

## VOLUNTEER NOTES

### Where Are They Now?

Former Marintern **Emma Onstott** is a Western Washington University freshman learning marine and coastal science. During her Marin County Free Library internship, Emma witnessed the world of imagination. She made felt animals, created storyboards, sorted seeds, and made decorations. The experience helped her build confidence in meeting new people and gave “a sense of purpose in my community,” she said.

### Join Us: Arts & Crafts Fair

Everyone is welcome at the Marin County Employee Arts & Crafts Fair on November 19 & 20 at the Marin Civic Center cafeteria. MarinShares volunteer **Annet Katan** and Marintern **Lucy Cooper** will be among the 30-plus vendors. This year is our fair’s 25th anniversary. New vendors each day!

### We Remember

MarinShares volunteer **Jo-Ann Giunti**, who ushered at Marin Center theaters for 26 years, passed away in January. Whether taking tickets or showing people to their seats, Jo-Ann found fun in her role with the Cultural Services Department, and she was known for recruiting new volunteers to the team.



#### STAFF

**Anne Starr**, Coordinator of Volunteers  
415-473-7167 • anne.starr@marincounty.gov  
**Joy Fossett**, Student Internships Coordinator  
415-473-7447 • joy.fossett@marincounty.gov

#### VOLUNTEERS

Writers: **Livia Danku, Natalie Dybeck, Julia Figueroa, Marjorie Grannan, Scott Harrop, Calla McBride** | Photographers: **Bob Dell, Steven Disenhof, Bill Johnston Jr., Doug Kaye, Gregg Turner, Steve Ziman** | Copy Editor: **Pamela Ross** | Graphic Design: **Eleanor Lau** | Graphic Design Aide: **Noemi Suárez** | Intern Writing Coach: **Ed Remitz** | Administrative Aides: **Deborah Fox, Deborah Gregor** | Cartoonist: **John Donaghue**

## Docent Highlights Frank Lloyd Wright’s Vision, Ego, and Tragedies

By Calla McBride

After more than three decades of service with the County of Marin, culminating in the role of director of the Community Development Agency, **Tom Lai** has found new purpose as a Civic Center tour docent.

Tom began volunteering as a docent last November, leading groups of visitors through Frank Lloyd Wright’s iconic Civic Center.

What started with nerves about remembering details from a 20-page script quickly became an opportunity to connect people with Marin’s landmark building.

“I see myself as an ambassador for the Civic Center,” Tom said. “It is a work of art, and I try to bring the building alive

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Tom Lai

PHOTO BY STEVE DISENHOF

## Volunteer Navigates Mapping Systems to Enhance County Data

By Natalie Dybeck

MarinShares volunteer **Ricardo Miramontes** studied geography and geographic information systems (GIS) at UCLA and volunteered those skills with the County of Marin’s GIS team.

GIS is a computerized system for managing and analyzing spatial data. With it, Ricardo created complex maps that can explore data at levels unobtainable by traditional mapping techniques.

“At UCLA I developed a strong foundation in spatial data, cartography, and geospatial technology,” said Ricardo. “With the county, I helped revise and update older maps of Marin using tools like Esri’s Experience Builder,

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PHOTO BY RICARDO MIRAMONTES



Ricardo Miramontes smiles while visiting Gibralfaro Castle in Málaga, Spain.

# Volunteer Navigates Mapping Systems to Enhance County Data

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supporting the team's efforts to keep the county's geographic information accurate and accessible."

In addition to balancing two jobs, Ricardo, who grew up in Novato, volunteered eight hours a week from March through September. He volunteered to surround himself with professionals who could inspire and challenge him and to "meaningfully contribute, in even a small way, to the community I call home," he said.

As GIS is a complex computerized system, the role "had its challenges, particularly learning new software and helping modernize older maps to meet digital accessibility standards, but those challenges have helped me grow," Ricardo said. He said he was thankful for the "chance to learn, stay current with new GIS tools, and contribute in a small way to the county's work."

A memorable moment was "seeing my first revised map published for internal use, knowing it would play a role in county operations," reflected Ricardo. Another highlight: the guidance of Lead Systems Engineer **Chris Edwards** and Senior Systems Engineer **Michelle Jennings** of the Information Services and Technology Department. "Chris helped me see how each task fits into the bigger picture of county services, while Michelle encouraged me to explore new tools and think critically about data quality. Their support made this experience not only educational but also very welcoming," he said.

