

## President's Message



**Deanna Hanson**

President

The Renaissance Society  
of Sacramento

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Renaissance Website:

<https://csus.edu/rensoc>

### Key Dates

**Monday, January 4, 10am**  
Renaissance Board Meeting

**Friday, January 16, 10am**  
New member orientation

**Friday, January 16, 11am**  
Open House, ballrooms 1&2  
Student Union

**Monday, January 12**  
Spring Catalog posted

**Tuesday, January 20, 8am**  
Class Registration

**Saturday, January 24, 2pm**  
Peter, Paul and Mary concert

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[Audio Clip](#) for CapRadio.

[Video](#) for channel 10.

## Happy, Happy 2026!!

I hope you all had wonderful December holidays. I'm not trying to rush time but you are likely looking forward to February and spring semester classes!

Did you give Renaissance Society memberships as gifts this year? If so, invite your friends to Orientation and Open House on Friday, January 16 and help them with their first class registration. The catalog will be online on January 12, and registration begins Tuesday, January 20 at 8:00 AM. There are many wonderful classes and events planned.

I am so pleased Jackie Lamb has agreed to step into the Vice President role following Ralph Paladino's resignation. This is a significant role, and we thank you so much, Jackie.

Norv Wellsfry and the Nominating Committee will soon begin interviewing interested board candidates. If you are curious, visit the Renaissance Society website and click on Board and Committee Responsibilities under Our Board and Governance. Don't hesitate to call me or anyone on the Board for more information.

Your generosity continues to amaze me! Ryan Choi from the ASI Food Pantry announced that Renaissance Society is the winner of the Golden Plate Award for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. This award signifies that RS has contributed more than any other entity on campus. A video of the Friendsgiving Feast with our Renaissance volunteers was shown at the last Friday Forum and a link is included in this newsletter. Thanks to ALL who participated and especially to Carol Barake for organizing RS participation.

Unfortunately, President Wood was unable to join us live at the December 5 Forum. He produced a terrific video for Renaissance Society which I think you will enjoy. [Here is the link](#) for this video, which is also on our website.

2026 will be a very big year – our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. How should we celebrate? We would love your ideas. Of course, 2026 is also the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our country. Watch for classes and celebrations for this significant event!! Ideas??? Do you know anyone who was an early member?

We will be working with our Sac State partners this spring to draft an updated Memorandum of Understanding. It has been five years since our existing agreement was signed, and we look forward to continuing our relationship. It will be a busy spring!

Enjoy the rest of your holidays and your January!



## Mynga Futrell Shares Her Experience with Family Alzheimer's Disease

*By Judy Lewis*

A lifetime of dealing with family dementia has given Mynga Futrell the background to be called an expert. She grew up in Kentucky's bluegrass area and attended elementary and secondary school on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University, where her father chaired the Geography-Geology Department. She completed a double major in Chemistry and Earth Science in 1966, followed by graduate studies at the University of Wyoming where she obtained an M.S. in Natural Science and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Science Education.



The Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 had spurred varied educational opportunities for high school science teachers. So, while teaching, Mynga attended several NSF-funded summer institutes before discovering a generously funded program at U.W. Her life's journey has been heavily impacted by two cases of Alzheimer's disease, first with her mother, and then with her husband, Paul Geisert. She met Paul in Laramie, Wyoming while doing graduate work on assistantship. He was a faculty member in the same department.

Mynga says she and her husband had similar resumes, and sometimes they both applied for the same job. After working in Wyoming for a few years, they were ready to move on from "cowboy country" to a city. They agreed that if either of them found a new position, the couple would head to that area. She landed a position at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., although Mynga reports that she "had never met a deaf person." After eight weeks of intensive training, as well as on-going training, she taught both students and instructors. She taught staff how to design teaching materials and to make their classes more effective. She considers this position the highlight of her career. An eyesight problem from childhood, amblyopia, which was referred to as "lazy eye" in those days, resulted in surgery at the age of 10. This caused her eye muscles to stiffen in adulthood, making it diffi-

cult to control images. Using sign language required extensive eye movement, and eventually she developed double vision.

