

Local NO KINGS Protest on National Day of Action

Time: Saturday, June 14, 12 – 2 pm

Location: Graceada Park, 401 Needham St., Modesto.

In America, we don't put up with would-be kings. NO KINGS is a national day of action and mass mobilization in response to increasing authoritarian excesses and corruption from Trump and his allies. We've watched as they've cracked down on free speech, detained people for their political views, threatened to deport American citizens, and defied the courts. They've done this all while continuing to serve and enrich their billionaire allies.

On Saturday, June 14, we're taking to the streets nationwide. We're not gathering to feed his ego. We're building a movement that leaves him behind.

The flag doesn't belong to Donald Trump. It belongs to us. We're not watching history happen. We're making it.

On June 14th, we're showing up everywhere he isn't—to say no thrones, no crowns, no kings. Check out <https://www.mobilize.us/nokings/event/786678/> for more information.

A core principle behind all No Kings events is a commitment to nonviolent action. We expect all participants to seek to de-escalate any potential confrontation with those who disagree with our values.

This event is a collaboration with Stan Dems, Central Valley Democratic Club, Modesto Progressive Dems, Turlock Democratic Club and the African American Democratic Caucus of Stanislaus County.



Reimagining the Peace Essay Contest: A Community Invitation

The Peace Essay Contest has been a beloved tradition in Modesto for over 30 years, organized by volunteers from the Modesto Peace/Life Center. It has engaged thousands of students in thoughtful reflection and writing on peace, justice, sustainability, and nonviolence—topics they may not typically explore in their everyday schoolwork.

Today, we're excited to share that the contest is entering a new chapter.

Our committee has been hard at work reimagining the contest to better reflect the world students are growing up in today. While the foundation remains the same—encouraging youth to think critically about how to build a more peaceful world—we're expanding the ways students can express their ideas. Rather than focusing solely on essays, we are opening the door to a broader category of creative expression, allowing



students to submit work that reflects their unique voice and talents, whether that's painting, music, poetry, or photography.

We're exploring potential themes, including the impact of artificial intelligence on our lives, communities, and future. Our goal is to create space for students to examine complex, real-world topics from a variety of perspectives, experiences, or imaginations.

To celebrate their efforts, the contest will conclude with an awards ceremony and reception in the Spring of 2026, where students and their families will be invited to honor their work and celebrate their contributions. First through third-place winners in each division will receive awards and scholarship prizes as recognition for their creativity, insight, and dedication.

This project remains proudly nonpartisan, grounded in our belief that a peaceful world is built by listening to and learning from diverse voices. We especially want to reach students who may not have had previous opportunities to think about these topics—creating new ways for them to engage in meaningful, transformative dialogue.

As we continue developing this new vision, some elements are still evolving. We're sharing this update now to invite you into the process. *Whether you're an*

educator, artist, community leader, or simply someone who cares about the next generation—we want to hear from you.

We're actively looking for:

- Community members and educators to help shape and guide the project.
- Artists, educators, and community leaders who want to uplift youth voices.
- Judges and screeners passionate about writing, art, music, or youth education.
- Volunteers to help with logistics, outreach, and event planning.
- Tech-savvy supporters to assist with programming, social media, and submissions.
- Partners from youth-based nonprofits,

continued page 2

INSIDE CONNECTIONS

LOCAL	2	HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	6
A SLAVES GIFT TO THE REVOLUTION	3	FIRST AMENDMENT VIOLATIONS	7
LIVING LIGHTLY	4	GATHERING OF VOICES	8-9
CAL PRIDE EVENTS	5	KCBP RADIO	10
		HOMELESSNESS	11

READERS! Sign-up for our e-edition!

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

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

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

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

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

The 40th Annual Peace Camp is Here!

June 20-22, 2025

Registration is now open!

peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp

The Modesto Peace/Life Center's 40th Annual Peace Camp in the Sierras will take place on June 20-22, 2025. Come celebrate 40 years of Peace Camp, a rich tradition of people gathering together in peace and kindness to live out and imagine a more peaceful world. You'll enjoy workshops, good food, singing, crafts, a talent show, recreation, and stimulating conversation with people of all ages in a beautiful mountain setting.

About Peace Camp

Peace Camp takes place at Camp Peaceful Pines, in Dardanelle off Hwy. 108 in the Stanislaus National Forest. Peace Camp officially opens at 3 p.m. on Friday and closes at 12 p.m. on Sunday. Families and individuals of all ages are welcome. Minors under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Camp rates start at \$70 for children and \$100 for adults and covers the program, food and lodging for the weekend. Partial scholarships and day rates are also available. Donations for scholarships are appreciated.

Reimagining the Peace Essay Contest

from page 1

schools, and local organizations.

There are also opportunities for sponsorship from individuals, businesses, and organizations interested in investing in a high-impact, youth-centered community project. Your support can help us offer meaningful recognition, expand access, and build something truly special together. This contest has already touched the lives of thousands of students—we hope to build on that legacy and continue growing with a new approach, new tools, and new voices.

Together, we can empower the next generation to envision and build a more equitable world. If you're ready to engage with passionate young visionaries and play a hands-on role in reimagining this powerful project, we invite you to join us.

As these plans continue to evolve, some details may change. This update is part of our commitment to keeping you informed and involved. We want this to be a community-driven effort, and your feedback and ideas are essential to that process.

Inspired to get involved? Ready to act?

If you're interested in volunteering—whether it's by helping to plan, judging, connecting us with partners, or simply providing feedback—reach out to us at modestopeacecontest@gmail.com or call/text 209-303-2036. Our committee meets biweekly on Mondays at 5:30 p.m., both in person and on Zoom. We would love for you to join us.

Let's reimagine what peace can look like through creativity, community, and connection.

2025 Workshop Speaker

We're honored to welcome Melanie Berru as our featured speaker for Saturday's workshop at Peace Camp. Ms. Melanie Berru is a proud Chicana from California's Central Valley, a mother, transformative educator, freelance consultant, contributing writer to the grassroots newsletter, *Stanislaus Connections*, and a trailblazer for equity and justice. As a sociology professor at Modesto Junior College, Ms. Berru also serves as the Rising Scholars Faculty Liaison and teaches college courses to incarcerated brothers and sisters within the jail system. Her abolition work embodies the belief that education is not merely a pathway to opportunity but a transformative force capable of dismantling systemic barriers and fostering empowered communities.

Ms. Berru's commitment to "making the invisible visible" is a guiding principle in her work. Whether through her engaging community, her transformative teaching, or her advocacy, she uplifts voices often unheard and empowers others to challenge inequity with courage and love. Recognized for her impactful service to students and the community, she has earned numerous awards that highlight her passion and advocacy.

