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**17**  
**INSPIRATIONS**

**Christina Gilbert: Stay, Commit, Give, Grow**

Each word above describes a phase of Christina Gilbert's life and career. With that progression, she found a position that's a unique fit. She's all about advocating for others and bringing people together through her role as San Joaquin County director of HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley.



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# IT'S MAY, MOM'S MONTH!



**T**his month we're celebrating some amazing moms who have significantly impacted our community. Whether it is their work, children, volunteer projects or roles as being a stay-at-home mom, they are strong. My hope is that you will be inspired by these ladies as much as I have been. Their ideas and actions are getting the attention they deserve.

Christina Gilbert is a great example of one of these women. In addition to being a wife, she is a boy mom—of four, to be exact! Can we just pause there? Four boys. Wow, that must be a rambunctious household. In addition to being a mom, she also has a fabulous life as volunteer and careerwoman, working with organizations such as Child Abuse Prevention Council, the Children's Alliance and HealthForce Partners. She is an all-around great lady, committed to faith, family and community.

Nine years ago, Laura Seuss became foster mom to Jack, a newborn with some serious health concerns. It didn't take long for Laura to legally adopt him as her own. After many medical appointments, Jack

is a thriving little guy who desperately needed a second chance in life to experience true love and compassion. He has become quite the confident, athletic, humble young man that our family has come to love as well.

When we took over *HERLIFE* Magazine at the beginning of 2021, we decided to add a new section, Spark Joy! Kids Shining Brightly. I have said it before, and I'll say it again. This is one of my favorite sections in the magazine (Wag Tales takes a close second). Read about Baby Zeta, or BZ, as they are casually referred to, a group of high school students who find time in their busy schedules to volunteer and give back to others. From serving meals to collecting Christmas gifts to volunteering at National Night Out, these young ladies are modeling what it means to be sparks of joy that shine brightly. You go, girls!

So, as you flip through the pages and absorb the stories of these amazing ladies we have featured, use it as an opportunity to ask yourself, "What can I do today to spread goodness to others?" Happy reading! Oh, and thank you, advertisers, for your support.

*Enjoy every moment,*



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# SIDEWALK

# S

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# A

# L

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# CHRISTINA GILBERT

STAY,  
COMMIT,  
GIVE,  
GROW

BY ANDREA BEAR





*There's a talent to bringing people together, whether it's for family functions, parties or community events. Gathering people takes much time and synchronization. For Christina Gilbert, the ability to bring people together is something of an art form.*

**A**s the San Joaquin County director of HealthForce Partners Northern San Joaquin Valley, she works to link all the various organizations and agencies that collectively deliver healthcare to our community. Her job is simple yet complicated; it's to be the piece of the puzzle that links all the essential players together to solve healthcare-related challenges collaboratively.

### DISCOVERING HER CALLING

Raised in the Stockton area, Christina and her husband, Jeff, who's a third-generation Stocktonian, recognized their hometown was the place to raise their family. Initially, Christina's career path looked like the route toward education. A graduate of San Joaquin Delta College and Stanislaus State, she worked at Quail Lakes Baptist Church at the preschool and directed programs for elementary school-aged kids. It was here that she first discovered her talent for connecting communities, linking families in the after-school program with tutoring support for their children. However, her plans of community coordinating were redirected to motherhood when it soon became evident the Gilberts would begin their family. With four sons all about a year apart from each other, Christina admits the early years were busy and required her full attention. She humorously recalls that with four babies, four years old and under, she had only enough time to choose between brushing her teeth or brushing her hair each day. Joking aside, it was important for her to make family the priority. "I knew I had to be home," she said resolutely. While her vocation as a mother was first and foremost, she didn't consider a career outside the home until her youngest son, Chase, started kindergarten. Jeff's IT business continued to support

the family, but Christina began her ventures in volunteer work.

Christina's friend, Lindy Turner Harden, got her involved with the Child Abuse Prevention Council, or CAPC, where she joined the auxiliary. There she helped with different projects and co-chaired the Ducky Derby, an annual event that releases rubber ducks into the Delta as part of their fundraising efforts. As Christina became more involved, connecting with other agencies and alliances, she began to love her work with the community, learning about various programs in San Joaquin County. In 2015, an opportunity to get further involved presented itself when a group of local leaders from multiple agencies came together to form the San Joaquin Children's Alliance, or SJCA, whose focus is to advocate for more resources to be directed upstream to preventive programming for children and families.





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## GAME CHANGER

SJCA received a grant for a part-time director to spearhead how they could expand funding to better serve San Joaquin children. Because of her involvement with CAPC, Christina was the ideal candidate for the job and was hired to lead the grant. It soon became evident that her talents used during her days at Quail Lakes would be useful to connect various agencies. Christina continued to work for the organization and found the work incredibly rewarding. It was here that she saw her job was about providing that link to tie all the different groups together. "It's less about doing it all and really about bringing together all the pieces," she said. "I'm not doing the work, but I have a bullhorn and a spotlight," she joked. But in reality, Christina was doing a great deal, as she helped local agencies collaborate and advocate for more resources for children. "I think that's what I love so much, is I get to sit with those organizations. Listen and learn and see how we can work together to align services and work more collaboratively. There are not many people who get paid to do this backbone type of work and I've seen firsthand how impactful it can be," she said proudly.

Through SJCA, Christina began to consult for HealthForce Partners, connecting healthcare agencies, educational entities and community-based organizations to solve healthcare workforce-related challenges to better serve the community. The organization's principle of "grow your own" expands healthcare educational pathways for residents to expand the workforce and diversify those serving in healthcare positions. In February 2023, she began her work with HealthForce Partners full time while remaining involved with SJCA as a consultant.

## ADVOCATING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

During the pandemic, as the community wrestled with how to invest state and federal funds to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, the SJCA worked with the Children and Youth Task Force convened by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors to bring funding proposals forward. The aftermath of the pandemic brought about a great deal of mental health concerns. San Joaquin County, like the rest of the world, saw a rise in mental health cases in need of support services. With Christina's participation, the Children and Youth Task Force proposed five grants to the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors.

A successful grant allotted the task force a \$5.2 million to expand the behavioral health workforce pipeline, including the money to hire a field supervisor. This position would increase more services, allowing graduate students from the University of Pacific and CSU Stanislaus to do their field hours locally in social work, licensed marriage and family therapy, professional clinical counseling, instead of accumulating hours outside San Joaquin County. "My position is really about advocacy," Christina admitted. "It's another opportunity to connect ourselves and our resources. While coordinating may seem simple on the surface, often broad collaborations don't happen because we expect leaders to find the time in their busy schedules to move that collective work forward. Many problems don't get solved in a systemic way because coordinating requires allocating time and listening. It's a lot of relationship building and trust building."

