



stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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A Student's Message to Politicians about the Florida Massacre

"If the President wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and how it should never have happened and maintain telling us how nothing is going to be done about it, I'm going to happily ask him how much money he received from the National Rifle Association."

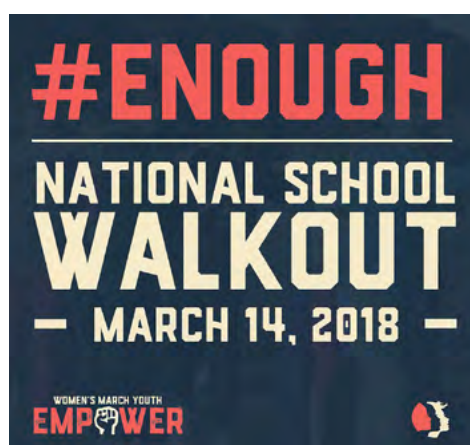
By **CÉSAR CHELALA**

The recent school massacre in Florida, that left 17 dead and scores injured, provoked the usual empty expressions of concerns from U.S. politicians, most of whom receive millions of dollars in donations from the National Rifle Association. Emma Gonzalez, a surviving student, expressed the feeling of millions of people around the country who don't feel represented by their elected officials.

In her speech to her fellow students, their parents and school officials, Emma said, "Every single person up here today, all these people should be home grieving. But instead we are up here standing together because if all our government and the President can do is send thoughts and prayers; then it's time for victims to be the change that we need to see."

"Since the time of the Founding Fathers and since they added the Second Amendment to the Constitution, our guns have developed at a rate that leaves me dizzy. The guns have changed but our laws have not." The Second Amendment to the Constitution states: "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." Although opponents to gun control insist in the last part of that statement, they usually neglect to consider the first part, which states that "a well-regulated militia" as the holder of that entitlement.

The facility to buy guns in the U.S. sur-



prises almost everybody coming from another culture, as is my case. "In Florida, to buy a gun you do not need a permit, you do not need a gun license, and once you buy it you do not need to register it. You do not need a permit to carry a concealed rifle or shotgun. You can buy as many guns as you want at one time."

While politicians in the U.S. continue to enact laws that make it easier for anybody to buy guns, even the mentally ill, other countries enact tougher laws that make these events less possible. As Emma, says, "Because Australia had one mass shooting in 1999 in Port Arthur (and after the) massacre introduced gun safety, and it hasn't had one since. Japan has never had a mass shooting. Canada has had three and the UK had one and they both introduced gun control and yet here we are, with websites dedicated to reporting these tragedies so that they can be formulated into statistics for your convenience."

"If the President wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and how it should never have

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How many dead will it take until politicians support stricter gun control?

By **RON YOUNG**

In the wake of many mass murders in our country, including the latest in Florida that took the lives of 17 people, and the apparent planned assault by a student here in Everett Washington prevented by a caring, courageous grandmother, finally, public opinion among both Democrats and Republicans, including NRA [National Rifle Association] members and national police organizations, has shifted to where majorities support expansion of background checks and restrictions on purchase of assault weapons. The question is whether politicians will pay attention to people's views and support sensible stricter laws or, as most politicians have done up until now, march in lock step to lobbying by the NRA.

The NRA wasn't always a big-moneyed lobby and wasn't always against restrictions on guns. Growing-up in New Jersey as a teenager in the 1950s, I joined the NRA and remember its major emphases were on teaching good marksmanship and gun safety. In the 1930s, responding to the deadly use of ma-

chine guns by gangsters, the NRA supported restrictions adopted in the National Firearms Act and the Gun Control Act. Following the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Bobby Kennedy in 1968, the NRA worked with the White House and Congress to support extending and tightening gun control legislation.

It was during the 1970s, and dramatically in 1980 with its endorsement of Ronald Reagan for President, that the NRA reversed direction. Now, the NRA lobbies against any gun control measures and gives politicians grades which, combined with providing or withholding crucial campaign funds can determine if a candidate is elected or not. The conflict between growing majority popular support for some more controls and the NRA's rigid opposition to any gun restrictions is dramatic and should be disturbing to all Americans who want to prevent violence and who believe in democracy.

NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre and NRA

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MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2018 • 720 13th ST., MODESTO

- 8:30 AM — Coffee and Conversation
- 9:00 AM — Business Meeting:
 - Financial Report
 - Committee Reports
 - Nomination of Board Members
- Discussion:
 - Action plans, ideas and strategies
- 12:00 PM — Adjournment

For 47 years the Modesto Peace/Life Center has been a meeting place for people concerned about peace, justice, equality, a sustainable environment, education and working for a more peaceful community and world. Join us!

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INSIDE CONNECTIONS

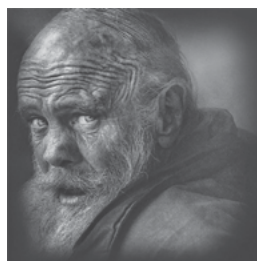
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Local documentary: *Homeless in Modesto* debuts March 22

By RICHARD ANDERSON, Ph.D.

The December 2012 Candlelight Vigil for our people who died homeless kindled a need in me to learn about what can be done to address our homeless problems. Two men that night eagerly told their stories to my camcorder. I resolved to make a video documentary.



Coincidentally, John Lucas advertised in *Stanislaus Connections* that he wanted also to document our homeless. We joined to put a face on our homeless, showcase some of the numerous local county and non-governmental homeless programs and indicate how viewers could help.

Gradually Leng Nou, Frank Ploof, Joseph Homer and Eric Caine joined in the effort, which was a huge undertaking. None of us could have done it on our own.

Our *Homeless in Modesto* documentary will debut March 22, 7-8 p.m. at MJC East, Forum 110, followed from by a



panel discussion and Q/A. The panel includes Dain Judd, a previously homeless man, Frank Ploof, who has worked indefatigably for 3 years with the homeless out on the streets, Tamra Losinski, Director of Family Promise, Ruben Imperial, in charge of the Focus on Prevention program, and Kristi Ah You, Modesto City Councilwoman. Admission is free, but parking on campus will require a \$2 fee.

Stanislaus County has since started its Focus on Prevention program. In 2017, 2.5 million CA State dollars were designated by the efforts of Adam Gray, D-Merced for our County's

homeless efforts, and \$1.4 million came from generous local business leaders.

A three-year pilot program for Laura's Law has been initiated. This program allows family and close associates of a homeless person with mental health problems to initiate a court appearance to encourage that person to go into treatment.

An "Access Center" has also been started that consolidates access to services for the homeless into one location. A new "Homeless Court" starts operating Feb. 26. After a homeless person has been counseled and analyzed, as the County explains, "...the Public Defender appears with each client and makes a presentation to the court showing how the client has progressed and how circumstances have changed since the client was originally charged with the offense, ticket or fine. The goal is for the client to walk away from court with these obstacles removed so that the client can move forward with their lives."

The County is also firming up plans to establish a "Low Barrier Shelter" on vacant Stanislaus Food land near the Salvation Army's Berberian shelter.

ACTION: Bring a friend or neighbor to the March 22 event and participate in the panel discussion Q/A from 8-9 pm.

Modesto Peace/Life Center to receive community service award

The Modesto Peace/Life Center has been nominated and selected to receive a community service award from the NAACP.

The Modesto/Stanislaus NAACP is having its Freedom Fund and Community Service Awards Banquet on Saturday, March 3, 2018 at the Seasons Event Center, 945 McHenry Ave., Modesto, from 6 to 9 PM. The event will honor local organizations and individuals who have made significant contributions to social justice, equity, human and civil rights.

Individual tickets can be purchased for \$65 each, or a table of eight for \$500. For more information contact Wendy Byrd, 209-345-9275, or email wendybyrd@ymail.com

36th Annual Peace Camp June 22-24

By KEN SCHROEDER

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 36th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierra will take place on June 22-24 at Camp Peaceful Pines in the Stanislaus National Forest on Clark Fork Rd. off Hwy 108. We'll enjoy a weekend of workshops, good food, hikes, campfires, singing, crafts, talent show, recreation, and stimulating people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting. Families and individuals are welcome. *Register early for a discount.*

This year Leng Nou will present the workshop "Cultivating Personal Resilience and Embracing Joy." The workshop's aim is to inform participants on ways to integrate our internal state to align with external aspirations in a way that maximizes energy levels and alleviates burn out. We will build on the work of social psychology in the areas of gratitude and joy. We will learn practices that will build resilience as well as develop happiness heart habits.

