Disability Rights – A New Focus
By Charlotte Casey and Michele Mashburn

It is ironic how things work in life. The wheelchair lift installed in the rear of the Collins House in 2015 made it possible for Michele Mashburn to take on the Coordinator position in September last year. Since then Michele has earned high praise not just for her organizational skills around the office and her ability to attract and mentor student interns and volunteers, but also for the leading role she is playing in raising awareness of the barriers to full participation in public life faced by people with disabilities.

Starting with the January 20th Counter-inaugural march and rally led by Rise Up for Justice, Michele introduced the concept of Universal Design into event planning in the South Bay area. She continues to engage with community partner groups and other people involved at the San Jose Peace and Justice Center to inform people about the realities of living with a disability. “I am more disabled by my environment and people’s attitudes than my physical impairments,” Michele says.

Universal Design creates access for all without a need for adaptation or specialized design. It is not simply about making things accessible for people with disabilities. It is about inclusion and equality. In Europe, they take things a step further and use “Design for All.” Maybe one day, we can have a Center designed for all...not only structurally but issue-related as well.

“The coordinator position is a unique opportunity for me,” says Michele. “It fulfills my inner activist while also giving me a platform to create change.”

We Remember and Honor
By Charlotte Casey

In the past year, we have lost valuable members of the South Bay peace and justice community including:

Darlene Wallach, an unstoppable fighter for social justice, for the cause of political prisoners in the U.S., for the Palestinian people, for the rights of First Nations, for overturning the prison-industrial-military complex and for many other causes. She, along with her sister Donna, were among the handful of brave and pioneering activists to sail the first Free Gaza boats to successfully break the Israeli blockade of Gaza in August 2008. While supporting Palestinian fishermen during that trip, Darlene was abducted and held in an Israeli jail, her second arrest by Israeli security forces since 2002. Darlene was also active in standing up for the rights of students, parents, and teachers as a member of the Board of Trustees in the Luther Burbank School District.

Betsy Wolf-Graves, a former member of our Board and a stalwart of Silicon Valley De-Bug. On its website, De-Bug commemorated Betsy’s spirit: “…as soft as her voice and demeanor could be, when she needed to cut down the institutions that mistreated and oppressed our people, she was a samurai — with an ability to slice through to the truth with precision and power. …She was helping families challenge police, prosecutors, and the prison system. She often took on the hardest cases, and employed both her sharp analytical mind along with her nurturing heart. Because of that, she was often the only source of hope for those on the inside, some who thought they would never come home.” We also remember Billy Wachter, Tom Buell, Jean Embry, and Danny McCauslin.

Rise Up for Justice!
By Matthew J. Sahagian, General Secretary - Rise Up for Justice

Heading into 2017 with the inauguration of Trump looming over us, the San José Peace and Justice Center (SJPJC), Santa Clara County Peace & Freedom Party, and the South Bay Progressive Alliance initiated a series of meetings to organize a local counter-inaugural demonstration. In the course of organizing the successful action which drew 500 to 1000 people on a rainy Friday, the broad ad hoc coalition adopted the name Rise Up for Justice and a group of key organizers who met during the coalition-building process later decided to carry on the task of building mass actions in the San José area.

On May 1st, International Workers Day, we rose up again to take on a critical role in the organizing and staffing of the three mile march from Mexican Heritage Plaza to Arena Green. Our work and the tireless efforts of local labor and immigrant rights organizations helped make the 2017 march the largest since 2006. In the interim, RU4J organized, sponsored, and supported additional actions, including a February 5 welcoming for refugees action at San José International Airport on the heels of Trump’s first Muslim travel ban; a February 15 demonstration with Jewish Voice for Peace around the slogan “No ban, no wall, human rights for all,” a Not My President Day rally initiated by STAND on February 20; and a Willow Glen bank divestment crawl in protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline on February 25.

Today, RU4J is an official project of the SJPJC and consists of a core organizing committee working with a number of the original 50 co-sponsor organizations as well as new coalition partners like STAND and Healthy California. It is our firm belief that in these times of increasing uncertainty, unity in action must be a guiding principle around which we develop and grow the means to defend and empower our local community now and against future threats of injustice.

On August 19th, we’ll be joining with California Prison Focus and existing coalition partners to raise the flag of the new abolitionist movement as we organize a San Jose sister march and rally with the Washington D.C. Millions for Prisoners Human Rights campaign.

Keep up to date on all our events on the SJPIC calendar and join the discussion at http://riseup.forjustice.us.
Californians Demand Health Care for All!  
By Joan Simon, Santa Clara County Single Payer Health Care Coalition

Even though SB 562 (The Healthy California Act) was passed by the full Senate, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon stopped its forward progress in the Assembly for discussion and debate. Nevertheless an active campaign is underway to get him to reverse his decision and allow the bill to go forward. SB 562 would guarantee that all residents of California receive good, quality healthcare regardless of employment status, age, marital status or immigration status and save California about $37.5 billion in healthcare costs annually.