Starting in the 1970s, Mynga and Paul decided to see parts of the U.S., Eastern Canada and Europe via riding their touring bikes. They pedaled through Pennsylvania's Dutch Country, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Roman roads of Italy, and particularly delighted in spending 10 weeks exploring rural France. Since this was pre-Internet, each day they looked in small village centers for postings of rooms

for the night to rent and met friendly families.

In 1985, they moved to California, where they developed their own company, Instructional Systems, carried out subcontracts for State of California projects and were able to work remotely. This allowed them to work from Kentucky when Mynga's mother "followed Ronald Reagan's decline into Alzheimer's disease." For three years, they cared for her, learning how to deal with the symptoms and inventing interventions until it was absolutely necessary to place her in a home.

Upon return to California, they continued their company until Paul developed Alzheimer's disease. Eventually it became necessary to place him in a facility. Sadly, he was infected with COVID and passed away shortly before the vaccine became available.

For 25 years, Mynga has volunteered for the Alzheimer's Association, serving on the Education Committee and participating in conferences and workshops. She reports that seven million persons in the U.S. already have some form of Alzheimer's disease. Mynga plans to share her knowledge with Renaissance Society members by facilitating a "Delving into Dementia" offering Spring semester. Her seminar goal is to benefit any curious life-long learner by providing helpful information on diagnosis and cognitive decline, along with the resourceful strategies and "caregiver survival" aspects of the neurological diseases.

## PROGRAM COMMITTEE ADDRESSES MEMBER CONCERNS ABOUT “CLOSED” AND “WAITLISTED” CLASSES

*By Deborah Seiler*

Have you ever attempted to enroll in a Renaissance class or shared interest group (SIG) only to discover it is closed or that your status is returned as “waitlisted”?

If so, you’re not alone and some have expressed surprise and even concern. This past Fall semester, Program Committee chair Jackie Lamb recruited Deborah Seiler and Allan Keown to reach out to the various programs with very limited or closed enrollment to learn more about the reasons. Class leaders were invited to either in person or zoom meetings to discuss their respective learning environments.

The results were extremely enlightening. The subcommittee found that the reasons fell into several basic categories:

- Space limitations
- Expertise requirements
- Ability of the leader to adequately monitor class projects/work submitted

For example, the music class needs a room on campus with a piano and the only one available has a seating capacity of 40. The games group rotates meetings at members’ homes, most of which can only accommodate three tables of four players at most.

The Great Books class is a special category that adheres to the Great Books curriculum in which only the book is read without reference to outside sources. The leader does not express his/her views but leads the discussion in accordance with the curriculum rules. Another book group, like most, considers 10-12 members the optimal size for good discussion.

Special expertise is required by some leaders to conduct specialized training in areas such as photography, foreign language, or creative writing for example.

In speaking with them, the subcommittee was amazed and inspired by the work these leaders do. But, working together, the leaders and the subcommittee also sought mitigating measures to address broader member concerns. One leader willingly switched to allow attendance on a first-come, first-served basis for the first time in many years. Another offered to lead a second group. Yet another realized two vacancies in her group had gone unadvertised and therefore unfilled. One group even wrote a description of their class for this newsletter to explain its chief goals and the limitations it operated under. As a result of the evaluation, the subcommittee’s efforts resulted in enhanced access to some classes.

Perfection is not possible under circumstances in which legitimate limitations exist. But working together, program committee members and program leaders are striving to address the situation with transparency and cooperation. If you would like a copy of the subcommittee’s report, contact [Deborah.seiler2@gmail.com](mailto:Deborah.seiler2@gmail.com)

Insider Tip: Be sure to sign up for the classes you want as soon as Spring enrollment opens on Tuesday, January 20 at 8am. Your *Weekly Update* has all the details.

## El Dorado Musical Theatre Tour of Performing Art Venue & Presentation

El Dorado Musical Theatre (EDMT) is an Arts & Entertainment Partner with The Renaissance Society. EDMT will be performing *Something Rotten* in early February 2026. This event includes a comprehensive tour of the facility, followed by an engaging presentation that highlights the intersection of theater production and costume design. This will be a unique and valuable experience for all attendees and will include:

- Event Schedule
- Brief introduction to El Dorado Musical Theatre, the upcoming performance of *Something Rotten*, and the significance of the Renaissance era in the context of the show.
- Facility Tour - A guided tour of our
- theater facilities, including costumes, props and set shops.
- Presentations & Fashion Show focused on the costume design process for *Something Rotten*, showcasing period-inspired designs and how we bring the 1590s to life on stage. This will include a mini "fashion show" of some of the key costumes for the production.
- Q&A Session
- Light refreshments