Leng Nou is a mindfulness and tai chi practitioner with heartfelt interest in the art of slowing down. Leng is a member of the Modesto Peace/Life Center and works to bring peace to all forms of encounter. Leng is also a Senior Fellow of the American Leadership Forum which seeks to unite and strengthen diverse leaders to serve the common good.

Camp Peaceful Pines features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins, platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Depending on the number of campers, cabins may be shared. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work.

The camp fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Adults are \$75 before May 1, \$80 before June 5 and

\$85 after June 5. Young people 18 and under are \$55 before May 1, \$60 before June 4 and \$65 after June 4. Ages 3 and under free. Minors under 18 need to be accompanied by an adult. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated. The camp opens with supper at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and closes after the morning workshop on Sunday. Directions and other information will be provided to participants before camp. Registration forms are available online at www.stanislausconnections.org and www.peacelifecenter.org to download and mail.

Information: Ken Schroeder, 209-480-4576, kschroeder70@yahoo.com

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<http://thevalleycitizen.com>

Peace/Life Center looking for volunteers

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

For more information, contact our volunteer/outreach coordinators: Susan Bower or Jocelyn Cooper at the Peace Life Center (209) 529-5750.

"Screw you, I love guns."

By a **MILITARY VETERAN**

[Edited for publication]

America, can we talk? Let's just cut the crap for once and actually talk about what's going on without blustering and pretending we're doing a good job at adulating as a country right now. We're not. We're really screwing up, and we have to do better. We don't have a choice. People are dying. At this rate, it's not if your kids, or mine, are involved in a school shooting, it's when. One of these happens every 60 hours on average in the US. If you think it can't affect you, you're wrong. Dead wrong. So let's talk.

I'll start. I'm an Army veteran. I like M-4's, which are, for all practical purposes, an AR-15, just with a few extra features. At least 70% of my formal weapons training is on that exact rifle. Like dozens of other soldiers/veterans I know, I was good with an M-4, really good. This rifle is surprisingly easy to use, completely idiot-proof really, has next to no recoil, comes apart and cleans up like a dream, and is light to carry around. I'm probably more accurate with it than with any other weapon.

With all that said, enough is enough. My knee jerk reaction is to consider weapons like the AR-15 no big deal because it's where my training lies. It is my normal, because I learned how to fire a rifle IN THE ARMY. While I may have shot only plastic targets on the ranges of Texas, Georgia, and Missouri, that's not what those weapons were designed for, and those targets weren't shaped like deer. They were shaped like people. Sometimes we even put little hats on them. You learn to take a gut shot, "center mass," because it's a bigger target than the head, and also because if you maim the enemy soldier rather than kill him cleanly, more of his buddies will come out and get him, and you can shoot them, too. That's how my Drill Sergeant explained it anyway. The fact is, though, when I went through my marksmanship training in the US Army, I was not learning how to be a competition shooter in the Olympics, or a good hunter. I was being taught how to kill people as efficiently as possible, and that was never a secret.

As an avowed pacifist now, it turns my stomach to even type the above words, but can you refute them? I can't. Every weapon a US Army soldier uses has the express purpose of killing human beings. That is what they are made for. The choice rifle for years has been some variant of what civilians are sold as an AR-15. Whether it has been an M-4 or an M-16 matters little. The function and purpose are the same. These are not deer rifles. They are not target rifles. They are

people-killing rifles. Let's stop pretending they're not.

With this in mind, is anybody surprised that nearly every mass shooter in recent US history has used an AR-15 to commit their crime? And why wouldn't they? High capacity magazine, ease of loading and unloading, almost no recoil, really accurate even without a scope, but numerous scopes available for high precision, great from a distance or up close, easy to carry, and readily



they're available. You can buy one at Wal-Mart, or just about any sports store, and since long guns, I don't believe you have to be any more than 18 years old with a valid ID to buy one. This rifle was made for the modern mass shooter, especially the young one. If he could custom design a weapon to suit his sinister purposes, he couldn't do a better job than ArmaLite did with this one already.

This rifle is so deadly and so easy to use that no civilian should be able to get their hands on one. We simply don't need these things in society at large. I always find it interesting that when I was in the Army, and part of my job was to be incredibly proficient with this exact weapon, I never carried one in garrison other than at the range. We tucked our rifles away in the arms room until the next time we needed them, just as it had been done since the Army's inception. The military police protected us from threats in garrison. They were the only soldiers who carry weapons in garrison. We trusted them to protect us, and they delivered. With notably rare exceptions, this system has worked well. There are fewer shootings on Army posts than in society in general, probably because soldiers are actively discouraged from walking around with rifles, despite being impeccably well trained with them. Perchance, we could have the largely untrained civilian population take a page from that book?

I understand that people want to be able to own guns. That's ok. We just need to really think about how we're managing this. Yes, we have to manage it, just as we manage car ownership. People have to get a license to operate a car, and if you operate a car without a license, you're going to get in trouble for that. We manage all things in society that can pose a danger to other people by their misuse. In addition to cars, we manage drugs, alcohol, exotic animals (there are certain zip codes where you can't own Serval cats, for example), and fireworks, among other things. We restrict what types of businesses can operate in which zones of the city or county. We have a whole system of permitting for just about any activity a person wants to conduct since those activities could affect others. We realize, as a society, that we need to try to minimize the risk to other people that comes from the chosen activities of those around them in which they have no say. Gun ownership is the one thing our country collectively refuses to manage, and the result is a lot of dead people.

I can't drive a Formula One car to work. It would be re-

ally cool to be able to do that, and I could probably cut my commute time by a lot. Hey, I'm a good driver, a responsible Formula One owner. You shouldn't be scared to be on the freeway next to me as I zip around you at 140 MPH, leaving your Mazda in a cloud of dust! Why are you scared? Cars don't kill people. People kill people. Doesn't this sound like crap? It is crap, and everybody knows. Not one person I know would argue non-ironically that Formula One cars on the freeway are a good idea. Yet these same people will say it's totally ok to own the firearm equivalent because, in the words of comedian Jim Jeffries, "Screw you, I like guns."

Yes, yes, I hear you now. We have a Second Amendment to the Constitution, which must be held sacrosanct over all other amendments. Dude. No. The Constitution was made to be a malleable document. It's intentionally vague. We can enact gun control without infringing on the right to bear arms. You can have your deer rifle. You can have your shotgun that you love to shoot clay pigeons with. You can have your target pistol. Get a license. Get a training course. Recertify at a predetermined interval. You do not need a military grade rifle. You don't. There's no excuse.

"But we're supposed to protect against tyranny! I need the same weapons the military would come at me with!" Dude. You know where I can get an Apache helicopter and a Paladin?! Seriously, do you really think you'd be able to hold off the government with an individual level weapon? One grenade, and you're toast. Drop these illusions of standing up to the government and needing military style rifles for that purpose. The government would take you out in about half a second.

Let's be honest. You just want a cool toy, and for the vast majority of people, that's all an AR-15 is. It's something fun to take to the range and put some really wicked holes in a piece of paper. Good for you. I know how enjoyable that is. I'm sure a certain percentage of people might not kill anyone driving a Formula One car down the freeway, or owning a Cheetah as a pet, or setting off professional grade fireworks without a permit. Some people are good with this stuff, and some people are lucky, but those cases don't negate the overall rule. Military style rifles have been the choice du jour in the incidents that have made our country the mass shootings capital of the world. Let's fix that. Be honest, you don't need that AR-15. Nobody does. Society needs them gone, no matter how good you may be with yours. Kids are dying, and it's time to stop repeating we can't do anything about it.

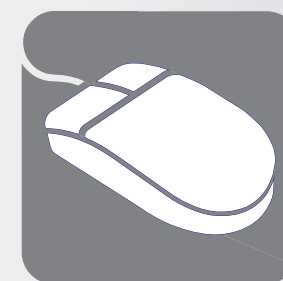
To find out more about the author, and read the unedited version of this blog post, visit <https://agingmillennialengineer.com/>

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The Genius of Birds gala dinner, March 10

By DIANA LOOMIS

This year's Gala Dinner is being held at the Great Valley Museum on March 10, 2018. The theme is the Genius of Birds, in conjunction with the international Year of the Bird. Guy Van Cleve will speak on the Genius of Birds. We will also have our poem of the year--"Birds" composed and delivered by Sal Salerno. The delicious beef dinner will again be catered by Hank Winkle of O'Brien's. If you prefer, a vegetarian option, call the GVM office, 209-575-6196).



