

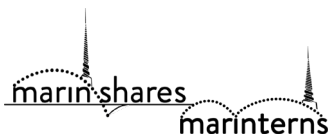
## VOLUNTEER NOTES

### Where Are They Now?

Here's an update on two former interns.

**Sierra Stephens** was a District 2 intern with the Board of Supervisors in the summer of 2017. Inspired by the internship, she switched from theater to a major related to politics and government. In 2020, she graduated from the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor with a degree in public policy from the Ford School of Public Policy. This year she began a Fulbright grant in Spain as a teaching assistant for a bilingual Model UN program at a secondary school in Madrid.

Last year, **Kiersten Price** was a tobacco policy intern with the Health and Human Services Department. She moved to Minneapolis in January and is now working at the University of Minnesota in clinical research.



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## Volunteer Tour Docent Shares Inside Story on Marin Civic Center's Design

By *Spencer Michels*

Sixty years ago construction began on Frank Lloyd Wright's modernistic Marin County Civic Center. It was a struggle.

It was designed by Wright in 1957 and 1958, one of the most futuristic buildings he ever attempted and essentially his last. It was also his only government building, if you don't count the postage-stamp-sized U.S. post office across the street. Conservatives and taxpayer groups called the Civic Center a waste of money, far too elaborate and even the work of a Communist...

It was meant to startle. At 1,500 feet, it is longer in length than the Empire State Building is tall; it is built on top of, and into, three hills that other architects would have bulldozed. With its horizontal design, it is so futuristic looking that the 1997 sci-fi movie "Gattaca" used it as a setting in the 25th century. Using endless circles and curves, Wright designed an iconic government headquarters. He believed in democracy, and the Marin Civic Center was his chance to serve the people.

What he didn't do was prescribe how the building would serve as a functioning work site. While he provided for movable walls between offices to accommodate future changes in bureaucratic needs, he seemed more obsessed with the overall effect of his structure amid the Marin hills than with the work-a-day functions of government and its employees.

"It's like a microwave on hot days," a custodian told me recently. It's so big that he calculates he walks 25,000 steps a day.

Several people mentioned they love Wright's concept of bringing the



*Spencer Michels*

outdoors inside, with trees and plants always visible from the open hallways. The natural light from the translucent roof that filters throughout the building got high praise. Wright originally wanted no roof, but that proved impractical in the rain and heat. Another worker told me people get lost and confused because the floors in courts and the administrative wings don't correspond to each other.

Working at the Civic Center gives some employees "bragging rights"; they are proud of the building and its fame. But some say they are concerned about lack of security. After a fatal shootout during an escape attempt at the Civic Center in 1970, measures were taken to screen visitors to the courthouse. But people can access the building from many entrances—so can rodents and snakes—since the building is set into the hills. Another complaint is that when there are fires nearby, or even far away, smoke penetrates the building because of its openness to the air.

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## Volunteer Tour Docent Shares Inside Story on Marin Civic Center's Design

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Perhaps most surprising to me were several comments from young workers that the building seemed old, that it was hard to modify and modernize the designs Wright came up with more than 60 years ago. Most feel lucky to work there, but for a few, it feels old.

What many appreciate is that Wright took obvious steps to make the building pleasant. He included a fountain and pool just outside the cafeteria, and a striking gold spire, all designed to please and charm visitors and workers. His circular library in the center of the building attracts children whose presence lightens the bureaucratic mood throughout the building.

Marin County has modified the Civic Center a bit over the years, but a Conservancy Commission keeps an eye on any changes to the site and

the structure, careful to preserve the Wright image.

Wright said he wanted the Civic Center to function for 100 years; it has already reached more than half that age. If everything isn't working perfectly, that's understandable, says Stanford architecture professor Paul Turner, a Wright scholar. Wright was "constantly innovating, taking chances," bringing people together in actual space.

Of course, Turner says, there'll be a few malfunctions. The building—the largest of Wright's 770 commissions—now seems like it will far outlive its projected lifespan, largely and dramatically intact.

*Spencer Michels, a retired PBS NewsHour correspondent, is a MarinShares volunteer tour docent at the Marin Civic Center. This article was published in the Marin Independent Journal's Marin Voice column, and an earlier*

*version appeared in the Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly. (Docent-led public tours are on hold during the pandemic. Anyone interested in leading tours when they resume may contact MarinShares Coordinator Anne Starr, [ASTarr@marincounty.org](mailto:ASTarr@marincounty.org).)*

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## Happy Anniversary

We congratulate these volunteers who celebrate their anniversaries this month and thank them for their ongoing involvement.