### Space is Limited & Registration is Required!

This event has a limited capacity so **if you register and then cannot attend, be sure to cancel**, and allow another member to enjoy this presentation and tour and support EDMT. For more information including address detail in El Dorado Hills, and to register **after January 4<sup>th</sup>**:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1967693396919?aff=oddttdtcreator>

Find out more information about El Dorado Musical Theatre at <https://>



### Dear Renaissance Society Members,

As we reflect on another year of learning, community, and service, we are reminded once again of the remarkable generosity of our members. Your continued support of the Renaissance Society Scholarship and Endowment Program has made a profound and deeply personal ar deeply personal.

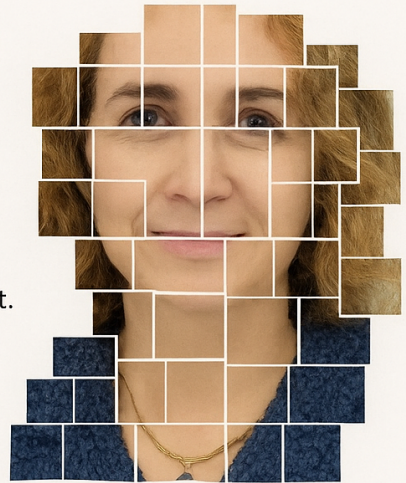
This year, we were honored to meet students whose journeys have been touched—and in many cases transformed—by your kindness. One of these students is **Anya**, a recent scholarship recipient.

Her story is both courageous and inspiring. Like many of our scholars, she has faced challenges few of us can imagine, from navigating college in a new country to balancing her education with the needs of her family.

With the support of Renaissance Society donors, she found the strength to continue. At our celebration event, she shared how meeting those who believed in her helped renew her courage and reaffirm her dreams. Her gratitude is a

reflection of the impact **you** make every single year.

Thank you for making this possible. Thank you for believing in students you may never meet, but whose lives are forever changed because of your compassion.



# The Challenge of a Capitalistic Democracy

*By Darrell Freeman*

This article is designed to offer a perspective as to why it seems that our United States Congress processes so slowly and sometimes seems to be paralyzed when it comes to constructing and acting on important public policy issues. As I have advanced in past articles, part of the challenge of public attitudes and assessment of the state of democracy in the country is the tendency to focus myopically on current affairs without adequately considering the history of the country's political development.

In the early days of the creation of what was to become the United States of America, a group of mostly wealthy colonial landowners met to discuss the state of the English colonies in relationship to their mother country Great Britain. The Second Continental Congress met and negotiated for 14 months of continuous session until they agreed on the wording of the Declaration of Independence. (May 10, 1775- July 4, 1776)

Members of that Congress debated issues argued in Thomas Paine's "Common-Sense" pamphlet that the colonies had a large enough population to survive economically without Britain. Also advanced was the notion of free trade with the world without British restrictions. Many members had business and wealth connections with the mother country Britain, while others felt the general population of the country would benefit more from independence and self-government.

It took four years from the drafting of the U.S. Constitution by the Constitutional Convention (May 1778) and the creation of the Bill of Rights by the First U.S. Congress, to ratification by the 13 states (December 1791). Economic issues negotiated included forbidding the States to impose tariffs, print currency and protection of private property rights. The federal government was granted authority to levy and collect taxes, regulate interstate and foreign commerce, create uniform bankruptcy laws and other protection of private property rights, to identify a few of the economic issues advanced in the document

Currently there are approximately 13,000 registered federal lobbyists in the United States. Among this group are more than 1300 lobbyists associated with agribusiness and the agriculture sector. Roughly 2,000–2,500 registered federal lobbyists are associated with banking, securities, investments and broader financial interests actively lobbying Congress. Approximately 2000–3500 registered lobbyists are involved in healthcare advocacy (hospitals, nursing homes, pharmaceuticals, health insurance and health professionals). This number represents about 50% of the stake holders working to influence the legislative activity of members of Congress. Let's assume that the other 50% (6500) advocate on behalf of public interest /public policy.

