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# NORTH STATE Parent

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### ON THE COVER

**Mary Charlotte Kendrick**, 14, as Miss Trunchbull; **Raema Symons**, 11, as Matilda; and **Scott Brown**, 13, as Mr. Wormwood, revel in their roles in the upcoming Redding School of the Arts Middle School production of "Matilda Jr." See page 12 for performance dates and ticket information.

Cover Photography: **Betsey Walton** says her work is all about relationships: "When the people, their expressions and their joy all come together in an image, I know why I am a photographer. There is something magical about catching a glimpse of the best in someone." Take a look at Betsey's magic at [bwaltonphotography.com](http://bwaltonphotography.com)

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## DEAR READERS

As we embark on a new year here at North State Parent magazine, we are grateful for the beautiful community spirit we have seen throughout 2025. One of the special aspects of our work is learning about exceptional community-minded people living in and around the North State region.

Danny Muñoz is one of those exceptional people and someone everyone should get to meet! His enthusiasm and commitment for his sweet community of Gerber (Tehama County) in offering something meaningful for children is explained further in our monthly Be The Change column, page 6. It could melt your heart.

A reminder to local music teachers: We will be happy to list your complimentary music teaching info if you teach youth. Reach out to us with your information. Find the music teacher directory link [here](#). We appreciate the special talents of music educators and want to see them flourish! In fact, supporting the arts is top of our priority list and has been since our beginning over 32 years ago. We invite local arts-related organizations to come on board with us and help us promote the arts throughout the North State.

Bring your family and come by the North State Parent booth to say hello on Saturday, Jan. 24 at the annual Snow Goose Festival. It's a great educational day for parents, teachers and students who yearn to discover more about nature and our feathered friends. Exhibits are open Jan. 23-25, 9am-3pm. However, we will only be there Saturday.

*Our very best to you in 2026. We wish you a year filled with peace and joy.*



*Pamela*

Pamela and the North State Parent Magazine Team

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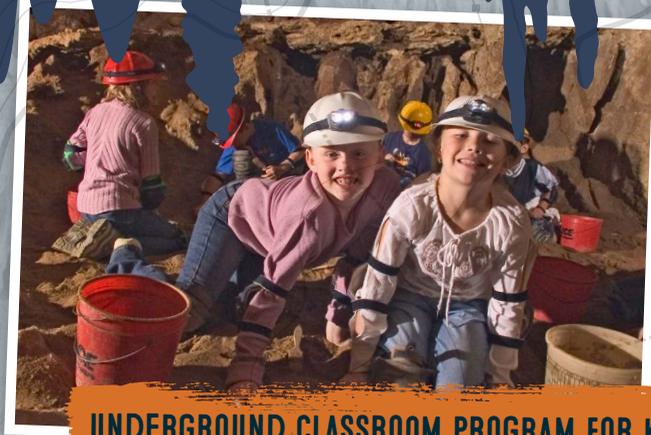


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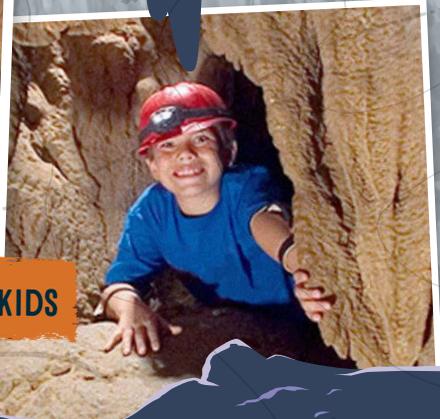
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The mission of our be the change column is to feature community members from the North State who are actively making a difference in community life. If you would like to nominate someone who is making a difference, please write to [pn@northstateparent.com](mailto:pn@northstateparent.com).

## be the change

By Jenna Christophersen

# Danny Muñoz

“There’s a little monkey,” says Danny Muñoz, looking into the eager little faces at Gerber Elementary School. “He’s a dreamer. He wants to be a DJ, but he is very nervous because he comes from a small town. He doesn’t think he can do it, but then...”

A few minutes later, Danny has recruited several of those little faces, beaming with excitement, to the stage to sing and dance, and nothing could make Danny happier.

### AN ENDURING HOMETOWN CONNECTION

Every year for Red Ribbon Week, Danny heads north from Orange County to Gerber, his small hometown in the North State, to attend his former elementary school and present his TOMTOD program – “turn on music, turn off drugs.” In 15 action-packed minutes, Danny conveys to Gerber Elementary School students messages of choosing a drug-free lifestyle, embracing the beauty and power of music, pursuing dreams and understanding self-worth.

“If they take anything away from the program,

I want them to know that they matter. You exist and you are very, very important,” Danny says. He knows he has succeeded when teachers come up to him and exclaim, “You know that student who came up onstage today? That child usually doesn’t ever talk or participate!”

### REIGNITING A FAMILY-FRIENDLY FIESTA

Danny grew up in Gerber and maintains a deep connection to the community, where his parents, siblings and nieces and nephews still live. “The day you forget where you come from, that’s the day you forget yourself,” he says. Although his career as an independent artist requires living in a big city, Danny visits what he still considers his true home multiple times a year to give back to the community that raised him.

In addition to TOMTOD, Danny pours his heart and soul into the annual Gerber Children’s Christmas Fiesta. With a different theme each year – from *Grinchmas*, to Disney’s *Frozen*, to this year’s edition honoring the special Mexican tradition of Las Posadas – the Fiesta offers free family fun and a chance to meet Santa. 7▶

Danny Muñoz embodies the idea of giving back and returning to your roots. The children of Gerber look forward to his fiestas every year.  
Photos by Pamela Newman.

Danny undertook coordination of the event in 2012, when he heard the Gerber Children's Christmas Party that had meant so much to him as a child had been canceled. Rallying friends and family to provide a venue, donate toys and decorations and volunteer as event staff, Danny pulled together a last-minute replacement party so that children who could not afford gifts or a visit with Santa at the mall could freely enjoy those experiences.

An hour into the event, they ran out of their 200 gift bags and had to close early. But as he watched children arriving barefoot to receive the gift bags, Danny knew that he would be back every year – “until I'm not around, or until there is no need. And there will always be a need; I was one of those kids in need.”

Since then, Danny has invested significant amounts of time, planning and personal resources throughout the year to make the Fiesta a family tradition to remember. Renamed to honor the Hispanic heritage of most of the committee members, the Fiesta welcomes every child who attends.

**GIVING BACK TODAY WITH KINDNESS**

The driving force for all of Danny's efforts in his North State

community is helping kids feel known, seen and valued. He remembers growing up intimidated by bullies who teased him for his accent and who shamed him for coming from such a small town. “I remember that kid,” says Danny Muñoz, “that kid who was afraid, that kid who was insecure. That kid who, deep down, wanted to devour the world, but he was too afraid. And I know that I'm not the only one who went through that.”

“I grew up trying to give back to my community,” Danny says. “It was a norm instilled by my family. And as I got older, I started realizing there's a lot of work

to be done and I could be that change. I know it sounds very cliché, but yes, we are the change that we want to see in the world.” And Danny doesn't believe in waiting to make it big to start making a big difference. “I hear people say, when I make it big, I'll do this; when I win the lottery, I'll do that. No, we have a lot to give. Not everything is money. Kindness is free and I think more than anything we can all give that.”

**GET INVOLVED**

If you, like Danny, don't want to wait to make a difference, you can help by volunteering at the Christmas Fiesta, donating toys or business services to the

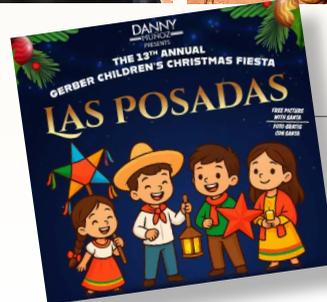
event or by attending Al Son de Mariachi, Fiesta's biggest fundraiser, May 1, 2026, at Rodgers Theater in Corning.

Starring a full mariachi orchestra, folklorico dancing and Danny's own vocal prowess, the concert not only raises funds for the Christmas Fiesta, but offers an impressive and enriching cultural experience.

Before the evening performance, Danny offers local schools an opportunity to attend a shortened matinee performance. “I love giving back to my community,” Danny says. “I'm proud of my heritage, but I'm also proud of what our committee does and that we do it for free for our community. That's the biggest reward.”



Danny Muñoz is a musician, a motivational speaker, a businessman and a philanthropist. Just ask his sister, Laticia; and his nephew, Leonardo.



Join Danny's efforts by going to [dannymunoz.com](http://dannymunoz.com) to learn more, donate or volunteer. ■



Jenna Christophersen is a Chico native who loves her community, living in the North State and writing about remarkable people who build our communities and make them places where families can thrive.