### 24 YEARS

**Mary Bowles** (Tiburon), **Roger Felton** (Belvedere), **Helen Lindqvist** (Tiburon), **Rosine Reynolds** (Larkspur), Stewards, Marin County Parks (Parks)

### 22 YEARS

**Mark Nordquist** (Petaluma), Air Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office (MCSO)

### 20 YEARS

**Al Baumann** (Petaluma), **James Malaspina** (Palm Springs), Patrol Volunteers, Parks

### 15 YEARS

**Nora Martinis** (Corte Madera), Senior Peer Counselor, Health & Human Services (HHS)

### 14 YEARS

**Robert Eichstaedt** (Larkspur), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, MCSO

### 12 YEARS

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

### 10 YEARS

**Kathryn Mitchell-Ball** (San Rafael), Senior Peer Counselor, HHS

### 8 YEARS

**Susan Buster** (San Rafael), Shelver, Fairfax Library

### 7 YEARS

**Jen Bach** (Tomas), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

**Curt Simon** (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, MCSO

### 6 YEARS

**Al Baumann** (Petaluma), Steward, Parks

### 5 YEARS

**Earl McCowen** (Novato), **Marty McCowen** (Novato), Patrol Volunteers, Parks

**Jerry Kay** (Novato), **Stephen Sarhad** (San Rafael), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service Volunteers, MCSO

### 4 YEARS

**Richard Gordon** (Novato), English Tutor, Novato Library

**Nicholas Koo** (El Sobrante), **Marcia McEwen** (Novato), **Chris Patella** (San Francisco), **Michael Synyard** (Berkeley), **Adam Vasquez** (Larkspur), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, MCSO

**Sydney Lundquist** (Dublin), **Dalynn McEwen** (Novato), **Maxwell Tripp** (Mill Valley), Marin Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, MCSO

### 3 YEARS

**Rose Lupo** (San Rafael), Corte Madera Creek Cleanup Volunteer, Parks

### 2 YEARS

**Ed Remitz** (Larkspur), Writing and Editing Coach, Human Resources

**Christopher Cuyler** (San Rafael), **Toby Fray** (San Rafael), **Maria Malin** (San Rafael), **Michael Webb** (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, MCSO

**Joshua Chertok** (San Rafael), **Haydon Jamison** (San Rafael), **Kader Kayser** (San Rafael), **Sofia Mincy** (San Rafael), **Valentini Muenh Mavridoglou** (San Rafael), **Kendall Scanlan** (San Rafael), **Fawn Zech** (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, MCSO

### 1 YEAR

**Casey Addicks** (Novato), **Hailey Connery** (Larkspur), **Daegan Cutter** (San Anselmo), **Cadence Evans** (Mill Valley), **Solomon Fragakis** (Larkspur), **Helena Janku** (San Anselmo), **Dylan O'Connor** (Greenbrae), **Luke Tusher** (Belvedere), **Kylie Voelker** (Novato), Marin Search & Rescue Youth Volunteers, MCSO

**Troy Evans** (Mill Valley), **Brad Hartwig** (San Francisco), **William Kuimelis** (San Anselmo), **Camero Maidenberg** (Oakland), **Emily Morrison** (Novato), **Brian Nishinaga** (San Rafael), **Karen Rehder** (San Rafael), **Maria Robles** (Vallejo), **Max Thompson** (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, MCSO

**Matt Ford** (San Rafael), Veterans Office Administrative Support, HHS

**Christian Hellwig** (Mill Valley), Steward, Parks

## Who's New & Welcome!

**Jeffrey Burnham** (Novato), Nursing Student, Health & Human Services (HHS)

**Ariel Calistro** (Sebastopol), Nursing Student, HHS

**Ganna Chambers** (Fairfax), Nursing Student, HHS

**Shannon Donelan** (Kentfield), Youth Working for Change Intern, Probation Department

**Carla Duncan** (Cotati), CPR for the Planet Intern, Community Development Agency

**Andrea Eneidi** (San Rafael), Environmental Health Consultant for Covid Business Unit, HHS

**Richard Fay** (Novato), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office (MCSO)

**Ken Feingold** (Nicasio), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

**Michael L. Fong Jr.** (San Anselmo), Nursing Student, HHS

**Rhian Gracey** (Mill Valley), Nursing Student, HHS

**Dennis Holland** (Sonoma), Nursing Student, HHS

**Rebecca Hurwitz** (San Rafael), Nutrition Wellness Program Data Management Project Intern, HHS

**Gillian Keirle** (San Rafael), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

**Carrie Moreno** (San Rafael), Nursing Student, HHS

**Julia Reid** (Sebastopol), Nursing Student, HHS

**Bob Salter** (Novato), Radio Communications Team Volunteer, Department of Public Works

**Gary Sello** (Novato), RACES/ACS Volunteer, MCSO

**Jasmit Singh** (San Pablo), Nursing Student, HHS

**Dot Spaet** (Novato), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

**Kevin Standley** (San Francisco), Nursing Student, HHS

**Laurie Vaala-Olsen** (San Rafael), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

**Ashlyn Winje** (Rohnert Park), Coroner Intern, MCSO

**Larissa Wong** (Sacramento), Nutrition Wellness Program Intern, HHS

**Eric Zeller** (Rohnert Park), RACES/ACS Volunteer, MCSO