

Free Event

Exploring how

Inner Work & Service to Others

Can Uplift Us All

Free Event



**WOULD THE WORLD CHANGE IF
WE CHANGED OURSELVES?**

**Videos,
Stories & Insights
from our
Service Trips to:**

- Turkey
- Thailand
- Cambodia
- Sacramento
- Oaxaca, MX
- US/Mexico
Border Wall

**An Evening of Hope and Inspiration Hosted by:
The Center for Cultural & Naturalist Studies**

**TUESDAY MAY 2
7:00 PM**

Not a fundraiser – No Money Involved

THE AUDITORIUM AT CLARA

**1425 24TH ST. SACRAMENTO
FREE PARKING ON CLARA PROPERTY
ON 24TH AND O STREET**

**Special Guest
Performance by:
The Puppet Theater of
Consciousness**



**MORE INFO:
CCNS-INC.ORG**



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Paying it forward

Center for Cultural & Naturalist Studies to present event on inner work, service to others

Marianne Boll-see Staff Writer

Offering an evening of hope and inspiration to our community, The Center for Cultural & Naturalist Studies (CCNS), a local nonprofit service organization, is hosting a free multimedia event at Seaman's Lodge in Pioneer Park on April 2 beginning at 5 p.m.

The evening's presentation will explore how inner work on consciousness combined with service to others can add meaning to our



On a recent service trip to the border wall in San Luis, Arizona, members of the Center for Cultural & Naturalist Studies (CCNS) offered physically and emotionally exhausted asylum seekers water and snacks as they waited, sometimes for hours, to be picked up and processed by the U.S. Border Patrol. Members of the nonprofit group CCNS will present images and tell stories of the human suffering they have witnessed at a free event on Sunday, April 2 at 5 p.m. at the Seaman's Lodge, 423 Nimrod St., Nevada City.

lives and be an uplifting force, particularly during these troubled times, according to co-director for CCNS Renee French.

CCNS, based out of Nevada County, just returned from their first post-pandemic trip: a one-month project in Oaxaca, Mexico where



A CCNS team member plays with a child while constructing a schoolhouse for Burmese refugees at the border of Thailand. The CCNS nonprofit consists of Nevada County residents who view external service as a natural path to internal exploration. A 'pay it forward' attitude brings human connections in the face of suffering around the world.

they connected with a local shelter and worked with asylum seekers on the migrant trail in need of basic necessities, according to French.

"Refugees escaping violence, political oppression, and economic



Laughter fills the soul and is part of the basic necessities that CCNS provides for communities in crisis. Members of CCNS put on a puppet show for rural children in Cambodia. The 'Puppet Theater of Consciousness' will perform at the free event at Seaman's Lodge on Sunday at 5 p.m.

hardships in their home countries of Venezuela, Guatemala, Cuba, Honduras, and others risk their lives crossing the Darien Gap, a swath of jungle between Panama and Columbia," French said. "About 60 miles of jungle, no

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During a recent service trip to an orphanage, Ciudad de los niños in Oaxaca, Mexico, children meet the puppets that are given life by the NNCS members. Children are everywhere within communities suffering with poverty, oppression and war. This is one way NNCS members can inspire.

roads."

It takes the migrants about two weeks to cross. It is a horror story. They face jaguars, snakes, violent narcotics dealers and thieves. Many have lost loved ones along

the way. No one would make this journey if the crisis was not life threatening, according to Koda Sun, co-director of CCNS.

"It's really heartbreaking," Sun said. "When we talked to them, the look on their faces was unbelievable."

The group from CCNS work, pool their money, and identify a need at home or abroad, then reach out to make contacts who they can travel to and support for a month or more, according to French.

Local churches, teachers, groups such as Daughters of Charity and The Centro de Orientación del Migrante de Oaxaca (COMI) need basic necessities such as toothbrushes, towels, bandaids, socks and food, according to Sun.

There are intricacies when going to a place where the hardship is extreme. It is best to work with the little support groups already there, according to Sun and French.

CCNS does not venture into war zones, but have come within a few dozen miles.

CCNS does not give out money, according to Sun. The members travel by plane, bus or on foot and do the work themselves or they work alongside the people.

"We pool our money and pay for the trips ourselves," Sun said. "We go in and find out what they need, not what we think they need."

Meeting the needs of humans who are suffering includes making con-

nections of hope. French and Koda put on puppet shows for the children they encounter.

"We bring food and do puppet shows, Sun said. "It is a big hit. It brings some light for the kids."

