



WRITE TIME, WRITE PLACE

WRITING CENTER OFFERS
STOCKTON'S YOUTH A
CREATIVE OUTLET

BY ALEXANDRA KRUEGER / ALY MONTEZ



There's a movement blooming in downtown Stockton. Like the eclectic murals that overlook the city streets, its presence is quiet, but its ideas shake the overwhelming notion that Stockton is a place for the miserable. It digs at the heart of the city's identity and unearths something forgotten. Something special.

On the ground floor of Cort Tower in the middle of the city, you will find a whole world of literature, poetry, and book arts, so unexpected in downtown Stockton that it borders on the magical. Entering the room, one can't help but feel like they've stumbled across a secret society.

Paula Sheil, President of Tuleburg Press, says that most people stumble in only because they can't figure out how to operate the elevator system.



In the library of The Write Place, “fold and cut” book arts—for which several books have been cut or folded to make various shapes or spell out words and phrases—catch the eye.

“Book arts’ means using the book as art,” explains Paula. She gestures to the table in their library where an exhibit of books stands upright, cattail plants sprouting up from their pages. “These were old law journals that were being thrown out; with them, we used paper bags and rushes to create our own Delta levee.”

And this isn’t the only echo of the Delta and Consumnes River in the writing center—towering over the classroom space stands a mural of a Great Blue Heron. Up a spiral staircase in a quiet loft meant for reading and writing, every wall is a landscape painting of the Consumnes wildlife preserve.

“I ask kids, ‘Where do you think this is?’ And they say, ‘The jungle!’” Paula shakes her head. “This is ten minutes outside of Lodi. We want kids to recognize where they come from as writers.”

More than providing San Joaquin’s youth with a space to explore their craft and understand their identity, The Write Place also serves as a place for kids to get away from their screens.

“All the machinery in here is manual. There are no computers for the kids,” says Paula, winding up the 1901 Pearl Press used for letterpress printing. “We want to get away from that. It’s all hands-on, focused, quiet, and attentive, as an antidote to that lifestyle.”

In the grand scheme of things, Paula saw the establishment of both The Write Place and Tuleburg Press as a way to reverse Stockton’s illiterate reputation on a national scale.

“When Stockton was listed as the third most illiterate city in the US, it was based on things like number of college degrees and median income, but also on things like newspaper subscriptions, magazine subscriptions, books circulated from the library, and so on,” says Paula. “So, just having Tuleburg Press here and a local writing center that does book arts, I mean, that’s a solution.”

As of a 2017 study, Stockton now appears on the ‘Most Literate Cities in the US’ list.

Just over a year old, The Write Place has already made waves in Stockton, transforming its downtown into a more creative, safe, and literate place for all—the task is now to spread the word. If you’re interested in getting involved at The Write Place, visit Tuleburg Press’ website for a list of the fun, creative classes they offer, and be sure to take part in (*or consider becoming a sponsor for*) their “Fully Booked” fundraiser at the St. Basil’s Greek Orthodox Church on September 28 from 6 to 9 PM.

While she hopes that The Write Place can teach Stockton’s youth about their identities as writers and makers, Paula also believes the organization can teach Stockton a few things about itself as a creative entity. “Big cities have centers like The Write Place,” she says. “In terms of creative arts, Stockton deserves to have everything any other city has.”

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GET CREATIVE:
 THE WRITE PLACE
 343 E. Main St., #101, Stockton
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A full-time professor at Delta College and a published writer in everything from *The Record* to *The New York Times*, Paula has accomplished much in her life. Her latest achievement—and newest hobby—aims to provide a place for young writers and creatives to express their talents and learn new ones: The Write Place.

Spearheaded by Paula and kept buoyant by its parent nonprofit, local publishing company Tuleburg Press, The Write Place is a writing center that fosters the talents of young, local writers. The center also cultivates knowledge of book arts, offering classes on bookbinding, linoleum block printing, paper-making, journal making, letterpress printing, and more.