

EDITORIAL: Thumbs up, thumbs down

By The Bee Editorial Board



Fresno State students spent Alternative Spring Break 2015 working as a team to install solar panels for residents in Fresno's Lowell neighborhood.

JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Thumbs up to all the **donors who have given money to help the family of Fresno Fire Department Capt. Pete Dern**, who fell through the roof of a Fresno garage while fighting a house fire and is critically burned. A fundraising page has been established at youcaring.com to assist his family. It had surpassed \$86,000 Friday morning. The family of first responders and those who respect them has come through on a national basis. Locally, several fundraisers are ongoing. Gratitude is also due to **Joe Reyes** and the other Good Samaritans who stepped in to help the professional firefighters save Dern and put out the fire in central Fresno. We are continually proud of how our region steps up in a crisis. Keep it up.

Thumbs up to **Katherine Andes of Hanford** for getting 4 million views on her Facebook post for a very clever 23-second video on organizing recycling plastic bags. Now she wants to drive the YouTube version viral, as well. Why not? It's good to reuse the bags, and good to trap them in an orderly way inside a box to keep them from flying around the environment. It's 23 seconds; it's easy. Here you go: <http://bit.ly/1MbXyf8>

Thumbs up to Fresno State students **Angelica Robertson, Surinder Multani and Guramrit Gill and other students** for spending part of their spring break helping Lowell neighborhood resident Delores Torres upgrade her home with energy-saving remodeling. Torres received \$10,000 worth of solar panels, which will save her hundreds

each year on energy bills. The group is part of an Alternative Spring Break program, in which students sign up to work during vacation with nonprofit renewable energy company GRID Alternatives. The equipment and maintenance are covered through a state energy grant program for low-income families. Robertson told The Bee's Hannah Furfaro that she hopes to extend a message of goodness and community: "Downtown Fresno is still important, and we still haven't forgotten about the people in the community who live here." Lovely.

Thumbs up to **Valeria Leon** and the other Valley residents who are putting an education program called Fresno Bridge Academy to good use. The Fresno County Department of Social Services and the Fresno nonprofit Reading and Beyond help people get off public assistance and into meaningful work. This week the leaders announced that they will expand it over the next three years with a \$12.2 million U.S. Department of Agriculture grant — one of 10 in the country. Leon received free child care, got help to become a U.S. citizen and became a full-time student. Now that she has graduated, she is self-employed as a medical interpreter. The qualifications for the academy are simple: be legally allowed to work and be receiving food stamps. In Fresno County, 91,000 people qualify. Check it out!

Thumbs up to **Rabobank**, a Roseville-based community bank, for giving \$150,000 to Terry's House across from Community Regional Medical Center in downtown Fresno. The family dining area has been named for the bank in honor of the donation. Terry's House is a medical hospitality house for family members of critically ill or injured patients.

Thumbs up to **Kacey Akin** of Clovis, a big winner on a recent edition of the syndicated game show, "Wheel of Fortune." It airs weekdays at 7:30 p.m. on ABC30. A Clovis North Educational Center teacher and coach, Akin took home \$19,600 in cash and prizes, including a trip to Morocco. That will make a nice second honeymoon and pay some tuition costs for school. Persistence counts. She first tried out for a spot on the show when the Wheelmobile stopped in Fresno in June. She didn't get called then, but got called at random in November and had her second tryout in Modesto, where she made it to the final round. Bon voyage!

Thumbs up to the **200-plus bowlers** who raised \$23,000 during Bowl for Kids' Sake to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central California. Now that is striking gold. By the way, the group needs more male volunteers. Step up, guys, you're needed! Details: Fresno (559) 268-2447, Madera County (559) 673-4863, Tulare and Kern County (559) 687-1108, or online at www.bigs.org.