By hiring a field supervisor, Christina's team provided a

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***"It's another opportunity to connect ourselves and our resources. While coordinating may seem simple on the surface, often broad collaborations don't happen because we expect leaders to find the time in their busy schedules to move that collective work forward. Many problems don't get solved in a systemic way because coordinating requires allocating time and listening. It's a lot of relationship building and trust building."***

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breakthrough so that interns would stay on to create viable mental health support. The grant provided scholarships for the graduate students and incentive to work locally. In the first graduating group alone, nine of ten of the interns continued their career in San Joaquin County. "This opened up a flood gate and expanded placements for local students to live, learn and work right here," she enthused, which in turn created more opportunities for much-needed resources not easily accessible. Seeing her ability to link the field supervisor to the colleges and mental health agencies became the steppingstone that the San Joaquin Valley had needed. "We are trying to increase collaborations that change systems. You need someone who can bring that time and energy."

## STAYING CONNECTED

Outside of her time coordinating and connecting, Christina loves spending time with family and enjoying local activities. These days, her two older sons, Caden, 19, and Nicholas, 18, are starting and exploring careers while the two younger sons, Tyler, 16, and Chase, 15, are busy with high school activities. While her family has grown and she finds her busy time is now redirected to community alliances, the Gilberts still make time to spend quality time. Christina finds that the link that brings the whole family together is poker, a favorite pastime that Jeff taught their boys and keeps their circle connected.

Whether she's at home with family or connecting agencies, one thing is certain. Christina Gilbert is sharing her talents and bringing people together. ♦





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# WENDY JOHNSON

## *A Lasting Legacy*

BY CAITLIN HAMER



As is true for so many folks in our region, Wendy Johnson's ancestors arrived in California from Europe to try their luck in the Gold Rush. But the Wagner family's success ended up being attached to textiles rather than precious metals. Jacob and Charles Wagner set up a leather tannery business, Pacific Tannery, in 1856, and for many years it operated at the head of McLeod Lake at El Dorado and Oak Streets. The business first used oak trees from around the Mokelumne River for their work, but eventually shifted this practice to Humboldt, taking the tan bark from those trees and shipping it down the coast to the harbor in Stockton. Eventually, the tannery closed, but the building that housed the tannery's machine works, located on Hunter and Oak Streets, remains standing, and the family business as it exists today, Wagner Land Company, is currently converting that space into mini storage.





## PARENTING TRANSITIONS

Wendy also finds it interesting to see how much things have changed for parents. On a personal level, she observes it within her own family. “I watch my daughters raising their kids and one thing I notice and wish I had done was to talk less and listen more.” And in general, she notes that the digital age we reside in presents new hardships for moms. “I think new mothers need to give themselves a break,” she urged. “There’s so much pressure today, especially on social media, all these mamas posting perfect everything. Life is messy, beautiful, fun and hard, and nobody ever posts their bad days.”

It’s a contrast to the news cycle, which can seem all bad, all the time. But Wendy is all about embracing all of life’s moments, and she applies that mindset toward Stockton, too, thinking back fondly on wonderful childhood memories here, such as the Astro Slide in Lincoln Center, while envisioning how the city can keep moving forward while paying tribute to its storied past.

“The greatest part of Stockton are the people,” she said. “I really feel that is one of Stockton’s greatest assets. It’s the community and the small businesses.” And, of course, she loves the waterfront, and not just because her family’s history, as well as the city’s history, is so strongly tied to that area. She just finds it beautiful and a reminder of the ways in which the city is capable of growing and changing.

“It’s very important for our family to remain active in Stockton,” she affirmed. “I want Stockton to be successful. This city is too important.” ♦

“It’s incredible to watch my son be part of that new legacy, as one of his responsibilities working for our family’s business is to oversee our downtown project,” said Wendy. The fifth-generation Stocktonian, mother to two girls, Melissa and Katlyn, and two boys, Zachary and Charlie, and grandmother to four grandchildren, reflects fondly on her family’s history here, and she has made sure to stress the importance of that local connection to her family.

## SHARING HISTORY

She was also able to instill some love for regional history in local students. Wendy attended USC, studying education and working in Southern California for a few years after graduation. She later returned to Stockton to get her teaching credential from University of the Pacific, going on to teach for four years at Lodi Unified. “It was the most incredible thing to be able to mold the minds of children,” she smiled. She taught fourth and fifth grades and especially enjoyed teaching California history. But her primary focus soon shifted to motherhood, a full-time job in itself.

“Raising kids is not easy and it’s not for the weak,” she laughed. “But it’s incredibly rewarding! My husband and I made plenty of mistakes when raising our children but one thing we know for certain is that we placed an emphasis on family, instilled faith into everyday life, and made lots of memories together.” And family is still of the utmost importance to her now that she’s a grandmother.

“I’m a Mimi, and my husband’s a Pop,” she described. The best part of having grandkids? It’s just plain fun. She hopes to have the same impact on her grandchildren as her own grandmother had on her life. “She taught me how to make doughnuts, we picked huckleberries together, and her love for gardening and flowers rubbed off on me! When you’re a parent, you don’t always have time for that kind of stuff. I want to tuck all those memories into their hearts and I want that to be my legacy.”



# A HEALTHY JOURNEY WITH HERLIFE MAGAZINE

BY CINDY MCDERMOTT

*For over a decade, I have been a contributing writer for HERLIFE Magazine, most of the time composing cover stories recognizing the accomplishments of many women. Their stories are empowering, interesting and far-reaching. Their recipes for achievement are enlightening and I've chosen some concepts to enhance my own life.*



**T**hese success tidbits were called into action in January 2019 when I decided to focus on living a healthier life. My overall wellness was fine for a 65-year-old female, but I needed something more on this journey, and that's when my *HERLIFE* connections paid dividends.

## THE INITIAL STEPS

First, I hooked up with Lisa Butler from FitChixKC, a previous cover feature and our healthcare writer at the magazine. Together, we set realistic goals for me to lose weight and get in better shape with balance movements and lifting weights, many times combining the two in compound exercises. Ten pounds gone in three months would be a good start. Workouts of 45 minutes, twice a week focused on strength training to build muscle and

good bones. Thirty minutes of cardio were scheduled on the other days on my elliptical or resistance cycle. I also downloaded a free app, MyFitnessPal, to plan and track my food. Success must include addressing diet and fitness at the same time.

In less than ten months, I had lowered my goal twice because 30 pounds had come off. I was nearly at my college weight, and I bought new clothes because nothing fit. Then my wellness journey took another direction that I had never anticipated.