For more information, please visit:

peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp

IN MEMORIAM

MARGARET J. BARKER

May 25, 1937 - March 4, 2025

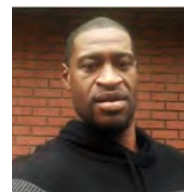
Long-time Peace Activist, Peace Essay & Harvest Supper Stalwart.



IN REMEMBRANCE

George Perry Floyd, Jr.

October 14, 1973 - May 25, 2020



Trevor Seever

April 24, 1991 - December 29, 2020



Friends of the Library Needs Volunteers for Summer Events

By **MARILYN DREW**, Friends of the Library Volunteer Coordinator

Jessica Geiss, the Children's and Teen Librarian at the Modesto Library, needs more volunteers to participate in the events below.

The Children's Department will hold two Summer Reading performers at the Modesto Farmers Market, 16th & H St. "Cruzin' Critters" will be held on **Saturday, June 14, at 9 am**, and "George the Giant" will be held on **Thursday, July 10, at 9 am**. Three volunteers will be needed at each event. Chairs will be provided, and library staff will ensure volunteers are shaded.

If you would like to participate in one or both of the events, contact Jessica Geiss, at jgeiss@stanlibrary.org.

The City of Modesto is Hiring Lifeguards!

The Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department is looking for Lifeguards and Swim Instructors to join the team this summer! These are hourly positions—perfect for students, athletes, or anyone who loves the water and wants to make a difference.

Please share the link below with your friends, family, neighbors, and local groups!

Lifeguard/Swim Instructor (Hourly) | Job Details tab | Career Pages

Loving Kindness
Meditation

Wednesday June 4, 2025
829 13th Street @ 4PM

Free to all who want to cultivate more peace,
love and kindness in their life and in the world.



MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER

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

Donations to the Peace/Life Center
gratefully accepted.

Phillis Wheatley - America's First Great Poet

By Tom Portwood

“We’ve said goodbye to the harmful effects of woke culture and so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion programs,” Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth recently bragged in a speech he gave at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. “DEI is dead at DOD.”



True to his word, the Secretary of Defense and his underlings have made a full-scale assault on significant aspects of our nation’s history, particularly those pertaining to the U.S. Military. Of course, he also fired the highly respected General C.Q. Brown as

the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the equally well-regarded Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Linda Fagan, because “Any general that was involved, general, admiral, or whatever, that was involved in any of that DEI woke shit has got to go.” (*The Guardian*, February 21, 2025).

While all of that was happening, the U.S. Army is just a few weeks away from holding the parade that President Trump had ordered for June 14th, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Army’s establishment during the Revolutionary War as well as the President’s own 79th birthday.

Knowing how Secretary Hegseth and the President feel about all things “woke,” it might come as a rude awakening to them that the Army’s first Commander-in-Chief invited an African American woman poet – our country’s first poet of international note – to the Army’s encampment in 1776.

Very briefly, this is how that occurred.

“The shot heard round the world” had already been fired on North Bridge in Concord some months before, and the nascent Continental Army under the leadership of George Washington, was laying siege to the British Army in the city of Boston when a young African American poet named Phillis Wheatley sat down at her desk not far from where clashes were taking place and wrote a poem, “To His Excellency George Washington” – perhaps hearing the distant roar of cannon fire as she dipped her quill pen

into a inkwell during its composition.

But this is just a small part of one of Early America’s most remarkable success stories, though tragically, a short-lived one.

Born in Gambia, West Africa, in 1753, Phillis (she was given the name after the ship, *Phillis*, that carried her to America) was captured by enslavers as a child of seven and sold into the home of John Wheatley, a Boston tailor, who, along with his wife Susanna, intuited that young Phillis was “very precocious” and made sure that she received an excellent education in a wide variety of subjects including history, the sciences, geography, and British literature. She also read deeply in the Greek and Latin classics.

According to Sondra A. O’Neale, whose excellent article on the life and poetry of Phillis Wheatley appears on the [Poetry Foundation](#) website, Phillis began writing poems when she was 13 and became a widely known published poet by 1770. By 1773, her collection of poetry titled *POEMS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS* had been published in London. As Ms. O’Neale points out, this was “the first volume of poetry by an African American published in modern times.”

At one point, Phillis journeyed to England, meeting the likes of Benjamin Franklin and several British abolitionists. And, as Sondra O’Neale writes, “in addition to classical and neoclassical techniques, Wheatley applied biblical symbolism to evangelize and to comment on slavery. For, ‘On Being Brought from Africa to America’ the best-known Wheatley poem, chides the Great Awakening audience to remember that Africans must be included in the Christian stream: “Remember, *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*, / May be refin’d and join th’ angelic train.”

By 1774, Phillis had been manumitted, and when the Revolution broke out, she became an ardent Patriot. In October 1775, after finishing the poem inspired by Washington and his gallantry, Phillis enclosed the poem with a letter which she sent to the General himself at his encampment.



In the February 1776 letter, General Washington wrote in reply to receiving Ms. Wheatley’s poem, it’s clear that he was very familiar with her previous work, and thanked her profusely for “your polite notice of me, in the elegant Lines you enclosed; and however undeserving I may be of such encomium and panegyrick, the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your great poetical Talents.”

The General went further, “If you should ever come to Cambridge, or near Head Quarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favoured by the Muses, and to whom nature has been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations. I am, with great Respect, Your obedt humble servant, G. Washington.”

Of course, George Washington can never be accused of being progressive, other than he fought to overthrow a monarchy; he would remain part of a slave-owning aristocracy until the very day he died, when he famously manumitted his own slaves. But he clearly acknowledged and appreciated talent and elegance, and Ms. O’Neale notes that Washington and Phillis Wheatley did indeed meet – as two patriots at the dawn of a new nation. And that’s important. It’s history and it can’t be erased.


Sadly, Phillis Wheatley would only live until 1784. She continued writing poetry to the end, “uncared for, alone, in a state of abject misery.” She had married a fellow named John Peters, but he was in the county jail for debt when she died, only 31 years old. But her legacy, her contribution to American poetry and literature, is unequivocal. As Sondra O’Neal stated, Phillis Wheatley “was a household word among literate colonists and her achievements a catalyst for the fledgling antislavery movement.” She’s “a most important poet in the American literary canon.”

And that’s not “woke.” That’s the truth.



