

## VOLUNTEER NOTES

### Involvement Is Up

Volunteers and interns made big impacts across the county organization in 2021–2022. According to the recently published 2021–2022 MarinShares & Marinterns Impact [Report](#), more than 7,200 participants served over 167,000 hours—a robust rise from the previous year when the pandemic shutdown was in effect. The Board of Supervisors accepted the report in June. It shows headcounts and service hours by county department. MarinShares volunteer **Eleanor Lau** created the design.

### Where Are They Now?

A former Marintern studying political science at UCLA recently interned in the U.S. Congress for Rep. **Adam Schiff**. **Wesley Fink** said his 2020–2021 County of Marin internship in Supervisor **Katie Rice**'s office provided "experience in government through projects on the 2020 Census, county social media, mental health, and more." He said the experience taught him how governments work, bolstered his resume, and cemented his passion for public service.

## Volunteers Who Keep Pathway Clear Receive Top Honors

By Max Gehm

Since 2019, MarinShares volunteers **Bebe** and **Mark Birnbaum** have removed tons of excess vegetation as they maintain the Pacheco Multi-Use Pathway. The result is a safer path for bicyclists and walkers. For their outstanding contributions, the Birnbaums share the 2022–2023 Volunteer of the Year honor.

"We created this whole volunteer role ourselves," said Bebe. Regular upkeep of the path "wasn't on the radar as far as we know."

Active all year, the Birnbaums spend up to 60 hours a month on a 1.2-mile stretch of the path that parallels

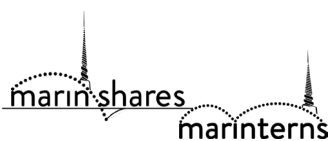


PHOTO BY BOB DELL

Board President Stephanie Moulton-Peters, left, congratulates Volunteer of the Year honorees Mark and Bebe Birnbaum, who serve with Marin County Parks. Standing in the background are Parks Director Max Korten and Parks Volunteer Coordinator Greg Reza.

Highway 101 between Marinwood and south Novato. Whether they are uprooting invasive species, trimming flammable foliage, or increasing visibility for cyclists, one thing is certain: their hard labor benefits many.

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### STAFF

**Anne Starr**, Coordinator of Volunteers  
415-473-7167 • [ASTarr@marincounty.org](mailto:ASTarr@marincounty.org)  
**Joy Fossett**, Student Internships Coordinator  
415-473-7447 • [JFossett@marincounty.org](mailto:JFossett@marincounty.org)

### VOLUNTEERS

Writers: **Clariss Ajanel, Natalie Dybeck, Marjorie Grannan, Scott Harrop, Calla McBride, Tiyona Pariani** | Photographers: **Bob Dell, Doug Kaye, Bill Johnston Jr., Gregg Turner, Brian Wilk** | Copy Editor: **Pamela Ross** | Copy Editor Intern: **David Balderama** | Graphic Design: **Eleanor Lau** | Intern Writing Coach: **Ed Remitz** | Administrative Aides: **Deborah Gregor, Deborah Fox** | Cartoonist: **John Donaghue**

## Team of the Year Shares Enthusiasm for Local History

By Marjorie Grannan

The Anne T. Kent California Room is a special archive of precious historic material reflecting Marin's history.

A team of MarinShares volunteers supports the California Room librarians who collect, preserve, and disseminate local history. For its exemplary service, this group is the county's 2022–2023 Volunteer Team of the Year.

Team members devote their own expertise to help research, catalog, arrange, and interpret materials in the collection. Members are **Nancy Castor, Brian**

**Crawford, Phil Danskin, Cathy Gowdy, Elizabeth 'Lissa' McKee, Jocelyn Moss, Amy Palmer, Brad Rippe, Gary Robards, and David Williams.**

The Marin County Board of Supervisors recognized the volunteers with resolutions of commendation during a May 2 ceremony emceed by Human Resources Director **Christina Cramer**. Library Director **Lana Adlawan** praised the team's contributions, and honoree Brian Crawford spoke on the group's behalf about the fun and value of volunteering.

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## Team of the Year Shares Enthusiasm for Local History

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A reception in the Civic Center Library followed.