We will try to provide a live encounter with the Birds of Prey from Hawks, Honkers and Hoots, a rescue group from Folsom (<http://www.hawkshonkersandhoots.org/>). They are scheduled to show a

Red Tail Hawk, a Peregrine Falcon, a Swainson's Hawk, and an owl for viewing before dinner. These were all injured birds that HH&H tried to rehabilitate, and as they do for all their rescued birds, tried to release back into the wild. But these particular birds are unable to survive in the wild so are used for educational purposes. They tried to release the Swainson's Hawk twice, but due to a head injury, he could not fly well so he's become one of their demo birds of prey. These birds will be in the Discovery Room for the hour before dinner.

This year has been designated the **Year of the Bird** by National Geographic, Audubon, Bird International and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These groups have been joined by more than 50 other organizations from

all over the world to celebrate and protect birds. It is the hope that the Year of the Bird will highlight not only the beauty and wonder of birds but also help with their plight for survival. To sign up to participate in the Year of the Bird activities visit:

National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/year-of-the-bird/>

Audubon Society: <http://www.audubon.org/yearofthebird>

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>

The birding club, Audubon was established because of the outrage over the slaughter of millions of waterbirds, particularly egrets and herons, for the millinery trade...waterbirds were being almost brought to extinction over feathers on hats! Because of the protest by Audubon chapters throughout the states, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918 which remains to this day one of the strongest laws protecting Wild North American birds. But it is being weakened and Migratory birds especially are suffering. On the 100-year anniversary, much needs to be done to still protect birds.

Our Gala would be a great start to your 2018 Year of the Bird

Tickets for the gala are available online at <http://www.mjc.edu/instruction/sme/gvm/> and at the museum (Tickets begin at \$125.00. Levels of sponsorship are available).

All the proceeds go to the museums projects. Last year, we educated 54,000 local school children on the natural wonders of the Great Valley. We serve children from Lodi to Chowchilla making us one of the primary sources for elementary science education in the Central Valley. Please consider donating to our cause and don't miss out on another memorable evening at the museum.

Food 4 Thought at the State Theatre, April 14

Switch up what is on the end of your fork and get your body running like a racing car on high-octane fuel and, at the same time, improve planet earth's environment and hone your compassion skills.

Discover the down-to-earth approach of two well-known authors/presenters whose lives revolve around food: Will Tuttle, Ph.D., author of *The World Peace Diet*; and Rubin Guzman, MPH, author of *Evolving Health*. They both attack current food issues but from different angles. Dr. Tuttle explores why we make the food choices we make and our cultural food history while Coach Ruben Guzman examines the health issues that come from our food choices and what motivates us.

Find out how what you do three times (or more) a day can make a huge difference for the better. Come away from the event with a clear idea of eating with purpose. You won't regret it and you'll feel better about yourself and the world when you leave.

Thanks to sponsors: Dr. Calvin Lee & Dr. Tammy Wu/Surgical Artistry and John Black, CEO/PRAP

Tickets: FREE

Date: Saturday, April 14th.

Doors: 6:00 p.m., program 7:00 p.m.

The State Theatre, 1307 J St., Modesto.

INFO: Kathryn Haynes, President/Founder of So Easy-So Good (A group for vegetarians, vegans and wannabes), kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com or (209) 250-9961.

Cinderella Performance by Central West Ballet to Benefit Boys & Girls Clubs of Stanislaus County West Modesto Club

By VERONICA JACUINDE

Experience the magic and beauty of Cinderella with a special ballet performance presented by Central West Ballet on Friday, March 16th. The festive event, which will include a full course gourmet dinner prepared by Greens on Tenth, will benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of Stanislaus County West Modesto Club, an after-school program that provides a safe and nurturing place for youth to learn, grow and have fun.

The *"Dreams Come True"* themed event will begin with cocktails at 6:00 p.m., followed by dinner, a ballet presentation by the professional dance company, Central West Ballet, and an auction. Kevin Fox of iHeartMedia will Emcee the celebration, which will raise much-needed funds for the West Modesto Boys & Girls Club.

Joseph Pope, Chair of the West Modesto Advisory Council for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Stanislaus County, states, "We are so thrilled to host this benefit to support the West Modesto Boys & Girls Club. Supporting the West Modesto Club is especially important because it is located in a community that is socially disadvantaged and disproportionately affected by poverty. "He adds, "The Club provides critical character & leadership development, health & life skills, sports & fit-



ness, art and other programs to empower the local youth of West Modesto."

"Dreams Come True" will take place on Friday, March 16th at Greens on Tenth located at 953 10th St. in downtown Modesto. Tickets: \$100 per person. Sponsorships for a table of 10 are \$1000. To buy tickets go online to www.cinderellaforbge.eventbrite.com. Information, call Christen (209) 602-4119 or Lee (209) 531-4500. To learn about the Boys & Girls Clubs of Stanislaus County visit <http://bgcstanislaus.org/> and <http://bgcstanislaus.org/westmodesto/>

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Women’s March Youth @WomensMarchY

More: We are all one movement.
[@schoolwalkoutUS](#)
[@AMarch4OurLives](#)
[#NationalSchoolWalkout](#)
[#MarchForOurLives](#) [#ENOUGH](#)

We, the youth organizers of the March 14th Women's March Youth Empower Walkout and the student-founded National School Walkout movement on April 20th, support all efforts to raise awareness of gun violence through student action. The March 14th walkout commemorate the one-month anniversary of the Parkland shooting, and the 17 minutes will memorialize the 17 lives lost in the tragedy. This event is part of an escalating force in a longer fight against gun violence. The April 20th walkout commemorates the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shooting and will last for the entire school day. This is a day for students to have a voice and be represented. This will further amplify students' commitment to action until Congress enacts legislative change. It will take sustained action from students across the country to send a strong message to our elected officials that we want to be safe, particularly in our schools. Please join us in supporting and participating in both student walkouts, the March for Our Lives and all student-led advocacy efforts that continue the fight for our safety.

We want to learn. We want to live. Please support us.

In solidarity,

National School Walkout & Women's March Youth Empower

- Lane M, 15, Ridgefield, CT
- Ana K, 15 Ridgefield, CT
- Kaleab J, 17, Cincinnati, OH
- Nicky BF, 18, New York, NY
- Alondra A, 18, Detroit, MI
- Jackson M, 16, Newtown, CT
- Brea B, 23, Long Island, NY
- Paul K, 17 Ridgefield, CT
- Alie BF, 18, New York, NY
- Madison T, 20, Seattle, WA
- Winter M, 17, Los Angeles, CA
- Victoria P, 18, Durham, NC
- Thomas M, 16, Sandy Hook, CT

Celebrate International Women’s Day

Join us in celebrating International Women’s Day in Modesto on March 8 at the Barkin Dog Grill, 940 11th St, Modesto. Great food and live music! International artists check in to perform! Intlwomensday@gmail.com.

Now, more than ever, there’s a strong call-to-action to press forward and progress gender parity. There’s a strong call to **#PressforProgress** motivating and uniting friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be gender inclusive.

How many?

from page 1

Public Communications director Dana Loesch rightly criticize Hollywood’s sick addiction to violence. While Hollywood provides culturally destructive inspiration for violence, by promoting massive gun sales and resisting even modest gun control measures, the NRA consistently contributes to more people possessing more and more weapons. Americans own more guns per capita than residents of any other country.

A few facts from reliable recent polls reveal how popular views have changed and how out-of-step the NRA is in relation to majority opinion among Americans. According to Gallup polls, just eight years ago the percent of Americans who believed laws controlling firearms should remain as they are was nearly equal to the percent who believed the laws should be made stricter. Today, almost twice as many Americans (60% to 33%) believe gun control laws should be stricter.

Polls in 2016-2017 by CBS, CNN, Quinnipiac University in Connecticut and Washington University in Missouri show that between 84% and 94% of American voters (Democrats and Republicans) support requiring background checks on all gun buyers. A Pew Research Center poll reveals that 79% of Republicans or Republican-leaning gun owners who are members of the NRA would support measures “preventing the mentally-ill from purchasing guns” and 72% support “barring gun purchases by people on no-fly or watch lists.” I assume similar or even greater numbers of NRA members would support keeping guns out of the hands of persons with serious criminal records.

A Pew poll in spring 2017 showed that majorities of both Democrats and Republicans supported banning assault-style weapons. While 80% of Democrats supported such a ban, sadly so far, while a majority, only 54% of Republicans supported a ban.



