduce homelessness."

At the time, a few observers noted that "prevention" wasn't possible for the hundreds of people already in the region with nowhere to go. The time for prevention had passed. Modesto alone had over 1,000 people without homes.

Almost six years later, there are more homeless people in Stanislaus County than ever. But Modesto and Stanislaus County aren't alone in experiencing rising homelessness. All along the west coast and as far away as Washington D.C., numbers of chronically homeless people continue to rise, despite the best efforts of local governments and volunteer groups to reduce them.

There are numerous and well understood forces driving homelessness, including job loss from the effects of Covid 19, diminished social and mental health services, housing shortages, rising living costs and stagnant wages. Much less understood are reasons why state and federal governments have been so helpless to stem the rising numbers.

Hasty Generalizations

One obstacle to addressing homelessness is the widespread tendency to lump homeless people into one or two broad categories, a dual error of broad generalization and oversimplification. In these scenarios, homeless people are "bums" or "addicts" who "choose" homelessness as a way of avoiding work and responsibility.

Supporters of the "bums and addicts" theories favor "tough love" remedies for homelessness, with the emphasis on "tough." Typical tough tactics include fines and jail time. The consistent action is a chase — an unending series of fruitless sweeps that push homeless people back and forth around town.

In some cases, the alleged bum or addict is placed in a locked down rehabilitation facility. The belief is that if the bums and addicts have it tough enough, they will shape up and get a job.

Supporters of the "bums and addicts" theories never address the most elementary realities of homelessness, especially the end results of jail and rehabilitation. No matter how "tough" jail and rehabilitation are, the vast majority of people who enter them homeless exit them homeless. That's because the cause of their homelessness isn't drugs or indolence, it's extreme poverty. Tough love approaches turn out to be circular routines back into homelessness.

It takes only a moment's reflection to realize that most drug users and addicts aren't homeless. If addiction caused homelessness, celebrity addicts like Rush Limbaugh, Prince, and Robert Downey Jr. would have ended up on the streets.

Soccer legend Diego Maradona had a cocaine habit throughout most of his career. His gifts as an athlete brought



him sympathy and compassion instead of the condemnation poor people experience from their drug use.

In 2019, "an estimated 10.1 million people aged 12 or older misused opioids. Specifically, 9.7 million people misused prescription pain relievers and 745,000 people used heroin." The numbers of people who "misused" opioids don't include those who (mis)used methamphetamine, cocaine, alcohol, Adderall and other drugs, nor do they include the millions whose drug use goes unrecorded. If drugs were the cause of homelessness, we'd have millions more homeless people.

The "bums" narrative, along with claims that people "choose" homelessness, are as specious as those that cite drug use as the causal factor. Yes, the homeless population, like any group of significant numbers, contains a proportion of "bums," people who seek to coast along on the efforts of others. Such people, however, don't choose homelessness. They're homeless because they have no other viable options.

Work of any kind must offer an incentive. In the case of homeless people, the most pressing incentive is a place to live. Close behind is a sense of worth and accomplishment. Today, especially on the west coast, but also in cities like New York and Washington D.C., only a tiny few homeless people have a chance at a job that pays a living wage.

Even in Modesto and Stanislaus County, which serve as bedroom communities for Bay Area wage earners fleeing high rents, housing for the poor and homeless is far out of reach.

Recent studies show that renters in Stanislaus County need to earn \$4,813 a month to afford an average monthly rental expense of \$1,255. Most of the county's economy depends on retail and agricultural workers who earn far less. Except for those who receive disability or Social Security income, homeless people earn nothing and their prospects for finding a job that pays enough for a rental, even if one were available, are virtually non-existent.

Moreover, Stanislaus County has 15,485 low-income residents who can't find an affordable home; another 76% of its low-income residents spend over half their salaries on rent, a recipe for imminent disaster; they're a hospital bill or car repair away from the streets.

When hard work doesn't pay the rent, the value of work declines. Wage earners who can't afford a place to live find fewer and fewer reasons to labor.

Obsolete Narratives

Despite mathematical facts about housing and wages in Modesto and Stanislaus County, many residents still favor an obsolete narrative about homelessness. According to a widely



held view, the remedy for homeless people is to move off the streets and into a shelter where they will be, "connected to services," that put them back into the mainstream with a job and a place to live.

In fact, local services for the homeless, especially those for the mentally ill, are far too understaffed and underfunded to address the needs of even the seriously mentally ill (SMI), let alone people with less severe but still significant mental and physical health problems.

Consider the case of Mary Baca. Just under six years ago, Mary showed up in a Modesto park after living for several months in her car. It was immediately apparent to homeless people in the park that she was severely mentally ill. Over time, her mental illness got worse.

Approached numerous times by outreach workers, Mary has always refused help, almost certainly because she's afflicted by anosognosia, a common condition among the mentally ill that makes them unaware of their illness. She once had a 15-day stint in Stanislaus County's Behavioral Health Recovery Service Center, where she received counseling and prescription medication, whereupon she was released and returned to her favored park location.

Back in the park, Mary's friends noticed a marked improvement in her mental health. However, she went off her medication after a few weeks and returned to her state of paranoid schizophrenia. Mary can be seen singing and playing guitar on a video taped by Richard Anderson in May, 2016. At 28 seconds in, Mary talks about life in Modesto's Graceada Park, and the seven underground homeless men responsible for home invasions in the Graceada neighborhood. Her illness is obvious.