The volunteers bring a range of knowledge and skills to their roles.

California Room Docent Cathy Gowdy was asked to become a regular volunteer in 2004, after working on projects for the Marin County Genealogical Society and the California Room.

“Before that I had been doing a lot of indexing of records which I published as an aid for researchers,” Cathy said. “Over the years I’ve connected with others who share my love of genealogy and I’m always glad to help them with their own research. It’s fun to help,” she added. “It’s kept my brain cells alive as I age!”

Fairfax native Brad Rippe’s love of hiking Mt. Tamalpais led him to the Tamalpais History Project. He uses libraries and other resources to study Mt. Tam’s unique history, and his own research eventually led him to the

California Room. He joined the volunteer team in 2017 to help with a huge collection of old maps.

Brad’s California Room roles are photographer, cataloger, and researcher. He assists with the interpretation of maps going back to the 1850s, as well as photographs and other documents, such as surveyors field books dating back to the 1860s.

“People use the map room to research everything from land disputes to historical interests to genealogy,” Brad said. “County surveyors come in and research old road maps.

“One of my favorite things is that people call me when detective work needs to be done identifying a location,” he continued. “These are the kinds of things that keep us all excited. I knew volunteering here was going to be fascinating and it’s gone way beyond that.”

Team members serve alongside Community Library Specialists **Marilyn Geary** and **Dewey Livingston**, Library Aide **Mitra Karimi-Tabriz**, and Librarians **Carol Acquaviva** and **Jennifer Christensen**.

Carol is staff supervisor to the volunteers and nominated the group for Team of the Year honors.

“Volunteers have always been one of the most important components of the Anne T. Kent California Room,” Carol said. “Their outstanding contributions are essential to enhancing the services we provide to our library patrons.

“They lend their time and their specialized skills, and care deeply about the success of the California Room,” she continued. “Each volunteer brings their own generous spirit, knowledge, and experience to every task. The difference they make is inspiring.” ■



PHOTO BY DOUG KANE

*Volunteer Team of the Year members Jocelyn Moss, Gary Robards, Cathy Gowdy, (Supervisor Dennis Rodoni in background), Brad Rippe, Phil Danskin, Lissa McKee, Dave Williams, Nancy Castor, and Brian Crawford pose with Board President Stephanie Moulton-Peters, right, after receiving resolutions of commendation from the board. Not pictured: Team of the Year volunteer Amy Palmer.*

*Librarian Carol Acquaviva, staff supervisor of the Volunteer Team of the Year, congratulates team members during a reception at the Civic Center Library branch.*



PHOTO BY BOB DELL

# Staff Supervisor of Volunteers Shines in Search and Rescue Role

By Marjorie Grannan

PHOTO BY SCOTT MCDANIEL



Lt. Pierre Ahuncain

Sheriff's Lt. **Pierre Ahuncain** is the county's Staff Supervisor of Volunteers of the Year for his outstanding work with [Marin Search and Rescue](#) (SAR) volunteers.

Pierre has spent 26 years with the Sheriff's Office in roles ranging from detective to lieutenant. His current duties include coordinating the Marin County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team. He has served in this capacity since 2018 when he was appointed to the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Coordinator role for the Sheriff's Office.

The great bonus of serving as SAR coordinator is that it lets him focus on what he loves about working law enforcement: helping people.

The Marin County Board of Supervisors honored Pierre for his work with SAR volunteers during a ceremony on May 2 for annual honorees of the central MarinShares and Marinterns programs. Sheriff **Jamie Scardina** spoke about

Pierre's leadership of the volunteer team, and board members unanimously approved a resolution of commendation for him.

(The county requires that volunteers and interns have staff liaisons. Since the early 1980s, the Board of Supervisors has recognized an outstanding staff supervisor each year to acknowledge the essential role that employees play in the volunteer program.)

Marin's Search and Rescue team is consistently considered one of the elite teams of the Mountain Rescue Association, and it is the only team in the nation with youth members on a Type 1 team capable of responding in the most challenging terrain. Youth volunteers, Pierre says, form one-third of the total SAR team.