Mass shootings in the United States	
Las Vegas, NV (2017)	58 killed
Orlando, FL (2016)	49 killed
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA (2007)	32 killed
Newtown, CN (2012)	27 killed
Sutherland Springs, TX (2017)	26 killed
Killeen, TX (1991)	23 killed
San Isidro, CA (1984)	21 killed
Parkland, FL (2018)	17 killed
San Bernardino, CA (2015)	14 killed
Edmond, OK (1986)	14 killed
Source: Los Angeles Times	

Appreciating how studies show that some stricter gun control laws can help protect police as well as the public, the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, which includes nine national law enforcement organizations, supports expanding required background checks. And seven of the nine national organizations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCC), also support a “ban on new semi-automatic assault weapons.”

The NRA opposes all of these sensible restrictions on guns, and will work with big money to defeat candidates for office who support them

In the run-up to the 2018 midterm elections, people should demand that every candidate for city, state or federal office declare support publicly for expanding background checks on all potential gun buyers and for banning purchase of assault weapons. Allowing the NRA to block these majority-supported sensible stricter gun control measures not only represents a threat to the lives of more innocent people, but also represents a threat to democracy.

Ron Young lives in Everett and can be contacted at ronyoungwa@gmail.com. Ron’s memoir, *Crossing Boundaries in the Americas, Vietnam and the Middle East*, was published in 2014. Sign up for his blog at the email address above. Read his blog at <http://ronyoungviews.blogspot.com/>



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IN MEMORIAM
Marian (Geary) Schroeder
March 8, 1924 – February 10, 2018

Peace Essay Contest

Sponsored by: **Modesto Peace/Life Center**

To All Our Supporters: Donors, Screeners, Judges, Board Members, Modesto Leaders:

Our contest committee members thank you all for of your contributions of time, energy, money and leadership which enabled the Peace Essay Contest to happen again this year. This 31-year-old tradition is still going strong. This year we received 549 essays that include the participation of 32 schools and 51 teachers. If this year's essays are indicative of the compassion of our youth, we can be assured of a future that ensures a better world for all of us. This year's essays were thoughtful and sometimes passionate. The students showed an ability to formulate and present ideas in a well-designed and logical fashion. More importantly, the essays revealed that our youth understand that their world is big, including much more than the students' immediate concerns. Our committee is proud of our students and the caregivers and educators and community members who model the qualities needed for our students to become responsible future citizens.

A successful essay contest requires the efforts and support of so many community members. The contest could not happen without you. We appreciate you very much. We need to begin thinking hard about next year's contest. We hope you will continue play a role in the coming Peace Life/Center Essay Contest of 2019 and that you will continue to be as generous as you have in the past.

Please attend our Awards Reception on Friday, March 2 at 7 p.m. at MJC's West Campus at the Mary Stuart Rogers Student Center. Visit our web site at www.peaceessaycontest.weebly.com to find the winning essays and other information

With Our Sincere Gratitude,

The Peace Essay Contest Committee



Division 1 Peace Essay Winner: Còn Nước, Còn Tất

By **WILLIAM FOOTE**

Like any normal day, the sun peeked over the city and barged its way into my family's small apartment. I'm always the first to be greeted by this unwanted visitor, and as such have created a ritual-comprised mostly of groaning-to meet my nemesis. Today, however, is different. It's the one time a year I jump out of bed, brush my hair without a fuss, and meet the sun with a smile. After all, today is Tet, Vietnamese New Year, a holiday where our worries are drowned out by laughter and song (Ly).

I am Hang Le, a 17-year-old resident of Little Saigon in Orange County, and before I was allowed to celebrate Tet as a time of lightheartedness, life was extremely taxing. When I was 14, my family lived in Vietnam. My father, who taught English at the local secondary school, had joined a political group that advocated on behalf of the local Christian indigenous people, called the Montagnards (Crane). Such support of religion and free political thought practically guaranteed him a run-in with the government. I remember my father recalling something a colleague of his had said: "It's not the old guerrilla battlefield—South versus North. It's religion versus communism, freedom versus control" (Kenning).

My father's job, which he had held for two decades, was terminated almost instantly. "Rough economic times" had been the excuse. Shortly thereafter, a man in a uniform knocked on our door and seized my father. A week later, he returned-battered and bruised. I couldn't bring myself to make eye contact with him for days, but when I did, I saw the same fighting gleam in his smile that I had grown up admiring. "Còn nước, còn tất," he had told me—while there's life, there's hope.

In the span of a month, 150 protesters, including my family, escaped to the neighboring Cambodia. In an instant, my friends, home, and life as I had known it vanished. With every step took, my feet ached more, and with every day that food became scarcer, I became hungrier. Each night, when my mother's nightmares jolted her awake screaming "Đừng bắn! Đừng bắn!" (Don't shoot! Don't shoot!), I cried myself to sleep. And at the moment I was absolutely positive life couldn't get any worse, it did.

Cambodia, being an ally of the Vietnamese government, soon began pursuing those of us seeking asylum in their country. The group which we had traveled with quickly dispersed out of fear that they would be deported back to the country which they had fled just months earlier. As a final token of kindness, the local fishing community in which we had found shelter offered us a pair of old fishing boats, in hopes that, somehow, we could find our way to the Philippines, a country that was willing to accept refugees (Evangelista).

Like sardines in a can, we set off, our destiny held in the unsteady palms of the waves. For eight days and nine nights—each that I thought would be my last—we were tossed at sea. Every time the boat lurched, my father would whisper once more, "Còn nước, còn tất." There is not a doubt in my mind that those words were what kept me alive. By some miracle, we made it to the western coast of the Philippines, where we were received by the Philippine Coast Guard.

International workers helped my family explore the possible places we could settle permanently, and my parents decided that the United States would be their first choice.

After an exorbitant amount of paperwork and countless months of waiting, our refugee status was approved. We were going to America.

Life did not immediately get easy when we arrived, however. When we landed, I remember worrying how I'd ever adapt to a world where all Americans look alike and everyone drives on the wrong side of the road. Bigger issues, arose when my father had to settle for a job as a security guard because his teaching credentials from Vietnam simply couldn't be transferred to the American education system. The most difficult obstacle to our success turned out to be our background, though. I remember three graffiti-painted words scrawled on a broken-down house that accosted us when we first drove through Little Saigon. They read, "Asians go home!" Go home to where? The country that had all but banished my family for independent thought? Or its friend Cambodia that valued a political alliance more than our lives? I don't have a "home" to go back to.

Nevertheless, for every one person that wanted us gone, there were ten more that made us feel welcome, most memorably the Morgan family. Mr. Harold Morgan, the Caucasian owner of a local chain of doughnut shops, met my father at a nearby mall where he'd been hired. He invited my family to dinner one night, and although I couldn't understand the entire conversation because of my weak English, it was the first time in a long time I had felt happy.

Later tonight we will celebrate Tet with the Morgans, just like we celebrated Christmas and Thanksgiving with them. Through this relationship I've come to understand that Morgans the are much more than family friends, they represent America at its finest—the part that sees us as a nation of immigrants whose differences should be championed, not suppressed. As it is true for the Morgans, it is true for me: America is my country, and just like the thousands of refugees and immigrants that come to this country every year seeking a better life that only America-land of, the free and home of the brave can offer, I am American. I don't know exactly where I have yet to go in life, but for the first time ever, I can say that I live in a country that I trust will get me where I need to be, because in America, there will always be life since there will always be freedom—and thus, there will *always* be hope.

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2018 Peace Essay Contest Finalists and Winners

Division I (grades 11 & 12)			
Award	Name	School	Teacher
1 st	William Foote	Turlock High School	Abbi Snider
2 nd	Aimee Gundlach	Independent Student	Susan Janis
3 rd	Matthew Hesse	Turlock High School	Abbi Snider
HM	Adam Gundlach	Independent Student	Susan Janis
HM	Schuyler Becker	Whitmore Charter High	Kelly Hayes
HM	Mehar Nijjar	Modesto High School	Glenn, Kerrie
SW	Karina Jimenez	Ceres High School	Ben Middleton
SW	Sophia Kline	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas
Finalist	Melissa Alcazar	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas
Finalist	Shelby Benz	Modesto High School	Glenn, Kerrie
Finalist	Bibiana Garcia	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas
Finalist	Valeria Hinojosa	Ceres High School	Ben Middleton
Finalist	Stephanie Ino-Cox	Oakdale Charter High	Jessica Menefee
Finalist	Ryan Jetton	Ceres High School	Ben Middleton
Finalist	Brett Lopez	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas
Finalist	Lexa Ludlow	Oakdale Charter High	Jessica Menefee
Finalist	Caleigh Martella	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas
Finalist	Jillian Murray	Oakdale Charter High	Jessica Menefee
Finalist	Desiree Silva	Oakdale Charter High	Jessica Menefee
Finalist	Kaylee Taylor	Hughson High School	Karalee Ruelas