Today, Mary is in the Stanislaus County Jail. She's been there since February of this year, when she was arrested for refusing to leave the premises of a local market where she panhandled during the day and slept at night. After over six months, her next hearing is scheduled for December. Even after all this time, the only "service" available for Mary is incarceration, despite clear evidence of SMI.

Kenneth "Pops" Yarber is a disabled man who spent over 20 years on the streets of Modesto until the opening of the Modesto Outdoor Emergency Shelter (MOES) in 2019, when Modesto Police Sargent Mike Hammond told him he needed to get inside or face arrest. MOES was a permitted campsite featuring onsite security and services.

When MOES closed in January, 2020, Pops moved into Stanislaus County's low barrier shelter in the Berberian Building on 9th and D Streets in Modesto. Except for a short

stint when he was kicked out for a dispute with a staff worker, Pops has been there ever since, almost 20 months. Somehow, he's still not connected to "services." During the time he was suspended, a period of triple-digit temperatures, Pops lived in a nearby park.

Though clearly erroneous and counterproductive, "shelter to services" is still the dominant narrative for homelessness, and a major reason why the numbers of homeless people continue to rise.

Parasites of the Mind and Perversions of Language

Homeless people are commonly classified as "vagrants" or "transients." The effect of such words — like the effect of words like "addicts" and "bums" — is to objectify and dehumanize them, to make them something other than people.

One of the most enduring myths about the homeless in Modesto and Stanislaus County is that they've been shipped in from other cities — they're not our own. Despite evidence that the overwhelming number of homeless people in the region have local roots, the "other cities" origin narrative persists because it assists in a process of alienation; it marginalizes homeless people as outsiders and makes it easier to deem them unworthy of help.

Help itself is routinely discouraged by memes about "enabling" and bromides about "teaching a man to fish" or giving him "a hand up instead of a handout." Instead of a its positive connotation, "enabling" becomes a negative because it's associated with encouraging bad habits.

In fact, we should be enabling more people with disabilities, not fewer. We should be feeding the hungry and comforting the afflicted. Perversions of language make it harder to think clearly about the realities of homelessness.

In a nation where wealth is seen as a sign of virtue, it follows that poverty must be a sign of vice. So it is that homeless people must "choose" homelessness and "don't want help."

It is true that after many attempts to make a living at poverty-level wages and after several rounds of failed "services," many homeless people become exhausted and burnt out. They've discovered "help" is illusory and too often leads back to the streets. They're also often damaged by the stress of extreme poverty.

Robert Sapolsky, Stanford's MacArthur-Award winning brain neurologist, has found that the stress of poverty leads to brain damage. The damage increases in social contexts featuring great wealth disparity.

While the damaging effects of poverty on children are well known, it's only recently that research by scientists like Sapolsky has revealed the damage to adults from extreme poverty. Chief among the effects of the prolonged stress of poverty is damage to the brain's executive function — the part of the brain involved in making choices. The popular view — that poverty is caused by bad choices — confuses cause and effect. In fact, according to research by Sapolsky and others, the bad choices are an effect of poverty, not a cause.

One of the ways homeless people cope with the stress of extreme poverty is by forming small communities, groups they often refer to as "families." Loosely associated with a local park, neighborhood, or along a river, homeless families provide their members with security from the bullies, thieves and belligerent young people who often prey on them. They

also share food and other necessities.

When Stanislaus County disbanded MOES, the most common complaint among the homeless was the loss of community.

"We've got each other's backs," was a common refrain from people displaced when the permitted campsite closed. "Now we're losing our community."

A number of MOES' residents, like Pops Yarber, moved into the county's low-barrier shelter, but with a capacity of 180 beds it left many of the over 450 MOES' campers with nowhere to go.

Not long thereafter, the county instituted an "accountability" element as part of its homeless abatement program. A key feature made any encampment or gathering of more than ten homeless people subject to citations or arrest. Once again, homeless policy in Stanislaus County had devolved to chasing poor people from place to place. The County's "Focus on Prevention" program had come full circle, with the major difference there were now more homeless people than ever.



The Covid pandemic only made things worse. Covid relief money took some homeless people off the streets only because they used the money to buy cars and vans. Some of these buyers had been living in shelters. Two residences for homeless people in the City of Patterson became vacant altogether after residents received Covid checks and took off.

The rising numbers of homeless people living in vehicles included many who had lost housing after failing to pay rent or mortgages. Despite moratoriums, renters were still being evicted. Stanislaus County's eviction rate led the entire state, with 18 evictions per 10,000 households. Mendocino, Kern, and Calaveras Counties tied for second place with 14.

Covid also made congregate living even less appealing than before the pandemic. Many homeless people avoided shelters anyway because colds and flu were prevalent there, especially during winter months. Covid added another disincentive.

In any case, shelters were never meant for long-term residence. They served best during a time when men — and the vast majority were men — who had fallen on hard times or struggled with alcohol or drugs could spend a week or two getting cleaned up before finding a job and moving on.

Those were also the days of cheap hotel rooms and boarding houses; rents were far lower. A worker could earn enough in a couple of weeks to move on from the shelter into a room or apartment. Those days are gone.

Today, shelter occupants seldom have viable options for relocation. Many are disabled and many more will never find a job that pays a living wage. Modesto and Stanislaus County have an acute housing shortage, but funding for construction is dependent on meeting federal and state standards for "affordable" and "permanent" housing. Nothing is affordable for people with no money and no prospect of getting any, and many people's Social Security or disability incomes fall far short of qualifying for market rentals.