In 2020, I interviewed the owners of Angel Competition Bikinis. Two sisters, Karah and Lauren Beeves, had built a company with international sales to create and manufacture bikinis for contestants to wear during bodybuilding competitions. With about a quarter of a yard of material covering key areas of their bodies, the



competitors' muscles were honed to perfection through vigorous, targeted training and diet management.

### ADDING THE GAME CHANGER

I continued with my healthy journey at FitChixKC and even took up boxing as another healthy endeavor with a personal trainer. The cardio and flexibility this sport demands are mind-boggling, but I didn't have the goal of climbing into the ring with another person. It was a sport that had interested me.

Then COVID hit and my journey hit a speed bump. The gym closed due to the potential of exposure so boxing was out of the question while my fitness training went virtual. And I needed another challenge, another step in my wellness journey. The interview with Angel Competition Bikinis came to mind. Could a Medicare-aged woman be a contestant in a bikini competition? Networking paid off because I found my bodybuilding coach, Jill Buchert, who would take me on as a client.

The first training day started with measurements, weight and photos, which would be continuously tracked as I became trimmer and built muscle. I recorded everything I ate noting calories, carbs, net carbs and more. Consuming lean protein was the goal while many of my favorite veggies would be eliminated. Goodbye, potatoes and corn, hello to Brassica vegetables including broccoli and cauliflower.

I added supplements, which with my food ran about 130 to 140 protein grams a day. To build muscle, you need lean protein. Lifting weights makes tiny tears in your muscles and then you consume protein to build new layers. The work was paying off. My shoulders

broadened, biceps grew, back strengthened and many more benefits were visible.

Now, I am in the final months to ready my body and mind for my first pageant. My mentality for this summer event reflects my outlook for this entire journey. I am not in competition against the other ladies on the stage but competing for myself. ♦

### HEALTHY JOURNEY TAKEAWAYS

Here are my key learnings to share so far:

- Check with your primary care to ensure you're ready for an exercise program.
- Select a sport you'll enjoy.
- Find a good trainer. I consider this an investment; spending that money is a game-changer. You need an educated eye to ensure you're correctly completing your exercises and holding you accountable.
- Set goals with achievable measures. "I want to lose ten pounds by October with cardio and diet."
- Buy a set or two of good workout clothing designed for your sport. Then reward yourself with another set when you hit your goal.
- Make it a part of your daily routine. Not feeling it this morning? Take your walk or run for five minutes and then see if you really want to turn around.
- Keep track of your stats. I use MyFitnessPlan and the fitness tracker on my watch to hold myself accountable. They're invaluable.
- Be positive that you'll succeed. Negative Nellies are not a part of any successful plan.

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# LAURA AND JACK SUESS

## *One Look, Two Lives Changed*

BY LAURA SUESS

*Nine years ago, I was working as an RN for a pediatric home care company in Fresno, California. I loved my job. I loved being able to go out into the community and empower families to take care of their littles, who often had very complex medical needs. I loved building relationships with the kiddos we would visit week after week. I loved stepping into communities that were often overlooked and underserved and watching them come around one of their own as they dealt with something no one thought could be overcome. It was life-giving.*

I remember that my desk in the office I shared with two other nurses sat right underneath the plastic file holder where referrals for new patients would show up. It was a Friday and I was looking at a referral for a soon-to-be-discharged baby boy at UCSF. Three months. Chronic kidney disease. Vesicostomy, a small opening in his abdomen to allow urine to drain directly into his diaper. Will most

likely need a kidney transplant by the time he's five. Going home on oral meds daily and injections three times a week. Education and nursing follow up needed. "Perfect," I thought. "This one's mine. Education and I'll get to snuggle a sweet baby for a few weeks."

My phone rang that very day as I sat at my desk with that referral looming right over me. The number for the foster family

agency I was licensed through popped up on my screen. I didn't think much of it because I was doing only very short-term care at the time. I answered. "Hey, Laura, we just got a call about a three-month-old baby boy they need placement for. He's got kidney disease and will most likely need a transplant by the time he's five. They'd love for him to be placed with a nurse. Will you take him?" Wide eyed, I turned to my co-worker, who



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was a fellow foster parent and dear friend. Apparently, she could hear every word because she was already holding up a sticky note that just said “YES!” Without thinking much about it, I agreed to pick him up that Sunday and hung up.

A few minutes later, my boss walked into my office and pulled that referral out, saying, “Wait on this kiddo. He’s a CPS hold.” I looked up at her and said, “Oh yeah. Um, I think he’s actually coming home with me.” I’m not 100 percent sure she believed me at first, knowing my propensity to jokingly threaten to take our patients home. However, not long after that, word had spread that I was definitely taking him and that the nursing referral could be canceled.

Two days later, I walked into his room. It was February 22, 2015. He was asleep but woke up when the nurse and I walked in, and he immediately gave us a big gummy smile. I was smitten. So were the NICU nurses. He’d been there 100 days, and he’d been their favorite for at least 99 of them. Before we left the next day, they paraded him around in a stroller that he was slightly too small for. He smiled at every nurse who fawned over him saying their goodbyes. The night nurses even insisted that I sleep in an empty adjacent room because they were going to be having a goodbye party in his room. I walked out of the hospital with him the next day with a car full of stuff and absolutely no clue what I was doing or how long I’d be doing it.

I adopted Jack in April 2016. I often think about how many times I could have changed my mind. No one would have faulted me. I was in no place to be raising a human alone, let alone one with very complex needs. It’s been nine years since I locked eyes with the baby boy who changed my life forever. Nine years of navigating difficult diagnoses and changes in medical treatments. Nine years of dealing with deep loss and trauma. Nine years of wondering if I am actually doing it all wrong and should start saving for the therapy he’s going to inevitably need because of me. Nine years of grace given to each other time and time again. I’m thankful every day for the referral. The phone call. The sticky note. The nurses. The story that was written for us despite my limitations and mistakes. Grateful doesn’t begin to cover it. I cherish every second I’ve had with this boy, all the best and the worst days.

While Jack’s chronic health issues will always be a part of his life, he has modeled what it means to overcome obstacles day after day. He loves to play sports, especially golf and track. He enjoys school and works hard to keep his grades up. And he loves to travel! His current goal is to visit all 50 states before his kidney transplant. He will have 20 states under his belt by the end of the year! Watching him thrive is an honor and one of my greatest joys. I can’t wait to see what his future holds. ♦

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# REBECCA RAY

BY HERLIFE STAFF

Rebecca Ray, director of community relations and development for Family Resource Center, recently sat down with HERLIFE Magazine to discuss her family, involvement in the community and dreams for the future.