Division II (grades 9 & 10)			
Award	Name	School	Teacher
1 st	Ciara Bargas	Modesto High School	Maggie Monjure
2 nd	Emily Swehla	Modesto High School	Maggie Monjure
3 rd	Reza Banankhah	Independent Student	Susan Janis
Finalist	Gabriela Ambriz	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	George Brady	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Carson Carranza	Modesto High School	Maggie Monjure
Finalist	Brian Estrada	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Gladys Hernandez	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Emily Machado	Central Catholic High	Suzi Guina
Finalist	Janeth Ramirez	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Maryam Sabri	Whitmore Charter	Virginia Aguilera
Finalist	Grecia Sanchez	Ceres High School	Tracy Pannell
Finalist	Seth Simmons	Oakdale Charter High	Jessica Menefee
Finalist	Lydia Stiles	James Enochs High	Chris Hayden
Finalist	Misbah Syed	Connecting Waters	Lisa Bender

HM = Honorable Mention

SW = School Winner, recognized for the top essay from a school that has submitted 10 or more essays in the Division

Division III (grades 7 & 8)			
Award	Name	School	Teacher
1 st	Rana Banankhah	Independent Student	Susan Janis
2 nd / SW	Stephen Romano	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
3 rd	Mora Collins	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
HM/SW	Victoria Blanc	Oakdale Jr High	Dee Hawksworth
HM	Lauren Bowman	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
HM	Aidan Pink	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
SW	Emiliano Lopez	Yolo Middle School	Brandi Decator
SW	Evelyn Martinez	Turlock Jr High	Jill Harlan-Gran
SW	Skylar Nguyen	Prescott Sr Elem	Maia Tobin
SW	Ximena Perez	Sacred Heart, Turlock	Elaine Magni
Finalist	Jeslyn Chavez	La Loma Jr High	Juana Rosas
Finalist	Joseph Edwards	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
Finalist	Francis Evans	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
Finalist	Jason Fritz	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
Finalist	Ashlin Hartley	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
Finalist	Abbygail Morales	Prescott Sr Elem	Maia Tobin
Finalist	Kate Oliveira	Sacred Heart, Turlock	Elaine Magni
Finalist	Alexandra Becerra Ortiz	Oakdale Jr High	June Botto
Finalist	Jordan Robinson	Prescott Sr Elem	Maia Tobin
Finalist	Matthew Swehla	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis

Division IV (grades 5 & 6)			
Award	Name	School	Teacher
1 st / SW	Heidi Bowman	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
2 nd	Bailey Chistopher	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
3 rd	Joanna Hoffmann	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
HM	Nolan Cheek	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
HM	Marcella Coleman	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
HM/SW	Pooja Dubey	Lakewood Elementary	Carrie Ann Burrows
SW	David McCann	Daniel J. Savage M. S.	Kari Caviness
SW	Elyse Munoz	Salida Middle School	Cara Ornellas
SW	Chelsea Paul	John Fremont Open Plan	Todd Brownell
SW	Ari Sello	John Fremont Elem	Dorene Arnold
SW	Jared Warter	Agnes Baptist Elem	Michelle Danner
Finalist	Yousuf Ahmed	Hickman Charter Sch	David Meyer
Finalist	Kaydence Bispo	Lakewood Elementary	Carrie Ann Burrows
Finalist	Sutton Edeal	Agnes Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Jordan Henry	Sonoma Elementary	Gina Grgich
Finalist	Ali Hou	Agnes Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Lorraine Mansell	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis
Finalist	Nathalia Martinez	Agnes Baptist Elem	Michelle Danner
Finalist	Stella McDaniel	Agnes Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Jacob Miller	Agnes Baptist Elem	Toni David
Finalist	Maddie Turner	Hart-Ransom A. C.	Susan Janis

Please send any name corrections to peaceessay@juno.com

The 31th annual Peace Essay Contest is a project of the
 Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th Street, Modesto 529-5750 peaceessay@juno.com
 Co-sponsored by the Modesto Junior College Department of Literature and Language Arts

Religious Intolerance

By DAN GALT

I was raised in the 1950's in a Baptist Church, like several others in this congregation. An unintended side effect of my childhood was religious inflexibility; in other words, religious intolerance.

This intolerance was brought home to me when the sermon our pastor gave in the early fall of 1960, as Richard Nixon and John Kennedy were battling it out to be the next elected president, when he announced, "While I can't tell you how to vote, it would be a crime against Christianity if America elected a Catholic president."

It wasn't until later that I saw this for intolerance. At the time, my 13-year old mind probably responded, "right on," as my mother and all her relatives were staunch supporters of "Tricky Dick" Nixon. Where, oh, where, was the Constitutional division between Church and State back then? But this sermon did set my young mind to wondering: if Catholics weren't a part of Christianity, what were they a part of?

Fast forward a couple of decades. My curiosity for the fate of the human soul led me to major in international agricultural development, then to spend two Peace Corps years in the Catholic country of Brasil, then to dedicate two decades of my work life overseas. Such work assignments included the Catholic countries of Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, and Bolivia, the Muslim countries of Senegal, Pakistan, Indonesia, Jordan and Turkey, the Buddhist country of Thailand and the Hindu country of Nepal.

In 1992, Sabri Er, my designated language translator for the preparation of training materials in Turkey, and I sat together on a public bus discussing religion as we traveled East to Cappadocia. He enlightened me to the peacefulness of his interpretation of the Koran; he was blown away to learn a bit



about the Church of the Brethren and Protestantism, neither of which he'd ever heard of before that day.

My reasons for continuing international agriculture work evolved, moving away from the concept that I functioned as a "minor missionary," working to help provide more food for the rural masses, giving them better diets and more "leisure time" in which to accept Christianity as preached by local "major missionaries" to convert all heathens to Christianity. My own particular Christianity had evolved into one of seeing Heaven as a wide-open, flower-filled field, full of not just Christians from any one of the truly "enlightened denominations," to a heaven filled with all types of Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and other good peoples of various faith groups.

In the fall of 2014, one of my co-pastors, Rev. Russ Matteson would soon be leaving my church for a regional position, and the other, Rev. Erin Matteson, would be shedding some of her ministerial duties. One obvious choice was for her to give up her seat on the Stanislaus County Interfaith Council (SCIC). I leapt at the chance to be her replacement, and the rest is history.

As my wife Trish and I prepare to leave Modesto, two groups are the most difficult to leave behind. The first is my congregation, filled with such wonderful people. A close second is the SCIC, a group I've come to love for their expansive hearts, acceptance of all other religious faith groups, and constant work to spread the message of religious tolerance to all of Stanislaus County.

In the past two years, the SCIC has added an annual prayer supper to the traditional Thanksgiving Celebration, and we held a major in-service training on the inappropriateness of religious bullying in Modesto City Schools. Fortunately, Luella Cole, another person who fully supports religious tolerance, has made a commitment to continue on the SCIC by replacing me as our church's monthly representative to that council.

Visit SCIC: <https://www.facebook.com/stanislausinterfaith/>

Student's message

from page 1

happened and maintain telling us how nothing is going to be done about it, I'm going to happily ask him how much money he received from the National Rifle Association.... If you don't do anything to prevent this from continuing to occur, that number of gunshot victims will go up and the number that they are worth will go down. And we will be worthless to you."

In the 2016 election, the NRA spent over \$31 million in the last presidential race. Presidential candidates, however, aren't the only ones who benefit from the NRA's donations. Representatives from both parties, although mostly from the Republican Party, receive tens of millions of dollars from the NRA. They will never bite the hand the feeds them.

In February of 2017, one year ago, President Trump and American lawmakers repealed an Obama-era regulation that would have made it easier to block the sale of firearms to people with certain mental illnesses. Thus, they made it easier for tragedies to occur.

Emma ended her speech saying, in a voice almost trembling with anger, "The people in the government who were voted into power are lying to us. And us kids seem to be the only ones who notice and our parents to call BS. Companies trying to make caricatures of the teenagers these days, saying that all we are self-involved and trend-obsessed, and they hush us into submission when our message doesn't reach the ears of the nation, we are prepared to call BS. Politicians who sit in their gilded House and Senate seats funded by the NRA telling us nothing could have been done to prevent this, we call BS. They say tougher guns laws do not decrease gun violence. We call BS. They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. We call BS. They say guns are just tools like knives and are as dangerous as cars. We call BS. They say no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies that have occurred. We call BS. That us kids don't know what we're talking about, that we're too young to understand how the government works. We call BS. If you agree, register to vote. Contact your local congressperson. Give them a piece of your mind."

