Legal Intern Learns About Justice System, Focuses Career

By Mandy Behbehani

Like many young people, San Rafael native Veronika Cuddy watched a full complement of law and order and police procedural shows on television and found herself thinking how awesome a career in the legal field would be. Unlike many of her peers, Veronika did something about it.

Trying to settle on a career path and needing to fulfill credits for her degree in English from Dominican University (she graduated in August), Veronika applied for a volunteer internship at the Marin County District Attorney’s Office. She started in June.

“It’s such an incredible opportunity,” said Veronika. “I knew after the first day of following my supervisor around that criminal law was something I wanted to do with my life.”

Her original goal was to meet a 40-hour internship requirement for school, but Veronika has completed nearly 400 hours so far and has chosen to continue as she waits to start law school in the fall. After applying to three Bay Area schools in October, she is “super excited” to have been accepted at one and is waiting to hear from the others.

“Law was something that always interested me,” said Veronika. “I always thought it would be amazing to be a detective, to have a job that is rewarding and helps the community. Our world is changing so much and we need to refocus our humanity, and having a job in public service to contribute to the greater good is something I want for myself.”

At the DA’s office, Veronika works closely with the deputy district attorneys to help them prepare for hearings and jury trials, reviewing video and audio recordings, digesting police reports, organizing and managing discovery materials, and analyzing witness statements.

“The 29 lawyers here find that volunteer and intern help is invaluable,” said her staff supervisor, Deputy District Attorney Tom McCallister. “Veronika possesses excellent analytical and organizational skills, has a keen sense of what true justice means, and quickly grasps the nuances of complex material.”

Veronika said what she’s learned is also invaluable. “I came into this internship thinking prosecutors are all trying to put everyone in jail, and my time here has completely reversed my understanding of how the criminal law and justice systems work. Everyone here is human and wants to work with defense attorneys, judges, and defendants to create the most just solution for everyone.”

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Civic Center Volunteers Nominated for Community Honor

Three CCVs participants are in the running for honors at the 25th annual Heart of Marin, a community event attended by about 800 people. Senior Peer Counselor Josefina Perez, who serves in the Health and Human Services Department, is our nominee for Volunteer of the Year. High school students Yessenia Hernandez, Public Defender’s Office, and Kobe Pole, Sheriff’s Search and Rescue team, are Youth Volunteer of the Year nominees.

Happy New Year!

Best wishes for 2018! Have you resolved to make a positive difference? Check the volunteer opportunities featured on page 4 – and for more, click here or google “Marin Civic Center Volunteers.” Don’t see a match for your skills and interests? Sometimes we can design a role. To explore possibilities, call us at 415-473-7407.

Holidays

County offices will be closed Monday, January 1 for New Year’s Day and Monday, January 15 for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.
Teen Girl Ambassadors Support Others, Build Team Spirit

Student interns on the Marin Teen Girl Ambassadors team recently completed a special project that helps people working their way toward financial independence. After a clothing drive at the Marin Civic Center, the teens sorted hundreds of shirts, skirts, and pants, transforming tall mounds of clothes into neat stacks for delivery to a local nonprofit, Bloom (formerly Image for Success). As they made joint decisions about donated items, the interns became better acquainted, which helped them work efficiently and build team spirit.

Novato High/Marin School of the Arts junior Georgia Lee called it a “bonding experience that helped us appreciate the art of volunteering.” Tam High junior Khadija Nakhuda felt good because “we were helping such a good cause.”

The ambassadors are 28 girls from 13 middle and high schools. Sponsored by the Marin Women’s Commission, the team’s main purpose is providing support for the annual Teen Girls Conference to be held Sunday, March 25. For details, visit marinteengirl.org or call the team’s supervisor, Chris Shaw of Human Resources at 415-473-6189.

The successful clothing drive was sponsored by the Marin Asian-American Public Local Employees, a county staff affinity group.

Tell a Vet: Resources and Coaching Available

Did you know that a trained volunteer coach is ready to help local military veterans with services and benefits? Civic Center Volunteer Mark Seely’s number is (865) 201-4047. Call for details, an individual appointment, or drop-in hours at the Civic Center Library.