The unit enjoys the strong support of the Sheriff's Office, ensuring members have the best equipment and training available.

To make the team, candidates go through a selection process and then complete boot camp. "That's a 65-hour training program where prospective members learn the basics of navigation, get an introduction to medical skills, and spend the night on Mt. Tam without a tent or sleeping bag," Pierre said. As the first Marin SAR staff coordinator to have completed all elements of the training, he knows those challenges.

"They truly get a lot out of it," he said of volunteers who finish the challenging course and begin responding. "It's a perfect example of team camaraderie and it's a pretty neat thing to watch the youth members grow their skill sets and gain enough confidence to work under stressful conditions."

The Marin native attended San Rafael High School, then earned a degree in biology at Sonoma State University before applying for his life's work in the law enforcement and disaster-prep fields. For Pierre, kicking back with his family involves hiking, camping, golfing, and whipping up Basque delicacies in the kitchen.

"Lt. Ahuncain's trust in the team helps foster a culture of responsibility, respect, and service," said his supervisor, Sheriff's Capt. **Craig Scardina**. "SAR is a dynamic team of more than 130 youth and adult members, with diverse backgrounds and experience. Lt. Ahuncain's supportive leadership allows the team to participate in missions and trainings around the state, expanding its reputation and skills."

Asked what he finds most rewarding about his work with Search and Rescue volunteers, Pierre said, "We've saved lives; what more reward is there than that?" ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF LT. PIERRE AHUNCAIN

Graduates of the rigorous Marin Search and Rescue (SAR) 2022 training program gather for a group photo. At far left in the back row, the man with the Sheriff's badge is SAR Operations Director Rich Riechel and next to him, in red, is SAR Boot Camp Manager Michael Synyard. Both are volunteers. Fifth from left in back in the suit jacket is Sheriff Jamie Scardina. Next to him, in black, is Lt. Pierre Ahuncain, the Marin County Staff Supervisor of Volunteers of the Year. The dog on the left is Catbird and the dog on the right is Eiros.

# Legal Intern Gains Valuable Experience During Criminal Trials

By Tiyona Pariani

Post-College Intern **Christina Pathoumthong** seeks justice for victims of violent crimes and their families while interning with the District Attorney's Office.

Christina began last August by learning to purge old cases, review jail calls, and assist with the factual background for motions and pleading papers.

Next, she moved to assisting attorneys at trials. She now has experience in marshaling evidence, preparing exhibits, jury selection, motion practice, preparing witnesses to testify, consulting with trial strategy, drafting direct and cross examinations, and preparing opening and closing statements.

She has been active "on some of the most sensitive and high-profile cases that we have, including a six-month-long gang-murder trial and another month-long, multiple-victim, child sexual assault trial," said her staff supervisor, Deputy District Attorney **Thomas McCallister**.

Thomas has high praise for Christina. "The educational assignment has been to learn as much about the trial process as possible and make herself as useful as possible to the trial attorney," he said. "She has done that and beyond. She will be excellent at whatever career she chooses to pursue, and we were very fortunate that she chose to intern in our offices."



PHOTO BY BRIAN WILK

*Christina Pathoumthong*

Working on closing arguments for the two cases particularly interested her. They taught her argument organization and law application.

Christina chose to intern at the county after involvement in Marin's diverse community. While involved in the 2022 midterm elections, she met a county employee who encouraged her to apply to the Marinterns program for a legal internship.

Christina studied at Dominican University of California, earning degrees in political science and history. She plans to enter law school.

"I completed four pre-law courses during undergrad and knew I was interested in pursuing a law degree," says Christina. "This internship has reinforced that goal."

She attended Acalanes High School in Lafayette and graduated in 2018. Christina was raised in Concord and has resided in San Rafael for five years.

Outside of her internship, she works as a tutor mentor at Dominican. The rest of her time mostly goes to studying for the LSAT, but she enjoys hiking, working out, and brunch dates with friends when she can get some free time.

She has a significant takeaway for interning at the county.