Emma and her fellow students showed to have more guts than a meretricious Congress.

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Dr. César Chelala is an international public health consultant and a winner of several journalism awards.

Poetry Contest

The Orchard Street Press is accepting entries for its annual Poetry Contest. Submissions of four previously unpublished poems (typed, single-spaced, no one poem longer than two pages) will be accepted up to the postmark deadline of March 31.

Prizes will be \$250 for first (winning the Malovrh-Fenlon Poetry Prize), \$150 for second, and \$100 for third.

Send submissions with the \$12 entrance fee (check payable to The Orchard Street Press) to: The Orchard Street Press, P.O. Box 280, Gates Mills, Ohio 44040.

More info: www.orchpress.com

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Let Winter Give Way To Spring

How cruel of the cottonwood to bloom
For the sky to shimmer pale and quiet
And soft breezes to kiss the eucalyptus
For Spring to intrude upon Winter
As if nothing, nothing has happened
For yesterday, another gunman
With another AR-15 spitting bullets
Played the system, killed at will
Seventeen, this time
This time it was children and teachers
On a bright sunny day and school almost out
This time was different, but not really different,
From every other time

Tally the butcher's bill, America
Tally it again, so there's no mistake:
1, 875 people killed, 6,848 wounded *
That's the body count these last five years, America
Shame on us
Shame on us for letting the slaughter go on
Let the children rise up and speak out
For Jamie and Peter, for Scott and Alyssa and Gina
For all their fallen classmates everywhere
For every Parkland and every Sutherland Springs and
every Aurora
For every mother and father of every child lost to carnage
Let the children take us by the hand
Watch them stand and fight for those who cannot speak
Let the children bring light into the day
Let Winter give way to Spring

– Tom Portwood
* Data, Gun Violence Archive

Billie, Roland and Charlie - Just Another Day

I.
Billy woke up angry, couldn't wait to pack his pack
Drank one last cup of coffee, He wasn't coming back.
Fully loaded n' loaded, demons screaming in his ear,
Old enough to buy that gun, but not to buy a beer.

He Ubered to the schoolyard, had all the tools he'd need.
HE would make the bastards pay, HE would make 'em
bleed
For all of the slights, real or not, imagined in his head.
He would be their wake-up call.
They would wake up dead!

YOU who walk the halls of power,
Who say now's not the time,
Your silence bought and paid for,
YOU're partners to the crime.

Save your hollow thoughts and prayers.
They're wasted on our ears.
They can't erase the pain and loss.
They won't erase the tears.

2.
Roland binged on video, played it every day.
Loved the thrill of stalking, then blowin' them away.
As the body count increased, so did his sordid dreams.
He longed to squeeze the trigger of a real AR-15.

On that Sunday morning he burst into the church.
He let the bullets fly, just to quench his thirst.
As he prowled the aisles with his awesome gun,
He blew 25 believers straight to kingdom come!

YOU who walk the halls of power
and say now's not the time,

Your silence bought and paid for,
YOU are partners to the crime.

Save your hollow thoughts and prayers.
They're wasted on our ears.
They can't erase the loss and pain.
They won't erase the tears

3.
Charlie and his duffel bag checked into the hotel.
Set up on the thirteenth floor, bound to raise some hell.
Shackled to a dead-end job, four kids and a wife,
Charlie hated everything, but most of all his life.

So from his perch way on high, he fired into the night,
Rained fury on the crowd below, the music and the lights.
While people stunned with horror n' fear tried to run from
peril,
Charlie mowed em down with ease, like fish inside a
barrel.

If RIGHT NOW is not the time, then I ask you when?
If we don't stop this madness NOW, it will never end!
NOW'S THE TIME to take a stand, we'll no more be
defiled.
NOW is the time to spoil the rod and to spare the child.

RIGHT NOW IS THE TIME TO SPOIL THE ROD AND
TO SPARE THE CHILD!

– Alan Arnopole 2018



Dear Politicians,

Please forget about your next reelection. Please quit worrying about campaign contributions. Please stop worrying about pleasing corporations. Your NRA rating is just silly—forget it. You didn't go into politics to be owned by anyone. I am pretty sure that you went into politics to serve the public. Now, prove your ambitions and SERVE YOUR PUBLIC. Put your egos on hold and admit you've been wrong, because you know in your hearts that GUNS ARE THE PROBLEM.

Avoiding talking about them doesn't serve your public. Sliding blame to mental illness (definitely part of the problem) is not going to fix this. Sliding blame to violent movies and video games (maybe part of the problem) is

not going to fix it. Guns are the problem. Making the sale of assault rifles illegal will help to fix it. As a start, making guns unavailable to the mentally ill, to domestic abusers, and to those who exhibit frightening warning signs will help fix it.

It is time to take your head out of the sand pile of the 2nd Amendment and acknowledge that this isn't what the creators of the Constitution meant when they wrote of the right to bear arms. They couldn't conceive of a weapon like an AR-15, and you and I both know that the right to bear arms was against a tyrannical government, not because you like the feel of the gun in your hands, not because you think it might be needed for...something

someday. You don't need an AR-15 to hunt or to protect yourself or to make you look tougher or as a collectible. No one needs one.

SERVE YOUR PUBLIC, politicians.

The time to fix this is NOW. Do what's right. Put your egos aside and help make our nation a safer place for our children. We're watching, and we'll vote in the upcoming elections. The ball's in your court: what are you going to do to serve your public?

– Gillian Wegener

disABLEDperson, Inc. National Scholarship Competition for College Students with Disabilities ends 3.16.18

disABLEDperson, Inc. announces our Spring 2018 National Scholarship Competition for College Students with Disabilities! This competition began on January 17, 2018, and ends on March 16, 2018, for the award of \$2000.00 (two thousand dollars)!

It is important to create a registration on our site www.disABLEDperson.com and become Details <https://www.disabledperson.com/scholarships/24>

To participate, follow these simple steps:

Write an essay with no more than 1000 words. The Essay Prompt: Taking into account your personal challenges with your disability, how would you mentor a younger person who is sharing your experiences?

Next, you need to register for the competition. To do so visit <https://www.disabledperson.com/signup>. Fill out the form completely and *paste your essay into the form*.

Reminders: Please keep in mind that the form must be filled out completely. We cannot accept incomplete or fraudulent forms. Correct spelling and grammar are important. Please submit carefully edited drafts only.

In order to qualify, the student must be enrolled in a 2 or 4 years accredited college or university in the United States of America. They must be a matriculated student and be attending school full time and U.S. citizen. We will accept students who are not attending school full time as long as the part-time attendance is due to their disability and not their financial situation (minimum of 6 credits for undergraduate, 6 credits for graduate). Unfortunately, we are not able to award scholarships to high school students.

Upon winning, the student will prove disability and matriculation through their Disability Student Services department. We define disability as described under the ADA: "A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such an individual. A record of such an impairment or being regarded as having such an impairment".

Submit your entry before the March 16, 2018, deadline. The winner will be announced on our website on March 30, 2018. All decisions made by disABLEDperson, Inc. are final.

Note: any essay exceeding 1000 words will be disqualified. disABLEDperson, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 Charity whose mission is to reduce the high unemployment rate of people and veterans with disabilities. We accomplish this through our 2 national job boards: www.disABLEDperson.com and Job Opportunities for Disabled Veterans or www.JOFDAV.com.

Insight Meditation Central Valley presents A Daylong with Kevin Griffin: Living Kindness - Buddhist Teachings for a Troubled World

By LORI WONG

This workshop will be held on March 17, 2018, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto.

Lovingkindness, or *metta*, is sometimes depicted as a simple "open your heart and love everybody" practice, but a closer look at the Buddha's teachings reveals a more complex and nuanced picture. In a time of great conflict and contention in our society, it can be extremely valuable to see how the Buddha addressed these relevant topics:

- the challenges of living with other people;
- the risk of hating anyone, even your enemies;
- and the dangers inherent to conventional loving relationships.

He uses his teachings on lovingkindness to emphasize the importance of *sila*, or ethical behavior, the potential for opening into deeper meditative states of peace and equanimity, and the importance of developing non-discriminating, unconditional love on the path of awakening.

The retreat includes meditation, lecture, small group

discussion, and Q&A. There will be a potluck vegetarian lunch—please bring a dish to share, if you are able.

Kevin Griffin is an internationally respected Buddhist teacher and author known for his innovative work connecting dharma and recovery, especially through his 2004 book *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps*. He has been a Buddhist practitioner for over thirty-five years and a teacher for two decades. His latest book is *Living Kindness: Buddhist Teachings for a Troubled World*.