A company called Folkmanis which makes extraordinarily intricate puppets donated about 25 different characters to CCNS to bring laughter, even for a short

Time, according to French.

"The puppets have gone all over the world," French said. "They are good travelers."

The sense of service is natural, like a parent caring for a child. The rewards are somewhat reciprocal,

according to Sun.

"I think that we are so privileged, the life we live here... so what is our life for if it's not to give to other people?" Sun said. "The benefits come back to us because we get to feel like we are a natural part of the human race, and not feeling so separate."

A second stop for the approximately 25 CCNS members was at the San Luis, Arizona/mexico border wall to offer the physically and emotionally exhausted travelers water and snacks as they waited, sometimes for hours, to be picked up and processed by the U.S. Border Patrol, according to French.

The event on April 2 at the Seaman's Lodge in Pioneer Park will

The event on April 2 at the Seaman's Lodge in Pioneer Park will feature this recent trip as well as give an overview of past trips to Thailand, Cambodia, and Turkey.

"In everything we engage in, we study ourselves and try to understand the obstacles we have that keep us from being more giving, loving people," French said. "So, this event will feature images and descriptions of our service projects, but we'll also convey what we've learned about how to find depth in human interactions and some of what we've discovered in terms of an inner life."

The event will be unique — even including, by popular demand, a skit from the Puppet Theater of Consciousness, according to French and Sun who are also the puppeteers.

CCNS serves the local community with a variety of projects. They host free meals, support local fire stations and warming shelters, visit the elderly at convalescent homes, and recently, CCNS helped Afghan refugees settling in the greater Sacramento area, according to a CCNS web page.

Nationwide, CCNS has served victims of Hurricane Katrina in a badly devastated town of Pearlinton, Mississippi, according to Sun and French.

In addition to service work, the nonprofit members come together over a broad spectrum of activities, from music and art to business, construction, rural land care, and meditation.



CCNS

An audience of around 50 guests gathered to hear the stories and insights from the groups from CCNS who travel to Thailand, Cambodia, Mexico and recently to the border wall in Arizona to help others.

Marianne Boll-See / mboll-see@theunion.com

The Center for Cultural and Naturalist Studies (CCNS), a nonprofit charitable organization held an inspiring evening of videos, stories and insights resulting from service trips around the globe.

The team members worked alongside people building needed structures, offering basic supplies and above all sincere gestures of support.

Stories were told about the connections the CCNS members made with communities in places like Turkey, Thailand, Cambodia and more recently Oaxaca, Mexico and San Luis, Arizona where asylum seekers turned themselves over to border agents after long, dangerous journeys.

A reoccurring theme was appreciation to be seen, to know that others are aware of their struggles and want to help, according to Matthew Blom, member of CCNS.

The speakers at Sunday night's event expressed the personal inner work that they found resulted from service and true connection to others.

"Looking at the things in our day to day lives that prevent us from seeing who is in front of us, from being able to give regardless of the distractions of our own wants and needs...and get a taste of being a giving person," Blom said.

Speakers shared a sense of gratitude for circumstances, such as living in safe and prosperous community, that fate could easily exchange had one been born under the oppression of authoritarian governments or in poverty.

The puppet theater also brought smiles to the audience, as they rapped cautionary rhymes about blaming others and recognizing personal weakness with humility.



CCNS

The Puppet Theater of Consciousness rapped messages of humility and patience when dealing with people in our day to day lives at Sunday evening's free event hosted by The Center for Cultural and Naturalist Studies at Seaman's Lodge in Pioneer Park, Nevada City. The puppets are used by members of CCNS to connect with children in communities around the globe.

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The next presentation CCNS will host is in Sacramento on Tuesday May 2 at 6:30 pm at the Auditorium at CLARA, 1425 24th ST. Sacramento.

The founder of CCNS, J Jaye Gold, has written two books titled *The Currency of Moments* and *Highway of Diamonds*, that explore travel and service work, and their connection to the inner life.

CCNS Refugee Support



Border wall,
San Luis, Arizona



Asylum seekers beginning processing with
US border patrol



Water, snacks, and basic hygiene supplies
and blankets for the onward journey

CCNS - Puppet shows around the world



Migrants meeting
the puppets!



Puppet show for Burmese refugees,
Mae Sot, Thailand



Water, snacks, basic hygiene
supplies and blankets for the
onward journey



Bicycles donated by local schools
to Afghan refugees



A new bike to ride to school

CCNS - Sacramento Afghan Refugee Support



A pizza welcome lunch with
newly arrived families