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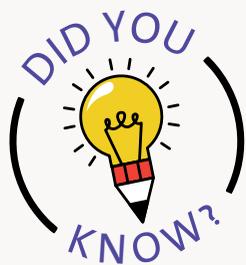
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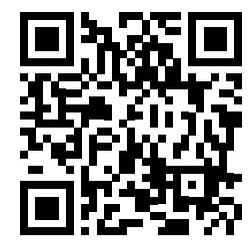


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# How Music Therapy with Disabilities

# Helps Teens Manage Stress and Emotion



Music therapy gives teens and children the tools that can help manage moods, release tension and express emotions

**F**or many teens, music is a lifeline. It sets the tone for their day, helps them process big feelings and provides a sense of identity and belonging. For teens with disabilities, music can be even more powerful. It becomes a form of expression and a therapeutic tool that supports emotional regulation, social connection and self-confidence.

#### **MUSIC THERAPY IS MORE THAN JUST LISTENING**

Music therapy is more than just a good playlist or playing an instrument. It's a structured, evidence-based practice led by certified music therapists. These professionals are trained to use rhythm, melody and movement to achieve specific goals in a therapeutic setting. These goals might include improving emotional regulation, reducing anxiety, building communication skills or helping with sensory processing challenges.

Sessions can look different depending on a teen's needs. Some may involve song-writing or improvisation, while others include drumming circles, singing, lyric analysis or guided relaxation with music. The beauty of music therapy is its flexibility. It meets teens where they are, regardless of ability or diagnosis.

#### **MUSIC HELPS WHEN TEENS CAN'T FIND WORDS**

Adolescence is already a whirlwind of emotions and for teens with disabilities. The ups and downs can be even more intense. Many neurodivergent or medically

complex teens experience difficulty identifying, expressing or verbalizing feelings. Music can help bridge that gap. A teen who struggles to describe feeling overwhelmed might pour that energy into drumming. A teen who can't verbalize sadness might find release through a ballad. Music provides a safe, nonverbal outlet that allows children to express themselves without judgment or pressure.

#### **MUSIC THERAPY REWIRES THE BRAIN**

When teens listen to or make music, multiple regions of the brain light up at once, including those responsible for emotion, memory and movement. For teens with autism, ADHD or other emotional regulation challenges, this multisensory stimulation helps "rewire" neural pathways, strengthening focus and self-regulation skills. Research shows that rhythmic patterns can calm the nervous system, lower stress hormone levels and boost feel-good chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin.

Music therapy gives teens real-world tools they can use every day. It helps them match songs to moods, use rhythm to release tension or make "feelings playlists" to express emotions that are hard to put into words. These small habits build coping skills that make it easier to handle frustration, anxiety or sensory overload. And when therapy happens in a group setting, the benefits go even deeper. Making music together teaches listening, cooperation and creativity while building a sense of connection and belonging. For nonverbal teens, it becomes a safe way to communicate and be understood. In music therapy, the focus is on progress, not performance and that freedom helps teens feel seen and heard.



## Incorporating music therapy principles at home

Even if you don't have access to a certified music therapist, you can still weave music into your teen's day in meaningful ways.

**Create emotion playlists:** Work with your teen to build playlists for different moods – calm, focused, happy or sad. For example, a “study beats” playlist can help during homework time, while a “reset” playlist can be a go-to after stressful days.

**Use rhythm to regulate:** Encourage clapping games, tapping a steady beat on the table or using a small drum or bucket to release tension. Some teens even find walking or bouncing to a beat helps them refocus.

**Encourage journaling to lyrics:** Invite your teen to rewrite the lyrics of a favorite song to express what they're feeling. This can turn into a creative outlet for processing emotions and building self-awareness.

You can also add short “music breaks” between activities, play soothing instrumentals before bedtime or have family jam sessions for fun connection. Small, intentional moments like this turn music into an everyday tool for calm, communication and connection.

These small steps can make a big difference, helping teens build stronger coping skills and feel more in control of their emotions. Music therapy gives teens of all abilities a safe, creative way to process feelings, connect with others and find genuine joy.

It's a reminder that expression doesn't always need words – sometimes a single beat, chord or lyric says it all. And in a world that often focuses on what teens with disabilities can't do, music therapy helps them see and celebrate all the ways they can shine. ■

Shasta County author Jennifer Arnold is the mom of four, two of whom have been diagnosed with multiple special needs. She hopes to raise awareness of many issues that parents of special needs children face on a regular basis.



Playing instruments that emphasize rhythm relieves tension and brings children joy.

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Emmy Kossol, 12, washes out her brush after painting sets for an RSA production.  
Photo provided by Redding School of the Arts

# Redding School of the Arts: Encouraging Creativity & Challenging Experiences

By RSA Freshmen Abigail (Ace) Burks and Abby Rapita

Redding School of the Arts (RSA) is a place where creativity thrives through its robust K-12 music and art programs. Over the years, the school has produced numerous successful shows including last year's productions of "The Wizard of Oz" and "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child." This fall, RSA High School presented the musical "The Addams Family" under the direction of Teshya Russo at the RSA amphitheater. Teshya has taught dance, theater and drama, stage craft and production at RSA for 17 years and also directs the high school musical.

Beyond its stage performances, RSA is known for its welcoming and supportive environment from kindergarten to high school. Students are encouraged to be themselves while exploring a wide range of academic and artistic opportunities, such as dual enrollment at the high school level, a K-8 Mandarin immersion program, coding and robotics and a vast array of art, music and dance course offerings. As a result, students build confidence in their academic and artistic skills while forming strong connections within the school community. RSA connects learning to real-world experiences

This year, RSA's middle school continues its musical tradition with its latest production, "Matilda Jr." Lizzie Stoxen, RSA's middle school musical director, appreciates that theater gives

students a unique opportunity to learn a new perspective and provides them with a wider lens to see the world. "We like to select material that will challenge our students and suit their interests," Stoxen says. "It's important to us to select shows that will provide opportunities to feature as many performers as possible. We also try to choose things that are relevant to the students or the current social climate that they can learn and grow from."

This approach reflects a broader philosophy at RSA, where teachers across disciplines and grade levels work to prepare students for future decisions by connecting learning to real-world experiences, which can also be seen in the cyclical thematic K-8 curriculum.

### STUDENTS BALANCE ACADEMICS WITH REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCE SCHEDULES

Students and teachers consistently demonstrate dedication and enthusiasm for their learning experiences. K-8 dance instructor and choreographer Amberly Steffensen, who has been sharing her love of dance with RSA's students for over 19 years, has witnessed this firsthand.

"When they're first learning the choreography, it can be chaotic and not coordinated and then they progress and rehearse and suddenly it comes together. It's like magic on stage!"

12 ▶

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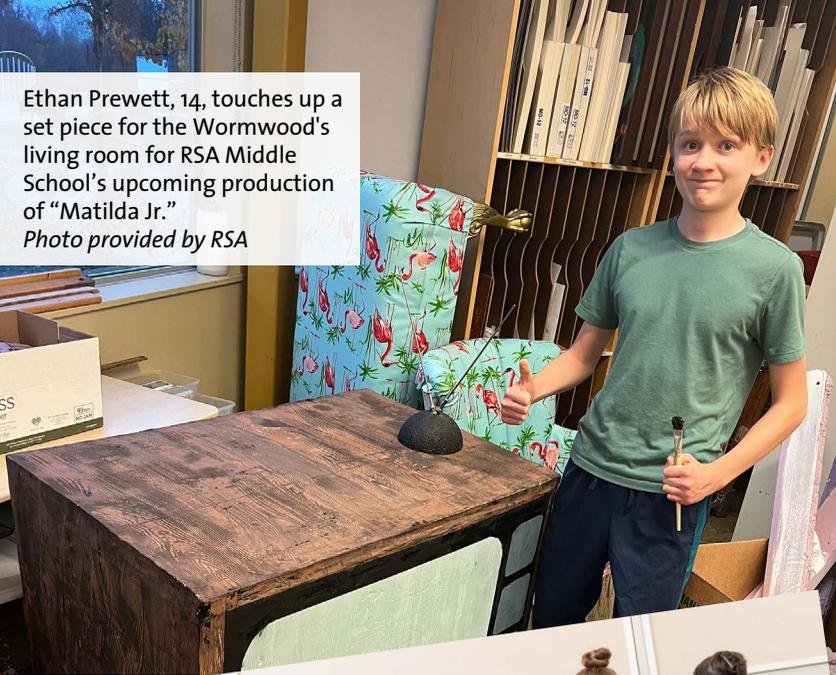
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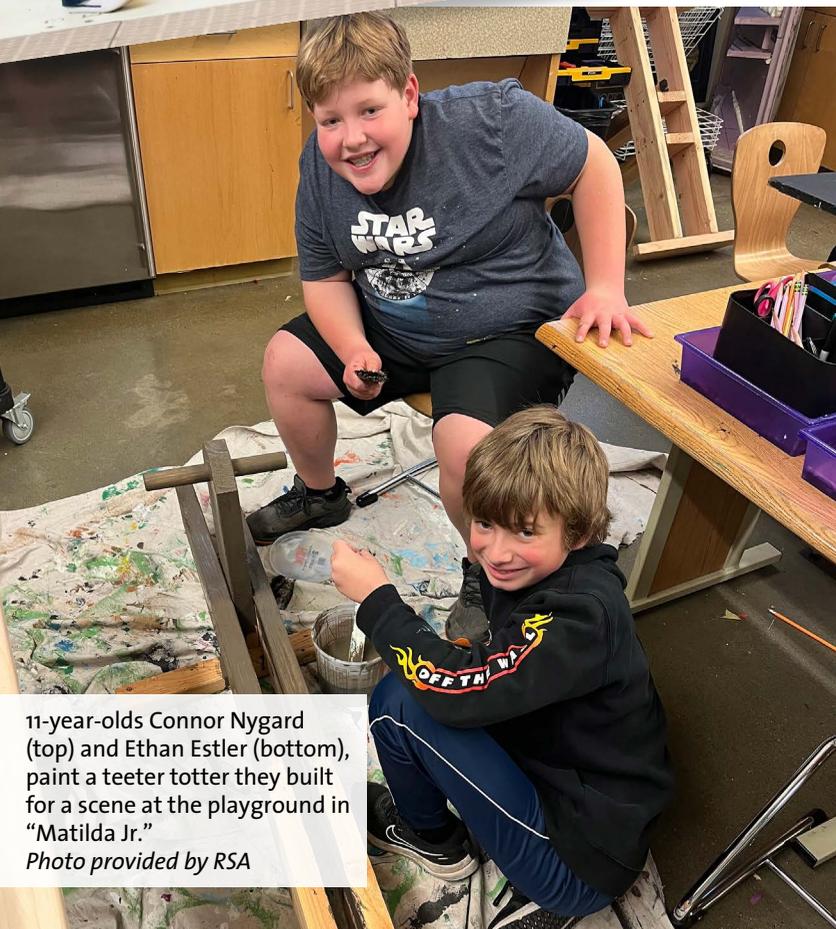




