



THE WEEKLY

COUNCIL INFORMATION REPORT

January 6, 2023

Sacred Ground

Founder of local group speaks on new challenges

By JEANNIE TYRRELL
Staff Writer

Sacred Rok is a Yosemite-based nonprofit that was established in 2009 — and dedicated to getting youth into experiencing nature.

By helping youth learn to respect nature, Sacred Rok founder Ron Kauk believes the organization is also helping youth learn to respect themselves.

"We're always talking about what it means to have the kids going out into nature and having that be part of an education, and our nonprofit has been going for about 12 years," said Kauk.

He said the fundamentals for the nonprofit have been built by having over 30 years of experience with rock climbing in Yosemite and also by traveling the world.

"I was getting to a stage of life where the knowledge

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Submitted photo

Sacred Rok's founder, Ron Kauk, says he's been witnessing the youth of today becoming more and more disconnected from nature. His organization is committed to improving the mental, spiritual and physical health of the next generation.

Supporting Youth in our Community

The City of Merced Parks and Community Services Department enjoys a collaborative partnership with Sacred Rok, <https://www.sacredrok.org/>. Sacred Rok is a nonprofit organization based in Yosemite. The organization takes young people on camping trips, provides educational presentations, and works with other youth-serving agencies.

On December 20th, youth from the My City Mentoring program, a City of Merced grant-funded program, and Merced Youth Council traveled to Yosemite National Park. There, they enjoyed a beautiful day with Sacred Rok's co-founder Ron Kauk who led a hike to Upper Yosemite Falls. These trips allow program participants to discover and build meaningful connections with nature.

The My City Mentoring program provides youth with mentorship, vocational training, and outdoor engagement opportunities, creating a space where participants develop supportive, caring relationships—also giving them the opportunity for growth and resiliency.

The program serves youth ages 13-17 who may need extra support and guidance. Participants learn they are part of a community where adults are invested in their well-being. Through recreational outings to our local nature preserves and Yosemite National park, our community's young people will discover more about themselves while building their confidence and learning ways to improve their community.



SAVE THE DATE

City of Merced

2023 Annual Town Hall Meetings

Wednesday, Jan. 25th, 6 - 8 PM

Merced Multicultural Arts Center

645 W. Main St., Merced

Tuesday, Jan. 31st, 6 - 8 PM

Cruickshank Middle School

601 Mercy Ave, Merced

Thursday, Feb. 9th, 6 - 8 PM

Weaver Middle School

3076 E. Childs Ave, Merced

Youth group hike article continued.

Submitted photo
Sacred Rok is a Yosemite based non-profit organization that was founded in 2009. The organization is dedicated to getting youth into experiencing nature. The organization hosted an outing on Dec. 21. Members of Sacred Rok are shown in this image.



SACRED

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from those experiences have challenged me to find the wisdom in it," he said.

"So to challenge myself to find the wisdom in it, we started a nonprofit to help youth connect to nature."

Sacred Rok is based in Yosemite, but the organization has expanded toward the area of Bishop.

"We keep challenging ourselves to make sense of the importance of what we're doing," he said.

Presently, Kauk said he's been witnessing the youth of today becoming more and more disconnected from nature.

"Our kids are getting so disconnected with all the technology. We're kind of in a state of shock because stuff is happening so fast and we can't keep up with the side effects," he said.

Kauk described the situation he's seeing as an uphill battle with human addictions, especially when it comes to social media. The challenges include over-powering a strengthening pull that is keeping youth and adults away from going outside.

Kauk agreed that people today are becoming more and more immersed in a "virtual" reality.

"It's really challenging me in a way to think about how you can articulate what it means to have an education about being human and about how we are nature," he said.

"We are nature, but now we're getting polluted with a

lot of stuff, just like our atmosphere is getting polluted."

He said his overall goal is to hold onto the commitment that Sacred Rok has toward the health and well-being of the next generation.

"I just keep waking up to the simplicity of what we do," said Kauk.

"We're taking kids for walks in nature."

He added it's far more than that. Kauk said one element of the program is about adults interacting with youth and getting along naturally.

"That can promote your authentic self and if there's anything we want to be in life, it's our authentic self," he said.

"I joke around a lot of times by saying we've got to set up a 12-step program back to being human."

Tracking his history as a rock climber, Kauk said all he's prepared for are challenges. He said he's faced one challenge after another, leading himself to scale a 20,000 foot rock tower at one point in his life.

"I look at these challenges as more of a motivation for me" he said.

Looking ahead, Kauk said he plans to expand Sacred Rok even farther and collaborate with organizations with common interests.

"We really want to collaborate in every way, shape or form through our communities and locally," he said.

"Not only to try to get more support, but to get a deeper understanding of what our mental, spiritual and physical health is going to look like."

Kauk also said processing the Covid-19 pandemic

has added to his journey toward an understanding. He spoke about his experience with the regulations and what it meant for the nonprofit.

"It was as if we were just tested to see how much we'd go along with everything and it puts us in a tricky position," he said.

Kauk clarified testing the waters of regulation or questioning it wasn't to disrespect the idea of Covid-19.

"We're not trying to be that way, but with all these regulations, vaccines and masking. You just have to stand back and ask what was it all about," he said.

Kauk explained he's a firm believer in a person thinking clearly for themselves and using their intuition.

"We're nature. Our organization is about building community in regards to all of our relations, which means the land, the air, the water, the animal life and plant life," he said.