These realities — housing shortages and restrictive laws and regulations — too often delay or prevent the quick action needed to reduce the harmful effects of homelessness. Ironically, Modesto and Stanislaus County had an ideal strategy for reducing the ongoing harm of homelessness with MOES. At an estimated cost of \$13 per day per person, MOES provided the most cost-effective harm reduction strategy for homelessness anywhere.

Even as Modesto and Stanislaus County veered away from permitted camping, cities like Sacramento have embraced it. The Sacramento City Council unanimously approved its "Safe Ground" strategy for reducing homelessness on August 10. It includes permitted camping, tiny homes, and round-the-clock service and security.

While Modesto and Stanislaus County double down on congregate living options — following the "shelter to services" narrative — other regions have moved to quicker and less costly options. Among the most efficient are Pallet Shelters and Conestoga Huts.

Pallet Shelters are sturdy, lockable, and can be set up in hours. Fresno, Santa Clara, Los Angeles, Sonoma and dozens of other locations have established sanctioned Pallet Villages already, with more coming. Rather than wait for years for so-called "affordable housing," these communities have recognized the urgent need for shelter now.

After decades of deferred maintenance, there won't be a quick and easy fix for our roads, bridges, canals, dams, ports and other crumbling infrastructure, nor will there be an easy fix for the punishing effects of extreme poverty. Every day homeless people spend without a secure place to lay their heads causes more harm, both physical and psychological.

Homelessness also causes loss of revenue to local businesses; it depreciates property values and contributes to rising numbers of quality of life crimes. Local governments everywhere have been unable to reduce the harms of homelessness in large part because their leaders have been incapacitated by obsolete narratives, obstructive regulations, mindless memes and perversions of language. The effect is to blunt and even destroy political will.

Ending "welfare as we know it" and reducing government "to the size where [we] can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub" sounded like good ideas at the time. Today, while billionaire oligarchs cavort in space, disabled Americans sleep on our sidewalks. Local governments are helpless. The quality of mercy isn't strained, it's shattered.

Reconnecting – A Model in Our Own Backyard

Michael Baldwin Senior is a Modesto Community Advocate and Paralegal. This is the final installment in a three-part series on the challenges faced by current and former incarcerated individuals in their quest to successfully reenter society. It was written in collaboration with Tom Portwood.

By MICHAEL BALDWIN, SR.

Just over a year ago, I had the honor of speaking at a candlelight vigil for George Floyd at the 10th Street Plaza in downtown Modesto. The people gathered together that evening were young and old, of multiple ethnicities, of untold faiths – in short, human beings from all walks of life leaving the comfort of their homes for an hour of healing in their community. It was a beautiful moment.

I am an optimistic person by nature, and I was definitely hopeful that night that – as a community – we could begin to address the systemic racism that ultimately led to George Floyd’s horrific murder, to the murders across this land of countless other innocent men and women of color. I remain hopeful to this day, especially now that I’m in the room actively open – in honest dialogue with law enforcement personnel.

While I’ve written at length in this series about the challenges formerly incarcerated individuals must overcome to succeed in society, I am now equally optimistic that an innovative program exists in our own backyard that could be a game changer for the entire rehabilitation system, if improved upon and adopted by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). (More on this a bit later)

I mention the candlelight vigil and George Floyd – who was himself a formerly incarcerated individual – because many of the same threads of systemic racism and social injustice that led to his death also impact the formerly incarcerated as they try to rebuild their lives, and because much of my current work reminds me of the events of last summer. We still have lots of work to do.

So, yes – society helps create and maintain many of the social injustices that the formerly incarcerated encounter on a daily basis. I can go into some communities and their lawns are well-manicured and green, their streets are clean, and the parks have new swings and playground equipment. The schools are among the best and always seem freshly painted. There’s a real vibrancy to the life you encounter there.

But then I can go into other communities, in neighborhoods where the city doesn’t send the sweeping trucks around very often, where the grass doesn’t get cut and trees don’t get planted, and there’s a lot of vacant, rundown buildings. There’s a reason why that doesn’t happen in the more affluent neighborhoods, and that’s part of the social injustice, part of the reason for the sense of hopelessness that sometimes grips these other, too-often neglected communities, part of the reason why there’s more violence and drugs on the streets, and some of the reasons why so many of the formerly incarcerated living in those neighborhoods return to crime. And people wonder why the rate of recidivism is so high.

And let’s be honest with each other, people have biases against people who are formerly incarcerated, especially if they are Black or Brown. You have to have a certain level of credit, a certain amount of money, and neither of those is going to be available if you’re fresh out of prison and lack a viable support system or a concrete opportunity at employment.

The housing market for the formerly incarcerated is a



major challenge. Sometimes you can’t get Section 8 housing if you’ve been a justice-involved individual. And if you have been convicted of drug offenses you may be unable to obtain housing subsidies. So you are on your own. If you don’t have a social support network, or haven’t enrolled in a transitional housing program, then you’re really on your own.

Obtaining viable employment is also extremely difficult for justice-involved individuals, even if they have the skills to do the job. Employers can ask in an interview about your criminal history, although the box on employment forms has been eliminated. I can tell you that many of the formerly incarcerated individuals I know will become some of the hardest working, most loyal employees you’ll ever want to meet. They just need to be given half a chance. I can vouch for the fact that many of them will never let you down, that they’ll work their fingers to the bone to do a good job for you.

