

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Annual Honors

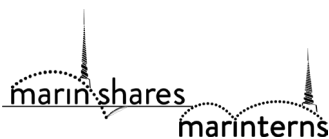
The Board of Supervisors will celebrate the Volunteer of the Year, Intern of the Year, top MarinShares and Marinterns teams, and two outstanding staff supervisors on Tuesday, May 27. Board President **Mary Sackett** will preside, and Human Resources Director **Christina Cramer** will emcee. The 3:00 p.m. ceremony in Board chambers at the Civic Center is open to the public. The Board started the county's central volunteer program in 1979 and has recognized honorees every year since.

Oak Hill Youth Participate

The Board of Supervisors recently noted the 25th anniversary of Oak Hill School, which serves neurodivergent students. Some 20 Oak Hill youth are in the county's Marinterns program as student service participants, and two MarinShares volunteers support them. Students have hands-on roles with three county departments: Health and Human Services, the Marin County Free Library/Fairfax branch, and the Community Development Agency.

Holiday

County offices will be closed Monday, May 26, in observance of Memorial Day.



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Marintern's 5K Run Aims to Reduce Stigma

By Natalie Dybeck

Marintern **Disha Divakar** has been interning weekly since the fall of 2023 when she attended the annual Marin Teen Girls [Conference](#) and learned about volunteer opportunities. Inspired to serve with the Marin 9 to 25 and OD Free Marin programs, Disha dreamed of creating an event for people struggling with mental health and addiction and encouraging them to ask for help.

As a result, Disha founded [One Stride](#), a 5K run/walk for hope, help, and recovery. This year's event is scheduled for May 10 at McInnis Park in San Rafael.

"One Stride stemmed from seeing loved ones struggle in silence with their mental health and substance use," said Disha. "I want to break the stigma of asking for help by empowering individuals with confidence, awareness, and nurturing a sense of community. I proposed my idea to OD Free Marin and won their

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PHOTO BY NANCY VERNON

Marinterns Disha Divakar, left, and Julia Owens (and two canine friends) pose with the One Stride 5K mascot at the inaugural event in 2024. This year's run/walk is set for Saturday, May 10, at McInnis Park in San Rafael.

Interns Gain Courtroom Experience, Win Praise

By Max Gehm

Marinterns **Gurinder 'Rin' Jassar** and **Ashley Johnson** began serving with the Marin County Public Defender's Office last August. By December, both had passed the California Bar and were sworn in.

Rin graduated from UC Santa Barbara in spring 2021 and the University of San Francisco Law School last May. He interned with the Legal Aid Foundation in Santa Barbara and has since interned



Rin Jassar



Ashley Johnson

PHOTOS BY DOUG KAYE

with Disability Rights California and the San Francisco Public Defender's Office.

He began his legal journey in public defense but later explored sports and civil rights disability law. A panel at the University of San Francisco (USF) featuring Bay Area public defenders and district attorneys reignited Rin's interest in public defense.

In addition to his regular activities, Rin serves with the USF Racial Justice

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Interns Gain Courtroom Experience, Win Praise

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Fellowship to implement the recent Racial Justice Act. “I’ll be on the forefront of the efforts to ameliorate lasting effects of implicit and explicit racial bias in Marin,” he said.

Ashley graduated from San Jose State University in spring 2021 and UC Law San Francisco last spring. She interned with federal public defenders in Kansas, San Diego, and San Francisco, and with the Santa Clara County Public Defender’s Office before joining the Marin Public Defender’s Office.

Ashley focused on public interest law during undergraduate studies at San Jose State. Her internship with the federal public defender in Kansas eliminated doubts about public defending. She said she’s been “in love with my work” ever since.

Ashley cited the Marin County Public Defender’s Office’s stellar reputation as a motivator.

“The Marin County Public Defender had a very positive reputation within my law school as an office that gave interns and young attorneys a lot of opportunities to provide input on and be involved in a lot of cases,” she said. “I receive a lot of great mentorship from experienced employees here.”

Ashley and Rin’s staff mentors, Deputy Public Defenders **Dominik Taylor** and **Gina Vanni**, appreciate the professional attitude of both new attorneys.

Dominik and Gina praised the two interns for litigating a jury trial to verdict.

They complimented Ashley for having been granted a Fifth Amendment Miranda motion and a speedy trial motion, which resulted in the dismissal of all charges for each defendant.