MODESTO PEACE/LIFE CENTER
Working for **peace, justice**
and a **sustainable future**

Connections is published monthly except in August by the Modesto Peace/Life Center
829 13th St., Modesto, CA 95354
Open by appointment.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 134,
Modesto, CA 95353
209-529-5750 / stanislausconnections.org



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

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

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

Workers’ Compensation and Social Security Disability Attorneys
Know your rights
Call today (209) 521-2552




MRB MICHAEL R. BAUDLER
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

mb@modestocpas.com **Michael R. Baudler, CPA**

TELEPHONE
(209) 575-2653 ext 303

FACSIMILE
(209) 575-0629

1120 14TH STREET, SUITE 2
MODESTO, CALIFORNIA 95354

Off the Rails in Tuolumne City

By **ELAINE GORMAN**

Making sure that I see every possible wildflower this season, I arrange to hike with Byron on the West Side Rails Trail in Tuolumne City. This 5-mile (one-way) path on the old railroad grade is level and packed with history, views, and amazing spring flowers. Logging was king in the late 1800s and early 1900s and is still an influential activity in the Sierra. This section of the Hetch-Hetchy and Yosemite Valley Railway is a testament to the labors of the workers of that era. Logs were carried to the Tuolumne sawmill, and mileposts along the way give the distance to the sawmill. The trail ends at the North Fork of the Tuolumne River.

We pull into the parking area off Buchanan Road, then drop down onto the trail. Being early spring, I tuck my pant legs into my socks to avoid being transport and meal for questing ticks. The cool, damp shade of overhanging trees provides the perfect habitat for Poison Oak. Walk in the middle of the trail! After a short distance, the trail opens up and we immediately observe large patches of spider lupine, purple and white owl's clover, yellow composites, and paintbrush. We spot the North Fork thousands of feet below us in the rugged canyon.

As we walk, interpretive panels give information about the early days of logging and the hazards that were encountered in these hills. There is also information about wildlife, plants, and indigenous people and their lifestyle. These signs help us to appreciate the landscape that we are walking through. Some of the steel rails and wooden ties are still in place and add to the historical significance.

In the Sierra foothills and other chaparral areas of California, I am on the lookout for the “trifecta” of Yerba Santa, ticks, and rattlesnakes. Yerba Santa — check. Ticks



— likely. Rattlesnakes — potentially. We keep our eyes and ears open and tread carefully. We walk under bowers of manzanita. I notice fresh leaves of Oracle Oak (a hybrid of deciduous oak and live oak). Birds are active,



and we identify jays, California Towhees, and Acorn Woodpeckers.

For the first mile and a half, flowers are abundant and diverse. Byron and I take turns naming mule's ears, buttercups, Chinese houses, and one of my faves — harlequin lupine. Although the California buckeyes are just starting to leaf out, their candle-like flower stalks are a-flame, ignited by the sun. I am hoping to see beautiful and fragrant bush lupines, but recent fires have knocked back their population. I am happy to see milkweed, an important food source for monarch butterflies. A bench in the shade begs for attention. We oblige.

Wooden trail markers give historic place names and distances. After about 2.5 miles, we come to Torment Gulch. An interpretive plaque has an historic photo of one of the many washouts along this section. The rails and ties are precariously suspended into thin air over the gulch. Between 1970 and the early 1980s, the West Side Lumber Co. ran an amusement train down to the North Fork from the mill. Perhaps you were lucky enough to have been one of the riders!

About half a mile past the gulch and creek, the brush thickens, and views are obscured. It is sunnier and warmer. We turn around (after 2.5 miles) and head back to the car. On the return trip, we notice that leaves seem glossier, and flowers more vibrant. The poppies have fully opened. We make a few more flower discoveries — mustang clover, woodland star, fringe pod. Then it's off to lunch at Byron's favorite taqueria.



Notes: There are no restrooms or water at the trailhead, so make sure to bring plenty of beverages. The best time to visit is during the spring wildflower season. It will be very warm during the summer, as the latter half of the trail does not have much shade.


<https://tuolumnerecreation.specialdistrict.org/westside-trail>

Getting there — About 60 miles, one hour and 30 minutes. drive time. From Modesto, go to Oakdale. Go east on Highway 108/120 toward Sonora. Take the Mono Way exit off Highway 108, go right. After about 1/2 mile, turn right on Tuolumne Rd. Go about 7 miles, turn left on Carter St. After about 1/4 mile, turn right on Buchanan Road. Look for a parking area on the left.

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






DRUG-RELATED OVERDOSE & POISONING DEATHS!

Stanislaus County has been impacted by a recent increase in *suspected* drug-related overdose and accidental poisoning deaths



What you can do:

- Carry Naloxone (NARCAN)
- If you suspect an overdose, call 911 right away - even if you administered Naloxone (NARCAN)
- Check in with friends and family with a history of substance use
- Seek treatment for substance use disorder
 - Call 1-888-376-6246

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit StanCounty.com or
StanRx.net

CALPRIDE STANISLAUS ✖

CALPRIDE VALLE CENTRAL ✖

CALPRIDE SIERRAS

BREAKING NEWS

CALPRIDE 2025 PRIDE EVENTS ANNOUNCED

CALPRIDE STANISLAUS

JUNE 07 – TURLOCK PRIDE
10 AM - 2 PM | DONNELLY PARK
600 PEDRAS RD, TURLOCK CA

JUNE 14 – CERES PRIDE
10 AM - 2 PM | CERES-WHITMORE PARK
3RD STREET, CERES CA

JUNE 21 – GENDER EXPRESSION EVENT
1 PM - 5 PM | SPLASH PARKING LOT
107 MCHENRY AVE, MODESTO CA

JUNE 21 – PRIDE BINGO
6 PM - 9 PM | SPLASH BAR MODESTO
107 MCHENRY AVE, MODESTO CA

JUNE 28 – WATERFORD PRIDE
10 AM - 2 PM | BEARD PARK
540 C ST, BONNIE BRAE AVE,
WATERFORD CA

JUNE 28 – WHAT A DRAG! SEASON 3
6:30 PM | GALLO CENTER FOR THE ARTS
1000 I ST, MODESTO CA

TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE ON [TICKETS.GALLOARTS.ORG](https://tickets.galloarts.org)

