First Volunteer for Friends of the Family
By Natalie Dybeck

Alicia Moss Nuyens is the first volunteer in the county’s new Friends of the Family program. After working many years as a legal assistant in divorce and custody disputes, Alicia has gained an understanding of how things can go sideways in domestic relationships and the impact that has on children. Now she is using that knowledge to help kids who are moved into the foster care system.

Alicia volunteers for the county’s Health and Human Services Department in the brand new Friends of the Family program.

A few weeks ago, in her volunteer role, Alicia picked up two young girls from their emergency foster care home and drove them to school so their resource parent could get to the airport.

She is the first person who has gone through all of the trainings to be a volunteer. She passed a background check and then completed 21 hours of resource family training, a two-hour interview with a social worker, online trainings, and quite a bit of paperwork.

“Alicia participated in extensive training on the child welfare system and interacting with children who have experienced trauma so that she can provide the best care possible,” said her staff supervisor, Social Service Program Manager Krista Hopper-Pasillas. “Alicia has been a great sport in working with the entire team of adult and youth volunteers as “full of heroes.” The team’s staff supervisor and coordinator is Sheriff’s Lt. Pierre Ahuncain.

Hands-on Projects Lead to Learning
By Scott Harrop

“I feel that volunteering and educating are an obligation we all have in community,” says David Moshal. “Like the older cavemen teaching the young ones how to make fire; directly communicating perils, applications, and joys.”

Even when he practiced as an anesthesiologist, the South African native maintained his fascination with software and electronics. (It first emerged in elementary school – Thomas Edison was his hero.) He moved to California and began a second career in information technology. When his daughter entered Spring Hill Montessori School, he began teaching a maker’s class, which then spread to a couple of other schools and to the Pickleweed Library.

(continued on page 2)
First Volunteer for Friends of the Family

(Continued from page 1)

us in a new program where we are still ironing out some kinks.’”

But Alicia was more than willing to jump through all the training hoops. “I did not have the easiest of childhoods, and I feel like I have empathy around family trauma from all sides,” she said.

Her childhood was not the only factor that led to her new calling as a Friends of the Family volunteer. “My boss is actually a foster parent who has adopted the little girl he was fostering, and he sent me the link to this new program,” explained Alicia. And at home, “we recently became empty nesters and I was interested in working with kids. So it just seemed like I was being pointed in the right direction.”

Alicia’s role varies depending on the day. She usually receives a 12- to 48-hour heads-up before she is needed to volunteer.

Recently Alicia was called to pick up a child after her visit with her mom and then spend a few hours with the girl. “I picked her up, took her to dinner at the mall, and then to a movie,” said Alicia. “She was great.”

Child Welfare Worker Cindy Wasserman, Alicia’s other staff advisor, said, “Ms. Nuyens loves children and teens and they, in turn, gravitate to her. She is open, genuine, funny and wise. An organized and reliable individual, she is a strong asset to our new volunteer program. We are lucky to have her!”

While Alicia’s volunteer role is still new, she has already had a tremendous effect on children’s lives.

Alicia’s most rewarding experience as a volunteer was driving two girls to school. “I will say that talking to the girls in the car—the little one was very chatty—about missing their mom and validating their feelings felt very nice,” said Alicia, “especially when the little one grabbed my hand as I walked her to class.”

To apply to volunteer for Friends of the Family or learn more about the program, contact Health and Human Services Volunteer Coordinator Tara Clark at TClark@marincounty.org or 415-473-3515.

Hands-on Projects Lead to Learning

(Continued from page 1)

Eventually Community Library Specialist Etienne Douglas, coordinator for the Webstar program for teens at the Marin County Free Library’s Marin City branch, invited him to help with the library’s Robotics Club.

“David is a pleasure to work with,” said Etienne. “He is endearing to the kids and very supportive in giving them the encouragement to learn programming.”

David teaches every Wednesday. “Light bulbs go off every time!” he says. The 7- to 10-year-olds learn mastery and confidence, building tangible projects they can show off to friends and family. He says if they can read, he can teach them to program. The younger they are, the faster they learn; older students think too much instead of just diving in. “I can’t teach adults; they ask too many questions!” David claimed.

David’s program, Elementary Physical Computing, uses electronics and software projects to reveal scientific and mathematical principles, which is far more engaging than learning from textbooks and classes. Students use real components, such as microcontrollers and LEDs, not toys, to build real projects: for example, clothing with colored lights, or mini cars that self-navigate in response to their environment.

David wants to expand the program, to encourage young people’s interest in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics). The applications are limitless: environmental studies, wearable electronics, and battle bots games, to name just a few.

Readers who want information about volunteering are welcome to email MarinShares Coordinator of Volunteers Anne Starr at AStarr@marincounty.org.
Former Journalism Professor Coaches Interns
By Scott Harrop

Working with this publication lets Ed Remitz indulge three of his passions: teaching, journalism, and volunteering. For the past year he has mentored County of Marin interns who write for Marinfo NOW (previously the Volunteer View), drawing on his experience as a professional journalist and educator.

After graduating from San Francisco State, the East Bay native worked at the Marin Independent Journal and wrote for various papers and magazines. He is a longtime member of the San Francisco Press Club.

Ed said he “sort of fell into teaching.” After a temporary stint at College of San Mateo, he joined the faculty full time and ended up staying for 23 years. During his tenure the program won a slew of journalism awards; he entirely credits the students.

Joy Fossett, Marin County Student Internships Coordinator, worked with Ed to develop the mentoring program. He is now coaching his third intern and is eager to expand the program.

“It’s a great way to give back to the community,” he said.

It’s also a great way to encourage budding journalists, like his first pupil at the Volunteer View, Tiyona Pariani. “Ed is an exceptional teacher. His deep knowledge and passion for writing inspire me to want to grow as a writer,” she said.