There’s a certain time when a person commits a crime that he should be separated from his community, or separated from the people that he has harmed, but there’s no justice in perpetuating that separation permanently. I’ve spoken about this before. I believe that justice is served when you try to bridge that gap, to reconnect the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individual with his family, with his community, so that understanding can happen.

One of the things I try to do with the people that I’m in contact with is I try to catch them before they’re released. The question “How am I going to survive?” becomes a constant thought, almost an obsession in the minds of so many men I know long before they leave the prison yard. When you’re unhoused and part of the homeless community, for many people it can become like dog-eat-dog. You’re vulnerable and the mission is to do your best not to be a victim. We shouldn’t have to make our incarcerated population or the formerly incarcerated crawl for their dignity, especially if we want to reduce recidivism. Their dignity is in our collective best interest – we want them to come out restored – and productive.

The price of rehabilitation is not cheap, but the costs for society of recidivism are even greater. And the costs of rehabilitation are cheaper than incarceration. But it’s harder for people in authority to grasp the concept that they’re going to spend X amount of dollars on rehabilitating the incarcerated population, as opposed to spending that money on locking them up.

For us to have any substantial impact on the rate of recidivism, we don’t even have to look very far. In fact, there’s a potentially exemplary program I am hopeful about right here in our own community: The Stanislaus County REACT Center.

The Stanislaus County REACT Center (REACT stands for Re-Entry and Enhanced Alternatives to Custody Training) is

exactly the model I wish CDCR would adopt down the line for all of its facilities. There are definitely changes needed to make it an ideal setting for rehabilitation – and, again, those in authority must be willing not only to keep an open mind to change but be willing as well to invest in it. But I believe this model, once its potential is fully realized, would have an impact on the reduction of recidivism for years to come.

Opened in 2018, the REACT Center offers Stanislaus County Jail incarcerated individuals the type of wraparound services I believe are necessary for each and every incarcerated individual. At the Center, justice-involved individuals can access not only job training and placement services, but comprehensive clinical and counseling services, as well as a critically needed family reunification program.

With the REACT Center, you’re providing a concentrated effort for those in the program to become citizen-minded before they are released. I believe that this is the space where we can do the most concentrated work to provide the type of quality rehabilitation that can lead to reduced recidivism – which also means reduced victimization.

I believe that when someone is ready to be released, he or she should have a folder-in-hand with the next 30 days planned ahead of time – and that that individual has been thinking about this plan for a while and receiving constructive advice from those who have been there and done that before, as well as the clinician or therapist who can help him or her dig into some of his or her psychological issues and traumas.

This intensive work must begin while these “Returning community members” (incarcerated individuals) are still inside, almost like in a boot camp setting. But even while they’re involved in classes and perhaps counseling sessions, these individuals can engage with organizations and agencies in the community that are willing to help them put together a resume and possibly line them up for job interviews. All the while, they can also be slowly reestablishing ties with their families and building confidence within themselves.

It is a multifaceted program but still in its early growing stages. If given a chance by Stanislaus County to be fully developed, I would urge the CDCR to take a close look at it. As I’ve noted before, the individuals who are incarcerated are the drivers of most of the rehabilitation work that currently occurs within prisons. But as the pandemic subsides, all of us have been given the gift of new opportunities – and this is one opportunity I hope neither Stanislaus County nor CDCR passes up. After all, we are all in this together.

As always, I’m here in the community for those who want to talk about what’s going on with them. I can be reached at Legacy Alliance Outreach, or visit my website:

www.mabsenior.com

michael@legacyallianceoutreach.org



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

POET: Roberta Bearden

Roberta is a poet, a painter, and a musician. She plays the Ukulele in a small local group. Roberta has a chapbook entitled "*The Season of Death*," a memorial of close family members and one full-length poetry book, "*On The Museum Steps*" that has been published. She has had numerous awards for her poetry and is currently working on a new poetry book and a series of short stories.



Disaster

The wind blows. The earth shakes. The fire destroys. Those who live in the path bargain, pray and sometimes run.

What happens when disaster stops, when the house is flattened or burned or water leaves mold on walls and floors?

Do we move, look for a safer place or do we stay, re-build, sure we are now safe from the wrath of nature?

We have learned nothing if all we can do is hope. We must look for solutions before it is too late.

Fall Again

Leaves swirl like square dancers swinging with unseen wind.

The late summer night is cool
an early fall feel to the evening.
She opens her window breathes
in the clean cool breeze.

There is a hope of rain in the
dropping temperature. Hope for
an end to years of drought.



Winter

Winter is coming. A favorite line from Game of Thrones. Winter is coming sounds so ominous -as if winter will bring disaster.

In California winter is barely noticed. Temperatures rare below thirty degrees and sometimes it can be over seventy.

Rain shows up occasionally exciting everyone for a few hours. We're lucky to get ten or twelve inches in a year.

We listen to weather reports of Hurricanes, Tornadoes, snow, twenty inches of rain in a day and feel safe. But the winds come, fire rages through towns taking houses, cars and people.

It is then we long for rain, cool nights and the fog we once cursed, wished would go away.

Still Gray Morning

Fire smoke fills the air
reminiscent of morning fog
blocks the sun
chills the summer day.

Inside cool air doesn't soothe
the longing to embrace a
new day, weed a garden
play ball with the old dog
while fire smoke fills the air.