**HLM: What do you love most about where you and your family live?**

**RR:** I was born in Los Angeles and lived there until about the age of 11. From there, I grew up in Reno, Nevada. I've lived in Stockton for 22 years now. Truly, there are so many caring people in our city; it's not just a soundbite. There are people here who'll get in the trenches to make a difference. Plus, I've made life-long friends here that I consider an extension of my family.

**HLM: How is your heart inspired to serve the community?**

**RR:** Through my role at Family Resource Center, I get to share the power of what childcare can do for moms, helping to lift their families up by sharing their stories and testimonials; it's beautiful to be able to do that and to help others. I participate in Boy Scout endeavors with my kiddo that help our community, and I serve on the School Site Council at my son's school.

**HLM: What sparks joy for you?**

**RR:** My husband, our kids and our five-year old granddaughter are my heart! I love any time I get to spend time with my extended family, too. I'm blessed to have such a loving family.

**HLM: What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

**RR:** I graduated from University of the Pacific as a non-traditional student in 2009. I juggled being a working parent on top of the course work, but I knew that if I kept persevering it would make for a better life for me and my family. I'm pretty proud of myself for that!

**HLM: What's your free time passion?**

**RR:** I really enjoy going to see the shows at the Stockton Civic Theatre; our local talent is soooo good! I also enjoy reading and crocheting; I'm working on blanket #2.

**HLM: Top three bucket list goals?**

**RR:** I'd love to be on *Wheel of Fortune*. I'm a Wheel Watcher, as geeky as that sounds, so being able to spin the Wheel, solve puzzles and win big would be right up my alley. I need to audition and get this checked off; when I retire, I'd like to volunteer at the library; I'd love to go see a Broadway show in New York City.

**HLM: Can you describe a key event that had an impact on your life?**

**RR:** I'm adopted and about five years ago I was able to meet and connect with my biological family. Being vulnerable enough to go through that experience, not knowing how it would turn out, taught me so much. As it turns out, I have a loving, surfer-skateboarder for a dad, aka Pops!

**HLM: Do you have a favorite quote?**

**RR:** "You are unrepeatable. There is a magic about you that is all your own." -D.M. Dellinger. True for all of us!

**HLM: What are you currently reading?**

**RR:** My oldest son, Sam, recommended a book to me called *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*, by Rick Rubin. It's zen-like (listening to the audiobook), and it's reminding me that no matter the craft, we're all artists in our own right. Everything we contribute to is art.

**HLM: Favorite food or dessert?**

**RR:** My family's Iacovino sauce, a spaghetti sauce that my aunts and uncles now make for our get-togethers that was passed down from my Granddad Iacovino, and from his family (and so on and so on). It's just the best! ♦



# Regina Anfield

RN, BSN

Regina Anfield, RN, BSN, is the recipient of the 2023 Alpha Phi Chapter, Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. Nurse of Distinction Award. She was proudly nominated by Hospice of San Joaquin. Regina is an exceptional individual who displays an incredible level of care and compassion towards terminally ill children and their families. It is truly inspiring to witness her ability to handle such challenging situations with ease. Recently, our Joint Commission surveyor marveled at Regina's care of a terminally ill child, stating she wished she could video her for educational purposes. Dedicated to the nursing profession for many years, Regina began her career in 1976 as a Licensed Vocational Nurse. She later obtained her ADN in 1984 from San Joaquin Delta College. In 2014 she completed her BSN degree from California State University, Stanislaus. Regina's commitment to continuous learning and personal growth is evident, as her extensive experience and vast knowledge make her an invaluable asset to her profession.

Hospice of San Joaquin was fortunate to gain Regina as a Pediatric Hospice Nurse when the hospital she was working at closed their pediatric unit. Her plan was to work a few more years and retire in 2018. Yet, her plans were short lived when Covid hit, and Regina knew she was needed. She came back as per diem pediatric RNCM to care for our most fragile and vulnerable population.

Regina has a manner of professionalism and dedication to her nursing oath that shines through her beautiful, confident smile. She provides quality care and is a patient advocate, taking care of a fragile population with integrity. Regina has a personality that draws people to her. She is kind, funny, empathetic, humble, and supportive. She is the type of Registered Nurse that shares her knowledge with others and is not afraid to ask if she doesn't have an answer. As a pediatric hospice RN - she knows it is a role that many nurses are apprehensive to take. With grace and love she manages the task of caring for terminally ill children and their family members. ☪



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The Medication Assisted Treatment Program described is supported by Grant Number H79T1084141 from SAMHSA.





# ONE-EIGHTY FASHION SHOW

With beautiful clothing from Prêt, a specialty clothing boutique in Lodi, the One-Eighty Fashion Show was enjoyed by all guests. The April 6 luncheon at their Lockeford Street facility raised funds to support counseling scholarships, the Intensive Outpatient Program and mental health trainings. For information about the One-Eighty programs and services, visit [180lodi.org](http://180lodi.org). ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN







BY MARY RAFFETTO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAYRE PHOTOGRAPHY

# GINA RATTO'S FASHION SAFARI

## *A Whole New Adventure*

*Have you ever met someone and felt like you'd been friends forever? Gina Strawn Ratto is one of those people. Her genuine warmth and friendly demeanor permeate Fashion Safari, the store she bought and remodeled two years ago on School Street in Lodi, California. Throughout the shop, Gina's keen sense of design is evident, from the broad selection of inventory to her own OOTD, as she calls her Outfit of The Day. Wearing a Chanel-style jacket and pearls one day, she is just as likely to don fashionable plaid flannel the next, depending on her mood.*

**D**uring the remodeling process Gina revamped the layout, adding dressing rooms, all-new flooring and a variety of exciting new merchandise. "When I select what will be sold here, I focus on quality, color and variety," she stated. It doesn't hurt that her prices are also very reasonable. One woman peruses the sale rack and comes away with an adorable ivory top. Marked down several times, the garment is not only versatile, but also now downright irresistible at just \$8.

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Gina is always mindful of what might appeal to her customers. Sandals, accessories, jewelry and gifts all play a big part in meeting their needs. "I always carry vacation clothes for both cold and warm climates. I want to make sure that wherever you're going, I've got something fantastic for you to wear," she said. And there's her Curvy Girls section. "I'm steadily adding to it and my customers who know about it just love it."

With Mother's Day coming up, Gina has found that gift certificates can be the best choice of all because they provide the recipient with a fun shopping experience in addition to whatever items they select. Perfectly situated on one of Lodi's prime restaurant and shopping streets, Fashion Safari has become a bit of a tradition for friends who want to meet for a nice meal and some great shopping.