Ethan Prewett, 14, touches up a set piece for the Wormwood's living room for RSA Middle School's upcoming production of "Matilda Jr."  
Photo provided by RSA



RSA Middle School music director, Lizzie Stoxen, guides students to not only give their best performance, but to help them see the world through a different lens.  
Photo by Betsey Walton



11-year-olds Connor Nygard (top) and Ethan Estler (bottom), paint a teeter totter they built for a scene at the playground in "Matilda Jr."  
Photo provided by RSA

RSA offers a diverse art and music program that goes beyond theater. K-12 students can explore classes ranging from culinary arts, orchestra and band, choir, piano, stage craft and set design to dance, photography and ceramics. During the preparation for shows, students balance a rigorous rehearsal schedule with academic responsibilities, while still maintaining a positive attitude.

**THEATER STUDENTS GAIN LIFE SKILLS**

Many RSA students find that despite their nerves, performing is rewarding. "I feel kind of nervous because it is a lot of pressure and it's a lot to live up to, but also I feel really excited," says Mary Charlotte Kendrick, who plays the intimidating Mrs. Trunchbull.

A parent of three RSA students says, "I can attest to the benefits of performing arts and its influence. Where most students struggle in college speech courses, my RSA graduate shows no hesitation at being in front of a classroom."

RSA alumni, Linze Zaniroli say the drama program gave her baseline acting skills that laid the foundation for her theater roles in high school and the greater community. "It gave me confidence to try new things."

**BEHIND THE SCENES, RSA STUDENTS ARE EQUALLY INVOLVED**

Students get an opportunity to create the sets and props, collaborating with art teacher Richard Cherveney. "We look at the actual script and then talk about the descriptions that happen in every scene as we start to kind of play out what should be in that scene," Cherveney says. "My favorite part of this is probably the painting and finishing the products," says one of the set design students assisting with the "Matilda Jr." musical. The backstage crew also plays a vital role managing lighting, projections and special effects.

"During the 'Little Mermaid Jr.,' we projected a water effect on the walls to make it seem like they were underwater," said one tech student. These immersive technical elements help bring each show to life while teaching tech students all the behind-the-scenes skills required to produce a show.

The upcoming production of "Matilda Jr." represents months of collaboration, creativity and hard work by RSA middle school students and staff. The cast and crew invite the Redding community to come experience the magic they have created on stage at the historic Cascade Theatre!

**Performances are Jan. 29-31. Tickets can be purchased at [cascadetheatre.org/performances/matilda-jr/](https://cascadetheatre.org/performances/matilda-jr/).**

**BLENDING CORE STUDIES WITH ART BOOSTS LEARNING, COMPREHENSION, RETENTION**

High school students at RSA can benefit from small class sizes in math, English, history, social studies and science. From K-8 grades, RSA students may be immersed in a Mandarin language program, but by high school Mandarin is offered to teens as a language class just like French and Spanish along with culinary arts, music, theater and visual arts. Students are singing, dancing, acting and designing theater props and promotional posters for theater productions. They may be considering the life of bugs in science class and learning to draw them in art class. Teachers work together to stimulate learning, understanding that a student struggling in math or science may excel in art. Purposely blending those domains can help the student thrive by involving all senses in the learning process to better understand and integrate academic subjects.

**RSA STUDENTS' ARTISTIC TALENTS BLOSSOM THROUGH DEEPER STUDY IN HIGH SCHOOL**

As the RSA high school art teacher, Cassandra Plummer takes students on a deep dive into the visual arts, progressing through drawing, painting, ceramics (the studio has 10 pottery wheels), sculpture, photography (cameras and iPads provided), print making and digital arts using Adobe and Procreate illustration and editing programs. Student abilities range from beginner to advanced and getting to know her students allows Cassandra to customize a visual arts program that helps them explore and create one-of-a-kind works of art. Some students create highly realistic drawings while others are strong in character illustration and building Pixar-style animation drawings. Some very advanced students are taking college classes in glassblowing, watercolor and figure drawing.

For students that are just beginning in the arts, Cassandra takes them through a step-by-step process to help them see as an artist. She urges them not to give up, but to follow her lead, believing it is a life lesson for them to build skills, one-by-one, to see what they can achieve. Cassandra's goal is to provide an RSA education that helps prepare teens who love the arts for a career in the arts. She's excited about the introduction of new Career Technical Pathways courses designed to help teenagers understand how to connect art with industry, identifying the pathway to not just a job, but an art career that they love.

Families interested in pursuing a spot for their child at Redding School of the Arts may apply for enrollment. Applications are entered into an annual lottery system and a select number of hopeful families are called to confirm enrollment. Visit [rsarts.org](https://rsarts.org) or call (530)247-6933. ■



Redding City Ballet



Chico Creek Dance



Kinetics Academy of Dance & Gymnastics



Chico Community Ballet



Redding Arts Project School of Theatre & Dance



Ignite Your Flair Dance & Acrobatics



North State Ballet



Chico Community Ballet



Dance Depot

# DANCE & MUSICAL THEATRE DIRECTORY FOR NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

## BUTTE COUNTY

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**Healthy Steps: The Lebed Method;** Chico. Whether you are getting back into shape or just want a gentle exercise program, Healthy Steps is a safe and accessible way to reach your goals and gain strength and balance with exercises to meet your fitness level. Zoom classes available. Classes offered at The Lakeside Pavillion (2565 California Park Dr.) and Enloe Regional Cancer Centre (265 Cohasset Rd). (530)228-4753. [healthysteps-maryjo.com](http://healthysteps-maryjo.com).

**In Motion Fitness;** Chico. Classes include pilates, zumba, yoga, step and swim exercise classes. Kids in Motion program for children of all ages, includes childcare. 1293 E. 1st Ave. (530)343-5678. [inmotionfitness.com](http://inmotionfitness.com).

**Kinetics Academy of Dance & Gymnastics;** Chico. Classes in gymnastics, aerial arts, adult classes and many styles of dance for all ages and all skill levels. At Kinetics, students are instructed by highly creative, skilled and innovative instructors in classes offering quality instruction and a caring, inclusive environment. Our goal is to create a comfortable and enjoyable classroom environment and community for all. Performance opportunities. Also offers birthday parties and summer camps. Ages 18 months & up to adults. 627 Broadway St., Suite 100. (530) 345-2505. [kineticsacademyofdance.com](http://kineticsacademyofdance.com).

**Northern California Ballet;** Paradise. Classes include pre-ballet and classical ballet. Performance opportunities. Ages 4 & up. North California School and Ballet Company. 5794 Clark Rd. (530) 872-1719. [northerncaliforniaballet.com](http://northerncaliforniaballet.com).

**Northern California Ballet School;** Oroville. This women-owned business offers a unique education experience that is focused on the individual student. We're dedicated to providing the best training possible in a fun and encouraging environment. [wingturtl@mac.com](mailto:wingturtl@mac.com). 2015 Challenger Ave., Suite B. (530) 680-5308. [classicalballetdance.com](http://classicalballetdance.com).