They lauded Rin for a motion to suppress evidence resulting in dismissal of all charges and for receiving a not guilty on all counts in a DUI case in which he proved his client was just a passenger.

“Ashley and Rin have extremely bright futures as public defenders and as agents of social change,” Dominik and Gina said in a joint statement. “We’re proud to say that they clerked at our office and couldn’t be happier with their accomplishments on behalf of our clients.” ■

Students interested in Public Defender internships may visit the Marin County Public Defender’s [website](#) for details.

Marinterns Organize Youth Town Hall



PHOTO BY DOUG KAYE

Youth voices filled the Civic Center Board Chambers at the third annual Marin County Youth Town Hall on Sunday, April 27, when students engaged directly with elected officials during a panel discussion and Q&A. Marinterns with the Marin County Elections Department’s Student Elections Ambassador team organized the event. Ambassador interns encouraged civic participation among their peers and highlighted the power of youth leadership in local government, according to Elections Technician **Elizabeth Iwamiya**, who coordinates the ambassador team. City and town mayors were among the local leaders from across Marin present for the lively session.

Marintern's 5K Run Aims to Reduce Stigma

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PHOTO BY NANCY VERNON



Disha Divakar

partnership by... recruiting a youth planning committee." Disha now directs meetings and delegates tasks to make the event a reality.

Starting One Stride wasn't easy.

"It was definitely a learning curve to figure out how to take an aspiration and turn it into an impactful community event," she said. She succeeded by recruiting the youth planning team, getting diverse perspectives, and emphasizing outreach.

Disha also helps lead OD Free Marin events. "I help create and attend NARCAN® training and OD Free-related events to bring in more participation and awareness." She attends meetings with community experts "to learn more about harm reduction, resources, and the fentanyl crisis, and I help set goals for the youth action team so more youth are aware of this crisis."

"Disha is a leader... who is not afraid to ask questions, speak up, and put in the effort to move the goals and projects of the team forward," said her internship liaison, Health and Human Services Department Program Coordinator **Colyn Heimerman**. "Disha's presence brings energy and connection."

One of Disha's most memorable moments was entering the Board of Supervisors chambers with mental health leaders and partners of the suicide prevention collaborative to tell about One Stride and ask the Board to declare May as Mental Health Month. "I felt powerful having a seat at the decision table," reflected Disha. This increased her interest in policy, and she now dedicates her time on the Marin Youth Commission to learn about and impact overdose-prevention policies.

In her spare time, Disha enjoys trying new foods, watching sunsets at Bolinas Ridge, attending speech and debate tournaments, and spending time with friends. "Interning is honestly my favorite activity," she said. "It is my community in the county organizations that has

truly shaped me as a person and leader, and what I look forward to every week."

Disha is scheduled to graduate from San Marin High School's biotech program in June and expects to continue her health-related interests. The past two summers she interned at the Buck Institute in Novato, and this summer she plans to intern at Kaiser. In the fall, she plans to attend UCLA on a pre-med track.

She aims to stay involved with Marin County by virtually attending OD Free Marin meetings and Marin 9 to 25 events.

"I've made such strong connections with friends my age that I intern with and with my mentors and adult visionaries," she said. "Knowing the impact we make motivates me every day. I am so thankful for my experience here and do not believe my journey ends with graduation," she added. "Volunteering has shown me the power of civic service. I will for sure continue my involvement with the county." ■

Lookouts Prep for Fire Season



PHOTO BY JEFF DAVIDSON

New and returning Marin County Fire Department lookout volunteers gathered April 26 for orientation and updates to prepare for the 2025 fire season. Fire Engineer **Bjorn Anderson**, pictured at front left, coordinates the lookout program. He led the session with input from several veteran lookouts. More than 25 attended the Saturday training, including 14 new MarinShares volunteers who look forward to taking shifts at the fire department's towers on Mts. Tamalpais and Barnabe. To learn more, watch [A Day in the Life of a Lookout Volunteer](#) by videographer **Gary Yost**, a former volunteer whose dedication at the film's end includes "all of the lookouts who patiently protect us."

