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The Giving List

Freedom to Choose



Husband-and-wife psychologists David and Bonnie Paul founded Freedom to Choose around 20 years ago (courtesy photo)

by Steven Libowitz

Last Sunday night, actor **Clarence Maclin** spoke to a sold-out Arlington Theatre audience at SBIFF's Virtuosos Awards about why he had spent years co-writing and then acting in *Sing Sing*, the feature film up for Best Picture at next month's Academy Awards. The movie depicts his earlier life, when he was sentenced to 17 years for robbery and found an outlet and healing by participating in Sing Sing prison's revolutionary Rehabilitation Through the Arts program.

"The message of this movie to the people on the other side of the prison's walls is that people in prison are just that — people," Maclin said. "They have the ability to change, to grow, to see something other than what's in front of us inside."

That's nothing new to The Freedom to Choose Project, the Santa Barbara-based nonprofit that for more than 20 years has been equipping participants in its programs — who almost exclusively are individuals incarcerated in California state prisons — with a palette of essential life skills, including conflict resolution, nonviolent communication, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, positive choice-making skills and self-awareness.

The prison program began as what was originally planned as a one-off workshop at Valley State prison, with a bare-bones curriculum developed by Santa Barbara husband-and-wife psychologists **David** and **Bonnie Paul**. Twenty years later, Freedom to Choose has led in-person programs for more than 7,200 members of the prison population, providing over 225,000 hours of in-person education, impacting rehabilitation and reintegration and reducing recidivism in every state prison across California as well as the Santa Barbara County Jail.

"We have served a lot of people who have been able to find a new way in their life by utilizing the skills to get out on parole and become contributing and productive members of society,"

said **Forrest Leichtberg**, the Project's Executive Director. "There are in-person workshops twice a year at each institution, and monthly support groups that provide participants with the opportunity to continue practicing the curriculum that focuses on working with triggers, healing from traumas and developing interpersonal communication skills."

It's hard to accurately measure with data the impact of Freedom to Choose programs, but there's one yardstick that can't be denied. Two of the seven full time employees at the organization are actually former inmates — and alumni who partook of the Freedom to Choose program while they were incarcerated.

Eddie Torres, now the nonprofit's Education & Project Coordinator and part of its facilitation team, was nearly a decade into his 17-year sentence for a violent crime when he was exposed to Freedom to Choose shortly after being transferred to Valley State in 2016.

Just like a stirring scene in the movie *Sing Sing*, he called an inmate he recognized by his gang moniker, Lazy, when he ran into him at Valley State.

"He told me, that's not my name anymore," Torres recalled. "I couldn't believe it. This guy was with me at another prison for three years and he was a knucklehead, not into rehabilitation or self-development, awareness, remorse or anything like that. But when he told me, 'it's true, I'm changing my life', it sparked my curiosity."

It was only about a week later that Torres attended the Freedom to Choose weekend workshop in the gym, and those first moments are still as fresh in his mind as the day it happened.

"There were 80 volunteers dressed in civilian clothes with huge smiles greeting everyone, which I'd never seen before," he said. "I was very nervous, and not really ready to be very vulnerable."

But when he spent time in his first Trio — the three-person format employed by the in-person program — he found himself softening.

Giving List Page 32 ▶

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MONTECITO WATER DISTRICT
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
ON ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE 100

Tuesday, February 25, 2025
9:30 A.M.*

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Montecito Water District (District) to be held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 9:30 A.M., the Board will consider the adoption of Ordinance 100, an ordinance adopting an administrative remedies procedure for challenges to rates, fees, charges, and assessments.

At the meeting on February 25, 2025 the public shall have an opportunity to be heard by the Board of Directors concerning the proposed ordinance.

*The meeting will be conducted in person at the District office located at 583 San Ysidro Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93108. Members of the public can also participate remotely. Remote participation information will be available on the meeting agenda posted at the District office, on the website www.montecitowater.com, and by calling 805-969-2271.