**North State Ballet;** Chico. Pre-professional training studio boasting a comprehensive developmental curriculum taught by professionally trained and certified faculty. Ballet, jazz, lyrical, contemporary, acro, tap and hip-hop programs deliver exceptional training in an environment catering to the developmental and physical needs of each student. Goal is to inspire growth, develop excellence and nurture the whole individual through professional instruction in the beauty and technique of classical ballet and beyond. 2400 Notre Dame Blvd. (530)774-2364. [northstateballet.com](http://northstateballet.com).

## SHASTA COUNTY

**Dance Depot;** Redding. Dancing is the rhythm of the soul expressed in movement, beauty, art, and creativity. Come dance with us! Classes for 12 month-adult, beginner-advanced. Ballet, tap, jazz, acrobatics, hip-hop, lyrical and Mommy or Daddy & Me. Performance & competition opportunities. Join our Dance Family. Teaching dance is what we love doing best! 2225 Larkspur Ln., Redding. (530)275-9618. [dancedepotfamily.com](http://dancedepotfamily.com).

**Redding City Ballet.** Redding City Ballet was founded in 1997. Now a non-profit, the company mission is to present classical, contemporary and innovative concert dance to a broad audience and to increase accessibility to the arts for the schools of the North State area through educational outreach programs, lectures and performances. RCB began its Chance 2 Dance scholarship program in 2022, providing ballet training and performance opportunities for area children lacking the means to pursue quality training. In 2023, RCB opened its own School of Dance, offering classes in classical and contemporary ballet. 935 Locust St. (530) 709-1205. [reddingcityballet.org](http://reddingcityballet.org).

**Redding Performing Arts Center Theatre Education;** Redding. We offer semester-long theatre programs for a variety of age groups from kindergarten through high school. Our courses are designed for beginners and experienced young actors. We foster a nurturing and supportive classroom environment where students are asked to take risks and step outside their comfort zones. Improvisation, audition technique and beginning scene work are used to expand students' acting and character development skills. Through rehearsal and performance of plays and musicals, students establish their own work within the larger framework of storytelling and develop skills to tell stories that are meaningful, connected and worth telling. This experience and exposure is designed to foster a life-long appreciation for the arts and develop life skills that extend beyond the classroom. RPAC Kinder (5 and 6 year olds), RPAC Kids (1st - 4th Grades), Youth Theatre (5th - 8th Grades), Performance Theatre (9th - 12th Grade), Technical Theatre (8th - 12th Grade). Visit [reddingpac.com](http://reddingpac.com).

**The Redding Arts Project - School of Theatre and Dance.** Established in 1993. Offers performing arts education in disciplines such as ballet, tap, contemporary, hip-hop, jazz, folk, and musical theatre. The RAP is the official training school of Redding Ballet Theatre, which produces the annual "The Nutcracker" proudly directed by Diana Christensen. In collaboration with Redding Theatre Company, our summer theatre academy stages captivating shows such as "Newsies," "Mary Poppins," "High School Musical," "Peter Pan," and more! All ages and levels are invited to join our vibrant arts community, guided by a dedicated staff fostering passion in the performing arts. Visit our website for class offerings and information on auditions and shows! The Redding Arts Project - School of Theatre and Dance, 1726 Market Street. (530) 245-1019. [thereddingartsproject.com](http://thereddingartsproject.com).

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## SISKIYOU COUNTY

**Idance Studio;** Fort Jones. Classes in hip-hop, acro dance, ballet, jazz, tap, contemporary, musical theater, yoga & more. All ages. 11921 North State Hwy 3, Fort Jones. (541) 210-0082. [idancestudiosv.com](http://idancestudiosv.com).

**Shasta Studios School of Theatrical Dance;** Mount Shasta. Offers dance for all ages, including tap, jazz, ballet & lyrical. Also offers voice lessons, children's theater classes, summer camp and performance opportunities. Studio 1: 108 Old McCloud Rd. Studio 2: 629 Alder St. (530) 235-6222. [Shastastudios.net](http://Shastastudios.net).

## TEHAMA COUNTY

**Ignite Your Flare: Dance & Acrobatics;** Red Bluff. Build confidence & character with Flare! We want to ignite your Flare for dance & acrobatics. Offers professional instruction in acro (Acrobatics Arts Certified), ballet, pointe, jazz, hip-hop, tap, lyrical, dance tech & conditioning, parent & child. We have a traveling competition team and dance camps & intensives. Ages are 1.5 (walking) – adult. 446 & 450 Walnut St. (530) 225-4180. [igniteyourflare.com](http://igniteyourflare.com).

**Jubilee Performing Arts Co.;** Red Bluff. A Christian musical theater program that offers tap, Broadway, hip-hop, ballet, pre-dance, voice and theater classes. 1325 Schwab Street. (530) 366-4786. [Jubileepac.square.site](http://Jubileepac.square.site). ■

Ignite Your  
Flair Dance &  
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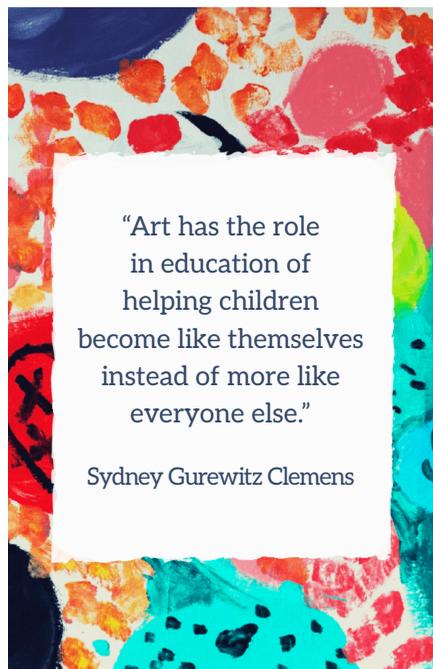
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Sydney Gurewitz Clemens



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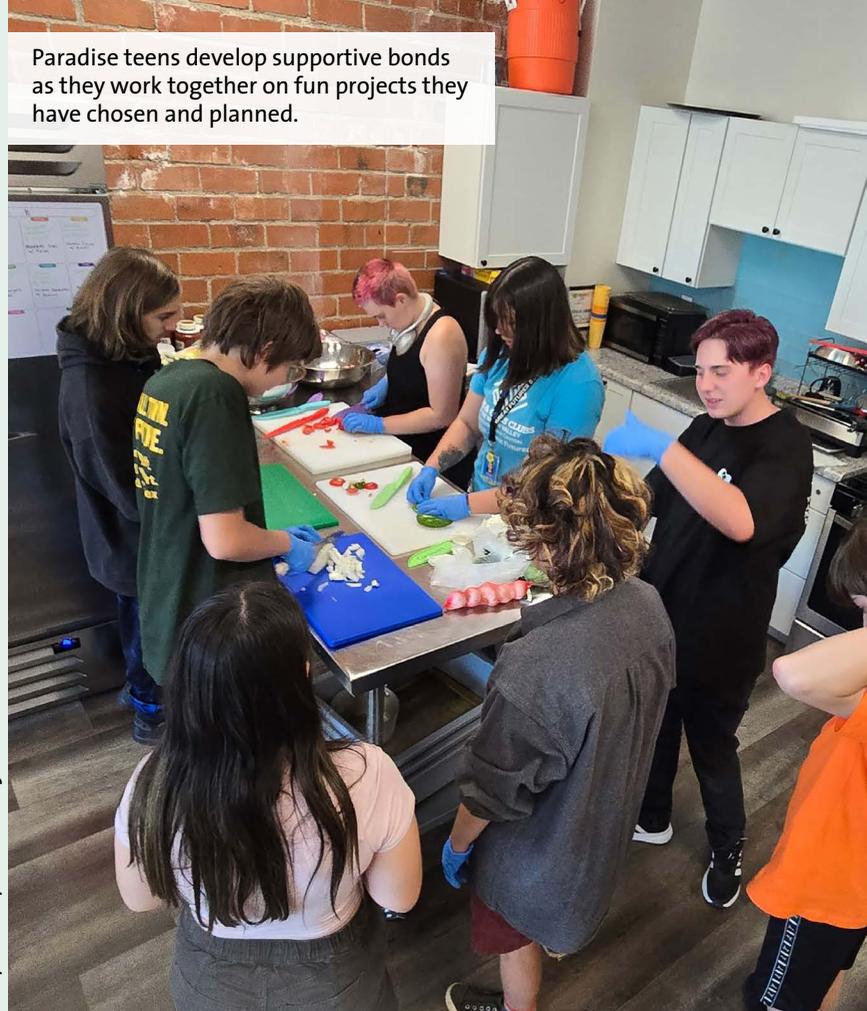
National Drug Help Line  
1-888-633-3239, [drughelpline.org](http://drughelpline.org)

National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline  
1-800-662-HELP (4357)



# GROWING UP ON THE RIDGE AFTER THE CAMP FIRE

All photos provided by Paradise Teen Center



When the 2018 Camp Fire swept through the town of Paradise and across the Ridge, it reshaped the lives of thousands. Families returned to neighborhoods that were forever changed, schools re-opened with new challenges and an entire generation of young people have grown up in a community is still rebuilding itself. Many of today's Ridge teens were young children during the fire; they remember the evacuation, the dislocation and the long journey home. Even now, recovery touches nearly every aspect of their lives: long commutes from temporary housing, multi-generational living arrangements, financial stress and ongoing uncertainty about their future. For young people navigating these harsh new realities, the need for stable, affirming spaces is greater than ever.