"I have gained a greater understanding of the criminal justice system and all its players," she said. "I've appreciated the teamwork, guidance, and candor of everyone in the DA's office in that manner." ■



CARTOON BY JOHN DONOGHUE

# Volunteers Who Keep Pathway Clear Receive Top Honors

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Pathway users themselves, the Birnbaums began volunteering after Mark nearly collided with another cyclist while riding his bike around a turn in which sight lines were obscured by overgrown broom. “Mark just said, ‘Y’know, there’s some broom down there, let’s go down there and pull it.’ I thought we were going to be down there tonight, tomorrow,” Bebe said.

Marin homeowners who share a fence with the Pacheco Multi-Use Pathway were quick to commend Bebe and Mark’s efforts. Bebe said one such resident “poked their head over the fence” to thank the couple, saying they had been “trying for eight years to get this place cleaned up.”

Under the guidance of Marin County Parks Volunteer Coordinator **Kirk Schroeder**, Bebe and Mark launched an ambitious offensive on thickets of invasive privet trees and weeds that lined the pathway’s drainage ditch.

“Staff expected this work to take the bulk of a year to complete, but unbelievably, Bebe and Mark were able to complete the (original) project in just two months,” Kirk said.

With common garden tools, the couple eliminated more than 20,000 pounds of debris in the past year alone.

Mark has worn out nearly 15 saw blades in the ongoing effort to keep the path clear.

Kirk noted that the Birnbaum’s contribution goes beyond their physical labor. Their presence on the path enables them to serve as eyes and ears for Marin County Parks. For example, they reported a seasonal growth of algae—since corrected—that repeatedly slickened the pathway and endangered riders.

Mark has noted a recent uptick in electric bike usage on the pathway, particularly among teenagers. Maintaining public safety on the pathway has become

more important, as electric bikes can reach up to 30 mph.

Dedicated bicyclists, the Birnbaums married in 1979. They met riding the Pedal Hopper, a bus designed to transport cyclists from San Francisco to scenic bike paths in the Bay Area. Bebe, then a nurse with Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital, and Mark, then a certified public accountant, moved to Novato in 1988. Both are now retired.

The Marin County Board of Supervisors recognized the pair during a May 2 ceremony at the Marin Civic Center honoring outstanding volunteers, interns, and staff liaisons. Board President **Stephanie Moulton-Peters** presented Bebe and Mark with individual resolutions of commendation. Marin County Parks Director **Max Korten** and Parks Volunteer Coordinator **Greg Reza** spoke on behalf of the department, commending the Birnbaums’ dedication, which benefits all pathway users. ■

## Who’s New & Welcome!

**Kaylie Chen** (Novato), Teen Volunteer, Novato Library

**Alexander Cupples** (San Rafael), District 1 Intern, Board of Supervisors

**Alexandra Del Prete** (Mill Valley), Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS) Pre-Doctoral Intern, Health & Human Services (HHS)