What's the point? From the inception of the public policy determinations creating the United States of America many stake holders, especially those of economic interests, have had a significant impact on the creation of

public policy and laws of this country. The advocacy of special interest lobbyists arguably are a major reason legislative action in the U.S. Congress (and State legislatures as well) may appear to be stymied in its public policy development work. Governing in a capitalistic democracy is complicated and challenging. There are a multitude of special interest stake holders constantly attempting to influence our democratic governance. The history of our country demonstrates that governing is often frustratingly slow and painfully inefficient. However, it is eventually assured and has 250 years of continuity as proof.

Happy New Year, and keep the faith



## WALKABOUTS TALENT YIELDS BIG CONTRIBUTION TO THE ASI FOOD PANTY

*By Deborah Seiler*

Renaissance member Nancy Schoellkopf was fortunate to have a good friend for a walk when she needed one. Nancy and Janice Stern were asked by Walkabouts co-leaders Donna Eash and Alan Wong to lead the Oct. 22 walk to visit local art murals. (one walk is 2 miles, for “tortoises”, the other is 4 miles for “hares”.)

Nancy tapped her friend Linda Sabella who is passionate about cataloging and photographing all Sacramento’s outdoor murals. Here’s Nancy:

*In the past, Linda’s taken me and other friends on walking tours of the downtown and midtown area, pointing out the murals to us. She is a wealth of information on the artists and many of the stories behind the murals. At my request, she developed the route for the walkabout for Janice and me. We gave her the parameters—four miles for the hares, two miles for the tortoises—and she drew the maps and created booklets with photos of all the murals in them. On the day of the Walkabout, she didn’t just give us the route, she actually led a guided tour for anyone who chose to take the shorter Tortoise route. I led the Hares on the longer route—for those who wanted to get in those extra miles (and see a few extra murals), but I couldn’t give the tour Linda gave.*

Linda made beautiful booklets of the many murals she had photographed to distribute to the walkers. The Walkabouts members were delighted and wanted to reimburse her not only for the cost but also for her expertise, talent, and time. Yet Linda would not accept payment.

So, Nancy and Janice suggested that members could donate their contributions to the booklets to the ASI Food Pantry. Everyone, including Linda, agreed this was a great idea and Nancy delivered a check for over \$250 to Ryan Choi of the Food Pantry.

Ryan was curious about the source of the funds and, at this writer’s suggestion, the group gathered on Friday, Dec. 5 so he could present them with a certificate of appreciation.

Even better... Nancy is willing to collect a monthly donation to the Food Pantry during future walkabouts.

Thank you, Linda and the entire Walkabouts team!!



Left to right: Ryan Choi, Donna Eash, Nancy Schoellkopf, Linda Sabella

## Greetings, ASI Food Pantry friends, partners, supporters, and staff:

### It's time for a data snapshot!

Since November 1st, we've welcomed 230 new students to the ASI Food Pantry, who are joining a whopping 2,405 undergrads and grads who have utilized our services this semester. The food we provide also helps to feed approximately 9,000 additional household members who rely on the students shopping here for their groceries.

| Fall Semester 2025<br><i>#s now include locker orders.</i> | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Fall Semester 2025 |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|--------------------|
| Week 1 - 8/25 - 8/29                                       | 101 | 168  | 148 | 97    | 78  | 592                |
| Week 2 - 9/1 - 9/5                                         | 0   | 139  | 198 | 161   | 111 | 609                |
| Week 3 - 9/8 - 9/12                                        | 119 | 159  | 180 | 155   | 76  | 689                |
| Week 4 - 9/15 - 9/19                                       | 90  | 155  | 180 | 126   | 18  | 569                |
| Week 5 - 9/22 - 9/26                                       | 93  | 173  | 177 | 141   | 57  | 641                |
| Week 6 - 9/29 - 10/3                                       | 97  | 159  | 177 | 120   | 79  | 632                |
| Week 7 - 10/6 - 10/10                                      | 78  | 164  | 184 | 134   | 0   | 560                |
| Week 8 - 10/13 - 10/17                                     | 79  | 129  | 166 | 140   | 66  | 580                |
| Week 9 - 10/20 - 10/24                                     | 79  | 144  | 176 | 130   | 65  | 594                |
| Week 10 - 10/27 - 10/31                                    | 105 | 178  | 186 | 104   | 71  | 644                |
| Week 11 - 11/3 - 11/7                                      | 100 | 171  | 175 | 137   | 93  | 676                |
| Week 12 - 11/10 - 11/14                                    | 98  | 0    | 193 | 120   | 79  | 490                |
| Week 13 - 11/17 - 11/21                                    |     |      |     |       | 0   | 0                  |