## PARADISE TEEN CENTER PROVIDES REFUGE, RESOURCES

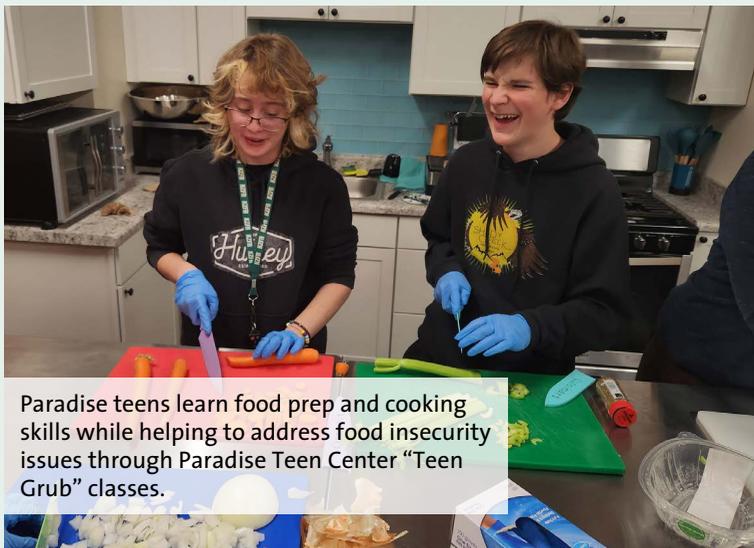
Spaces like the Paradise Teen Center are the foundation for a better future for the people of this community and are invaluable to the lives of those they touch. The Ridge's youth carry a quiet resilience, but they also carry the weight of interrupted childhoods and the pressures of rebuilding alongside their families and friends. The Paradise Teen Center exists because that resilience deserves support, community and resources to help them become the best versions of themselves possible.

The Paradise Teen Center (PTC), a program of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the North Valley, was created to be a consistent, caring home-base for teens ages 13-18 on the Ridge. More than just an after-school program, PTC is a place where teens can drop their cares, be themselves and build meaningful connections with their peers and mentors. "The Club is somewhere I can come to after a long day and drop my worries like stones in a river," says 17-year-old Sage.

## PARADISE TEEN CENTER STAFF OFFER SUPPORT, UNDERSTANDING, CARE AND LISTENING EAR

With so many Paradise families still recovering, the Club offers the stability, routine and belonging young people often struggle to find in other spaces. What sets PTC apart is its direct focus on the lived experiences of Ridge youth. We recognize that the impacts of the Camp Fire aren't just in the past. They still shape the day-to-day lives of the teens we serve, in obvious and less obvious ways.

Many teens juggle responsibilities far beyond the expectations of their age; helping raise younger siblings or working part-time jobs to support their struggling families. Others deal with transportation difficulty, limited housing options or social



Paradise teens learn food prep and cooking skills while helping to address food insecurity issues through Paradise Teen Center "Teen Grub" classes.



Teens prepare to do Nerf battle at the Paradise Teen Center, a hub for energetic creative outlet.



isolation. At PTC, these challenges are acknowledged but never used to define a teen. Instead, the emphasis is on their strengths, creativity, humor, talent and endless possibility. Our staff lead with empathy, patience and genuine care. We listen. We celebrate. We show up. And we create an environment where teens feel safe, seen and supported every single day.

### TEENS LEARN ESSENTIAL SKILLS THROUGH UNIQUE PARADISE TEEN CENTER PROGRAMS

The Paradise Teen Center's programs are designed around the real needs of our community and the hopes our teens have for their future. Through programs like *Money Matters*, youth learn essential budgeting and financial literacy skills that help them support their families through the long-term rebuilding process. *Teen Grub* gives teens a chance to cook together, enjoy a shared meal and bring leftovers home, providing comfort and addressing food insecurity that still affects many households on the Ridge.

Partnership programs such as Med-Ed Club, presented by [HealthyRural California](#) and local health care professionals, open doors to high-demand career pathways – helping teens imagine themselves stepping into future roles that strengthen their community. Physical wellness programs, art and creativity clubs, career readiness workshops and leadership

initiatives all work together to build confidence and skills that teens can carry with them on their journey to adulthood. "I have met and bonded with the best people in my life here," says Sage, "and I have 'glassblown' myself, my present and my future into something I can be proud of."

### TEENS LEARN TO GIVE BACK AND HELP REBUILD THEIR COMMUNITY

Beyond structured programming, PTC fosters community pride and service learning. Teens participate in local events and give back through leadership roles, service-learning projects and collaborative efforts with partner organizations. From Trunk-or-Treat celebrations to community cleanups, kindness campaigns and school-based collaborations, PTC teens actively contribute to the growth and spirit of the Ridge.

At its heart, the Paradise Teen Center is a hub of healing and momentum; a place where young people rebuild their confidence, rediscover joy and help shape the future of a community that has endured so much. The Ridge's recovery has been long, but its teens continue to rise and we are honored to rise with them! ■



Teens learn service and give back to the community through projects like planting a community garden.



Nathan Starkey is the Site Director of the Boys and Girls Club of North Valley Paradise Teen Center. A longtime resident of Butte County, he is dedicated to providing much needed support and resources to Ridge teens and doing his part in helping the Ridge community thrive and recover.



*Here's to a Joyful New Year!*

# THIS IS TEHAMA



The ancient word “Tehama” once meant a place where rivers could be crossed. With our county’s rich currents of history, happenings and hope, this is our crossing place today – where we meet to celebrate our beautiful Tehama County.

## NURTURING YOUTH AND HORSES WITH MORRIS HOOF CARE

“Before you can shoe a horse, you must understand the horse,” Justin Morris says. “It’s the same with youth – before you build a relationship, you must get to know the individual.”

This is the motto of Justin and Lisa Morris, husband-and-wife team and co-owners of Morris Hoof Care in Red Bluff. At each appointment, Justin is the farrier, but only after Lisa has calmed and secured the horse. Justin says, “One time, there was a very wild pony that no farrier wanted to touch. Lisa spent just 20 minutes with him and then he allowed me to work on his feet.”

Lisa says, “I like to love on the scared ones, calm them down and let them know that no one is going to hurt them. You introduce yourself to a horse and they relax. You introduce yourself to youth and they do the same.”

### Love of horses, youth, ministry and each other bring couple full circle

A lifetime of experience with horses and people has led to this husband-and-wife venture, which became official in January 2024 after Justin apprenticed as a farrier for a year and graduated from a Farrier School in Texas. “I’ve trimmed our horses’ feet and helped friends and neighbors with their horses for most of my life,” Justin says. “I grew up on a ranch outside Red Bluff and my dad

introduced me to the trade. He probably thought I’d stick with the cowboy life right after high school, but I kept him guessing,” he says with a laugh.

19 ▶



Photos by Kate Hiller

Lisa and Justin Morris work as a team to care for horses; Lisa helping to calm and reassure these magnificent animals while Justin cleans and trims their hooves.

Instead of just getting bucked off rodeo horses, Justin fell head over heels for a life of ministry and for his wife, Lisa. "Soon we will celebrate our 26th wedding anniversary and, no need to ask, I can talk all day about my love for Lisa and for the Lord."

"By the time we moved to Kenya, my dad had gotten used to his 'wayward' son," Justin says. "We spent four years there before realizing that our mission field was back here in Red Bluff. Our ministry, primarily with youth up until that point, expanded to the whole community when we opened our own church, Country Bible Fellowship, in 2024."

"It has been a full circle for us to be back with a full-time ministry and now a business," Lisa says. "I live with chronic pain, so this is the first full-time job I have had in 24 years. There is something about horses and healing, however, and working with them lessens my pain—sometimes making me forget about it altogether. There is something very therapeutic while working to reduce pain and stress in animals and that can be true when helping youth, too."

### Relationships blossom through caring for horses

Some of Justin and Lisa's closest relationships began over the necks of horses. When they started Morris Hoof Care, they met a struggling family that now attends their church. Recently, Lisa was present for the birth of the family's third child and Justin and Lisa are overjoyed to be honorary grandparents.

"Loving God and loving people has always been our goal. It's safe to say we can add 'loving horses' in there, too," Lisa exuberantly says. "We feel so

blessed to drive out to remote properties, meet new horses and be welcomed into clients' homes. Sometimes we will visit afterward or go for coffee or lunch. And we are always happy to take youth along. We get to know them on the drive and somehow talking while you work with horses, rather than face-to-face, helps them let down their guard."

"Just like horses need their shoes to be fitted to their feet, we need to remember that all people need customized care," Justin adds. "We have never walked in someone else's shoes and we need to meet them where they are at. Another added benefit of our husband-and-wife business is that women clients appreciate Lisa being there – they feel safe."