CALPRIDE VALLE CENTRAL

JUNE 14 – CALPRIDE AT THE PARTISAN
5 PM | THE PARTISAN
432 W MAIN ST, MERCED CA

JUNE 21 – MERCED PRIDE PROM
5 PM - 11 PM | MERCED
MULTICULTURAL ARTS CENTER
645 W MAIN ST, MERCED CA

JUNE 22 – MERCED PRIDE BBQ
10 AM - 3 PM | APPLGATE PARK
2500 BLOCK P ST, MERCED CA

CALPRIDE SIERRAS

JUNE 01 – SONORA PRIDE
12 PM - 5 PM | MOTHERLODE
FAIRGROUNDS
220 SOUTHGATE DR, SONORA CA

JUNE 21 – COULTERVILLE PRIDE
12 PM - 5 PM | COULTERVILLE PARK
10313 PARK LN, COULTERVILLE CA

**SEPTEMBER 21 – MURPHYS
PRIDE IN THE PARK**
12 PM - 5 PM | MURPHYS
COMMUNITY PARK
505 ALGIERS ST, MURPHYS CA

SEPTEMBER 25 – HOPS AND GLITTER
4 PM - 9 PM | AROUND THE HORN
BREWING CO. AND RESTAURANT
17820 CA-120, GROVELAND CA

LIVE MUSIC - DRAG SHOWS - BBQ

VENDORS - FREE FACE PAINTING - RESOURCES

**SELECT EVENTS
WILL FEATURE
GUEST PERFORMERS**

KATALINA ST JAMES, JULIAN MOONLIGHTT,
GREASEPAINT, KIDD CVLTT, YUKA GEDDIT, PHOENIX
FLARES, GIGI BANKS, RAD BUSINESS, PRACTICE,
ASPEN, THE RAGING GRANNIES, MAGNIFIQUE, SASHA
RAINE DUPREE, DREAMY DEE, BABEL, & MORE!

FOLLOW US FOR UPDATES

@ TOGETHERCALPRIDE



CalPride Brings 12 Pride Events to the Central Valley This June

By **JESSICA PARMAN**

Since 2015, CalPride—formerly known as the LGBTQ+ Collaborative—has grown from a small grassroots hub in Stanislaus County to a multi-county network serving 2SLGBTQIA+ community members across Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador, and Mariposa counties. Our work centers intersectional advocacy, transparent education, and trauma-informed care, rooted in equity, empathy, diversity, and social justice.

This year, we’re celebrating Pride Month 2025 with twelve events uplifting queer joy and community power through live music, drag performances, BBQ, resources, and art.

Executive Director Roman Scanlon will be making his drag debut alongside mentor and Havs of Cvltt performer, Magnifique! Tickets are available at <https://tickets.galloarts.org>

Executive Director Katalina Zambrano will perform at select events—catch her while you can!

Executive Director Morgan Rain will spearhead events featuring local bands, BBQ, drag performances, and plenty of fun for the community!

Let’s gather, celebrate, and uplift each other—because our Pride is your Pride, too.

Follow us for updates:
[@TogetherCalPride](https://twitter.com/TogetherCalPride)

Amnesty International Releases Brief Exposing Serious Human Rights Violations Against Immigrants Detained at the El Paso Service Processing Center

Amnesty International today released a new briefing exposing serious human rights violations against immigrants detained at the El Paso Service Processing Center (EPSPC), against the backdrop of the broader crackdown on immigrants under the Trump administration.

The briefing, based on Amnesty International's April 2025 research trip to El Paso, including a guided tour of the EPSPC facility, documents disturbing patterns of abuse and systemic violations. [Dehumanized by Design: Human Rights Violations in El Paso](#) reveals widespread mistreatment inside EPSPC and highlights stories of enhanced – and sometimes unlawful – immigration enforcement, and alarming use of the Alien Enemies Act to categorize Venezuelans seeking safety as gang-affiliated and high risk, detain, and expel them.

“The Trump administration is blatantly targeting and making the lives of our immigrant friends, neighbors, and family members unbearable,” said Amy Fischer, Director of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International USA. “Immigrants, including asylum seekers and those who have lived in the U.S. for years, are being rounded up throughout the country, denied access to legal representation and due process, thrown into abusive detention facilities, and in some cases disappeared to a maximum-security prison in El Salvador. These practices are not just inhumane – they are unlawful.”

Amnesty International researchers met with 27 detained individuals as well as legal, humanitarian and social service providers and local organizations. The organization observed a general disregard for human rights standards across a wide variety of measures.

Arbitrary detention

Amnesty International documented numerous cases of people, including those with long-term U.S. presence and asylum claims, who were arbitrarily detained. These included people fleeing political violence, torture, and gang violence. Many reported having no access to attorneys, facing prolonged detention without explanation, suffering cruel and inhumane conditions, and being transferred between facilities impacting their ability to communicate with loved ones and legal service providers.

One man from the Dominican Republic said: “I have been in four detention centers in two months. Each time they move me I have to go through processing and my court date and judge and the status of my case changes.”

Others described family separation including their spouses and children being left with no support, no communication with loved ones and mental distress.

One man from Mexico said: “most of us have the same problems...our kids and wives have been abandoned. We are here because the system isn't good.”



Violation of right to due process and lack of legal resources

The recent termination of the DOJ's Legal Orientation Program (LOP) has severely limited detained individuals' ability to understand their rights or navigate the immigration system. In El Paso, long-standing organizations like Estrella del Paso, once a lifeline for migrants through their trainings in detention on immigration law and the legal system as well as supporting unaccompanied minors in court, have lost funding, leaving immigrants caught up in the system without access to legal representation and due process. Most detained individuals interviewed lacked legal representation, and several individuals detained said they were frustrated about lack of access to legal resources, including being regularly denied access to the law library. Others said they lacked access to any information about their case.

One local service provider said: “The biggest thing right now is that we are struggling because so much is happening without any info...They are setting up people to fail intentionally.”

Venezuelan individuals being targeted under the Alien Enemies Act

Under the Trump administration's use of the Alien Enemies Act, Venezuelans have been disproportionately targeted and labeled as gang-affiliated without evidence, arbitrarily detained, and removed without due process, including to El Salvador, where they face inhumane prison conditions and risk of torture. At EPSPC, people reported that Venezuelans are disproportionately physically abused by guards, put into solitary confinement, and designated as “alien enemies” based simply upon nationality and tattoos – all with no due process. Speaking anonymously, various individuals detained detailed threats of being sent to Guantanamo or El Salvador by guards as a fear and intimidation tactic and/or disciplinary measure.

One individual from Venezuela detained at the EPSPC told Amnesty International, “there was a man who was thrown to the ground and beaten by guards for [skipping] someone in the food line and then sent to El Salvador.

Another Venezuelan went to go talk to officers and then came back with his face totally beaten. The guards don't just walk up to people and be abusive, but if you annoy a guard or something they'll threaten to send you to Guantanamo or El Salvador.”