We are still not the same

It was a place of dirt and beauty.
A child of the West Coast I had
a tinge of arrogance that shames
me now.

The bathrooms were labeled white
for people with skin my color. Other
bathrooms were labeled differently,
places my Mother pulled me away from.
Separate drinking fountains made me
wonder if the water tasted the same.

Many years later, as an adult, I returned.
The dual facilities were gone, the same
water slaked everyone's thirst. The
divide hidden behind false smiles.

The Picture

You showed the picture to us.
Two little girls picking cotton.
I looked at the picture, tried to
see if they were black or white.

I was white. It didn't matter. The
long sacks stirred the poison soil
of central California. Spores traveled
through air, caught in my throat.
created life-long problems.

The spikes that held the fluffy balls
dug into flesh, tore skin with sharp
claws. I remember how they hurt.

I see my father, my mother bent over
for hours stuffing the long bags like
Santa Claus at Christmas, only these
were not toys. They were the food we
ate, the homemade clothes we wore,
the gas for our old car.

I look back on those days, grateful for
a determination to do something different,
something inside where air conditioning
made me forget a 100-degree sun, a lack
of shade, no bathrooms.

Growing up this way shaped me into
a more competent person with an
arrogance that said I did it, why can't
you? It took years to understand the
reasons why you couldn't.

Global Warming

My great grandsons will have
no memories of the valley I
lived in as a child.

The heat and cold of my world,
tamed by dams and canals, is
covered by winter fog and summer sun.

The fog is gone now, nights too
warm for the wet mist and deep
ground clouds that made driving
an adventure to be avoided.

Desert flowers and cactus hover
on the edge of the valley wait like
Vultures for the first sign of weakness.

Behind mountain dams water level
drops, sucked out by thirsty cities.
As another subdivision rises we wait
for snow that rarely comes.

Listen to Local Programming, The Voice of the Valley, 95.5FM

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

PROGRAMS: AREA 5150 UFO RADIO – Saturday night at Midnight.

Sounds Irish from County Wicklow – Saturdays, 7:00 p.m.
KeeHive-LaKiesha McDonald talks women who have overcome great odds. Mondays & Wednesdays, 7:00am

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 - Mondays, 8:00pm; 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 Leah Hassett - 8:00pm Tuesdays & Thursdays & Wednesdays, 9:00am. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbpwotv> and on Spotify.

The Peril and the Promise with Pegasus - Wednesdays, 9:30 pm; Saturdays, 2:30 pm; Listen here also: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp-peril>

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

Where We Were - Fascinating local history with Felton Daniels. Monday & Thursdays 9am.

Friday 8:30pm; Sunday at 11:00am & 4:30 pm.

The Ralph Nader Hour - 4:00pm Saturdays.

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



Local Music

Modesto Area Music Show with Middagh Goodwin - Mondays 5:00pm; Fridays 9:00pm & Saturdays 6:00pm.

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

This is SKA with Middagh Goodwin - Tuesdays, 9 pm; Fridays, 11pm; Sundays, 6 am.

Weekdays (Monday - Friday)

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

Dead Air - Hear the Grateful Dead with Corey Daniels.

Fridays, 6pm; Saturdays, 3 pm

Attitude with Arne Arnesen - 3:00pm

Sojourner Truth - 4:00pm

Democracy Now! - 7:00pm.

Flashpoint Magazine - 10:00pm.

Children's Programming

Confetti Park - Saturdays 8:00am; & Sunday's 12:30pm.

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

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

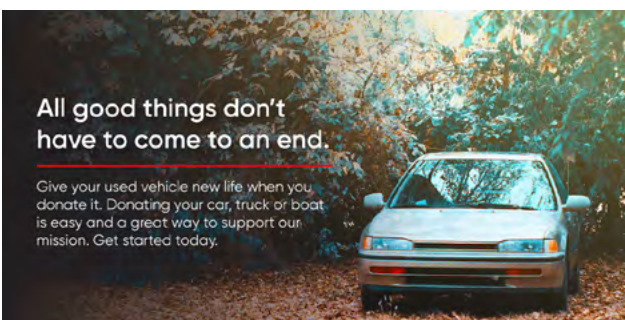
What programming do you like or would like to hear? Contact us at programming@kcbpradio.org or call (209) 353-3066. Help put "Community" into community radio!

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4. Donating beats the hassles and worries of selling.
5. Our Vehicle Donation Support Team is here to guide you every step of the way.
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To donate, call (855) 500-7433, or submit the secure on-line form at <https://careasy.org/KCBP>. We accept all types of vehicles that meet the following basic requirements: Vehicle has a clear title, is in one piece, is accessible for safe towing, does not need to be running.

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Fridays for Future: The Children, Most at Risk, Bear the Brunt of Climate Change

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lectively account for nearly 70 per cent of global emissions. Only one of these countries is ranked as extremely high-risk in the index.

We cannot allow this injustice to continue. It is immoral that the countries that have done the least are suffering first and worst.

Governments and businesses urgently need to work to tackle the root causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

This report comes ahead of the November 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. There is still time for countries to commit to preventing the worst, including setting the appropriate carbon budgets to meet Paris targets, and ultimately taking the drastic action required to shift the economy away from fossil fuels.

While we do that, we must also find solutions to build resilience and help those already in trouble. This crisis is happening now.