Justin and Lisa hope to continue in work and ministry as long as possible, so they came up with a treatment for Lisa's chronic pain and for all the injuries and back strain that come with working as a farrier, "We take ice baths," Lisa says. "They are a game changer! They also make us laugh – a lot of things do. We love working together and spending every day together. It is our joy."

If you're a teen interested in riding along with Justin and Lisa, with parental permission, call (530)366.6096. Justin says, "In five years, our area will need new farriers. We're eager to mentor any youth interested in the trade." ■



Kate Hiller's 78-year-old dad still trims his horse's feet and his patience and love toward animals and people have always been an inspiration to her.



Caring for horses and caring for youth has enriched Justin and Lisa's lives and blessed all whom they have touched.

# Siskiyou County News

## NEW LODGE WELCOMES GUESTS AT FAR-NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S ONLY...

On the slopes of Mount Shasta – rising 14,162 feet into Far Northern California's crisp alpine air – families have been enjoying world-class, meticulously groomed trails, peaceful mountain vibes and community connection at Mt. Shasta Nordic Center for many years. The center, sponsored and run by SORA (Siskiyou Outdoor Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing rural economic development and community health through outdoor recreation), began simply: a yurt on a concrete pad, a ski equipment shed and a couple of port-a-potties.

### MT. SHASTA NORDIC CENTER BLOSSOMS FROM UNASSUMING BEGINNINGS

Despite these humble facilities, skiing and snowshoeing families had easy, low-cost, uncrowded access to some of the best-groomed cross-country trails – in fact the only cross-country trails – between Tahoe and Bend, Oregon. There, beginners to advanced snow sports enthusiasts enjoyed 14.6 miles of beautifully groomed, epically scenic Nordic ski trails and a two-mile snowshoe trail system.

Now, thanks to a \$1.1 million grant from the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Regional Parks Program, SORA has been able to commission and install a custom designed guest services lodge and separate double vault toilets at Mt. Shasta Nordic Center. Designed to be off-grid, (solar powered with a storage battery and diesel generator backup) and furnished in a beautiful, clean Danish Modern-inspired style, the heated lodge has many amenities that were unavailable in the former yurt quarters.

Families can enjoy hot or cold beverages and snacks. Indoor picnic tables provide plenty of room for families to spread out their own hand-packed picnic lunch while enjoying a magnificent view of towering Mount Shasta. Persons of all abilities are welcome to relax in the lodge and can easily access all facilities via the ADA compliant handicap gridded non-slip rampway. "We want this facility to be affordable and accessible to all," says Dante Giordanengo, Mt. Shasta Nordic Center program director. Other amenities include a boot drying closet with an electric heater and ventilation system to keep boots in tip-top condition and an

equipment rental area that, as Dante says, allows skiers to enter at one end and ski out the other with ease.

### NORDIC CENTER'S GENEROUS FUNDERS FACILITATE BIG CHANGES, HELP MAINTAIN AFFORDABILITY

With generous support from The Nancy Driscoll Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation and individual and private donors, SORA has brought in a brand-new snowcat groomer to keep trails pristine all winter long. The McConnell Fund of The Community Foundation of the North State stepped up with funding to replace the outdated rental equipment with brand-new boots and Rosignal skis.

Upgrades are great, you may say, but what does that mean for the cost of rentals and skiing at the Nordic Center, which has traditionally been extremely affordable? Thanks to the CDRRPP grant and the generosity of individual donors and donor organizations, prices at Nordic Center remain the same. Admission for children up to 18 is free and their ski equipment rental for the day is just \$15. School groups can come to the center and experience outdoor education in a living classroom with ski rental, instructions and skiing for \$5 per student. Group ski classes, clinics and individual instruction are priced affordably.

### NEW CLASSES, NEW TRAILS, YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

A new addition to ski instruction at the center is Movement Analysis, led by Dante, who will be certified this season as a Professional Ski Instructor. With their permission, he will film clinic participants as they ski and then retreat to the lodge to conduct an analysis for participants. "We can work on technique, watching participants on the TV while having lunch," Dante says.

While the lodge is the centerpiece of the Mt. Shasta Nordic Center Facilities Upgrade & Connected Community Trails Project, it is part of the larger Nordic Center Master Development Plan, which in addition to the lodge and new rental equipment, features construction of 5 miles of trail in the 45-mile expansion of the Gateway Trail System through a partnership with Mt. Shasta



## CROSS-COUNTRY SKI AREA

Participants in The Mt. Shasta Nordic Center Youth Program enjoy group lessons with the center's new Rosignal skis, boots and poles.

**New Lodge Welcomes Guests**

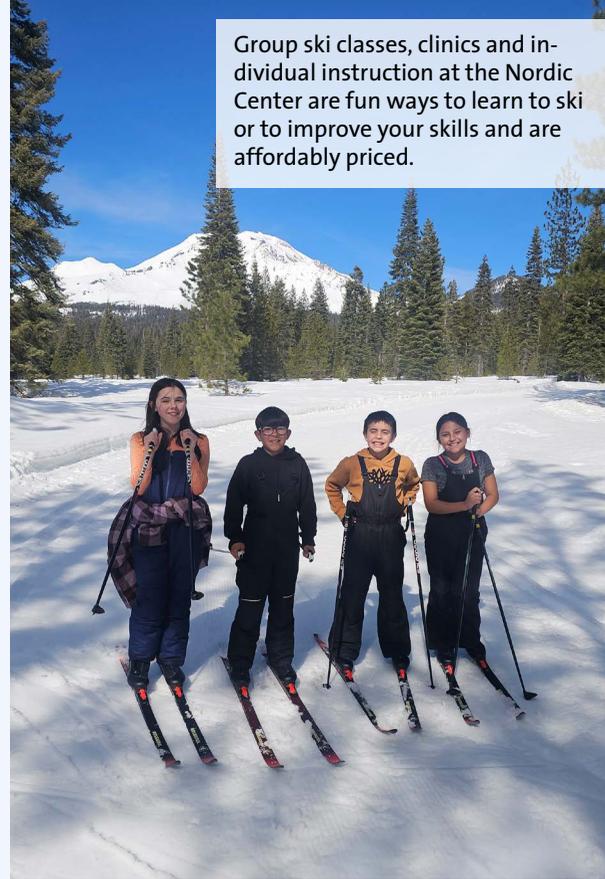
Trail Association and the Shasta-Trinity US Forest Service. "I'm looking forward to hosting our ribbon-cutting ceremony party to open our Sunshine Snowshoe Trail System that is headed toward the mountain and is filled with sunshine and meadows," Dante says.

SORA has plans simmering to make the Nordic Center a year-round operation, with free summer concerts for suggested donations, using the former yurt concrete slab as a band stage. Summer mountain biking might also be in the offering. Dante wants to bring back the youth ski program for ages 7-11, which has been on hiatus for the last few years. "I'm bringing back the very thing that made me the skier

that I am," he says. Dante has been skiing at the Nordic Center since he was a child. "What was great about the youth program is that it let me know that there were so many other kids who were interested in and fascinated by this sport. This is our next generation! It is such an honor to be able to bring this program back."

Affordable family snow adventures await just a short drive away. Mt. Shasta Nordic Center is 1 mile below Mt. Shasta Ski Park on Ski Park Highway, just a few miles east of Interstate 5. The Nordic Center offers day passes and rentals, lessons, special events, youth programs and season passes. You can book any of those services at [mtshastanordic.org](http://mtshastanordic.org).

Group ski classes, clinics and individual instruction at the Nordic Center are fun ways to learn to ski or to improve your skills and are affordably priced.



Families can embark on miles of top-notch ski and snowshoe trails, starting at the Mt. Shasta Nordic Center, and return after an exciting day to enjoy hot beverages and snacks in their warm new facilities.

New to mountain snow country, Stacey has obtained brand new snow shoes and looks forward to trying them out on her first cross-country snowshoe hike at the Mt. Shasta Nordic Center this year.



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# TAG!

## THIS IS IT

### HOW LOCAL LIBRARIES ARE READING THE ROOM ON THE NEEDS OF THE NORTH STATE'S YOUTH

A love of community, learning and literature must be nurtured in encouraging environments to really thrive. And that is what lives at the heart of the TAG (Teen Advisory Group) program. TAG is an adaptive program designed to cultivate a love of reading, forge friendships and engage young minds in fun and productive ways.

#### DOING THE WORK OF MAKING TEENS FEEL HEARD.

This isn't just grownups telling kids what to do. Glori Kidder, library assistant for the Chico branch of the [Butte County Library](#), says, "Teen TAG members can advise us on what programs might be popular for teens. It's their chance to have a voice in the library, like what kind of services they'd enjoy having, to build community and get to know each other."

Juliae Parsons, library director for the [Shasta Public Libraries](#), where the teen group is call the **Teen Action Board (TAB)**, says, "Teens are getting volunteer hours for working with us. They tell us what they want and how we can better support them." Drawn from locations throughout Shasta County, the Teen Action Board helps students and teens from the area connect with one another and discover their strengths.