Inhumane detention conditions

Amnesty International found that conditions at EPSPC violate both U.S. and international detention standards. People detained in EPSPC reported physical abuse by guards, use of solitary confinement, unsanitary and overcrowded living spaces including dysfunctional toilets, inadequate medical care, and poor-quality, expired food.

Many of those detained who Amnesty International spoke with had similar experiences. One person said: “We do not get access to medical care as needed. They feed us expired food and we all got sick. They told us to drink water. The water is warm and not clean. It smells. They would not give us any medicine.”

Stop funding this cruel attack on immigrants

Amnesty International's visit paints a troubling picture, filled with human rights violations.

“This administration is detaining people and carrying out mass deportations without regard for human rights, dignity, or accountability,” Fischer said. “This is not a functional immigration policy – it's an all-out attack on immigrant communities where cruelty is used as a weapon to encourage people to give up their rights and self-deport.”

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is requesting over \$200 billion to expand its immigration enforcement capacity – including \$45 billion to triple current detention capacity up to 150,000 people each day.

Amnesty International urges the U.S. government to end mass immigration detention, ensure individualized assessments for any detention with a presumption of liberty, and establish a guaranteed right to counsel, and consistently uphold international human rights standards. It must also halt the targeting of Venezuelans in strict compliance with the principle of non-refoulement.

Congress must stop funding detention and deportation systems that violate human rights. The administration should halt expulsions under the Alien Enemies Act, guarantee due process and safe return for those affected, and ensure all people in immigration court have timely access to legal representation.

“Congress should be saying no to more money to expand this cruel system,” said Fischer. “No matter what President Trump says, the United States has an obligation to uphold the human rights of everyone within its borders. The violations we documented in El Paso, among so many others, must end now.”

From [Amnesty International](#)

An Open Letter to Leaders of American Institutions

We direct organizations that defend the freedoms of speech and the press. We write to sound a collective, unified alarm about the Trump administration's multi-front assault on First Amendment freedoms, and to call on leaders of civic and other major institutions—including universities, media organizations, law firms, and businesses—to stand more resolutely in defense of these freedoms that are integral to our democracy.

In little more than 100 days, President Trump and the agencies under his control have threatened First Amendment rights through a breathtaking array of actions. They have sought to control speech and association by imposing unconstitutional conditions on a wide range of federal grantees and contractors. They have sanctioned lawyers for their representation of people whom the president views as political enemies. They have arrested, detained, and threatened to deport international students—including lawful permanent residents—solely because of their participation in lawful political protest. They have purged crucial datasets from government websites, gutted agency offices responsible for compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and imposed new and indefensible restraints on public employees' right to speak on matters of public concern. They have invoked civil

We write to sound a collective, unified alarm about the Trump administration's multi-front assault on First Amendment freedoms

rights laws to justify extensive and unwarranted intrusions into universities' autonomy and academic freedom. Resurrecting a policy introduced during President Trump's first term, they have barred legal scholars from providing information and expertise to the International Criminal Court. They have banned the Associated Press from the White House press pool because it declined to update its stylebook to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America." Books have been removed from U.S. military service academy libraries, and other federally operated educational institutions, because they do not conform to the administration's ideological preferences, and federal funds are being used as a cudgel to censor curriculum and promote the administration's viewpoints in schools. The Federal Communications Commission has threatened to revoke the licenses of television and radio networks and stations whose reporting the administration disfavors.

There have been other times in our nation's history that witnessed sustained and misguided efforts to suppress speech. All of our organizations have opposed both Democratic and Republican administrations when they abridged First Amendment freedoms—as all of them, at

If First Amendment freedoms are compromised, our democracy will be compromised, too. Democracy and free speech are inextricably linked.

various points, have done. But we share the view that the Trump administration's actions, taken together, represent an extraordinary and in some ways unprecedented challenge to First Amendment rights and the values they embody. These actions call for a forceful, uncompromising response. Some institutions have countered in exactly this way, to their credit.

It has been disheartening, however, to see so many others capitulating to the administration's unconstitutional demands rather than asserting their rights. The logic that leads even powerful institutions to compromise or submit in these circumstances is, of course, easy to understand. But when one institution "bends the knee," its peers face increased pressure to do the same. Each surrender makes the assertion of First Amendment rights more costly and more perilous. We fear that if major institutions continue to submit rather than stand on their rights, the freedoms of speech and the press will be seriously and perhaps irreversibly weakened.

If First Amendment freedoms are compromised, our democracy will be compromised, too. Democracy and free speech are inextricably linked. If we are to govern ourselves, we must be able to inquire, speak, write, associate, and protest without fear of governmental retaliation. The public must have broad and undistorted access to reliable information about the government's decisions and policies. The press must be free to report independently and critically without fear of official reprisal.

Leaders of civic and other major institutions must do more to defend these principles. They must stand more firmly in defense of First Amendment freedoms, and they must fight back unhesitatingly and energetically when their rights, and the rights of those they serve and represent, come under threat. We are ready to help. Our organizations have all committed significant resources to challenging Trump administration policies that violate the First Amendment, including those described above, and we are willing to do more. We are ready to represent and support institutions whose First Amendment rights are infringed or threatened.

If our democracy is to survive, the freedoms of speech and the press need a vigorous, determined defense. Leaders of this country's most powerful, well-resourced, and prestigious institutions must play a larger part in this effort.

Jodie Ginsburg
Chief Executive Officer
Committee to Project Journalists

Jameel Jaffer
Executive Director
Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University

Summer Lopez and Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf
Interim Co-CEOs
PEN America

Trevor Timm
Executive Director
Freedom of the Press Foundation

Greg Lukianoff
President and CEO
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression

Anthony D. Romero Executive Director
American Civil Liberties Union

Clayton Weimers Executive Director
Reporters Without Borders (RSF USA)





Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest Winners Celebrate

By **LYNN M. HANSEN**, Letters Chair, NLAPW, Modesto Branch, and MoSt Charter Member

On May 10, 2025, the Modesto Branch of The National League of American Pen Women (NLAPW), in collaboration with Modesto/Stanislaus Poetry Center (MoSt), hosted the 30th Aileen Jaffa Memorial Youth Poetry Contest winners' celebratory reading at the Carnegie Center for the Arts in Turlock, California.

This yearly contest is conducted in memory of Aileen Jaffa, poet, artist, sculptor, former agricultural reference librarian at UC Berkeley, and past President of the Piedmont/Oakland Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

Contest Chair Lynn M. Hansen received 103 entries from students enrolled in kindergarten through high school in Stanislaus County. Twenty-one student winners read their poems to an audience of admiring parents, friends, and teachers. Cash awards for First, Second, and Third prize certificates, as well as Honorable Mention Certificates plus a booklet of student-winning poems, were provided by the MoSt Poetry Center, while two grand prize cash awards were provided by the Modesto Branch of NLAPW.