We will strike again and again until decision-makers change the course of humanity. We have a duty to urgently raise awareness and demand action. What began on a Friday three years ago, has continued every Friday since, including today. We have a duty to each other and to the children that are too small to hold a pen or a microphone, but that will experience even greater challenges than we are. Movements of young climate activists will continue to rise, continue to grow and continue to fight for what is right because we have no other choice.

We must acknowledge where we stand, treat climate change like the crisis it is and act with the urgency required to ensure today's children inherit a livable planet.



Valley Water Belongs to the People

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many thought was a sweetheart deal that incensed longtime members of the district.

After a \$20 million upfront fee and millions more for infrastructure, Trinitas was annexed into OID ahead of many local farmers who had sought annexation for years. Dependent at the time on groundwater, Trinitas spokesman Ryan Paton said he expected to be “95 to 97 percent dependent” on OID surface water by 2016. He also said, “These are long-term investments for us,” Paton said. “We’re not short-termers. We’re not flippers. Nothing we have is for sale.”

Five years later, neighboring farmers say Trinitas’s groundwater pumps almost never stop running and Trinitas is now known as “PSP,” because in 2017 it formed a partnership with Canada’s Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP).

The commingled groups are known as “Mahi Pono” in Hawaii, where they have recently been charged with greenwashing investments and violating their own ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) standards. Their presence on the island of Maui has been controversial from the very beginning, mostly because local residents and farmers feared they were engaging in a “legislative water swipe” to service their 56,000-acre purchase.

Fears of a water grab intensified in the fall of 2019, when Trinitas/PSP/Mahi Pono hired OID water attorney Tim O’Laughlin as its Chief Operating Officer. *Maui Time* journalist Deborah Rybak described O’Laughlin as a specialist in, “privatizing public water.”

Anywhere other than the incestuous world of western water, O’Laughlin would be seen as having a huge conflict of interest when representing both the water district and one of its biggest customers. At OID, a district that depends on water sales to balance its books, it’s just business as usual.

OID has to sell water because its first-tier customers get water below the cost of delivery, far below. In fact, farmers in the nearby Modesto Irrigation District (MID) also get their water below the cost of delivery. In the case of MID, however, farmers are subsidized not by water sales but by its rate-paying electricity customers.

When MID tried to sell water to San Francisco in 2011, a roaring public outcry that was joined by local farmers shut the sale down. OID sales and those of nearby South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID), on the other hand, have been met with widespread public approval.

June 23, a Modesto Bee editorial argued that, “the water

is not needed by customers of OID and SSJID.” *Bee* editors added that, “whatever water OID and SSJID can sell is water that parched farms don’t have to pump from aquifers to keep their orchards and crops alive. Preserving precious groundwater is a top priority for all agencies.”

Like far too many Valley citizens when it comes to water, *Bee* editors seem unable to accept the nearby evidence of their senses. Yes, “preserving precious groundwater is a top priority for all agencies,” including those in Modesto, Oakdale, and Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties, where PSP/Trinitas and other farmers continue to pump groundwater and deplete the aquifer both within and outside OID, MID, and SSJID boundaries. How much sense does it make to justify a water sale by saying it reduces pumping groundwater when the sale is by a district where farmers continue to pump and wells continue to go dry?

Passed in 2014, California’s *Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)*, requires local agencies, “to develop and implement groundwater sustainability plans to avoid undesirable results and mitigate overdraft within 20 years.” Groundwater, like water in general, doesn’t observe water district boundaries, which is why SGMA guidelines refer to the sustainability of groundwater basins, as opposed to city limits, county borders, or water districts in general.

Groundwater near and within the spheres of influence of OID, SSJID and MID is declining rapidly for many reasons, but especially because tens of thousands of acres of nut-bearing orchards have been planted in the eastern foothills of Stanislaus County over the last two decades. The rush to plant trees came about after farmers learned that the Mehrten Formation in eastern Stanislaus County contained the last viable aquifer in the San Joaquin Valley.

The highly permeable “black sands” of the Mehrten Formation are in part fed by nearby reservoirs, including New Melones, Modesto, and Woodward. Before it was drained by the rush to pump, the Mehrten aquifer contained water 1200 years old and older. Now, it would take centuries to replenish that water as the aquifer continues to decline.

As aquifers are depleted, orchards near reservoirs and along the region’s major rivers will doubtless survive longer than others, but that’s only because they are pumping water that belongs to the public, yet another case of public subsidy of private enterprise. By now well-documented, pumping groundwater has been shown to be a major factor in the decline of rivers nationwide, especially in the west. Moreover, pumping groundwater near a reservoir contributes to water loss from that reservoir.

Nonetheless, *Bee* editors, like most everyone in the San Joaquin Valley, argue that it makes sense to send so-called “surplus” water south, where farmers have drained their aquifers to near depletion and canals and other conveyances are declining in efficiency due to damage from subsidence. Evaporation loss and pumping costs of sending priceless water to distant locations are apparently acceptable “costs of doing business.” What kind of sense does it make to send water elsewhere when wells are going dry in your own back yard?

When government agencies attempt to intervene in water sales and distribution so that the public resource can be distributed more equitably, Valley farmers and their supporters carp about “water grabs.” They never mention the true history of water grabs in the San Joaquin Valley, which began with the draining of the second-largest freshwater lake in

the United States, continued with the exhaustion of the San Joaquin River to the point that it dried up for a sixty-mile span, produced one of the largest and most severe areas of subsidence in the world, and continues with the ruination of the San Joaquin Delta.