Gina says her absolute favorite thing about the store is "meeting all the people, helping them work with colors that suit them best, and making sure the clothes look really good on them." She is also proud to feature the handmade creations of talented locals, a section that reflects the changing seasons and their flights of inspiration.

### LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Three popular events that locals and tourists enjoy throughout the year are the Lodi Street Faire, the Farmers Market and the Wine



Stroll. Gina looks forward to these occasions, taking special care as she prepares for the extra visitors. "The people who come in are so nice, and it's just such a pleasure getting to know them," she said with enthusiasm.

A true people person to the core, Gina is one of the managers at Garlic Brothers Restaurant in Stockton, where she thrives on the positive interactions as well as "the best sunsets in town." Her heart for others is also manifested in the donations she makes through Fashion Safari to Helping One Woman and Hospice of Lodi. "They are wonderful organizations," she affirmed with humble sincerity.

Gina is the director for the Diocese of Stockton Catholic Youth Organization, or CYO. She oversees 12 parishes for cross-country running, girls' basketball, boys' basketball and girls' volleyball. She became involved with CYO in 2011 and was appointed director five years ago.

Part of what fuels her, Gina related, is practicing a balanced life. Outside of work, the things that make her happiest are time with her son, AJ, her family, dogs, gardening, cooking, sports and watching scary movies. She feels truly blessed and appreciates all that is good in life. With an outlook of gratitude, she shares her motto with others, saying, "Life is short. Go with the flow and concentrate on the good stuff!" ♦

Visit Fashion Safari at 123 S. School Street, Lodi, California, call (209) 263-7959 or go to @fashion\_safarilodi to see newest additions.

# Baby ZETA

KIDS SHINING BRIGHTLY



BY HERLIFE STAFF | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BABY ZETA

HERLIFE Magazine sat down with members of Baby Zeta to discuss their organization and community involvement.

**B**aby Zeta, or BZ, as it is casually known, is a philanthropic sorority composed of high school girls who are dedicated to serving San Joaquin County. While all the current members go to Lincoln High, any high school girl, freshmen through seniors, living in San Joaquin County can join.

The members participate in many service projects in the San Joaquin area. They have worked with, to name a few, the County Office of Probation for National Night Out, Stockton Shelter for the Homeless, Science Olympiad, John McCandless School, Kids Night at Stockton Raceway, and Trunk or Treat with Lovotti, Inc. They have also volunteered to set up for the ACS annual Moonlight Gala, BXSJ Scholarship Crab Feed, and recently organized a successful pasta feed that will fund several scholarships for senior girls and provide sponsorship for a YMCA youth sports team. They volunteer at St. Mary's Dining Room, where they serve dinner every Tuesday and Thursday, along with the Valentine's Day arts and crafts project at St. Mary's Family Shelter. The money raised goes into a scholarship fund for high school senior females that have committed their time to serve the community and need college funding assistance.

Participating in BZ has a positive impact on the members. When asked how the opportunity to serve has affected them, several members responded.

"I have adapted a whole different perspective from seeing people from all walks of life. I have put myself in environments that I'm not used to and have allowed myself to adapt and learn for future

experiences," shared Payton.

Shelby said, "I have realized how much one person can impact our community. It makes me enjoy helping others and inspires me to reach out to those in need."

"BZ has opened my mind to the real world," said member Claire. "Working with a variety of groups and volunteering in different areas of the community has led me to be educated and see the world from multiple views."

Members of this philanthropic organization experience giving back to their community and help people in need. While serving and being a member, BZs learn interaction skills, teamwork, responsibility and leadership. BZ gives members the opportunity, through their volunteerism, to interact with others who have experienced more life than they have, and they have demonstrated how they continue to push through. Along with this, many friendships and connections are made inside the club as well as outside with those they interact with and meet along the way.

"My favorite part of BZ is when I volunteer at St. Mary's Dining Room," Payton concluded. "Everyone has a smile on their face. Whether the smile is from the food or for me, I take it to heart. Oftentimes, they will also say 'You are loved,' 'Jesus loves you,' 'God bless you,' or even a simple 'Thank you.' These comments make my day. Ultimately, through the BZ experience, I have learned the value of serving others in my community." ♦







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# THE UNICORN SOCIETY



*Where Girls Sparkle and Shine*

BY HERLIFE STAFF

*“Kindness is a sign of a person who has done a lot of personal work and has come to a great self-understanding and wisdom. Choose to be kind over being right and you’ll be right every time, because kindness is a sign of strength.” ~Unknown*

**W**ho can doubt the truth of this quote? It’s on the Facebook page of the Random Acts of Kindness Society, the sister organization of The Unicorn Society, started with nine members in 2016 by Monica Rabara and her co-founder, Christina Cortez.

“The initial idea of doing something inclusive came to my

co-founder, Christina Cortez, and me at an inclusion conference at UOP,” said Monica. “At the time, I was a special day class teacher and Christina was working toward her teaching credential. With her daughter, Tessa, who has Down syndrome, in mind, we wanted to come up with something fun that could include her and her younger sister, Chloe.”



The duo chose to join a highly recognized organization for girls, with the intention of having girls with special needs and having the ability to partner with surrounding sister groups to serve as mentors. “We quickly realized that it was more difficult to facilitate than we anticipated and we wanted more opportunities for our girls. Within our own circle of friends and family, we knew that we had some amazing mentors that would fit nicely into what we were trying to accomplish,” she described.

Nine members quickly grew to 28 members by 2019. “By this time, we knew that we wanted to branch out and really give our girls more opportunities to participate within the community and the ability to shine in their own ways,” Monica remembered. “In fall 2019, we decided that it was time to do our own thing and our primary focus was on our new club, The Unicorn Society. In addition to The Unicorn Society, we also started our non-profit, Random Acts of Kindness Society, or RAKS.”

RAKS is a group of amazing special educators and their fabulous friends who raise money to fund activities that the Unicorn Society participates in, such as monthly meetings, an adapted version of *The Nutcracker*, and a Daddy-Daughter Dance, which will be held at the end of May. “RAKS also has the flexibility to fund other special projects within our community, as well as giving our girls the opportunity in giving back,” Monica related. “Most recently, our girls assembled Birthday Boxes that were given to children who are in transitional housing or in foster care. To date we have 34 girls between the ages of 5 and 21 who participate in The Unicorn Society and we continue to grow!”

The Unicorn Society’s mission is to provide girls with special needs opportunities to participate without barriers. “We pride ourselves in creating a social club in a judgment-free, positive environment where ALL girls can thrive. We believe that the mentorship bonds our girls have with their mentors are exceptional and they learn so much from each other.

