

Non-Profit Happenings

Moab's Canyonlands Field Institute, City Lights Books' Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and cell phones –

by Nancy Kurtz

Sign scrawled and prominently posted in San Francisco's venerable North Beach bookstore, City Lights – "Stash your sell phone and BE HERE NOW." – Lawrence Ferlinghetti, sometime in the 1990's -

Flash forward, Moab, Utah. It's the dawn of the year 2025. I'm at the Canyonlands Field Institute offices with Michele Jordan Johnson, executive director, and CFI's grant writer, Shelby Rockelein.

The times have changed, but the theme, in 2025 more compelling than ever, lives on in the hearts and minds of the dedicated crew at CFI.

At age 40, CFI is Moab's longest-living nonprofit, and arguably a flagship of sorts. Founded in 1984 by Robin Wilson and Karla Vander Zanden, it's been through many changes but has never abandoned the stated mission: to inspire connections to nature through river running, hiking, educational retreats and seminars for denizens of the Moab Valley and visitors alike.



As the CFI website puts it, "...we encourage people of all ages to experience wild nature directly. We reject increasing technological connection in favor of emotional connection and stride toward our roots as humans, pursuing

the core of who we are."

In other words, disconnect in order to connect --

For the past year Michele Jordan Johnson and her core staff have been working long and hard to perpetuate and deepen that vision. New models are literally being pursued in order to open up the programs to more diversity and equality, endeavoring to make CFI programs available to those who could not otherwise afford them.

Michele took over the CFI leadership a year or so ago and embraced her new position with a multitude of ambitious intentions, shifts in programming, a proposed renovation of the "Field Camp", all within the atmospheric dissonance of an increasingly technological, not to mention still traumatized post-pandemic world. In dire need, may we conjecture, of the exact forms of connection that CFI is pledged to provide –

"I was so worried," Johnson says. "There were so many pieces to the puzzle. I would ask 'what's urgent.' But everything is urgent!"

It's a new century and an ever-changing world. Jordan Johnson points out that we have had wars, a digital revolution (as opposed to the industrial revolution at the turn of yet another century) and, of course the aftermath of a pandemic. Michele and Shelby note that students who have known nothing other than digital connections are experiencing a kind of "existential dread." Says Shelby, "They need a sense of belonging, where they can just be and learn to connect to both themselves and one another."

As grant writer, Shelby's task is to tell the story so potential donors will see that the challenges CFI is trying



to address are worthy of their funding: "CFI requires the kids to leave their phones but it's built into our cultural

lexicon," Shelby tells me, adding that 66 percent of kids asked for feedback said they enjoyed the experience. Some of the refrains -- "It was nice to connect with people. It was nice to not be stressed out about it" -- speak poignantly to the huge impact an educational journey into nature with experienced CFI guidance and stewardship can have.

This is an evolving story about a nonprofit experiencing a watershed moment. Hopefully there will be more stories as the plans unfold and hopefully Nonprofit Happenings will continue to follow them. For the moment, CFI is looking toward a renovation of their Field Camp, a 35-acre site in Professor Valley. Twenty miles down the "River Road" from downtown Moab, the camp is a wide expanse surrounded by mountains, mesas, sandstone towers and blue sky, there is a classroom yurt, tipis for sleeping, and yes, a river runs through it.

The renovation means CFI will not run Field Camp-based programs this summer – to fill the gap, they are emphasizing their other programs, with a special focus on river-based programming. CFI is seeking funding to hire more staff and buy extra gear "to help outfit our participants and achieve our mission of creating inclusive pathways to the outdoors."

To help purchase the flotation devices, whitewater helmets, tents, rafts, canoes and other items on the "gear wish-list" and to support CFI in this transitional year, be sure to take a look at their website: cfimoab.org.

And be sure to mention you read about it in *Moab Happenings*.



City RAP Community Grant applications are due February 21

Qualifying nonprofits are invited to apply for Moab City's Community Recreation, Arts and Parks (RAP) Grants no later than February 21, 2025. The application form, grant guidelines, and additional information about the program is available on the City website at www.moabcity.gov/RAP.

"The Moab Community has a diverse array of nonprofits that have great ideas for community programs and events, and the RAP Tax grant funds are a great way to assist in realizing these ideas," said Moab City Arts and Special Events Director Kelley McInerney. "We are looking forward to funding another round of projects that benefit our city's recreation, arts, or parks this year."