**Anna Diaz** (Berkeley), Pre-Law Intern, Public Defender’s Office

**Theo Dowd** (Richmond), California Room Archives Intern, Civic Center Library

**Lisa Engelbert** (Novato), Volunteer Shelver, Novato Library

**Caroline Foster** (Corte Madera), High School Intern, Registrar of Voters

**Stefhanie Gallegos** (Petaluma), California Dept. of Public Health Fellow, HHS

**Ingrid Granados** (Richmond), BHRS Practicum Intern, HHS

**Avery Grant** (Sausalito), Communications & Marketing Intern, Cultural Services

**Kathleen Herzog** (Corte Madera), BHRS Pre-Doctoral Intern, HHS

**Johana Jaimes** (San Pablo), Pre-Law Intern, District Attorney’s Office

**Benjamin Johnson** (Mill Valley), Radio Shop High School Intern, Department of Public Works

**Caitlin Kawamura** (Greenbrae), District 1 Intern, Board of Supervisors

**Siqi Liu** (El Cerrito), BHRS Practicum Intern, HHS

**Miranda Lockman** (San Francisco), Summer Law Clerk Intern, County Counsel’s Office

**Laura Mayen** (San Francisco), BHRS Practicum Intern, HHS

**Virginia Meyer** (Mill Valley), Photographer, Human Resources

**Alex Morales** (San Rafael), District 1 Intern, Board of Supervisors

**Alison Paxtor** (San Rafael), Public Health Pathways Intern, HHS

**Luisalfredo Plascencia** (Concord), BHRS Pre-Doctoral Intern, HHS

**Patricia Prorok** (Novato), Marin Center Volunteer Usher, Cultural Services

**Emerson Rabow** (Mill Valley), Pre-Law Intern, Public Defender’s Office

**Maya Rembrandt** (Corte Madera), Pre-Law Intern, Public Defender’s Office

**Lyla Runkel** (San Rafael), Pre-Law Intern, District Attorney’s Office

**Rayna Saron** (Corte Madera), Law School Intern, Public Defender’s Office

**Judy Saute** (Novato), Event Aide, Human Resources

**Alma Soria** (Novato), California Room Archives Intern, Civic Center Library

**Isabel Torres** (San Rafael), Pre-Law Intern, Public Defender’s Office

**Tirsa Ventura** (Rancho Cucamonga), BHRS Pre-Doctoral Intern, HHS

**Brian Wilk** (Novato), Photographer, Human Resources

# Happy Anniversary

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

## 38 YEARS

**Jerry Foster** (Novato), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Marin County Fire\*

## 26 YEARS

**Stuart Duke** (Novato), RACES/ACS Volunteer, Marin County Fire

## 25 YEARS

**Linda Comella** (San Rafael), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

## 21 YEARS

**Doug Kunst** (Danville), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

**Linda Novy** (Fairfax), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

## 15 YEARS

**John Newman** (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

## 13 YEARS

**Michael Fischer** (Mill Valley), RACES/ACS Volunteer, Marin County Fire

**Maria Gregoriev** (San Rafael), **Susan O'Brien** (Mill Valley), Financial Abuse Specialist Team Volunteers, Health & Human Services (HHS)

## 11 YEARS

**Amory Willis** (Sausalito), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

**Paula Kamena** (San Rafael), Cold Case Investigator, Marin County Sheriff's Office

## 9 YEARS

**Judy Greenwald** (San Anselmo), Marin Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer, HHS

## 8 YEARS

**Marie Fitzgerald** (Mill Valley), Event Aide, Human Resources

## 7 YEARS

**Pamela Ross** (Greenbrae), Newsletter Copy Editor, Human Resources

## 6 YEARS

**Elizabeth McKee** (Mill Valley), California Room Archivist & Caltrans Historian, Civic Center Library

## 5 YEARS

**Milton Hyams** (San Rafael), RACES/ACS Volunteer, Marin County Fire

## 3 YEARS

**Deborah Gregor** (Novato), Administrative Aide, Human Resources

**Kate Lane** (Kentfield), **Sofia Casano** (Novato), Teen Leadership Crew Interns, Marin County Free Library

**Janet Hecht** (Greenbrae), Marin Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer, HHS

**Scott Smith** (San Rafael), Volunteer Steward, Marin County Parks

**Clariss Ajanel** (Greenbrae), Newsletter Writer Intern, Human Resources

## 2 YEARS

**Jerry Foster** (Novato), **Ken Adams** (Woodacre), **Brian Cooley** (Corte Madera), **Ken Brownfield** (Novato), Radio Communications Volunteers, Department of Public Works

**Jonathan Bernstein** (Corte Madera), Civic Center Tour Docent, Cultural Services

**David Balderama** (San Rafael), Copy Editor Intern, Human Resource

**Frederick Schultz** (Marshall), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

**Karen Dozer** (Mill Valley), Friends of the Family Volunteer, HHS

**Michael Fischer** (Mill Valley), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

## 1 YEAR

**Sarah Vega** (San Francisco), West Marin Program Development Volunteer, HHS

**Oscar Bomse** (San Francisco), Packet Assembly Team Intern, HHS

**Sandra Bushmaker** (Sausalito), Ombudsman Volunteer, HHS

**Linda Garb** (San Rafael), Client Assessment Volunteer, HHS

\*RACES/ACS volunteers, formerly hosted by the Marin County Sheriff's Office/Office of Emergency Services, are now hosted by the Marin County Fire Department/Office of Emergency Management.