Who’s New & Welcome!

Angela Cox-Parra (San Rafael), High School Intern, Public Defender’s Office
Palden Flynn (Hanover, NH), Pre-Law Intern, District Attorney’s Office
John Hammond (San Rafael), Adopt-A-Spot Team Leader, Public Works

Valerie Lels (Kentfield), Volunteer Attorney, District Attorney’s Office
Claudia Lowder (Mill Valley), Aide, Corte Madera Library
Dhruv Pareek (San Rafael), Teen Program Intern, Civic Center Library

Lynda Pearson (Mill Valley), Video Consultant, Human Resources
Patrick Troubetzkoy (Pacifica), Photographer, Human Resources
Coral Vargas (Richmond), Behavioral Health Recovery Services Assistant, Health & Human Services
Human Resources Intern Amandine Lienhart moved to the United States from France a year ago to work as an au pair and improve her English language skills. She found an opportunity to intern with the county’s Human Resources Department — and is about to begin paid work for a private company using her HR skills.

In France, Amandine worked in HR administration and studied HR management. While she gained work experience, her company supported her educational advancement. She holds bachelor’s and master's degrees in HR management. Her thesis focused on equal employment and diversity, which prepared her well for her internship with Marin Equal Employment Opportunity Director Roger Crawford of the county’s HR Department.

Amandine analyzes large sets of hiring data used to created equal employment reports. The reports, which show improvements in diversity hiring practices, are presented to the Marin Women’s Commission, Personnel Commission, and Human Rights Commission. Amandine said her most interesting project was creating a new way to view data; she developed graphs that reflect the salaries of men and women within the county organization.

Asked why she chose an HR internship, she replied, “I like HR because it’s always different. There’s a lot to learn, and it also impacts the company. I wanted to get back into HR work because I was missing it. I also wanted to work in an English-speaking environment to improve my language skills. The people here are so nice and I’ve learned a lot.”

Her staff supervisor, Human Resources Technician Khanh Huynh, commented, “Amandine has been an impressive intern who checks our data for accuracy. She’s also a great teacher and has taught me new ways of computing data and viewing salary data with the charts and tables. She’s very intelligent, patient, and has an abundance of equal employment knowledge and data analytics through her experience and education. Amandine has been wonderful and so easy to work with. I’m grateful for the opportunity to work with such an individual.”

In February, Amandine will begin a new job with a small French cheese company in San Francisco, where she will serve in a human resources and accounting role.

Inspired by her internship, her ultimate goal is to work in human resources in equal employment. She enjoys cooking and traveling, and plans to visit Miami and Hawaii soon.
Featured Volunteer Opportunities
View our volunteer or intern opportunities online at marincounty.org/volunteer. Register for specific opportunities or complete an online application. Don’t see anything that interests you? Send a resume to RMadias@marincounty.org. We’ll discuss your experience and interests and try to create an opportunity best suited for you. Questions? Call 415-473-7407.

Adopt-A-Spot Volunteer
Adopt-A-Spot partners with the Department of Public Works and the residents and merchants in your local community. Volunteers of all ages come together to remove litter from the streets, sidewalks, and storm drain openings. If you’re interested in helping, please contact Angela Clapp at 415-473-3202 or aclapp@marincounty.org.

Parks & Open Space Volunteers
Marin County Parks has abundant opportunities for volunteers. May assist with maintaining a habitat restoration site, trail, or an entire park. Volunteer Coordinators Kirk Schroeder (KSchroeder@marincounty.org) and Greg Reza (GReza@marincounty.org) can work with you on a project that matches your skills and commitment.

Senior Access Reader
Volunteers work with a group of elderly library patrons reading stories and materials to them every Thursday from 1:30-2:30 p.m. in Novato. Ideal volunteer loves stories, is comfortable with public speaking, and is an expressive speaker. Some listeners are hearing impaired, so the ability to speak loudly and articulate with energy is essential.