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Council honors White Pony Express founder, Sufism Reoriented spiritual director

By Jennifer Wake



Dr. Carol Weyland Conner Photo provided

During the June 12 Lafayette Council Meeting, council members recognized in a Proclamation Dr. Carol Weyland Conner, spiritual director of Sufism Reoriented and founder of White Pony Express and Following Francis who passed away on April 22.

In recent years Conner won national prominence and numerous civic awards for the volunteer service programs she founded which seek to help those on the margins of society move closer to the mainstream. According to a press release, Conner was tireless in her efforts to care for the underserved, downtrodden and homeless, who she saw as her own family. Following Francis, founded in 2011, staged colorful outdoor "fares," musical plays, and other activities for nearly 15,000 children throughout the nation, with the aim of nurturing feelings of kindness, courage, and self-worth in children. In Contra Costa County, she formed White Pony Express in 2013 to gather surplus fresh food from markets and restaurants and deliver it to service agencies that feed the hungry in the county. White Pony Express is now one of California's largest food rescue programs and distributes new clothing and other goods to the underserved.

The Proclamation not only outlined Conner's contribution to society, but made note that Lafayette is home to the largest number of White Pony Express volunteers. "Every single day, 364 days a year, White Pony Express picks up and delivers 12,000 pounds of high quality, largely perishable surplus food for our neighbors in need," the

Proclamation noted. Thousands of pounds of this nutritious food have been delivered to and benefited low-income seniors in Lafayette and hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh food have been donated to White Pony Express collectively by Lafayette schools and businesses, including Acalanes High School, The Meher Schools, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods Market.

"In this model or new paradigm of life," Conner was quoted in the Proclamation, "responsibility for helping the family of man is assumed by everyone, or in the phrase the White Pony Express often uses, 'All of us taking care of all of us.'"

Conner has been honored with the "Jefferson Award" from San Francisco TV station KPIX, the "Threads of Hope" Award from Diablo Magazine, she was named a "Hometown Hero" by the Contra Costa Times, and on April 8, two weeks before her passing, she was given the Soroptimist Ruby Award for Women Helping Women."

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