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ORDINANCE NO. 25

ORDINANCE OF THE GOVERNING BOARD
OF THE MONTECITO SANITARY DISTRICT
ESTABLISHING COMPENSATION OF DIRECTORS
AND REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 20

WHEREAS, Health and Safety Code section 6489 authorizes the Board of Directors to adopt an ordinance pursuant to Water Code sections 20200 et seq. in order to compensate each director above the amount established in Section 6489; and WHEREAS, on October 13, 2022, Ordinance No. 20 established the compensation to be paid to directors; and

WHEREAS, Water Code section 20202 authorizes the Board to adopt an ordinance to increase compensation in an amount not to exceed five percent of current compensation for each calendar year after the operative date of the last adjustment; and

WHEREAS, director compensation has not increased since the adoption of Ordinance No. 20; and

WHEREAS, the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors requires substantial time to carry out District business; and

WHEREAS, notice of a public hearing was published pursuant to Government Code section 6066 and Water Code section 20203; and

WHEREAS, the public hearing on the adoption of this ordinance was held on January 13, 2025, as required by Water Code section 20203.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that:

1. Compensation. The standard and maximum compensation of each director of the Board shall be **\$254.00** per day for each day of attendance at a regular or special meeting of the Board, a meeting of a standing or ad hoc committee of the Board, or for each day's service rendered as a Director by request of the Board, not exceeding a total of six days in any calendar month.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 27th day of January, 2025.

AYES: Directors Glaser, Johnson, Newquist, Ohlmann, and Ellwood T. Barrett II

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

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Montecito Journal

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS SUMMARY

Proposals due at **2:00 PM on Friday, March 14, 2025** for:

INDEFINITE DELIVERY-INDEFINITE QUANTITY "AS NEEDED" CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TESTING SERVICES – 3 YEAR CONTRACT TERM WITH COUNTY OPTION TO EXTEND ADDITIONAL 2 YEARS

Project Number(s): VARIOUS

General work description: CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TESTING (QUALITY ASSURANCE)

Funding Source(s): State, Local

The RFP is available at <https://pbsystem.planetbids.com/portal/43874/portal-home>

All RFP questions are due Friday, March 7, 2025 by 2:00 PM and must be submitted via PlanetBids. Confirmation of receipt will be provided. RFP questions and answers will be posted on the County PlanetBids website.

The cumulative total pages for the proposal must not exceed 30 pages (minimum 12 font size, single-spaced). Page count limit is exclusive of cover letter, blank pages or tabs, and required forms (i.e. Attachment A Agreement Cover Sheet, Attachment B Contractor Information Sheet, Resumes, etc.).

Proposals must be submitted electronically through PlanetBids by the deadline above.

The County hereby notifies all proposers that it will affirmatively insure that in any agreement entered into pursuant to this advertisement, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) will be afforded full opportunity to submit proposals in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, or disability in consideration for an award. You are encouraged to employ craftsmen and other workers from the local labor market whenever possible to do so. Local labor market is defined as the labor market within the geographical confines of the County of Santa Barbara, State of California.

This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the California DIR. Prevailing wages are required on this Proposal. The State DIR Director determines the general prevailing wage rates which can be obtained at the DIR website at <https://www.dir.ca.gov/>.

All times are 2:00 PM unless otherwise noted. Proposals must be received prior to or on the date due. Proposals received after the due date and time or received at the wrong location are considered nonresponsive and shall be rejected.

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Montecito Journal

◀ **Giving List (Continued from 20)**

“That night when I fell asleep, there was a sense of peace, a sense of something that was stirring inside of me to seek more.”

The next day was even more impactful, Torres recalled.

“It found something I had been searching for my entire life going back to being a young boy – unconditional love. No judgment, no advice, just the quiet presence of safety and compassion. I opened up and then I just broke down in tears.”

Torres was able to participate in the first cohort of the monthly program at Valley State Prison, working the exercises and moving through segments on respectful communication, confirming understanding, managing emotions and more.


“The pinnacle of the Freedom to Choose curriculum for me was working with your inner wounded child, being able to go back and talk to my little self and what he wanted or needed,” he recalled. “Being able to heal those wounds and go through all the developmental stages for me was life changing.”