These community grants are available specifically for projects related to arts, culture, recreation, and parks projects or programs. Funds will be distributed through a competitive process rated by the five-member Recreation, Arts and Parks Tax Advisory Committee (RAP TAC), established in 2022

based on community feedback. Members of the citizen committee were appointed by the mayor and approved by the Moab City Council. The committee reviews all community grant applications and makes recommendations for project funding to the City Council.

The City Council typically allocates the majority of RAP Tax revenue to qualifying City projects. The remainder goes to help fund the community grants for qualifying projects proposed by local nonprofit organizations. The percentage of RAP Tax revenue allocated to community grants is reviewed annually during the City's budgeting process and may change from year to year.

The Recreation, Arts and Parks Tax is a sales and use tax approved by voters in 2020. It went into effect in April of 2021. The RAP tax is a one-tenth of 1 percent sales tax included on eligible sales and uses within Moab City limits. The tax amounts to 1 cent for every \$10 spent. Unprepared

food items and fuel are exempt from the tax.

According to Utah Code, RAP Tax revenues can only be used for recreational, cultural, arts and parks programs and facilities provided by the city, or by qualifying nonprofit groups. The City has discretion regarding how decisions are made for projects funded through the RAP Tax.

This spring, the City will be updating the Swanny Park playground with RAP Tax revenues. The playground will feature all abilities equipment, shade structures, and classic playground favorites. RAP Grant awards in 2024 funded 16 different organizations with projects spanning from music and film festivals to bicycle repair clinics and youth-oriented sports clinics.

For more information about the RAP Tax and the RAP grant program visit www.moabcity.gov/RAP.

Seekhaven's Puttin' on the Ritz 2025

Seekhaven will be hosting the classiest event of 2025 —Puttin' on the Ritz—on Saturday Feb. 8, at the Hoodoo Moab! Themed "Masquerade", attendees are invited to sport their finest attire and join fellow Moabites for an evening full of first-class dining and dancing in addition to a silent auction chock-full of regional art, activities, and services. The evening begins at 6 pm, giving attendees a chance to socialize and bid on a wide array of silent auction items. The silent auction bidding and payment will be managed on the Bid Beacon app, so you can bid on your phone throughout the night, ensuring great winnings! Please note that a \$10 initial bidding registration fee does apply. Dinner will be prepared by the talented staff at Josie Wyatt's, and served around 7 pm with dancing to follow!

Puttin' On the Ritz helps raise funds to sustain and expand Seekhaven's safe shelter, supportive services, and educational programs. Seekhaven is the primary advocacy program for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and is the only emergency shelter in the region serving Emery, Grand, and San Juan Counties. Over the past year, Seekhaven served a record breaking 394 people, provided nearly a quarter million dollars in financial aid to survivors, and educated at least 2,500 individuals to prevent violence before it ever occurs. Your support and participation ensures Seekhaven can continue to provide needed services in Southeast Utah!



Assembly of God 1202 South Boulder Avenue	435-259-7747
Bahá'í Faith	435-650-5778
Canyonlands Fellowship 111 East 100 North	435-260-2434
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	
First & Second Wards	435-259-5566
475 West 400 North	
Third, Fourth & Fifth Wards	435-259-5567
701 Locust Lane	

Moab Church Services Directory

Community Church 544 MiVida Drive	435-259-7319	Grace Lutheran Church 360 West 400 North	435-259-5017
Episcopal Church of St. Francis 250 South Kane Creek Blvd	435-259-5831	Jewish Interfaith Beit Moabi	435-260-0241
First Baptist Church SBC 420 MiVida Drive	435-259-7310	Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses 25 Dogwood Ave	435-259-8166
Friends in Christ Free Lutheran Church 1240 South Highway 191	435-259-4378	Moab Baptist Church 356 West Kane Creek Blvd.	435-259-8481
		Not So Churchy in Moab	970-213-8208

Quaker Meeting 239 West Center St.	775-442-1298 text only
River of Life Christian Fellowship 2651 East Arroyo Rd.	435-259-8308
St. Pius X Catholic Church 122 West 400 North	435-259-5211
Seventh Day Adventist 4581 Spanish Valley Drive	435-259-5545
The Church of Christ 456 Emma Boulevard	435-259-6690