The ongoing commodification of a public resource for private use and profit has many forms, but in the end amounts to socializing costs while privatizing profits. In addition to the public expense of environmental destruction, commodification results in a grossly inequitable distribution of the fruits flowing from a commonly held resource.

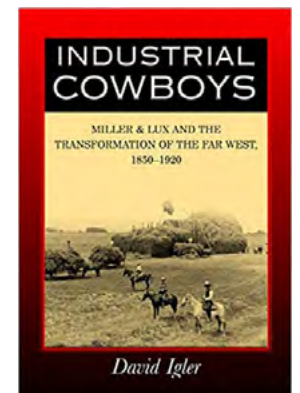
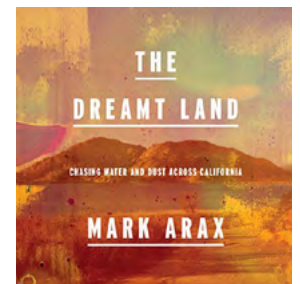
Consider, for example, the case of John Vidovich, who in 2017 owned over 100,000 acres of Valley land. In 2009, Vidovich sold the rights to more than 14,000 acre feet of Kings County water to a San Bernardino County water agency for \$73 million. Why should Vidovich have been able to sell a public resource for such inordinate private gain? In the end, did the sale provide an equitable public benefit? What about the lost value of that water to the Kings County economy?

When *Lux v. Haggin* was adjudicated, the public interest wasn’t even a distant dream. The lawsuit concerned wealthy and powerful men. Today, suits involving water still feature the wealthy and powerful, except in cases of government intervention or when environmental organizations like the Audubon Society come forward to represent the public interest.

When government does intervene, the wealthy and powerful scream, with plenty of help from their flacks and political pawns, “water grab,” and demonize those who favor a more equitable distribution of the fruits of a public resource as “enviros” or “socialists.”

“Reasonable use,” the pivotal principle in the California Water Doctrine, can be defined any number of ways, and will be defined differently by people with different interests. For a great many Valley citizens and people in general, reasonable use of water would include living rivers and living wages for those who toil in the fields. Reasonable use would include potable water for farmworkers who live in towns where the stuff that comes out of their faucets is referred to as “piss water.” It would include viable fisheries, native wildlife in natural settings, healthy ecosystems, and a thriving San Joaquin Delta.

As early as the 1870s, when James Ben Ali Haggin diverted water from the Kern River for his own use, there were negative consequences elsewhere. Today, water diversions, especially in the form of water sales, wound the public interest in any number of ways, but especially by commodifying a public resource so that it becomes the *de facto* property of private enterprise. The remedy is an engaged public, a willingness to speak truth to power, and greater recognition that water belongs to the people.





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

SEPTEMBER 2021

CHECK WITH MEETING HOSTS. ONLINE MEETINGS MAY BE PLANNED.

Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC via Zoom. To access the program, click <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmaymqgHqzxsAa0RjYwVg/>.

MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science: free MJC science programs. Watch past presentations at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2pMYnCos9w0xwd_5lcw3Pg. Participate by logging on to an Internet Link: <https://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/maps.php> to sign up for notification of the link. **Friday, Sept. 24, 2021.** CRISPR Zoom/YouTube: **Dr. Gokul Ramadoss** (Ph.D., UCSF). Recently named a “Discovery Fellow,” an advanced Ph.D. student chosen to serve as an ambassador for basic science education. Talk focuses on the development of safer and more precise **CRISPR tools** for therapeutic genetic/epigenetic editing especially applying these tools to treat neurodegenerative diseases.

VIRTUAL FILMS are available at the State Theatre! Visit <https://thestate.org/virtual-screenings/>. NOTE: The State is open with limited seating.

The Prospect Theatre has continuing offerings: Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2020-2021-season/>

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

8 WED: NO VIGIL in September.

16 THURS: 3RD Thursday Art Walk, downtown Modesto art galleries, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. Follow the yellow balloons.

LOOKING AHEAD

Jan. 11: John McCutcheon returns to Modesto for Modesto Peace/Life Center Concert Benefit. More info: TBA

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

Village Dancers are not dancing in person but have a Zoom class, every Sunday 3:00-5:00 PM (PST). Lessons and reviews every week are given in international folk dances and are led by different teachers from around the Valley. People from England to Taiwan, New Hampshire to Oregon, Arizona to Denair join us each week to exercise in their own homes to interesting music. Email Judy at JudyKropp40@gmail.com to receive the Zoom number and password.

Modesto Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 10:00 am at the MODSPOT, 1220 J St. Call or text 209-232-1932, email modestovineyard@gmail.com; All Welcome.

IMCV weekly Insight Meditation and dharma talk, 8:45 am - 10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcome. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: info@imcv.org

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

MONDAYS

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Chapter is meeting by Zoom on the 2nd Mondy at 7p.m. Bereaved parents, grandparents, and adult siblings are invited to participate in their 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; <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

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

Monday Morning Funstrummers Beginner Ukulele Lessons. Modesto Senior Center. 10:45am to Noon. Free Scenic and Bodem.

Walk with Me, a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month (September only meeting 9/15/14 due to Labor Day). Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

Silver & Gold Support group for our senior LGBT communities' unique concerns and experiences. A group that will understand and accept you where you are. For LGBT folks over 50 yrs. old. Every Monday at 3 pm to 4 pm at various locations in Modesto. Info: Steven Cullen/Facilitator. Cell/text - (559) 799-0464. Email: stevencullen@sbcglobal.net

TUESDAYS

Teen Tuesdays every week from June-August, 2-5 pm., Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St. Peer Support, Games & movies. Safe space for teens to socialize, work together on projects, and learn about LGBTQ history. Each week will be a little different as we want YOU (youths) to guide the direction this group will go!" Info: Maggie Strong, Political Activist Director/ GSA Liaison, mstrong@mopride.org, 209-284-0999.