More than six years after he first encountered Freedom to Choose, Torres was granted parole at his first opportunity. Shortly afterward he ran into another former inmate who was working at the nonprofit, began volunteering as an intern and was hired full time early last year.

“Freedom to Choose allowed me to understand myself, to be able to dig deep and heal myself from the traumas and abuses, learn to be vulnerable and authentic and to feel safe within a community,” Torres said. “I have the strength to work on a healthy self-esteem, understand my boundaries, be able to communicate and seek help when I need it.”

So deciding to work at the organization was a no-brainer.

“Early on, there was a volunteer at Valley State who had been incarcerated there, and he was a co-facilitator who told us, ‘I used to sit in that chair where you are,’” said Torres, who is still on parole. “That instilled the hope that change is possible. I’m so grateful to be able to give back what was given to me.”

With its low overhead, the vast majority of donations to Freedom to Choose goes directly towards making a difference. But there’s always also a need for more volunteers – which over the years have numbered more than 1,000. More volunteers would allow the nonprofit to expand its work to more prisons more frequently, in addition to affording volunteers themselves the chance to experience firsthand the difference you can make. 

Visit <https://freedomtochooseproject.org>

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **Ride the Bark Bus**, 546 Asilomar Way, Unit 104, Goleta, CA 93117. **Jonathan D Eymann**, 546 Asilomar Way, Unit 104, Goleta, CA 93117. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on February 5, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000326. Published February 13, 20, 27, March 6, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **Foundation Square of Lompoc; Tharon Lompoc LLC**, 1420 W North Ave, Lompoc, CA 93496. **Tharon Lompoc LLC**, 5967 W 3rd St Suite 360, Los Angeles, CA 90036. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 16, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000148. Published February 13, 20, 27, March 6, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **The Wine Country Cowgirls Polo Team**, 606 Alamo Pintado, 351, Solvang, CA 93463. **Matthew B Orr**, 606 Alamo Pintado, 351, Solvang, CA 93463. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 31, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000295. Published February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **House of Brutal Power Building Gym LLC; Strength Crews; House of Brutal Power Building Gym**, 865 Perry Ct, Santa Barbara, CA 93111. **House of Brutal Power Building Gym LLC**, 865 Perry Ct, Santa Barbara, CA 93111. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 29, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000271. Published February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **Home Cleaners Santa Barbara**, 14 Romaine Drive, Suite B, Santa Barbara, CA 93105. **Glenda V Oliva**, 14 Romaine Drive, Suite B, Santa Barbara, CA 93105. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 30, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000273. Published February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT: The following person(s) has (have) abandoned the use of the Fictitious Business Name(s): **Dr. Greenthumb's Orcutt**, 1604 E Clark Avenue, Suite 101, Orcutt, CA, 93455. **East Clark SB OPCO LLC**, 4675 MacArthur Ct FL 15, Newport Beach, CA 92660. This statement was originally filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on April 8, 2022. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL), filed January 29, 2025. Original FBN No. 2022-0000936. FBN 2025-0000260. Published February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **All Booked Up**, 5659 Stinson Way, 101, Goleta, CA 93117. **All Booked Up**, 5659 Stinson Way, 101, Goleta, CA 93117. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 16, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000157. Published January 30, February 6, 13, 20, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **Evoke Design Studio; Evoke Design; Evoke; Evoke Studio**, 636 West Ortega Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101. **Evoke Interiors**, PO Box 1104, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on January 7, 2025. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2025-0000042. Published January 23, 30, February 6, 13, 2025

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT: The following person(s) is/are doing business as: **Santa Barbara Senior Real Estate Planners; SB Home Prep; Santa Barbara Senior Move Manager; Your SB Rentals**, 5276 Hollister Avenue, Suite 263, Santa Barbara, CA 93111. **Rachel A Quittner**, 5276 Hollister Avenue, Suite 263, Santa Barbara, CA 93111. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Santa Barbara County on December 18, 2024. This statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the Office of the County Clerk. I hereby certify that this is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office. Joseph E. Holland, County Clerk (SEAL). FBN No. 2024-0002957. Published January 23, 30, February 6, 13, 2025