So why has the California State Assembly, controlled by Democrats, blocked SB 562, when recent polls show that 70% of Californians support the bill? The answer: The corporate-controlled Democratic Party of California works for big pharmaceutical and health insurance donors and not for the people. The State Democratic Party alone has taken $1.2 million from the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries.

On June 28th, about 500 health care activists held a spirited rally outside the Capitol in Sacramento. We marched into the Capitol building and took over the rotunda, chanting to demand that Speaker Rendon move SB 562 forward.

We need to fight corporate Democrats and Republicans and make sure that SB 562 passes the California State Legislature and is signed into law.

WILPF Works on Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty  
By Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom, San Jose Branch

Trump’s dangerous claims that “all options are on the table” in Korea, and the US increased arming of South Korea highlights the urgency of the work of San José Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Over the past several months they have focused on increasing public awareness of the United Nations General Assembly’s Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty negotiations. Major US media did not report on these negotiations, in a climate in which the president, Congress, and the military are planning huge programs to modernize our nuclear weapons.

On July 7, after a seven-year process, 122 of the 193 UN member countries successfully passed the treaty that will go into effect when 50 member nations sign and ratify it. This will herald an end to two decades of paralysis in nuclear disarmament efforts, fill a legal gap and complement the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, none of the nine nuclear-weapons-owning countries, including the US, participated in the treaty negotiations!

San José WILPF and the Raging Grannies participated in a number of local events, speaking to others about the issue and passing out over 1000 informative flyers, encouraging readers to EDUCATE themselves.

WHAT CAN WE DO?
1. Educate ourselves and others: www.icaw.org and www.reachingcriticalwill.org
2. Support the Mayors for Peace Initiative to abolish nuclear weapons by 2020: www.mayorsforpeace.org
3. Join WILPF – call 408-294-0981

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Peace Crossroads Anti-Nuclear Weapon Rally, June 17, 2017 with WILPF & the Raging Grannies.

Immigration Relief Project Expands  
By Michelle Cordova

The Immigration Relief Project is celebrating its 5th anniversary. Last semester we gave presentations on immigrant rights, immigration relief and fraud protection to over 5000 people. Student interns and volunteers handled close to 700 individual consultations; over half (410) of those cases were referred to services to assist with obtaining different visas, citizenship, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and more.

Through the San José Mexican Consulate, we now operate in 5 counties: Santa Clara, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Alameda. We accompany the Mexican Consulate when it holds its monthly mobile consulates in cities such as Salinas, Greenfield, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville. This additional outreach has added to the list of nonprofits with which we have relationships. It also connects us with people we otherwise would not have been able to reach.

The growth of this project is supported and dependent on students from San José State University. They are the reason why we can continue to provide the services free of charge. They are trained at the beginning of each semester and spend many hours researching to find new possible collaborations with English as a second language and citizenship classes, immigration lawyers and more. The Interns create charts, presentations, and videos to analyze the latest data and policies related to immigration.

Green Party Digs In  
By Sandy Perry

2017 has been a year of building for the Green Party of Santa Clara County. The current membership in the main entered the party during the 2016 election. Disgusted by the treachery and political corruption of corporate Democrats, former Bernie supporters flocked to help build an independent political party that does not accept corporate money.

Green Party members this year have participated and played leading roles in the battle for single payer health care in California, for clean energy and for housing in San Jose, and for peace and against DAPL. At the same time, we helped build the South Bay Progressive Alliance, a new non-partisan group dedicated to electing local corporate-free candidates. Join us at 7 pm on the fourth Thursday every month at the San Jose Peace and Justice Center, to find out what you can do to help the movement for economic and social justice break free from the dead-end politics of corporate Democrats.

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SCC Peace & Freedom Becomes Membership Organization  
By Jon Britton, County Chair

The Republican and Democratic parties, with differing electoral bases and campaign rhetoric but both serving the interest of the banks and giant corporations, are in crisis. On both the national and state levels, pro-corporate Democrats have captured the chairs of that party against strong opposition from anti-corporate delegates. Parts of the progressive base, such as Draft Bernie for a People’s Party (www.draftbernie.org), are in revolt.

The Peace and Freedom Party has been on the ballot in California for nearly 50 years, challenging the pro-corporate duopoly. The Santa Clara County PFP Central Committee recently adopted bylaws to reconstitute the county branch as a membership organization, as opposed to simply a ballot party with thousands of registered but few active members.

You are invited to join with others in building a multi-tendency party that can make a difference—a party that combines mass action and electoral action, a party that participates in and helps to unify and lead the diverse people’s struggles now on the rise, a party with a socialist program and controlled by its members.

For more information, come to our Labor Day picnic, email us at sfp santacala-ra@peaceandfreedom.org, or leave a message at 408-207-6249.

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