For more information or to register go to: <https://tinyurl.com/imcv-kevin-griffin>

"Here was a nation, infested with the contagion of an ever-present fear."

Thomas Wolf upon visiting Nazi Germany in the mid 1930s.

TEACHERS: Spring 2018 National Student Writing Competition: Letters of Hope

Want to inspire your students to write? Here's an opportunity to write about something meaningful and for an audience beyond the classroom

The YES! National Student Writing Competition is an opportunity for middle school through university students to write for a real audience—not just you, the teacher—and the chance to be published by an award-winning magazine.

Each quarter, students are invited to read and write an essay on a selected YES! Magazine article. We divide contestants into four categories: middle school, high school, university, and Powerful Voice (for authors whose essays are powerful and passionate). Winning essays in each category are published on the YES! Magazine website and in our online education newsletter.

Your students will have plenty to write about as they reflect on this question:

Think about what matters most to you about our country's future. Write a letter to someone important to you, describing that future you imagine and hope for.

The deadline for registration is March 9. Student essays must be submitted by **April 20**.

Since the contest began in Spring 2012, over 30,000 students have written essays for the contest. Teachers tell us that they like participating in our contest because their students have the opportunity to write about something meaningful, and to share their stories to an audience beyond the classroom.

Register [here](http://www.yesmagazine.org/for-teachers/writing-competition-essays/about-the-yes-national-student-writing-competition). Click [here](http://www.yesmagazine.org/for-teachers/writing-competition-essays/about-the-yes-national-student-writing-competition) for general information about the writing competition.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/for-teachers/writing-competition-essays/about-the-yes-national-student-writing-competition>

California Can Stop the First Use of Nuclear Weapons

California State Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry has introduced an important bill that needs broad support.

Assembly Joint Resolution (AJR) 30 urges the United States Congress to speedily take up and pass the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017 and send it to the President for his signature.

AJR 30 states that nuclear weapons "have the capability to directly undermine global peace and place the United States at existential risk from retaliatory nuclear strikes." It goes on to state, "The framers of the United States Constitution understood that the monumental decision to go to war, which can result in massive death and the destruction of civilized society, must be made by the representatives of the people in Congress and not by a single person."

While passage of this state resolution alone is not enough to make the needed change on the federal level, it is an important step. It would send a strong message to other states to join in and would let the federal government know that the people are ready for this change. After all, California is often the leader when it comes to pushing the national discourse in the right direction.

Please take a moment today to send messages to your California State senator and Assemblymember, encouraging them to sign on to Assembly Joint Resolution 30.

TAKE ACTION at http://org2.salsalabs.com/o/6357/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=25874

From the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, www.waging-peace.org



A Real Christian Radical

BY VASU MURTY

The early American feminists Lucy Stone, Amelia Bloomer, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met with anti-slavery editor Horace Greeley to toast “*Women’s Rights and Vegetarianism*” ... seeing animal rights as social and moral progress for all mankind, in the tradition of the abolitionists, suffragists, feminists: women’s rights and civil rights.

Emma Goldman and the IWW free-speech campaigners were jailed for organizing workers, advocating contraception, and resisting World War I. Suffragists picketed the White House for the right to vote and, when jailed, went on hunger strikes.

Feminists For Life has many vegetarians and vegans in its ranks, printing its newsletter, *Sisterlife*, on recycled paper with soy ink, and working with PLAGAL (the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians). Well-behaved women rarely make history.

In the tradition of the abolitionists, suffragists, feminists, and vegetarians before her, the late Reverend Janet Regina Hyland (1933 - 2007), a real Christian radical, was the author of *Sexism is a Sin: A Biblical Basis for Female Equality*. Regina Hyland was involved with the plight of migrant farm workers, women’s rights, and animal rights. She supported the sanctuary movement during the 1980s and opposed Texas governor George W. Bush’s execution of Karla Faye

Tucker in 1998.

Regina Hyland was raised Irish Catholic and attended Catholic school as a youth but went over to the Protestants to become an evangelical minister, since the Catholics do not (yet) ordain women. She studied Western theology and was familiar with East Indian philosophy (Hinduism and Buddhism), and even reverently referred to Jesus as “...my guru.”

When I visited Regina in Sarasota, Florida, in August 2003, I gave her a *japa mala* (Sanskrit for “prayer beads,” a Hindu “rosary”), for the purpose of *mantra* meditation: chanting the holy names. But I couldn’t show her how to properly use the beads in the bead bag, since she was left-handed. Regina said she saw points of similarity between Hindu and Christian monasticism: “When Catholics say the rosary beads, they are repeating the same prayers, over and over...” Regina told me she believed in *karma* and reincarnation and was familiar with Western astrology, but not Hindu astrology. Regina appreciated people of faith in all the world’s religions glorifying God in their own vernacular through music, song, and dance as well: “When I was at the Assembly of God Seminary, we would attend revival meetings at local and rural churches... ecstatic behavior pretty much defined the services.”

Regina told me she began seminary studies in biblical theology in 1955-58, but didn’t complete a Masters in Theology until the late ‘70s through early ‘80s. She studied with the Assembly of God Home Missions beginning in 1982 and was ordained on November 24, 1984.

Regina told me she was vegetarian since the 1970s but found it odd that some religious vegetarians also consider mind-altering substances to be “unspiritual.” Regina admitted that having been raised Irish Catholic, she enjoyed an occasional drink, and believed (like some Christians) that the Bible permits alcohol in moderation.

Regina was the author (in 1988) of *The Slaughter of Terrified Beasts*, which was revised and expanded in 2000 by Martin Rowe of Lantern Books (which publishes books on animals and theology) as *God’s Covenant with Animals* (available through PETA, which describes the book as a must-read for anyone tired of hearing the Bible misused to justify animal cruelty).

Regina cared deeply for animals and, as a *progressive theologian*, was in the forefront of social change: religion and animal rights. Years before SERV (the Society for Ethical and Religious Vegetarians) was founded, she published *Humane Religion*, a Christian vegan periodical.

Regina wrote the foreword to my 2003 book on religion and animal rights, *They Shall Not Hurt or Destroy*, and endorsed the book in a review in *Humane Religion*: years before it was finally published by Steve Kaufman of the Christian Vegetarian Association. She referred to the book as “a valuable resource,” and “a must for every humane library.”

Reverend Andrew Linzey, contemporary Anglican priest, and author of several books on animal rights and Christianity, tells Christians still eating meat to, “Give it up.” Regina Hyland, similarly, told me plainly about the killing of ani-

mals and the eating of meat: “It’s a sin.”

Regina was an ardent feminist and described herself as a “dyed-in-the-wool Democrat.” When I first contacted Regina in 1996, she was convinced the entire pro-life movement was a vast, right-wing conspiracy. Since then, I turned her on to Democrats For Life, Feminists For Life and the Seamless Garment Network (a coalition of peace and justice groups on the religious left that takes a stand against war, abortion, poverty, the arms race, racism, capital punishment, and euthanasia — His Holiness the Dalai Lama has signed their Mission Statement)... and before she passed away, she expressed the sentiment that as an alternative to abortion, science might come up with a form of contraception that even the Pope would approve of!

Regina told me she once attended a conservative Christian religious conference, but her reputation as a liberal Democrat, an ardent feminist and an animal advocate involved with the plight of migrant farm workers preceded her. She said when she arrived, they didn’t recognize her. They were expecting a Gloria Steinem type, and instead saw (in her words) “an aging Debbie Reynolds.”

On April 14, 2007, she wrote me:

“...I want to take this opportunity to tell you how very much I appreciate your friendship, both in a personal sense and also as colleagues / activists. You are a blessing in my life...”

Regina was planning to visit me here in Northern California at the end of September 2007, and to attend the World Vegetarian Festival in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, when she suddenly fell ill. I live in Oakland, and I was looking forward to seeing her again in person and selling her books with her.

I spoke to Regina Hyland over the phone shortly before she passed away. Among her last words to me were: “*The Christian God cares (for animals).*” Regina was pleased when I told her that I not only distributed her pamphlets on animals and Christianity at the World Vegetarian Festival, but that I managed to sell a copy of *God’s Covenant with Animals* to Catholic high school students who had formed an animal rights group on campus. She had faith in the future: faith in the younger generation.

Regina died of breast cancer October 9th, 2007 — one day after a “Day of Fasting,” designated by the Network of Spiritual Progressives in protest against the Iraq War. Her Hindu astrological chart has Jupiter (representing piety and fortune) in the 12th house (representing the afterlife), indicating a fortunate next birth.