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Teens from throughout Shasta County work together on The Shasta Teen Advisory Board to create ways for teens to connect and explore their talents and strengths.

*Photo provided by Shasta County Library.*

When teenagers feel heard and welcomed, they get excited. Participation becomes teamwork, strengthening self-assuredness, leadership and social skills. This creates the framework for future successes, both individually and in collaboration with others. "Through TAB, teens have the opportunity to grow, collaborate and learn valuable life skills in a supportive environment," says Brooke Trzebiatowski, Shasta Library marketing coordinator.

Every participating location provides something a little different, since each TAG is shaped by the kids involved. "We're asking them, 'What interests you?' It can be crazy stuff. TAG is their chance to express those things. We want to get ideas about where they're at," Glori says. "The more we can cater to teens, the more we can get other teens interested in coming to the library as well."

### TAG HAS BIG GOALS FOR BUDDING MINDS.

TAG offers opportunities for pre-teens and teenagers to interact, hone their voices and learn about themselves. Kids take charge of their journeys in a way that fosters confidence by giving them the space to identify their own strengths and passions in an environment that celebrates their creativity and innate gifts.

The benefits of nurturing these skills, as well as cultivating the courage to communicate, are far-reaching. Granting kids the chance to self-advocate presents an opportunity for growth that could set them on the right path for life. What it means to lead and to compromise are core lessons learned through cooperation. "They vote with each other and create their own bylaws and program plans," says Juliae.

Learning how to stand by their own convictions and advocate for others matters. Whether it's the strength to ask for a deserved promotion or refuse to go along with something that doesn't feel right, the ability to use their own voice is essential to success and survival. And in a world evermore geared toward technology and isolation, these communal spaces and life skills pave the way to improved social skills and community engagement.

### EVEN SERIOUS WORK CAN BE SILLY AND FUN.

The people running these programs are as thrilled as the kids getting to participate and it shows. Their joy is infectious and that energy invites kids to be kids, even while crafting the interpersonal foundations they'll need for their futures.



"Coming up with ideas and seeing them actualized has been really cool," Glori says. "I was pleasantly surprised by how good the attendance was during TeenTober. Being able to come up with fun programs and seeing the teens really actively engage with them – that was really exciting."

During TeenTober, the library was spooktacularly lively. "We had a scavenger hunt, a murder mystery, the Five Nights at Freddy's game up on our projector – teens would take turns," Glori says with bubbling mirth. "We had pizza and other food and drinks. And we had some different crafts that were Five Nights at Freddy's themed. One of my favorites was Frankentoys. We took a bunch of thrifted toys and meshed them together to make it look spooky. It was really fun."

Over at the Shasta Library, fun threads throughout their get-togethers, too. "They meet four times a month," Juliae says. "The first Tuesday of the month is their business meeting. The second Tuesday is the community service meeting. They decide. They do park clean up, events and they make DIY projects to donate to the community. The third Tuesday, it's creativity and skill-building." Brooke adds, "Our goal is to provide teens with meaningful experiences that teach leadership, teamwork and community involvement."

But it's not all seriousness, as Julie points out. "The fourth Tuesday is their game night. They socialize, learn how to talk to other people and decide on games and movies to share."

### THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO LOOK FORWARD TO WITH TAG.

New events are just around the corner. Teen Hangouts and Lock-Ins (after hours events just for teenagers) enrich and entertain kids in a safe and supportive environment.

**Teen Hangout meets every month at the Chico Library on the second Friday from 3:30–5pm, and TAG meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 5–7pm. "For January," Glori says, "we've got Teen Hangout, Friday, Jan.9 – that's going to be Boardgame Blizzard. Next is Fandom Feb.13. The TAG activity for Feb. 25, from 5-7pm, will be the Jackbox Party Pack 7."**

With more events planned at Shasta and Butte County libraries well into the summer, along with new ideas spilling from young and engaged minds, there's never a dull moment for teens involved in these programs. ■



Photos provided by Butte County Library, Chico branch

Butte County teens had a blast creating "Frankentoys" from thrift store finds for this year's hugely successful "Teentober" event, a chance to express their creativity and ingenuity.



Brianna is a literature and child-development enthusiast who has long loved public libraries. They often found refuge in the stacks throughout childhood and adolescence and delighted in sharing that magic with their own child.



Chico Montessori Children's House



# LOCAL DAYCARE AND PRESCHOOLS



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### Shasta Head Start Child Development, Inc.

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[shastaheadstart.org](http://shastaheadstart.org). ⓓⓈⓂ Ages: 0-5 yrs • M-F, 8am-4:30pm  
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## SISKIYOU COUNTY

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# LETTING GO without LOSING SLEEP

## Finding the Right Balance of Teen Independence

Parenting teens today feels quite different from a generation ago. On one hand, we're encouraged to raise confident, self-reliant young adults. On the other, we're bombarded by headlines, social media warnings and safety concerns that make it hard to let go.

So it's no surprise that many parents today wrestle with the tough question of whether they're giving their teens enough independence to thrive in a world that constantly makes us feel like we need to hover.

### THE TRICKY BALANCE OF LETTING GO

The push and pull between giving teens room to grow and wanting to keep them safe is a common struggle. Teens want the freedom to make their own choices. But, because they are still developing, those choices aren't always wise ones.

Here is what experts and research say about why teen independence is so important and how parents can ease into it without losing sleep.

### WHY INDEPENDENCE MATTERS (EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD)

Teenagers live in a unique in-between space. They're no longer little kids, but they're not quite adults, either. This is the phase in their lives where they test limits, take risks and figure out who they are.

As unnerving as that may sound to parents, specialists say that this pulling away is a normal and necessary part of growing up. Experts call this stage individuation. It's when teens begin to separate from their parents, develop their own identities and make more independent choices. Psychologist Jessica McGawley describes it this way: "It's about separating your identity from those around you and pushing against those boundaries to say, 'I'm different and this is how.'"

When teens don't get enough space to make their own decisions, they can feel stifled and frustrated. And when they're given too much independence without support, they may feel overwhelmed and adrift. The goal is to find a sweet spot. And experts say that parents can accomplish this by gradually increasing independence while still providing emotional support and a solid safety net.

### WHAT RESEARCH REVEALS ABOUT TEEN INDEPENDENCE

Recent data suggests that many parents are hesitant to give their teens unsupervised freedom, often out of concern for their safety. A national poll from [C.S. Mott Children's Hospital](#) found that fewer than half of parents would leave their teen alone in a hotel room, fewer than one-third would allow their teen to walk alone to a coffee shop and only 20% would let their teen explore an amusement park solo.

Experts caution that this type of hesitation may have unintended consequences. According to Sarah Clark, co-director of the study, teens need opportunities to build real-world confidence. She explains, "Teens need the freedom to develop the confidence that they can navigate the world on their own."

These findings aren't isolated. Prior research published in the [Journal of Pediatrics](#) shows that teens today are significantly less likely than previous generations to hold part-time jobs or walk or bike to school independently.

Psychologist Peter Gray made this striking observation of the study: "It's absolutely no surprise to me that we're seeing these dramatic rises in anxiety and depression among teenagers."

### WHY LETTING GO FEELS SO HARD

Letting go is tough in today's "safety-first" parenting culture. With so much access to real-time information, we're acutely aware of potential dangers.

But in our effort to protect, we can sometimes overstep. And even though our efforts are well-intentioned and rooted in love, micromanaging can send the message "I don't trust you to handle this on your own."

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Developing responsibility takes time and practice. Parents can provide guidance and teach skills, then allow their teen time and space to implement those skills.

Psychologist Lisa Firestone warns, “When we assume our children need more than they do, we’re undermining their abilities and hurting their confidence.” True support sometimes means knowing when to step in - and when to step back.

#### **SIGNS YOUR TEEN MAY BE READY FOR MORE INDEPENDENCE**

If you are unsure your teen is ready for more freedom, experts suggest looking for key indicators like responsible behavior, sound judgment, solid time management, impulse control and emotional resilience.

If your teen consistently shows these traits and tends to follow the rules when they’re not being closely monitored, it might be a good time to consider expanding their independence. Child development specialist Holly Tiret puts it this way: “Developing responsibility takes time and practice. Teens should be required to show responsibility before earning new or expanded freedoms.” Parents can reward consistent, responsible behavior with more freedom. The key is to link new privileges to demonstrated maturity, one step at a time.

#### **WHAT IF YOU’RE NOT SURE THEY’RE READY?**

Not all teens develop at the same pace. If your child is still learning responsibility or struggling with judgment, that doesn’t necessarily mean

that independence should be off the table. It may just mean that you can start small and build.

Let them earn your trust in one area before moving to the next. Maybe they can walk to a store solo if they stick to curfew. Or maybe they can drive more often if they show responsibility for schoolwork and chores.

Keep the conversation open. Try saying “I want to give you more freedom, but I need to see more follow-through first. Let’s work on this together.”