Kids and Adults Volunteer to Uproot Invaders



Youth and adult volunteers from Marin Country Day School teamed up with Marin County Parks to remove thousands of super-invasive broom plants as part of Earth Day-related activities around Marin. Among the Parks Department's events was an April 25 workday with Marin Country Day. "We've partnered with the school in invasive removal for 25 years, since the year 2000," said Parks Volunteer Coordinator **Greg Reza**. "We worked with over 300 students and faculty and pulled over 20,000 broom plants on Ring Mountain Preserve in a single day." The preserve is located on the Tiburon peninsula. The school also sent volunteers to pull invasive plants at Stafford Lake Park west of Novato.

Who's New & Welcome!

William Chais (Sebastopol), Certified Legal Intern, Public Defender's Office

Barry Crotty (San Rafael), Marin Center Volunteer Usher, Cultural Services

Alexander Cwirko (San Rafael), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Autumn Hall (Rohnert Park), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Pablo Lechuga (San Rafael), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Pedro Ramirez Calo (San Rafael), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Izzy Scott (Sebastopol), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Dhanya Subramanian (Novato), Find Your Way Intern, District 1 Office, Board of Supervisors

Denny Vasquez Perez (Rohnert Park), FIRE Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Compiled by Deborah Gregor

Happy Anniversary

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

28 YEARS

Richard Fay (Novato), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Marin County Fire

27 YEARS

Eric Cutler (Tomales), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

20 YEARS

Janice Hitchcock (Novato), Senior Peer Counselor, Health & Human Services (HHS)

16 YEARS

Pat Williams (Corte Madera), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

15 YEARS

Hans Adler (Mill Valley), **Diane Cokely** (San Anselmo), **Oak Dowling** (San Rafael), **Irwin Gubman** (Mill Valley), **Roberta Robinson** (San Anselmo), **Paul Roye** (Greenbrae), **Sylvia Roye** (Greenbrae), Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) Volunteers, HHS

12 YEARS

Kathleen Kopp (Santa Rosa), **Bob Stein** (San Anselmo), **Michael Warner** (Redwood City), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

9 YEARS

Rory Hewitt (San Francisco), **Steve Johnson** (Pacifica), **Steve O'Keefe** (Novato), **Peter Van der Naillen** (Oakland), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

6 YEARS

Ken Adams (Woodacre), **John Gazzoli** (San Anselmo), **David Puglisi** (Lagunitas), **Tom Valens** (Forest Knolls), **Amy Valens** (Forest Knolls), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

4 YEARS

Chris Gould (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Candace Key (San Rafael), Friends of the Family Volunteer, HHS

James Saltzgaber (Fairfax), Radio Communications Volunteer, Department of Public Works (Public Works)

3 YEARS

Stephanie Collins (Mill Valley), **Daniel Dillingofski** (Stinson Beach), **Daniel Marsh** (Mill Valley), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

Calla McBride (Corte Madera), Newsletter Writer Intern, Human Resources

Iliana Milan (Greenbrae), Friends of the Family Volunteer, HHS

2 YEARS

Denzel Chang Castillo (San Rafael), **Meily Jimenez** (San Rafael), **Marlon Mejia Ramos** (San Pablo), FIRE Foundry Interns, Marin County Fire

Lisa Engelbert (Novato), Shelver, Novato Library

Bill Johnston Jr. (Richmond), **Brian Wilk** (Novato), Volunteer Photographers, Human Resources

1 YEAR

Giov Alipio (Novato), **Cesar Evina** (Napa), FIRE Foundry Interns, Marin County Fire

Karen Arnold (San Rafael), **Rosemary Bruckner** (San Rafael), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

Ernie Castiaux (Castro Valley), **David Hochman** (Mill Valley), **William Holt** (San Francisco), **Michael Kelly** (Alameda), **Carley Saelinger** (Mill Valley), **Dabney Smith** (Novato), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

Richard Donick (Tiburon), Friends of the Family Volunteer, HHS

Andy Fyne (Sebastopol), Harm Reduction Volunteer, HHS

Camilo Ibarra (Greenbrae), Juvenile Probation Intern, Probation Department

Ruth-Louise Moran (San Rafael), Event Aide, Human Resources

Robert Rieders (Belvedere), Civic Center Tour Docent, Cultural Services

Alexia Schwaegler (Corte Madera), Homework Helper Intern, Corte Madera Library

Lincoln Tithof (Fairfax), Clean Fairfax Intern, Public Works

Compiled by Deborah Gregor