Over ten years later, Janet Regina Hyland is still missed by everyone who knew her. I know I miss her dearly.

vasumurti@netscape.net





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Stockton

PEACE AND JUSTICE NETWORK OF SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY (<http://www.pjnsjc.org>). Info: James Walsh, jwprod1956@clearwire.net

MARCH

MAPS (Modesto Area Partners in Science) presents free, informative, engaging, inspiring community science programs. Fridays, 7:30 pm, MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 (*except where noted). **March 16:** Dr. Lori Silverstein, FDA process for approval of new drugs. ***April 6:** MJC East Campus Auditorium, A Family Science (all ages) Presentation, TED speaker, Dr. Puragra (Raja) GuhaThakurta, UCSC and Lick Observatory, "Our Place in the Cosmos." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOWTzVNB2g4>

MJC Spring Science Colloquium. 3:15pm – 4:15 p.m. Contact: Teri Curtis (209) 575-6775, curtist@mjc.edu. **March 14:** "Primate Research" by Ann Kohlhaas, Ph.D., zoology professor, CSU, Stanislaus. **March 21:** "Recovery of the Riparian Brush Rabbit" by Patrick Kelly, Ph.D., zoology professor, CSU Stanislaus. **March 28:** "On Becoming a Marine Scientist" by Melanie Okoro, scientist, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service. **April 4:** "Math in Poetry" by Heidi Fernandez Meyer, MJC mathematics professor. **April 11:** Documentary: An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power, sponsored by the MJC Civic Engagement Project. Note: This 90-minute film will be shown in SCC 114 (same 3:15 p.m. start time).

2 FRI: Peace Essay Contest Awards Ceremony, Mary Stuart Rogers Student Center, MJC West Campus, 2201 Blue Gum Ave., Modesto. 7:00 pm

3 SAT: NAACP Awards Banquet. Peace Center to receive award. 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. See article this issue for ticket information.

7 WED: Modesto Peace/Life Center VIGIL: Gun Control. McHenry & J St., 4:30-5:30 pm. (Note new time).

8 THURS: Celebrate International Women's Day. Barkin Dog Grill, 940 11th St, Modesto. Great food and live music! International artists check in to perform! Intlwomensday@gmail.com. Strong call to #PressforProgress motivating and uniting friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be gender inclusive.

10 SAT: The Modesto Peace/Life Center's Annual Meeting, 8:30 am to noon. 720 13th St. Modesto. All welcome.

11 SUN: Sunday Afternoons at CBS: Traveling the world with her harp on her back and her heart on her sleeve, Gillian Grassie's compositions challenge the conventions of her instrument. Her latest release, The Woodlands Sessions, showcases Gillian's voice, which beckons listeners into intimate and sometimes poignant story-songs. All concerts held at 1705 Sherwood Ave. at 3 pm. Tickets at the CBS office and at the door. Single Tickets \$25/Adults; \$20/Seniors & Students; \$10 children. Call (209) 571-6060 for tickets or info. More at sundaysatcbs.com

17 SAT: Insight Meditation Central Valley presents A Daylong with Kevin Griffin: Living Kindness: Buddhist Teachings for a Troubled World. 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto. Info: information visit <https://tinyurl.com/imcv-kevin-griffin>

17 SAT: The State Theatre and the Lawrence Livermore National Lab: Science on Screen.

Biomedical Accelerator Mass Spectrometry: Improving Human Health One Atom at a Time. Toxicologist Michael Malfatti, Ph.D., Senior Biomedical Scientist in the Biosciences and Biotechnology Division LLNL. Film: *Medicine Man* (PG-13~1992) Sean Connery stars as a research scientist who discovers a cure for cancer in the Brazilian rainforest but loses the formula. Doors at 2; presentation at 2:30; talk with scientist at 3:15; film at 3:30 pm. Visit <http://ww2.thestate.org/calendar/event/1045>

18 SUN: The Modesto Film Society and The State Theatre presents *The French Connection*. 1307 J. St., 2:00 pm. Visit <http://ww2.thestate.org/calendar/event/903>. Become a member of the State Theatre and get perks! Visit <http://www.thestate.org/membership>

22 THURS: Documentary: Homeless in Modesto. Forum 110, MJC East Campus, 7:00 pm.

LOOKING AHEAD

April 14: Food for Thought. Switch up what is on the end of your fork and get your body running like a racing car on high-octane fuel and, at the same time, improve planet earth's environment and hone your compassion skills. Will Tuttle, Ph.D. and Ruben Guzman. FREE. State Theatre, 7:00 pm. See article, this issue. Info: kathyhaynesSESG@gmail.com or (209) 250-9961.

April 26: Film "Fun" Raiser for DKG Epsilon Nu Chapter, Singin' In The Rain. State Theatre (1307 J St. Modesto). 5:30 pm with Wine, Appetizers, Raffle Items. 7:00 Film. Donation: \$25.00. Benefits: Education Foundation of Stanislaus County, MJC Scholarships, Library Books, & Great Valley Museum. Tickets at dkgmodesto@gmail.com or contact Gloria (209) 545-0883.

May 5: Friends of Modesto Library Used Book Sale, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Modesto Library Portico 1500 I St., Modesto. For free pick-up: (209) 985-7156 or pat.glattke@gmail.com

June 3: Annual Modesto Peace/Life Center Pancake Breakfast, Modesto Church of the Brethren.

June 22-24: Peace Camp in the Sierra, Camp Peaceful Pines, Clark Fork Rd. Register here

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

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

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

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

MONDAYS

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

Unity Tai Ji Qi Gong (A Journey Within) - First United Methodist Church Multipurpose Rm - 6 pm - Mondays - freewill offering. Michele, 209 602-3162.

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

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), (NOTE TIME), 4:30-5:30 pm. Call the Center for info: 529-5750.

MEDIA: Listen to Peace/Life Center radio, KCBP 95.5 FM streaming at <http://www.KCBPradio.org> (not on the air yet)

PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, FIRST Thursdays, 720 13th St., Modesto, 6:30 pm, 529-5750.

MEDIA COMMITTEE of Peace Life Center. Meetings TBA. Call John Lucas, 527-7634.

CONNECTIONS EDITORIAL MEETINGS: Info: 537-7818, jcostello@igc.org

PEACE/LIFE CENTER MODESTO, 720 13th St. Call 529-5750. We'll get back to you with current info on activities.

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 50+ years of age. Ongoing support group for mental health and wellness to meet the needs of the mature Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Every Monday 3:00 - 4:00 pm, Community-Hope-Recovery, 305 Downey Ave. Modesto. Info: Monica O, Tiamonica64@gmail.com or Susan J, SusanthePoet@gmail.com

TUESDAYS

NAACP Meeting. Christ Unity Baptist Church, 601 'L' St., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 7 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 Road, Donation. 209-505-3216, www.Funstrummers.com.

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

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

WEDNESDAYS

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

Modesto Folk Dancers All levels welcome. Raube Hall, Ceres (call for address), 480-0387.

LGBT 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

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

LGBTQA Collaborative Meetings 4th Thursdays. Agendas are the same for each meeting. Lunch meeting: Peer Recovery Art Center, 1222 J St, Modesto, Noon to 1:30 pm. Dinner meetings: Stanislaus BHRS – Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Dr., Modesto, CA 95354, 5:30 pm to 7 pm. Dedicated to promoting well-being in the LGBTQA community. John Aguirre, jpmamodelto@gmail.com, 559-280-3864.

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

Third Thursday Art Walk, Downtown Modesto, downtown art galleries open – take a walk and check out the local art scene. 5-9 pm every third Thursday of the month. Info: 579-9913, <http://www.modestoartwalk.com>

A Buddhist Approach to Recovery from Addiction. Jana Lynn Community Rm., 500 N. 9th St., Modesto. Thursdays 6:30-8 pm. FREE (donations accepted). Info: email RefugeRecoveryModesto@gmail.com

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

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter. 2nd Thursday of the month. Contact: Joanna Rose-Murray, 209-484-8276, jrmcompassionate@gmail.com, <http://www.tcfmodesto-riverbankarea.org>

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

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

FRIDAYS

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

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

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

Village Dancers: Dances from Balkans, Europe, USA and more. Fridays, Carnegie Arts Center, 250 N. Broadway, Turlock. 7:30-9:30 pm, \$5 (students free). Info: call Judy, 209-480-0387.

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

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

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

DEADLINE to submit articles to CONNECTIONS: Tenth of each month. Submit peace, justice, environmental event notices to Jim.Costello@igc.org Free Calendar listings subject to space and editing.