“Every girl in our club is capable, celebrated, accepted, valued and has the ability to positively impact our community,” Monica continued. “We just need to provide them the opportunities to do so. We are always looking for ways to include our girls in community



activities and events, and we have had an incredible amount of support from our community, families and local businesses who have partnered with us.

As some of the Unicorns get older, the founders are focusing on the future of Unicorns and how they can continue to provide meaningful opportunities for the older girls. “We are looking into purchasing a drink cart to start a micro business with which our young ladies with special needs and their mentors can work on communication, vocational skills and job training skills. To get our drink cart up and rolling, we have projected a \$45,000 startup that includes the drink cart, trailer and supplies. This cart would be

available for rent for small parties, festivals, school events and other community activities,” she said.

The RAKS March crab feed, its most successful yet, funded most of the organization’s expenses for 2024. “We are always open to sponsorships and donations for activities for our girls to participate in. Our website, [raksofstockton.com](http://raksofstockton.com), has a donation link that goes directly to The Unicorn Society account, and 100 percent of a donor’s contribution goes directly to Random Acts of Kindness Society,” Monica concluded.

If you would like more information or are interested in RAKS and the Unicorns, please visit [raksofstockton.com](http://raksofstockton.com). ♦



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# COME TO THE CABARET

Talk about dinner and a show! The Stockton Civic Theatre's Black and Gold Gala was an evening full of fun and entertainment, featuring performances by the cast of their upcoming show, *Cabaret*. Throughout the evening guests enjoyed previews of musical numbers for upcoming shows. It was a glorious evening celebrating the arts. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN RIPKEN



# ZINC HOUSE FARM

FAMILY ROOTS AND  
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURIE EAGER



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*If you are looking for a delightful way to spend a day in the country, take a drive on Highway 120 to Escalon and visit Zinc House Farm. I recently had the pleasure of meeting co-owner Carol Franzia, who, along with her three brothers, is creating a world-class agritourism destination.*



**W**e meandered together through the certified organic farm, watching the early beginnings of a new season of produce. The lush fields support a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers that are sold at the farm stand. We stopped to admire the 30 lively hens that keep the farm stand stocked with fresh eggs. We chatted with creative master-mind gardener, Brandon Pruett, who shared some of the ways he creates an organic, balanced eco-system on the farm.

Our next stop was the shop. The shelves inside the beautifully converted old building are chock full of local products including jams, honey, olive oils, soaps and artisan-produced crafts. Sunlight streams through the windows, illuminating the beams strewn with dried flowers. Inviting tables beckon the visitor to sit and perhaps

enjoy a glass of wine.

Carol explained how the farm has evolved over the years from a humble family farm into a dynamic, innovative space that reflects their values of sustainability and respect for the environment. For the “fearless foursome” of siblings, the farm fosters a deep connection to the

earth and agriculture. The four have a shared dream of contributing and giving back to the local community where their family has lived for over a century.

The Ferrea siblings offer authentic experiences to all visitors, sharing their knowledge of San Joaquin Valley agriculture and their enthusiasm for living a healthy, natural lifestyle. The name Zinc House Farm comes from a small, prefabricated house that arrived from New York in 1850 and served as a hotel, a school and a stopping





place for miners on the road between the Port of Stockton and the gold-rich foothills. Carol and her brothers love to share the history of this special place and entertaining stories about all that has happened on this property throughout the years. It doesn't take long to feel connected, and to know that your first visit will not be your last. Visitors can experience guided tours, hands-on workshops and special Zinc House Kids programs in which children can explore the wonders of nature.

In addition to the farm, Zinc House is home to Clark Ferrea Winery, named after Carol's two grandmothers. Carol is a fourth-generation winemaker and produces fine wines that are an expression of the land that she loves. Visitors to Clark Ferrea Winery will experience a variety of wines that reflect the unique characteristics of the area. Wine tasting is available Friday through Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. Currently under construction and set to open in 2024 are a gorgeous, state-of-the-art wine lab, tasting room and outdoor pavilion that will be available to host events. Come for some produce and leave as a friend. ♦

For more information, including videos and fabulous recipes, check out [zinhousefarm.com](http://zinhousefarm.com) and [clarkferrea.com](http://clarkferrea.com).



Laurie Eager is the author and illustrator of *In Papa's Garden*. A seeker of beauty every day, she loves adventure travel, all things French and dark chocolate. She lives in Stockton with her husband, Steve, and can be found most mornings enjoying a cup of coffee and the first rays of sunshine in their abundant vegetable garden.





# EASY ONE-PAN CAPRESE CHICKEN

RECIPE BY LAUREN LANE | LAUREN-LANE.COM



## INGREDIENTS

- 4 large chicken breasts or 6 thighs
- 2 tablespoons of Italian seasoning or a combination of dried basil and oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (Cervasi recommended)
- 2–3 cups fresh cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 4 slices fresh mozzarella cheese
- Optional: torn basil and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano for garnish

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Sprinkle chicken on both sides with Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Heat a large cast-iron skillet or heavy-bottomed skillet and add olive oil. When the pan is hot, add chicken and let sear for a few minutes on each side. Don't touch or move the chicken around so that you let it develop the nice browned chicken bits. Once one side is brown, turn the chicken over and add tomatoes, garlic and balsamic around the chicken. Place in oven and bake for 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the chicken. You can use a meat thermometer to check doneness. After chicken is cooked through, add a piece of mozzarella cheese to each chicken breast. Set oven to broil and place the skillet on the top rack. Broil for a few minutes, or until cheese is melted and a little bit browned. Watch it; it can go from browned to burned in a hurry. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with fresh basil, parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil if desired. ♦

## TIPS

**1:** This dish is excellent served on a bed of arugula drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper. It's also fantastic over a pile of pasta drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper.

**2:** A meat thermometer is your best friend in the kitchen and the only way to be sure your meat is cooked perfectly every time. For chicken, white meat is at its juiciest at around 150°F, and dark meat at 165°F+.



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# OVERCOMING CHALLENGES



Before

## FROM GRIEF TO A BEAUTIFULLY RENOVATED PROPERTY

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**STORY BY KATHLEEN JENNISON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY TODD A. PETERSON  
DESIGN BY KATHLEEN JENNISON**

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*After the recent loss of her husband, Kathleen Jennison, owner of KTJ Design Co., found it difficult to continue living in her large house and maintaining the expansive yard. The weight of memories was crushing her, and she knew something needed to change. In an effort to start fresh and overcome her grief, Kathleen made the decision to sell her beloved home, all the contents, and purchase a smaller, more manageable property.*



After months of searching, she found the perfect home in the Caldwell Village area of Stockton, California, a quaint two-bedroom, one-bath house built in 1935. With her eye for design and passion for renovation, Kathleen saw this as an opportunity to turn her new house into a beautifully updated and personalized home. Little did she know this project would also serve as a way for her to heal and find joy in the midst of grief. The following is the story of Kathleen's journey from grief to a beautifully renovated property. So, let's take a closer look at the challenges she faced and how she overcame them in order to create her dream home.