"Ricardo jumped right in to support the modernization of existing ArcGIS web applications," said Chris. "Although Experience Builder presents a steep learning curve, Ricardo approached every technical obstacle as

an opportunity to expand his knowledge. His can-do attitude and persistence allowed him to navigate challenges thoughtfully, exploring multiple approaches before identifying the most effective solution. In addition, he contributed valuable suggestions that improved the applications."

Outside of volunteering, Ricardo works at REI, where he enjoys helping people get outdoors, and serves as program director for i9 Sports League in Novato. "Both roles have taught me a lot about time management, adaptability, and leadership—very important skills that I've been grateful to carry into my GIS work." In his free time, Ricardo enjoys rock climbing, hiking, and playing basketball. And in winter, you can find him pursuing his new hobby, snowboarding. ■

## Happy Anniversary

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

### 36 YEARS

**Marilyn Bagshaw** (San Rafael), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Marin County Fire

### 18 YEARS

**Rich Riechel** (Mill Valley), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office

### 13 YEARS

**Linda Witong** (San Rafael), Cold Case Investigator, Marin County Sheriff's Office

### 8 YEARS

**Carlene McCart** (San Rafael), **Kim Ruchamkin** (San Rafael), **Alison Steiger** (Novato), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

**William Timpson** (Greenbrae), Search & Rescue Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office

### 7 YEARS

**Maureen Carlin** (San Rafael), **Mary Lou Dibbern** (Mill Valley), **Stan Green** (Greenbrae), **Barbara Parkman** (Novato), **Patricia Prorok** (Novato), **Everil Robertson** (San Rafael), **Robert 'Bob' Robertson** (San Rafael), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

**Sal Munoz** (San Rafael), **John Van Hooser** (Tiburon), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Marin County Sheriff's Office

### 6 YEARS

**Belle Gulden** (Tiburon), **Jill Knowlton** (Novato), **Walter Lemmermann** (Sausalito), Patrol Volunteers, Marin County Parks

### 5 YEARS

**Anthony Fedanzo** (Corte Madera), **Milton Hyams** (San Rafael), **Robert Ireson** (Greenbrae), **Tom Jordan** (Corte Madera), **Adriana Rabkin** (Corte Madera), Radio Communications Volunteer Planning Team, Public Works

### 4 YEARS

**Michael Cann** (Mill Valley), **Ciara Cox** (Point Reyes), **Emerson Erving** (Mill Valley), **David Grover** (Petaluma), **Dennis Hughes** (San Francisco), **Andromeda Kelly** (Mill Valley), **Nicole McConeloug** (Fairfax), **Nick Slanec** (San Rafael), **Zoe Stephens** (San Anselmo), **Kelly Weidner** (San Rafael), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Marin County Sheriff's Office

### 3 YEARS

**Daniel Greely** (Novato), **Andrew Musselman** (Corte Madera), Radio Communications Volunteers, Department of Public Works

**Shannon Scutt** (Mill Valley), **Leslie Weber** (Novato), Friends of the Family Volunteers, Health & Human Services

### 2 YEARS

**William Anton** (San Rafael), Volunteer Steward, Marin County Parks

**Kathy Norwood** (Fairfax), Meals on Wheels Client Assessor, Health & Human Services

**Steve Waskow** (Fairfax), Meals on Wheels In-Home Assessor, Health & Human Services

### 1 YEAR

**Katie Blasingame** (Novato) Homework Helper Intern, Novato Library

**Shanti Dhruva** (Corte Madera), **Lexie Schmidt** (Tiburon), **Ash Weir** (Corte Madera), Homework Helpers Interns, Corte Madera Library

**Martha Frankel** (Point Reyes Station), Volunteer Shelver, Inverness Library

**Sharon Jones** (Point Reyes Station), ESL Tutor, Point Reyes Library

**Barry Liu** (San Rafael), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Douglas Sides** (San Rafael), Friends of the Family Volunteer, Health & Human Services

**Sachiko Suhara** (Sausalito), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

## Who's New & Welcome!

**Sheila Adams-Sapper** (Novato), Radio Communications Volunteer, Department of Public Works (Public Works)

**Reem Chaya** (San Rafael), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Jakub Coltun** (San Francisco), Volunteer Environmental Steward, Marin County Parks