This year, Zoe Byron, Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate, Angela Drew, Poet Laureate of Modesto, Anne Williams-Bailey, and Karen Baker, both MoSt Poetry Center and NLAPW members, assisted in handing out awards and certificates to the contest winners.

The Grand Prize Winner for Grades 7-12 was **Eliana Tambua**, Grade 8, for her poem "Hidden Beauty." The Grand Prize Winner for grades K-6 was **Isaac Doub**, Grade 6, for his poem "Forest Walk." Both Grand Prize winners were from Hart-Ransom Charter School in Modesto, CA.

NLAPW Modesto Branch President Louise Kantro presented the grand prize winners with certificates and cash prizes. After the reading, student poets, their teachers, and their families enjoyed a reception with refreshments provided by the MoSt Poetry Center.



Above L-R: Eliana Tambua, Louise Kantro, Issac Doub, Lynn Hansen

Top: All the winners, with Andrea Drew, far left, Modesto Poet Laureate, judge, and award presenter. Lynn M. Hansen in yellow blouse next to Zoe Byron, Stanislaus County Youth Poet Laureate, judge and award presenter.

Mikhail Gurfinkel: Poetry As A Bridge

I am originally from Chernivtsi, Ukraine, with deep roots there spanning at least three generations. The Chernobyl tragedy and the bad economy made it hard to live in the city. I lived in the USSR until I was 37, and I spent 12 of those in military service.

In 1997, I came to America with my Mother for a better life. My uncle sponsored us, and we lived in Mountain View. I began to work my way up the career ladder. I started as a food handler at Burger King. Later, I began working for Del Monte Corporation in security. I wanted to learn about computers and began taking evening classes.

After being certified as a Software Quality Assurance Engineer, I began working for Microsoft in Mountain View. Due to the dot-com crash, I changed jobs and became a patient account representative at Stanford Hospital. While there, I studied Homeland Security at the Institute of Technology in San Jose. After completing my studies, I became a security first responder at Sun Microsystems. I worked as a lead security officer for several firms.

Two and a half years ago, my wife and I moved to Modesto to live closer to our five children and their families.

As a poet, my journey began in 1974, when I first put pen to paper to express the complex emotions and experiences of life. In 1997, I immigrated to the United States, seeking a new chapter in life. This transition was both challenging and inspiring, as I navigated the nuances of a new culture while holding on to my roots. Over the decades, my work has been deeply influenced by the diverse cultures and people I have encountered, both in my homeland of Ukraine and in my adopted country of America.

Through my poetry, I explore the universal themes of resilience, identity, and the power of human connection, often delving into my personal experiences as an immigrant. My writing reflects a lifelong passion for understanding the emotional intricacies of the human condition, with a focus on kindness, perseverance, and the courage to rise after life's inevitable setbacks. Each poem I write is not only a reflection of my inner world but also an offering to those who have shared in this journey with me.

Now, in America, my work continues to evolve as I blend the traditions of my past with the possibilities of my present, always striving to create something that speaks to both the heart and the mind. Poetry, for me, is a bridge—connecting cultures, histories, and people in a shared exploration of what it means to be human.

A Gathering of Voices is honored that Mr. Gurfinkel shares several of his excellent poems in this issue of *Stanislaus Connections*.

Blossoms of Peace: A Vision for Russia and Ukraine

In fields where shadows once did loom
Where skies were filled with war's dark gloom
A whisper rises, breaks the tomb
Of hearts that hope, of hearts that bloom.

From Kyiv's streets to Moscow's spires
Where history's echoed in countless choirs
A plea for peace, as conflict tires
A vision where no blood aspires.

Oh, lands of strength and pride so deep
Where rivers of our memories [stream]
May dreams of peace in silence creep
And cradle those who weep, who sleep.

Let soldiers lay their weapons down
In fields of green, in urban town
Exchange the sword for olive crown
Where love's sweet song can drown the frown.

In every village, every home
From Eastern steppes to Western loam
Let peace, like gentle winds, now roam
To heal the wounds, to mend, to comb.

May mothers' tears be turned to smiles
And children play for endless miles
In lands now free from war's harsh trials
United hearts, no more exiles.

Oh, Russia, Ukraine, in this embrace
Let not our past dictate our pace
But the future's promise interlace
With hope, with love, with endless grace.

For every flag that once did wave
In sorrow's winds, above each grave
May peace now rise, so strong, so brave
And lead us to the peace we crave.

Oh, may the dawn bring light anew
Where skies are clear, and hearts are true
A future where our bonds accrue
In peace, in love, for me, for you.

Peace In the Middle East

In lands where ancient rivers flow
Where sands of time in deserts blow
A cry for peace begins to grow
In hearts that yearn, in hearts that know.

Beneath the sun's relentless blaze
Where history's shadows cast their haze
A dream of unity we raise
For brighter, more harmonious days.

Oh, Middle East, your stories old
Of prophets' words and heroes bold
May peace be forged, and not withhold
A future where love's light is told.

Let olive branches touch the skies
As doves of hope in freedom rise
Beyond the pain, beyond the cries
A vision of peace before our eyes.

In markets where the spices blend
And ancient walls the skyline mend[s]
Let whispers of goodwill ascend
From foe to friend, our hearts extend.

May minarets and steeples chime
In harmony, a sacred rhyme [sign]
Together, in this fragile time
We'll weave a peace, a sublime [rhyme].

For every child, a chance to dream
In valleys lush rivers gleam
Where laughter flows like a gentle stream
Let peace be more than just a theme.

Oh, Middle East, with all your grace
In every culture, every face
May love and peace our paths embrace
And heal this ancient, wounded place.



Juneteenth

In Galveston's warm June embrace
A dawn of freedom took its place.
Whispers carried on the breeze
The final bonds began to ease.

Two years and more had shadows cast
Till freedom's light would shine at last.
On Texas soil, the word arrived
The truth declared, and hope revived.

The chains of yesteryear undone
In the bright and rising sun.
Juneteenth, is a day to celebrate
The end of sorrow, love not [hate].

From fields of toil to hearts set free
A promise kept in history.
Resilience strong as mighty trees
A future carved with destinies.

Together now, we honor them
The strength within each woman and man.
Their voices echo through the land
In freedom's glow, united stand.

Juneteenth, a beacon, bright and clear
A time to cherish, year by year.
For liberty, for justice, sing
In every heart, let freedom ring.