Kauk said he believes people have to rise to the occasion and specifically, Sacred Rok offers day trips and camping trips for youth in foster care, youth in the probation system and for other young people who can benefit from the opportunity to learn about nature.

"People always ask if we are seeing any results. Yeah every time we go out, we enjoy ourselves and you can feel that everybody had a good time and connected," he said.

"They've expanded their minds and got to think a little."

Visit www.sacredrok.org to learn more about the nonprofit's activities and outings.



A message from Acting Police Chief Joe Weiss.

In 2014, Chief Norm Andrade established the Disruptive Area Response Team (DART) to address quality-of-life issues within our community. Since then, DART has done exceptional work supplementing our Patrol Division by addressing many problems, including human trafficking, illegal gambling, blight, and connecting with the community. Most notable is DART's work with the unhoused. Through partnerships with county agencies and nonprofit organizations, DART officers have aided in the delivery of services to many people.

Merced is a dynamic community of about 93,000 people. The Merced Police Department employs 98 sworn officers, approximately the same number of officers employed in 2010. Over the past several months, the Merced Police Department has been faced with the challenge of staffing the Patrol Division and specialty units necessary to meet the needs of our community.

Despite our efforts to recruit new and experienced officers coupled with several employees on extended leave, we continue to face staffing shortages. Therefore, effective Monday, January 9, 2023, the Department will temporarily disband DART to strengthen our Patrol Division. We did not make this decision lightly, knowing how this would impact community members, businesses, and the DART officers who are very passionate about this work. Without DART, our Patrol Division officers will fill the void in understaffed areas. As we grow the Department and fill positions with competent and qualified professionals, we anticipate reestablishing DART.

We ask for and appreciate the community's support during this transition.

Public Works in Action Storm Preparedness

Public Works Crews installed a Muscle Wall Barrier and sandbags along North Bear Creek Drive.

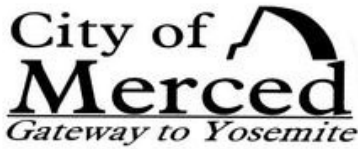


Storm Prep Work Throughout the City

Sewer/Storm and Streets Crews continue to work throughout the City to prepare for more weather.



Sand locations shown below. The Merced Fire Station at 99 West 16th Street will distribute sandbags as needed: for information on sandbag availability contact Merced Fire at (209) 385-6891. Sand and sandbags can also be obtained from the County Public Works Department. Please visit www.countyofmerced.com/sandbags



SAND LOCATIONS

ADDRESS	LOCATION	QUANTITY
Buena Vista & Sarasota		5 Yards
Parsons Av. & Brookdale Dr.		5 Yards
Parsons Av. & Oregon Dr.		5 Yards
W.N. Bear Creek & Shadow Brook Dr.		5 Yards
Cheney Dr. & Buckner Rd.	South of E. Gerard Ave.	5 Yards
West Side of Mansionette	South of Redwing Ct.	5 Yards
Campus Dr. & Line Dr.	West of G St.	5 Yards
W. 24 th & K St.	North of RailRoad Tracks	5 Yards



THE
retreat
AT MERCED
APARTMENTS
AN ALLIANCE REALTY SERVICES INC.

YOU'RE INVITED

Retreat at Merced
Grand Opening Ceremony

JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE THE GRAND OPENING OF
THE RETREAT AT MERCED WITH A RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023 • 11:30AM TO 1PM
1137 B Street, Merced, CA 95341


KINDLY RSVP BY JANUARY 11, 2023 TO
SIGNATUREMARKETING@RICHPANMGT.COM

ENJOY LITE BITES, REFRESHMENTS, RIBBON CUTTING AND A TOUR OF THE COMMUNITY.



CITY OF MERCED PARKS AND RECREATION

OKINAWAN KARATE & Escrima




TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS AT THE ROSSOTTI CENTER
1045 W. 25TH ST.

AGES 6-12: 5:30PM | AGES 13+: 6:30PM | \$45 PER MONTH

KABAROAN ESCRIMA IS A UNIQUE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ART FORM FROM THE PHILIPPINES. KARATE IS THE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ART FROM OKINAWA. SENSEI SCOTT LEMBERGER HAS 30+ YEARS OF MARTIAL ART EXPERIENCE. LEARN PRACTICAL SELF DEFENSE COMBINED WITH PHILOSOPHICAL TENETS OF HONESTY, INTEGRITY, DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT.

REGISTER AT OUR OFFICE 632 W. 18TH ST,
CALL US FOR MORE INFO! (209) 385-6235



CITY OF MERCED PARKS & RECREATION

ADULT BASKETBALL LEAGUE 2023



Men's League Now Forming:
18 and older and out of High School

Season runs January- April 2023
Games played on Sundays only

Registration Period:
October 31st, 2022 - December 30 , 2022

Team entry fee:
\$500

Format:
10 games guaranteed plus playoffs
Location: El Capitan or Merced High School Gymnasium

Registration forms are available at our
Parks & Recreation Office

Parks & Recreation
632 W. 18th St, Merced
Hours: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM (Closed 12:00 PM- 1:00 PM)
For more information call (209) 385-6235 or
email Kindavongl@cityofmerced.org




THE GRAVEL IS CALLING!



RIDE THE ULTIMATE GRAVEL EXPERIENCE

MARCH 18, 2023

REGISTER ONLINE BEFORE FEBRUARY 12 AND YOU'LL RECEIVE A **FREE** JERSEY WITH YOUR REGISTRATION!

REGISTER NOW

JOIN THE RIDE!




MERCED, CA
MARCH 18, 2023