**Pamela Cook** (San Rafael), Volunteer Student Elections Ambassador Program Advisor, Elections Department

**Sammie Foley** (San Rafael), District 1 Intern, Board of Supervisors

**Doug Frazer** (Lagunitas), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

**Andrew Kousharian** (Corte Madera), Homework Helpers Intern, Corte Madera Library

**Divya Lourdu Francis Xavier** (San Rafael), Homework Helpers Intern, South Novato Library

**Saylor Macallister** (Novato), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**June McKeon** (Fairfax), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Nohemi Mena** (San Rafael), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Gracie Nauman** (San Anselmo), Homework Helpers Intern, Fairfax Library

**Christian Pantoja** (Rohnert Park), Homework Helpers Intern, Civic Center Library

**Danielle Peinado** (Santa Rosa), Coroner Intern, Marin County Sheriff's Office

**Olivia Ritter** (San Francisco), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Sophia Seelhoff** (Novato), Homework Helpers Intern, Novato Library

**Samuel Sung** (San Rafael), Clean Marin/Marin Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP) Intern, Public Works

**Paola Tziu Aban** (Novato), Homework Helpers Intern, South Novato Library

**Connor Wilson** (Sausalito), Certified Law Student, District Attorney's Office

**Sienna Yang** (Tiburon), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

**Linda Zeichner** (Novato), English as a Second Language Volunteer, South Novato Library

**Benjamin Zimmet** (Mill Valley), Homework Helpers Intern, Corte Madera Library

## Fire Department Interns Host Ember Game



PHOTO BY ASHER GOLDBLATT

Marintern **Arleen Gamboa**, a member of the Marin County Fire Department's FIRE\* Foundry program, helped host an instructive game for hundreds of visitors at the 2025 Ember Stomp. Players tossed beanbag "embers" into containers while learning about the danger of wind-driven embers during wildfires. The game was one of many activities available during Ember Stomp, an annual community event supported by Marin County Fire, the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority, and Fire Safe Marin. In addition to Arleen, many other FIRE Foundry recruits participated. Some helped at home-hardening displays, where visitors learned ways to make property less likely to burn. Bilingual recruits assisted Spanish speakers. Ember Stomp was held September 6 at the county fairgrounds in San Rafael. For useful tips about recognizing risks and taking action to protect one's home, visit [ReadyMarin](https://www.readymarin.org).

\*Fire, Innovation, Recruitment, and Education

## Docent Highlights Frank Lloyd Wright's Vision, Ego, and Tragedies

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with stories about the visionaries who built it and who fought to protect and celebrate it.”

His inspiration to become a docent came after a life-changing event. In October 2022, shortly after participating in the Civic Center's 60th anniversary celebration, Tom suffered a hemorrhagic stroke that left him temporarily paralyzed. He retired in March 2023 to focus on recovery. Nearly two years later, regaining independence gave him the chance to return to the building in a new way.

“Being a docent is extremely meaningful for me,” he said. “It allows me to give back to the county organization that supported me through my 31-year career.”

Tom leads 90-minute walking tours at least once a month. He tells stories of

Wright's architectural vision, the history of the Civic Center's design and construction, and anecdotes from Marin's past, including the filming of “Gattaca” in 1996.

He supplements his tours with audio clips, digital slides, and nuggets from the books he continues to study about Wright and his life.

“I like to surprise visitors with stories about Mr. Wright's huge ego, brushes with the law, and the tragic moments of his life,” Tom said.

Assistant Director of Cultural Services **Libby Garrison**, who manages the tour program, praised his commitment. “Tom would probably sign up for every tour each week if he could. I love his dedication to the program, and the value he brings is immeasurable,” Libby said. “As a former department head of the County

of Marin, he's got a very unique history with the building which translates into an engaging, informative tour for our visitors.”

Outside of tours, Tom enjoys tending to his koi pond, caring for his rabbits Boba and Milky Tea, and building Frank Lloyd Wright structures with Lego. He has visited 33 national parks and many Wright sites, with hopes to see more in the future.

“I think my passion comes through in the tours,” Tom said. “Being a docent gives me the opportunity to share knowledge, to learn from others, and to continue discovering new ways to appreciate this incredible building.” ■

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Visit the Cultural Services website for tickets to the [Frank Lloyd Wright Civic Center Tour](#).