In the Shadows of Towers

In the shadow of the towers, where the skyline once soared,
A silence now lingers, where so many hearts roared.
We remember the morning, so bright and so clear,
When the world felt a tremor, of anguish and fear.

The sky turned to ashes, the streets filled with cries,
Yet through the dark smoke, we saw heroes rise.
With courage unshaken, they ran toward the flame,
Each one a symbol, though we may not know their name.

We remember the fallen, in the rubble they lay,
Their spirits still with us, as we gather today.
They live in our memory, in stories, in song,
In the hearts of the nation where they forever belong.

In unity, we stand, as we honor the past,
In the face of destruction, our hope held fast.
For though we were broken, we refused to fall,
And through love and resilience, we answered the call.

The towers may be gone, but their legacy stands,
In the strength of our people, in the clasp of our hands.
So today we remember, and we vow to defend,
The freedom and peace for which they did not bend.

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

Streaming on www.kcbpradio.org

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

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

The Children's Hour - Sundays 3:00 pm. And Mondays at 4:00 p.m.

SCIENCE

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

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

Big Picture Science - 1:00 pm Sundays.

Planetary Radio – 2:30 pm Sundays.

PROGRAMS

The Ralph Nader Hour: Citizen advocate Ralph Nader and guests discuss topics important for consumers and our nation on Saturdays at 4 p.m.

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

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

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

Stanislaus County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services and KCBP 95.5 FM "The Voice of The Valley"

**Presents A Live Bi-lingual Program:
"THE WELL-BEING OF THE
COMMUNITY, YOUR FAMILY
AND YOU"**

THURSDAYS 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM



Down on the Farm - topics important for our San Joaquin agriculture with Madera organic farmer Tom Willey - Saturdays, 6 am

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LOCALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMS

The Well-Being of the Community, Your Family, and You 11:00 am to 1:00 pm Thursdays.

Live, Bilingual in Spanish & English.

Rockin' with MJC – One-hour music shows by Modesto Junior College students. 1:00 a.m. Saturdays; 2:00 p.m. Saturdays; 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays.

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

Sports Talk Modesto - Join Jay Freeda and Jimmie Menezes. Snappy banter to catch up on everything happening in the sports world. – Thursdays, 5 pm.

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

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

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

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

Arts of the San Joaquin Valley with Linda Scheller and

Laura Stokes - Mondays, 8:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:00 am & Wednesdays, 8:00 pm. Listen here: <https://anchor.fm/kcbp> and on Spotify

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Can't manage homelessness? Blame Turlock

By Eric Caine, The Valley Citizen

Last week, California Governor Gavin Newsom called out the City of Turlock for its refusal to donate one dollar to secure state funding that would enable the *We Care* homeless shelter to continue providing nightly beds for 49 homeless men. In a 3-2 vote, the Turlock City Council refused to help *We Care* continue its mission because the shelter couldn't provide 24/7 bathroom access for its residents, who are limited to night occupancy due to lack of staff and services during the day.

Turlock Mayor Amy Bublak joined Councilmembers Rebecka Monez and Erika Phillips in a vote to reject the \$267,100 state grant because Turlock has “to start changing the way we do homelessness.” Newsom called the grant refusal “an absolute moral failure.”

Newsom added that, “The state has done its part. Local leaders need to step up.”

Governor Newsom is both right and wrong. He's right that local leaders need to step up, and he is egregiously wrong about the state having done its part.

According to a statewide audit released in 2024, the State of California spent \$24 billion on homeless programs over a five-year period and did “such a poor job of tracking outcomes that it's impossible to tell if they've been successful.”

Actually, it's easy to tell from continually growing homeless numbers throughout the state that California's homeless programs have failed miserably. The outcomes are clear for anyone willing to look at our freeway margins, parks, riverbanks, sidewalks and parking lots.

For several months prior to taking office in 2022, Modesto City Councilman Nick Bavaro did a systematic study of homelessness throughout the city. A few miles north of Turlock, Modesto shares many of Turlock's problems with homelessness. Both cities are in Stanislaus County.

During his research, Bavaro met with the various county agencies and committees dedicated to housing and homeless issues. He also talked to law enforcement officers and outreach workers. He chatted with dozens of homeless people, and he enlisted local volunteer and homeless savant Frank Ploof to be his special consultant on homelessness.

After months of study, reflection, and expert opinion, Bavaro came to a fundamental realization:

“Homeless people don't have anywhere to go,” he said in response to Newsom's “blame the cities” tactic. “The state has spent \$24 billion and we have more people on the streets than ever.”

Shortly after he took office, Bavaro rode along with one of Modesto's outreach teams. When they came upon a small group of homeless campers in a local park, the team ordered the campers to move because they were violating a city ordinance prohibiting camping in public parks.

Councilman Nick Bavaro talks to a homeless man in his Modesto district, Modesto, CA

“I went by the next day and those same people were



across the street with their belongings piled up on the sidewalk,” said Bavaro later. “What's the point of moving homeless people from one place to another when they have nowhere to go?”

After he realized that the lack of space to lay down is the fundamental issue in managing homelessness, Bavaro became an advocate of sanctioned camping.

“Modesto has an excellent *Camp to Streets* program,” he said, “now we need *Streets to Camp*. We have to get homeless people off our streets.”

When he read about Gavin Newsom's attack on cities for their failures to manage homelessness, Bavaro was incensed.

“If Newsom wants to get people off the streets, he needs to provide them somewhere to go,” said Bavaro. “The shelters are full. Many of the people on the streets are mentally ill. Gavin Newsom needs to reopen our mental hospitals and open up state land for permitted camping and shelter. He needs to cut all the red tape in the way of providing transitional housing and shelter and provide funding for management and services.”

And while Gavin Newsom has indeed failed to provide the leadership needed to manage California's homeless population, he's not alone in futility. The 2021-22 Report of the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury included a review of the county's attempts to manage homelessness. The Grand

Jury concluded that, “...accountability is lacking. Given the significant dollars spent to address homelessness, this lack of accountability is problematic and can undermine the public's confidence in our public agencies.”

“Lack of accountability” is indeed, “problematic” not only in Stanislaus County but throughout the state, but that alone isn't why so many people lack confidence in state and local government. Turlock Mayor Amy Bublak and her fellow Councilmembers may think they've earned political capital by denying funds to *We Care*, but all they've done is make things worse.

Denying the *We Care* program funds needed to provide homeless men a place to sleep isn't just cruel, it's self-defeating. Without that supplemental funding, *We Care* may have to close down as early as next month.