### Compared to previous year, same time period:

| Fall Semester 2024      | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Fall Semester 2024 |
|-------------------------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|--------------------|
| Week 1 - 8/26 - 8/30    | 67  | 91   | 114 | 120   | 0   | 392                |
| Week 2 - 9/2 - 9/6      | 0   | 126  | 169 | 125   | 10  | 430                |
| Week 3 - 9/9 - 9/13     | 73  | 148  | 173 | 140   | 15  | 549                |
| Week 4 - 9/16 - 9/20    | 96  | 138  | 161 | 143   | 9   | 547                |
| Week 5 - 9/23 - 9/27    | 92  | 159  | 150 | 122   | 4   | 527                |
| Week 6 - 9/30 - 10/4    | 68  | 120  | 154 | 139   | 6   | 487                |
| Week 7 - 10/7 - 10/11   | 70  | 127  | 158 | 135   | 14  | 504                |
| Week 8 - 10/14 - 10/18  | 78  | 120  | 147 | 134   | 1   | 480                |
| Week 9 - 10/21 - 11/25  | 78  | 144  | 168 | 124   | 1   | 515                |
| Week 10 - 10/28 - 11/1  | 75  | 126  | 139 | 128   | 6   | 474                |
| Week 11 - 11/4 - 11/8   | 66  | 127  | 157 | 148   | 0   | 498                |
| Week 12 - 11/11 - 11/15 | 0   | 130  | 135 | 134   | 6   | 405                |

### Zooming out for a second:

Here's what we know about food security resource usage in Sacramento this past month:

- 3,226 total household members, relying on 2,754 visits from 1,433 individuals, served at the ASI Food Pantry in October 2025.
- 18,512 total household members, relying on 6,169 individuals, served at the South Sacramento Interfaith Partnership (SSIP) Food Closet in October 2025.
- 372,728 total household members from across our county served at the Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services in October 2025.

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Last month, we reached more people than any other month in our organization's 9-year history, shattering the previous record by nearly 28,000 visits.

That's not a record we ever hoped to break, but it's a powerful reminder of just how many Sacramentans are struggling right now.

We're incredibly grateful for our donors, volunteers and supporters as well as our 110 amazing partner agencies who continue to show up for families across Sacramento County when they need us most.

With the holidays approaching, our work is far from over. If you'd like to help, visit [sacramentofoodbank.org](https://sacramentofoodbank.org) to make a gift or get involved.



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Your advocacy, encouragement, and continued care for our team goes a long way!

The ASI Food Pantry has been selected as the recipient of several fundraising campaigns for the month of November - December 2025.

1. **Empty Bowls 2025, hosted by Sac State Art students.**
2. **Swarmfunding Campaign for ASI Friendsgiving Feast 2025.**
3. **Sacramento Democrats 2025 Holiday Party.**
4. More will be posted on <https://asi.csus.edu/post/hunger-rising-california> as we spend the last part of this year sending out thank you notes, recognizing and appreciating our core partners and supporters, and taking time to humbly reflect on a blessed 2025.

Best,  
Ryan Choi

ASI Student Services Manager  
Associated Students, Inc. | Sacramento State  
[Book a 20-minute Zoom call with me!](#)  
916.539.6445

[Become a KSSU DJ!](#) | [DJ Service Rates](#)  
[Volunteer \(Food Pantry\)](#) | [Donate \(Food Pantry\)](#)  
Strengths: Communicator|Achiever|Includer|Maximizer|Belief

## Peter, Paul and Mary Tribute

Enjoy a family-friendly Peter, Paul and Mary Tribute Song-Along Concert, presented by RS member Michael Hersher, along with Peter Baird and Lily Young.

The **new** venue, date and time are:  
January 24, 2pm  
Bethany Presbyterian Church  
5625 24th Street

Free and open to the public.  
Children are welcome.

**Registration is required.**  
Go [here](#) for more information and to register.