Psychologist Annalise Caron suggests leading with curiosity. “Ask them what they think about the situation first, before offering your opinion. This shows them some respect, which will help them feel supported by you.”

#### **GIVING THEM THE RIGHT TOOLS AT THE RIGHT TIME**

There’s no universal roadmap for giving teens independence. Every child is different, and every family is ready at their own pace. But if you’re thoughtfully asking whether you’re giving your child enough freedom to grow, chances are you’re probably already on the right track.

When we offer teens the tools, trust and time to stretch their wings while staying close enough to catch them when they stumble, they’re far more likely to soar. ■

## **Signs Your Teen May Be Ready for More Independence**

**Not sure whether your teen is ready for more room to expand their freedoms? Watch for signs like:**

- **They follow through on their responsibilities like homework, chores or part time jobs.**
- **They show sound judgment most of the time, even when it is not easy.**
- **They respectfully ask for more privacy or freedom and are willing to negotiate and listen.**
- **They manage their time and commitments effectively and on their own.**
- **They learn from their mistakes.**

**Giving your teen independence does not mean throwing out all your established rules.**

**It means adjusting your role and allowing your teens to take the lead with your support in areas like:**

#### ***Time Management***

**Let them manage their own homework, activities and commitments. Help if they ask but resist the urge to remind them every step of the way.**

#### ***Money***

**Give them a monthly allowance or let them work part time if their grades allow it. Teach them to budget and make good financial choices, even if it means learning from costly impulse buys.**

#### ***School Choices***

**Let them make decisions about course loads, extracurriculars and study schedules.**

#### ***Friendships and Social Life***

**Trust them to make social plans, manage conflicts and choose their friends, while keeping the lines of communication open. Ask questions without interrogating.**

#### ***Daily Routines***

**Let them be responsible for waking up on their own, packing lunches or doing laundry. Their attempts may be awkward at first, but these skills build confidence.**



Shannon M. Dean specializes in writing about families. Her son recently enthusiastically replied “Cool mom!” when she confided her dream of writing fiction.



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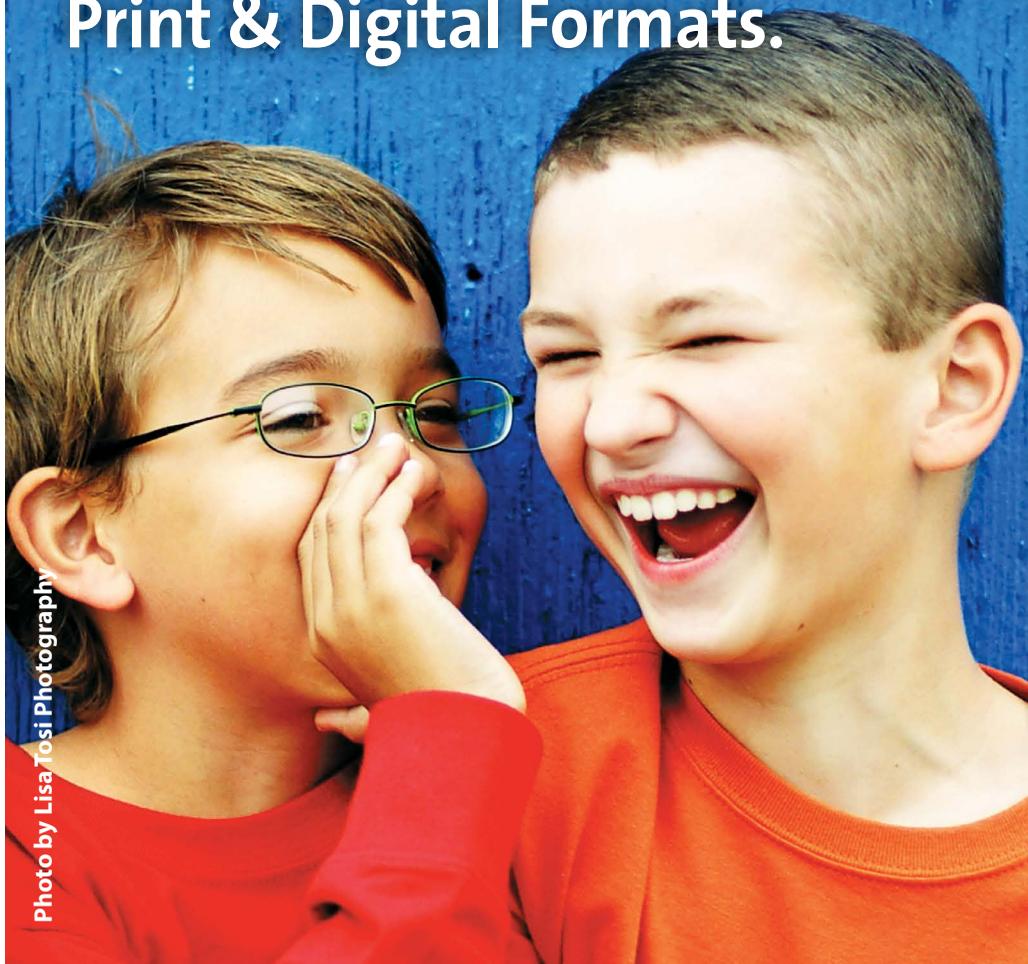


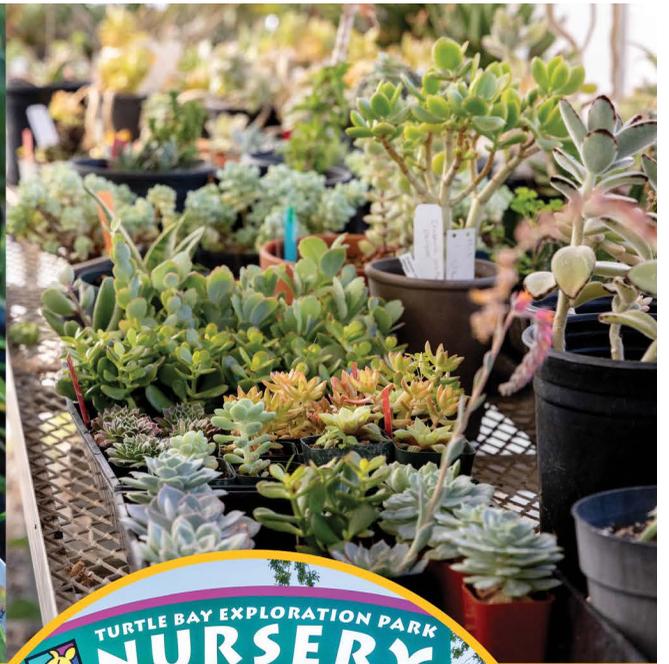
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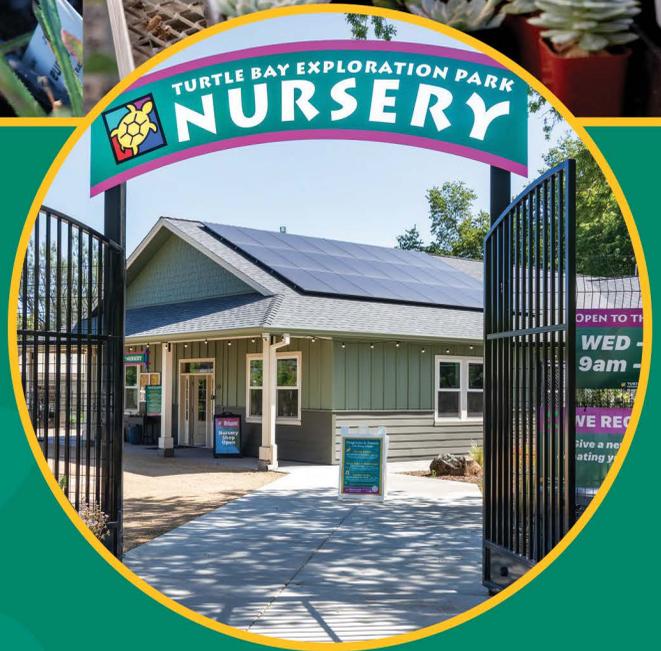


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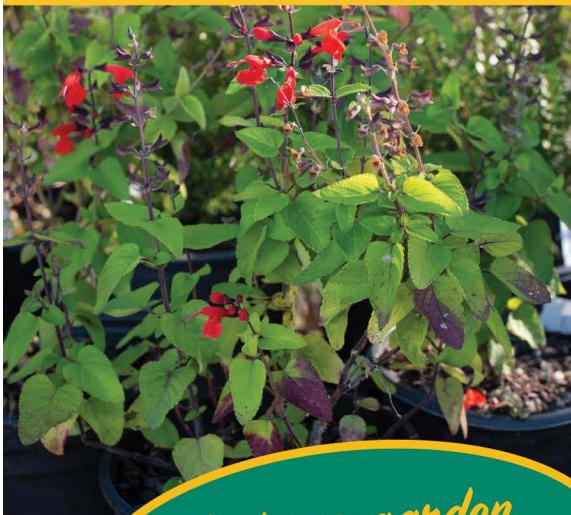
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