### TRANSFORMING THE INTERIOR: FROM GUTTING TO GORGEOUS

Upon purchasing her home, she realized it needed a lot of work. Years of neglect as a rental property had taken their toll on the once-charming home. The house needed new plumbing, electrical, insulation and updated HVAC systems. The kitchen and bathroom were outdated and worn out, and the smell of pet excrement was overpowering. Despite these challenges, Kathleen saw potential in the home and knew she could transform it into a beautiful space.

Kathleen's grief over her difficult past made it hard for her to even step foot in the house until July, two months after purchasing it. But she soon realized that in order to tackle her grief, she needed to dive into the project of renovating her new home.

The first step in the renovation process was to remove all the overgrown and dead vegetation in both the front and backyard, as well as a rickety shed, giant redwood tree and two dying trees. This was followed by gutting the old kitchen and bathroom. She then turned her attention to updating the mechanical systems and getting rid of any unpleasant smells to make her home a healthy and comfortable living space. This process took three months as she worked with trusted tradesmen to remove and replace old plumbing, electrical, insulation and HVAC systems.

### DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: CREATING A TIMELESS AND FUNCTIONAL SPACE

With the mechanical taken care of, Kathleen focused on designing her dream home while keeping the original time period and architecture in mind. The first thing on her list was restoring the damaged original hardwood flooring. It was sanded and stained white to give it a fresh look while still maintaining the character of the home. Insulation was added to all the walls, and new sheet rock was installed, followed by an imperfect smooth plaster finish for a modern touch. Wallpaper in various patterns was used throughout the house to add texture and depth.

The kitchen design included two-tone cabinets painted in Sherwin Williams SW6215 Rocky River and white oak stained Cardamom. These were paired with white

marble countertops and backsplashes from Evolve, patterned classic star-and-cross Mediterranean-style tiles in white matte and white gloss from Tile Bar. Only modern appliances would be acceptable, so a collection of Bosch appliances was selected. The layout of the kitchen was updated by moving the oven and microwave and turning the dining area into a home office.



### REVITALIZING THE DINING ROOM, FIREPLACE AND BATHROOM: FROM FLORAL PATTERNS TO PROVOCATIVE WALLPAPER

The dining room received a complete makeover. The walls were adorned with a floral-patterned wallpaper that extended into the coved ceiling, which was then framed out and painted in Sherwin Williams SW 6209 Ripe Olive. A stunning chandelier was installed above a round dining table, and the windows were dressed in coordinating linen Roman shades.





## ADDING PERSONAL TOUCHES: FROM HEIRLOOM PIECES TO MODERN ACCENTS

Throughout the renovation process, Kathleen made sure to add her personal touch in every corner of the house. She used heirloom pieces inherited from her mother or collected over the years. This was coupled with new modern furniture from her store and accents carefully chosen to bring life into the space.

But the work didn't stop there. Kathleen also made sure to give attention to the exterior of her home. The front and backyard were landscaped with low-maintenance plants, fresh concrete patios and walkways, a wood arbor, gazebo and string lights. These outdoor spaces are now perfect for hosting all the parties Kathleen had dreamed of when purchasing her new home.

The interior walls were painted white, but all the doors and trim were painted Sherwin Williams Ripe Olive. This contrast brings life to the small space. The original front door was also refurbished by stripping the white paint and staining it to its natural wood color, while keeping the charming accents intact. The exterior red brick was preserved with a protective coating and the wood trim was painted in Ripe Olive as well.

The final touch on the outside of the house was updating the garage door. The old, ugly white one was faux painted to look like wood to match the front door, giving it a more authentic and charming feel.

## FROM HEARTBREAK TO HAPPINESS: TURNING A NEGLECTED PROPERTY INTO A DREAM HOME

The end result of Kathleen's renovation was nothing short of amazing. The previously old and neglected rental property had been transformed into a beautiful, modern home that still maintains its original charm. Every corner of the house now has Kathleen's personal touch, from heirloom pieces to modern accents carefully chosen to create a cohesive and unique design.

Kathleen's journey of renovating her home not only provided a distraction from her difficult loss, but also allowed her to create a space that truly reflects who she is. It was a therapeutic process that helped Kathleen heal and move forward in life. And now, she wakes up every day grateful for the opportunity to own and transform her dream home. Even though the grief remains and proves overwhelming at times, the experience has not only given her a beautiful living space, but also a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. It demonstrates that even in the face of challenges and difficult pasts, with hard work and determination, one can create their own little piece of paradise. ♦



The fireplace also underwent a major transformation. A mantel cap fireplace hood was built and plastered to tie into the coved ceilings, while the rock around the fireplace was preserved and a new marble hearth added.

The bathroom was another major project, as it was poorly laid out and felt cramped. A hall linen closet was sacrificed to give the bathroom more room, and the toilet and shower were flipped. Classic marble tiles clad the walls, flooring and countertops, and a laminate vanity and linen cabinet were installed. To add a touch of whimsy, provocative black-and-white wallpaper with faces was applied to the walls. A large lighted mirror finished the room nicely. A fancy WASHLET® toilet from Toto was a big splurge, with special thanks to PBK Showroom.



*Before becoming an interior designer, Kathleen Jennison worked as certified public accountant for a national firm. A near-fatal car accident changed her career path and life forever. She suffered serious brain injuries, and her doctors suggested she take art classes to help with her rehabilitation. With her newfound love for design, she studied at the Art Institute in Sacramento, obtaining her bachelor's degree in interior design. She is a member of the American Society of Interior Designers and has served as the director of marketing for the National Association of Remodelers for the Greater Sacramento area. In 2009, she started KTJ Design Company.*

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# HARRIET CHALMERS ADAMS

## ADVENTURER



Harriet's professional portrait for the Woman's Club



Harriet in Mongolia in 1913

BY PHILLIP MERLO  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAN JOAQUIN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

San Joaquin County is known for its trailblazers, innovators, organizers and pioneers. Perhaps no local trailblazer has had as much an influence on the national stage as Harriet Chalmers Adams, renowned journalist, traveler, explorer and Stocktonian. As America's first nationally known female travel writer, Harriet broke gender barriers and educated millions of Americans about the cultures and geographies of the world.