“I want to introduce them to the writing discipline,” Ed said, citing three key elements based on tenets from the Society of Professional Journalists. First, the basic ethics of journalism. Then, journalistic style. Finally, editing their work. “We want them to go through the process,” he said. Writers refine their work until it meets the newsletter’s format.

Ed would like to coordinate with local educational institutions on curriculum and to obtain academic credit for the interns. He has had discussions with faculty at San Marin High, as well as the City College of San Francisco.

Aside from his coaching, Ed volunteers as a judge for journalism contests and is copy editor for the Marin History Museum Bulletin. With the ongoing demise of local newspapers (the Martinez News Gazette recently shut its doors), he finds it essential to inspire and promote would-be journalists.

“Journalism’s role is to defend democracy,” Ed says.

Curious about writing internships? Contact Student Internships Coordinator Joy Fossett of the Marinterns program at JFossett@marincounty.org or 415-473-7447.

Photographer Joins Newsletter Team

We welcome MarinShares volunteer Renata Lima, who has two roles. As shown at far right, she helps maintain a county Open Space trail. She’s also a Marinfo NOW photographer. The Civic Center image at right is an example of her art. Look for her name in photo credits. And kudos to all the newsletter team members who write, take photos, design, edit, and proofread to keep fellow volunteers and interns connected.
Volunteer Opportunities

Looking to make a difference? Here are three opportunities. For more volunteer roles and internships – and for a link to a COVID-19 community volunteering guide – visit our webpage. For the MarinShares: Marin County Volunteers coordinator call 415-473-7167 and to connect with the Marinterns program coordinator call 415-473-7447.

Help Older and Disabled Adults

The Health and Human Services Department’s In-Home Supportive Services program will be seeking volunteer and intern coaches to help enroll providers and clients in a new online timesheet system – after the pandemic emergency is over. Volunteers will support enrollment, monitor enrollment needs, provide telephone outreach and coaching, and make home visits if appropriate. Spanish speakers are encouraged to apply. Details: HHS Volunteer Coordinator Tara Clark at TClark@marincounty.org.

Write Away!

Do you like learning about others and telling stories? Our Marinfo NOW newsletter has room on the editorial team for another writer and a Q&A columnist. Ideal candidates are accurate, respect deadlines, and have some background in writing, journalism, or business communications. For Q&A, an ability to take photos is a plus. Roles are open to volunteers and student interns. Hours: Up to four a month. Schedule: Flexible by mutual agreement. Staff provides orientation and assignments.

Support Successful Events

Although county events are on hold because of the need for physical distancing during the pandemic, someday we will be able to gather again. Would you like to help events run smoothly? Volunteer aides prepare materials, greet guests, and register attendees at wellness fairs, library surplus book giveaways, staff workshops, and more. The ideal aide is reliable and has excellent customer service skills. Volunteers receive notice of upcoming events and choose those that fit their schedules. Staff provides orientation.
Happy Anniversary! We congratulate these volunteers who celebrate their anniversaries this month and thank them for their ongoing involvement.

23 YEARS
Mary Bowles (Tiburon), Roger Felton (Belvedere), Helen Lindquist (Tiburon), Rosine Reynolds (Larkspur), Stewards, Marin County Parks

21 YEARS
Mark Nordquist (Petaluma), Air Patrol Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

20 YEARS
Grant Pritchard (Novato), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services/Auxiliary Communications Services (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

19 YEARS
Al Baumann (Petaluma), James Malaspina (Palm Springs), Patrol Volunteers, Marin County Parks

14 YEARS
Barbara Levin (San Rafael), Nora Martinis (Corte Madera), Senior Peer Counselors, Health & Human Services Department (HHS)

13 YEARS
Robert Eichstaedt (Larkspur), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

11 YEARS
Sandra Walker (San Rafael), Chaplain, Sheriff’s Office

Cara Wasden (Petaluma), Lifelong Learning Reader, Novato Library

9 YEARS
Donald Johnson (Fairfax), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks
Kathryn Mitchell-Ball (San Rafael), Senior Peer Counselor, HHS

7 YEARS
Susan Buster (San Rafael), Shelver, Fairfax Library

6 YEARS
jen Bach (Tamasles), Volunteer Firefighter, Tamasles Station, Fire Department
Curt Simon (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, Sheriff’s Office

4 YEARS
Jerry Kay (Novato), Stephen Sarhad (San Rafael), RACES/ACS Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office
Earl McCowen (Novato), Marty McCowen (Novato), Patrol Volunteers, Marin County Parks

3 YEARS
Richard Gordon (Novato), English Tutor, Novato Library
Nicholas Koo (El Sobrante), Marcia McEwen (Novato), Chris Patella (San Francisco), Michael Synyard (Berkeley), Celena Tanguay (Oakland), Adam Vasquez (Larkspur), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office

2 YEARS
Sydney Lundquist (Dublin), Dalyan McEwen (Novato), Maxwell Tripp (Mill Valley), Marin Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office
Robin Meisel (San Rafael), Ombudsman, HHS

1 YEAR
Joshua Chertok (San Rafael), Haydon Jamison (San Rafael), Kader Kayser (San Rafael), Jacqueline McKillop-Herr (San Rafael), Sofia Mincy (San Rafael), Valentini Muenh Mavridoglou, (San Rafael), Kendall Scanlan (San Rafael), Fawn Zech (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office
Christopher Cuyler (San Rafael), Toby Fray (San Rafael), Carina Hessmer (Mill Valley), Maria Malin (San Rafael), Noah Rainey (San Rafael), Michael Webb (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, Sheriff’s Office
Ed Remitz (Larkspur), Writing and Editing Coach, Human Resources