Attention Veterans: Join us for Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

NAACP Meeting, King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

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

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

Tuesday Evening Funstrummers Ukulele Jam. Songbooks provided. 6pm to 8pm, 1600 Carver Rd., Donation. 209-505-3216, www.funstrummers.com.

IMCV weekly Insight Meditation and dharma talk, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely, donations welcome. Info: Contact Lori, 209-343-2748 or see <https://imcv.org/> Email: info@imcv.org

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

WEDNESDAYS

Ongoing meditation class based on Qi Gong Principals. Practice a 3 Step Guided Meditation Process I have

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGILS: SUSPENDED, 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, 82913th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom.

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

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

Mindful Meditation: Modesto Almond Blossom Sangha, 7 - 9 pm. Info: Anne, 521-6977.

Compassionate Friends Groups, 2nd Wed., 252 Magnolia, Manteca.

THURSDAYS

CA10 Progressive Coalition Monthly Meeting, third Thursdays. Inclusive group of progressive activists to share resources, ideas, and information in order to support all the great organizing work happening in the Valley! Feel free to invite trusted allies. Meet-up and social hour: 5:30 pm-6:30 pm. Meeting: 6:30 pm-8:00 pm. Follow group on Facebook. Info: Tim Robertson, tim@nvlf.org

Laughter Yoga, Every other Thursday at The Bird's Nest, 422 15th St., Modesto. The dates are February & March 7th & 21st, April 4th & 18th, May 2nd & 16th. 5:30pm-6:30pm. \$15.00 per class. To register, call or text Nicole, 209-765-8006 or visit www.nicoleottman.com

Attention Veterans: Join us for Free Coffee & Donuts Meet & Greet at the Stanislaus Veterans Center, 3500 Coffee Rd., Modesto, Suite 15, 7 am – 11 am

IMCV Grupo de Meditación en Español, cada semana 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (edificio trasero al final del estacionamiento este de UUFSC). Ofrecido libremente, las donaciones son bienvenidas. Info: Contacto Vanessa, 209-408-6172.

LGBTQ+ Collaborative Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of the month, unless noted. Evening meeting, 1pm to 2 pm, Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto, CA. Information: John Aguirre at cell/text - (559) 280-3864/ e-mail: jpmamodesto@gmail.com

Green Team educational meetings the 3rd Thursday of each month, 10 to 11 am, Kirk Lindsey Center, 1020 10th St. Plaza, Suite 102, Modesto. www.StanislausGreenTeam.com

Third Thursday Art Walk, downtown galleries open 5:00 - 8:00 p.m Follow the yellow balloons. <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

The Book Group, First & third Thursdays. College Ave UCC Youth Bldg., Orangeburg & College Ave., 3:30 – 5:00 pm. Info: mzjurkovic@gmail.com

Valley Heartland Zen Group: every Thurs 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2310 Woodland Ave. Meditation. Newcomers welcome. Info: 535-6750 or <http://emptynestzendo.org>

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

FRIDAYS

Overcoming Depression: Small group for men & women. Every Friday, 7:15 p.m. Cornerstone Community Church, 17900 Comconex Rd., Manteca (209) 825-1220.

Game Night and Potluck, third Friday of each month. For 21+ only. Central Valley Pride Center, 400 12th St., Suite 2, Modesto. 7 pm to 10 pm. Info: John Aguirre, (559) 280-3864; jpmamodesto@gmail.com

Friday Morning Funstrummers Band Rehearsal. Donation 9:15am to Noon. College Avenue United Church of Christ, 1341 College Ave., Modesto. 209-505-3216, www.funstrummers.com.

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

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

Mujeres Latinas, last Friday, lunch meetings, Info: Cristina Villego, 549-1831.

Hispanic Leadership Council, 3rd Fridays at noon, 1314 H St., Modesto 95354. Questions? Yamilet Valladolid, yamiletv@hotmail.com

SATURDAY

12-Step/Buddhist Meeting starts with a 30-minute meditation and then open discussion. Held monthly every second Saturday, 4:30 to 6:00 pm, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto at the UUFC in Sarana (small building, rear of the east parking lot). Freely-offered donations welcome. Information: 209 606 7214.

Free Community Drum Circle every third Saturday, 3 pm, Deva Café, 1202 J. St., Modesto. No experience or drums necessary to participate. All levels welcome. <https://drum-love.com/>

Refuge Recovery: A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. @Friends Coming of Age., 1203 Tully Rd., Ste. B., Modesto. Saturdays 8-9 am. FREE (donations accepted). Info: RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com

Divine Feminine Gathering. Join us for a time of ritual, song and conversation as women come together to celebrate one another and the Divine among us and within us. 3rd Saturday of the month, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Stockton, CA. Contact Rev. Erin King, 209-815-0763, orkingenne@gmail.com

So Easy ~ So Good: Vegetarian/Vegan/Wannabe Group. Potlucks, guest speakers, field trips, activist activities, movie nights, etc. Third Saturday of every month. Info: Kathy Haynes (209) 250-9961 or email kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month.

Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim Costello, jcostello@igc.org
Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.