Harriet was born in 1875 in Stockton to Alexander Chalmers and Frances Wilkens. Her father was a well-known dry goods salesman who carried the most up-to-date travel gear in his store, and her family frequently took long trips into the Sierra Nevada on horseback. Harriet is known to have particularly remembered a year-long trip from Oregon to Mexico along the Pacific

Crest that she took when she was 14.

After marrying Franklin Pierce Adams in 1899, Harriet began her career as a professional traveler and travel writer. In the days before the internet, the television and the airplane, travel journalists were the only means of learning about the rest of the world, and Harriet took the profession by storm. After her first trip through South America, which included circumnavigation of the continent and traveling on horseback along the length of the Andes, the *New York Times* wrote a full-length feature about her work.

For the next ten years, Harriet took many trips to places around the world, including a two-year adventure from Siberia to Sumatra along the east coast of Asia in 1913 and 1914. By WWI, she was hired as a correspondent for *Harper's Magazine*. According to many



Harriet with a llama

sources, she was the only female journalist allowed to visit the trenches of the allies. Her work was published and reprinted by dozens, if not hundreds, of newspapers across the country. Throughout her career, she maintained a robust lecture circuit, speaking in cities such as New York, Washington,



Panama Travel Talk at the Yo Semite To night



Harriet in The Evening Mail

D.C., San Francisco, Chicago and Stockton to audiences that included business elites, elected officials and a wide variety of professional associations and clubs. In Stockton, she was particularly famous for a lecture given in 1915 titled "The Fringe of Asia," on her travels along the Asian coast. The lecture was given to the

Philomathean Club and then later to at least a dozen business organizations across San Joaquin County.

Harriet's travels and writing continued into the 1920s, where she achieved some of her most important work. In 1925, frustrated from her experience with professional discrimination, Harriet helped found the Society of Woman Geographers with Mary Hastings Bradley, Blair Niles,

Gertrude Shelby, Gertrude Emerson Sen and Marguerite Harrison. Despite being a fellow of the prestigious Royal Geographic Society of Great Britain, she was forbidden from joining the well-known Explorer's Club, which was male only and remained so until 1981. The well-known National Geographic Society didn't hire a woman on staff until 1951.

At the time, Harriet was quoted as saying, "The men, you know, have had their hide-bound exclusive little explorers' and adventurers' clubs for years and years, but they have always been so afraid that some woman might penetrate their sanctums of discussion...We decided that the best thing to do would be to organize our own club."

Harriet continued her travels until the end of her life, passing away in Nice, France, in 1937 at 61. Newspapers across the country mourned her passing. Her legacy included the opening of the American travel writing field to women, educating millions concerning the geography and cultures of much of the rest of the world, and taking thousands of photos that document the world in the early 20th

Harriet Chalmers Adams Heads National Society, Woman Geographers



Harriet Chalmers Adams heads National Society

century. In their tribute, the *Stockton Record* noted that "no daughter of Stockton enjoyed a more colorful, interesting or productive career." One can find her archival photo collections, scrapbooks and typewriter at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum, Micke Grove Park, Lodi. To learn more about Harriet's life, one can also purchase the book *Harriet Chalmers Adams: Adventurer and Explorer* by local historian Durlynn Anema. ♦

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# Freckles

## A CHEEKY LIZARD

BY HERLIFE STAFF  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
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**Q: What's your full name?**

**A:** Freckles Petchmo Osterlie

**Q: Tell us about yourself.**

**A:** I am a pretty mellow and chill kind of dude, but I do think quite highly of myself and that seems to make people laugh.

**Q: What's your favorite vacation spot?**

**A:** I do not get out of the house very much, so my favorite vacation spot is the big branch in my terrarium. It is right under my UV light, so it feels nice and tropical. However, when I do get to get out of the house and go on a car ride, I love to box surf! This is where I run and slide around in my travel box.

**Q: Your best play spot?**

**A:** My favorite place to roam or walk is on "my" keyboard. My human will press the keys and I like to pretend I am playing it.

**Q: Are you ever a naughty reptile?**

**A:** My naughtiest deed is when I am hanging out with my human, I will be my normal mellow self, and just chill on her shoulder or keyboard. When she least expects it, I will make a run for it and jump as far as I can! One time I almost convinced her I was trying to escape.

**Q: What's your reptilian obsession?**

**A:** I am obsessed with my two favorite hats. The first one was made for me by my friend Aubrey when I was just a little lizard. The other is a beanie my friend Emilee crocheted for me.

**Q: What's your favorite treat?**

**A:** This might be gross to you, but my absolute favorite treats are wax worms! They look like little grub things and are positively delicious.

**Q: What's your guilty pleasure?**

**A:** One of the best guilty pleasures is sitting on the heads or backs of my human friends, in just the right spot. Then I use my claws to give them just a little scratch. I will not move and because I am in the perfect spot, they just cannot seem to reach me. It's quite funny.

**Q: Where do you go to get pampered?**

**A:** Being the lizard that I am, I don't typically like a lot of pampering; however, I do love my toe baths. I get to soak my toes in warm water, and my owner, Emmalene, helps me remove any shedding left behind. It's like a lizard pedicure.

**Q: Where were you adopted from?**

**A:** I was adopted from Petco in Lodi.

**Q: What else should we know about you?**

**A:** Something extra special about me is that hidden in the middle of my tail are three freckles (spots) that are in the shape of a smiley face. That is how I got my name.

**Q: Who is your human parent?**

**A:** Emmalene Osterlie ♦



# Poncha

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**MAY 18**

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2453 Grand Canal Boulevard, Suite 5, Stockton  
Info: communitycenterfortheblind.org

**MAY 9**

**Stockton Garden Club Plant Sale**

1661 W Longview Ave., Stockton  
Info: contactstocktongardenclub@gmail.com

**MAY 18**

**Children and Youth Day**

Pixie Woods at Louis Park, Stockton  
Info: frcsj.org

**MAY 4**

**Paddlefest at Lodi Lake Beach**

1101 W Turner Rd., Lodi  
Info: lodiboathouse.com

**MAY 10**

**SJCHCC Golf Tournament**

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Info: info@sjchispanicchamber.com

**MAY 17-19**

**Stockton Flavor Fest**

Weber Point, Stockton  
Info: stocktonflavorfest.com

**MAY 4**

**Spaghetti Feed**

Harvest Home Animal Sanctuary, Stockton  
Info: info@harvesthomesanctuary.org

**MAY 11**

**San Joaquin Ube x Matcha Fest**

630 E Weber Ave, Stockton  
Info: kcommunityhub.org

**MAY 17-19**

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Info: goldenstatepinball.org

**MAY 4**

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Info: hospicesj.org

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**Mother's Day**  
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