If that closure happens, it will mean 49 men won't have bathroom services not only during the day, but during the night as well. Way to go Turlock. Like Gavin Newsom, all you've done is compound the problem.

Meanwhile, Turlock, Modesto, and other Stanislaus County cities and towns will continue chasing people from place to place, following squandered dollars with more squandered dollars because they refuse to face the simple reality Nick Bavaro realized years ago:

Homeless people have nowhere to go. Meanwhile, they still need food, shelter, and a place to take a dump.

calendar

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

JUNE

MAPS - Modesto Area Partners in Science: Free MJC science programs on Fridays in MJC West Campus, Sierra Hall 132 at 7:30 pm., unless noted otherwise. TBA FALL.

Modesto Science Colloquium, Wednesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m., MJC West Campus, SCC 115. Free to the Public. Talks recorded for the [Science Colloquium's YouTube Site](#). TBA FALL.

The Prospect Theatre: 24/25 season has continuing offerings. Visit <https://prospecttheaterproject.org/2024-2025-season/>

4 WED: PEACE LIFE CENTER BOARD MEETING, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom and in person. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

4 WED: LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION at the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Free to all who want to cultivate more peace, love, and kindness in their life and the world. Donations to the Peace Center/Life Center accepted but not required. 829 13th St., Modesto. 4:00 pm.

10 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

15 SUN: The State Theatre and Modesto Film Society present *Top Gun*, 2 pm. Join the State Theatre. Have fun, get perks, and support Modesto's historic non-profit theatre. Visit <https://thestate.org/films/top-gun-062025/>

FRI: 20-SUN: 22, 2025: The 40th Annual Peace Camp is here! Registration open at peacelifecenter.org/peace-camp. See article, p. 2.

24 TUES: VIGIL: DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Info: Call the Center at 209-529-5750 or email jcostello@igc.org.

REGULAR MEETINGS

SUNDAYS

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

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

IMCV Weekly Insight Meditation and Dharma Talk, 8:45 am - 10:15 am, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto (rear bldg. at the end of the UUFSC east parking lot). Offered freely; donations welcome. All are welcome. For more information, please email charlie@imcv.org. Our mailing address is IMCV, P.O. Box 579564, Modesto, CA 95357.

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

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

MONDAYS

The Compassionate Friends, Modesto/Riverbank

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

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

Walk with Me, a women's primary infertility support group and Bible study. 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm the first and third Mondays of each month. Big Valley Grace Community Church. Interested? Email WalkWithMeGroup@gmail.com or call 209.577.1604.

TUESDAYS

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

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

NAACP Meeting. King-Kennedy Center, 601 S. Martin Luther King Dr., Modesto, 3rd Tuesday @ 6:30 pm. 209-645-1909; For ZOOM link, visit <https://www.naacpmoDESTOSTANISLAUS.ORG/> email: naacp.branch1048@gmail.com

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

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

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

WEDNESDAYS

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

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

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

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/>

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT GROUP, 2nd & 4th

MODESTO PEACE LIFE CENTER ACTIVITIES

Modesto Peace/Life Center **VIGILS: held EVERY OTHER TUESDAY** of the month at McHenry Ave. and J. St. (Five Points), 4:30-5:30 pm. Call the Center for info: 209-529-5750.

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 Wednesdays, 829 13th St., Modesto, 6:00 pm, 529-5750. Meetings on Zoom and in person. Email Jim Costello for login information, jcostello@igc.org

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

Wed., 7:30 to 9 pm. Info: (209) 338-0855. Email info@stanpride.org, or tgssupport@stanpride.org

THURSDAYS

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: jpamodesto@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

3rd Thursday Art Walk, downtown Modesto, third Thursdays, 5 to 8 pm. stroll to art displays and galleries. Info: <https://visitmodesto.com/arts-entertainment/#art-walk>

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

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

FRIDAYS

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

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

Ukulele On Funstrummer Fridays: Every Friday morning from 9 am to 10:30 am Play Along Easy Songs from the Funstrummers Songbooks of over 500 songs. Funstrummers Performing Band Practice from 10 to noon and afternoon gig. Unitarian Church, 2172 Kiernan Ave., Modesto, 209-505-3216 for details. Donations accepted. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mej3gD0ZD40&list=LLB8Y19zZg660qHCXGoC6oJQ&index=1>

SIERRA CLUB: Yokuts group. Regular meetings, third Friday, Office of Valley Improvement Projects, 1224 K St. Modesto., 6:45 pm. Info: 209-632-5473. Visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/mother-lode/yokuts> for info on hikes and events.

SATURDAY

Free Community Drum Circle every third Saturday, 11 am to 12:30 pm, Gallo Center for the Arts, 10th & I 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

CALPRIDE STANISLAUS

Peer Support Groups

Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus
1202 H Street #C, Modesto, CA 95354
209-408-8848

<https://www.facebook.com/CalPrideStanislaus/>

Trancendence: Every Friday, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm. A peer support group for transgender individuals ages 18 and older, providing a safe and judgment-free space to connect and share experiences.

Senior Gay Men's Group: Every Thursday, 1:00 pm. Senior Gay Men's Group is a space to connect, share, and build community. For individuals aged 55+.

Writing Group: Every Friday, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm, This group provides an affirming and confidential queer space to craft poetry and short stories. For individuals aged 18+.

Folx Group: 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. An inclusive LGBTQ+ peer support group for individuals ages 25 to 45, providing a welcoming space to connect, share experiences, and build community. Hosted at CalPride Stanislaus 1202 H Street #C, Modesto, CA, 95354.

Dreams & Solutions, 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month, 11:00 am-12:00 pm. A supportive space for those navigating challenges with drugs and alcohol to connect, share, and heal together. For individuals aged 18+.

We Thrive: Every Wednesday of the month, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm. A space to explore your journey through art, connect with others, and create in a welcoming and supportive environment. This group is for individuals aged 18+.

Heart to Heart: First Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A supportive, peer-led group dedicated to exploring and nurturing healthy, respectful relationships within the LGBTQ+ community. For individuals aged 18+.

Strength in Solidarity: Third Tuesday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A safe and supportive space for sexual assault survivors to connect, share experiences, and find healing. For individuals aged 18+.

Closet Abierto: First and Last Thursday of the month, 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. A welcoming and affirming space for LGBTQ+ Latinx individuals to share experiences, find support, and build connections. For individuals aged 18+.

Queer Karaoke Night: Last Friday of Every Month: 4:00 pm-5:00 pm. Sing along to your favorite tunes with your friends at CalPride! For individuals aged 18+.