

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Career Explorers on the Job

The 2026 Career Explorer program is under way, with 50 interns active in 14 County of Marin departments and at several local nonprofits.

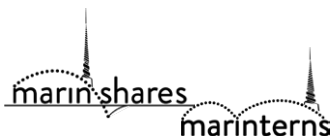
The Probation Department manages the annual session, which starts with a two-week introduction followed by a six-week internship for each participant. During orientation, "students were introduced to many careers from various county departments including the Public Defender's Office, Department of Finance, Health and Human Services, and Parks," said Program Coordinator **Fatima Roldan**.

Each explorer serves 25 hours a week alongside staff, learning about the mission and work of the department or nonprofit to which they are assigned. Performing Stars in Marin City and WildCare in San Rafael are among the nonprofit hosts providing hands-on opportunities.

The interns all have supervisors who provide mentoring through August 7, when the session ends.

Holiday

County offices will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of the Fourth of July.



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: **Natalie Dybeck**, **Marjorie Grannan**, **Scott Harrop**, **Diana Jones**, **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**

County's Top Supervisor of Volunteers Supports Fire Lookout Team

By Marjorie Grannan

He wasn't expecting it. Wasn't striving for it, wasn't hoping for it, and he sounds downright bashful talking about it. Marin County Fire Engineer **Bjorn Anderson** has been awarded the Supervisor of Volunteers of the Year honor for helping to keep Marin safe by supporting the trained and enthusiastic MarinShares volunteers who staff Marin's fire lookout towers.

"I feel honored to be recognized. I take a lot of pride in what I do," Bjorn said.

Bjorn is a Mill Valley native who attended Tam High, pursuing independent studies until he graduated with the class of 1999. He joined the Marin County Fire Department in 2007 and currently is assigned to the Throckmorton Fire Station on Panoramic Highway above Mill Valley.

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Bjorn Anderson

PHOTO BY GREGG TURNER

Outstanding Supervisor of Interns Encourages Youth to Promote Voting

By Marjorie Grannan



Elizabeth Iwamiya

For her innovative work with interns in the Student Elections Ambassador Program (SEAP), the County of Marin's Supervisor of Interns of the Year award has been presented to Elections Department employee **Elizabeth Iwamiya**.

Elizabeth, who was honored at a Board of Supervisors ceremony on May 18, said her regular work as an elections technician focuses on coordinating

vote-by-mail operations during elections and conducting public outreach. Outreach efforts include engaging voters with accessibility and language needs, underrepresented communities, unhoused voters, people involved in the court system, older adults, young voters, and voters-to-be.

Reaching those young voters and voters-to-be is SEAP's mission. Elizabeth coordinates SEAP and supports ambassador interns who visit campuses and take part in community events.

"Elizabeth has embraced her role coordinating and lifting up students

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PHOTO BY LILY IWAMIYA

Outstanding Supervisor of Interns Encourages Youth to Promote Voting

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accepted in the Student Election Ambassador Program,” said her department leader, Registrar of Voters **Natalie Adona**.

Reflecting on her work, Elizabeth explained, “Outreach raises awareness of just how precious this right to vote is, and the struggle and sacrifice it took to achieve that right for every citizen of our country.

Many people feel disconnected or believe their participation won’t make a difference—but housing, education, healthcare, the environment, transportation, civil rights, and so many of the things people care about are shaped by decisions made through the democratic process.”

She continued, “Working with young people is especially fulfilling because we can help them establish a lifelong habit of voting.”



PHOTO BY LAINE HENDRICKS

Board President Eric Lucan, left, displays the resolution of commendation for honoree Elizabeth Iwamiya, holding award. Pictured with them are Registrar of Voters Natalie Adona, Supervisors Dennis Rodoni and Brian Colbert, and Chief Executive Officer Derek Johnson.

The current group of 78 SEAP applicants consists of high school and college students. Those who sign up with the county’s central Marininterns program become official Marin County interns. Elizabeth provides orientation, and the students learn to make presentations,

register residents who are aged 18 and up, and pre-register younger kids.

Elizabeth listens to interns’ concerns and encourages them to develop new ways to promote youth participation in voting and elections.

With Elizabeth’s support, interns also enjoy in-person events like the pizza-centric Fall Kickoff, the sensational Summer Ice

Cream Social, and the signature annual Youth Town Hall.

“Recruitment for SEAP is mostly word of mouth,” Elizabeth said. She is always looking for new ways to reach students, schools, and parents. “My dream is to establish a healthy cohort of students in every high school and college in Marin, and we’re getting closer every year.

“I enjoy the feeling that I make a tangible difference every day with the work I do. And I love that my job allows me the latitude to stretch my creative vision and innovate.

“I’m passionate about helping young people understand that when they participate and speak up, leaders pay attention,” Elizabeth added. “They can have a voice in shaping their communities, and their vote is powerful.” ■



Young Library Ambassador Makes a Difference

By Calla McBride



PHOTO BY BOB DELL

Library staff member Héctor García, youth volunteer Joselin Ordoñez, and library Webstar interns Heidy Ordoñez and Sabiti Namburu pose at the South Novato Library, where they help welcome young patrons.

At age 11, **Joselin Ordoñez** is already making an impact as a youth volunteer at the South Novato branch of the Marin County Free Library.

Since becoming a library ambassador in December 2024, Joselin has spent an hour each week helping create a welcoming space for young readers.

Inspired by seeing other students assist library patrons, she decided she wanted to get involved. “I also wanted to do that because I thought it was interesting,” Joselin said.

“At South Novato, we strive to open up opportunities for younger children through volunteering so they can develop lifelong skills.”

She organizes toys and books in the children’s area, selects books for displays alongside Webstar Library Intern **Heidy**

Ordoñez, and helps with outreach at library events and at her school.

One of her favorite tasks is simple but meaningful: “I like organizing books,” she said.

Joselin’s journey with the library began through its Reading Buddies literacy support program, where her enthusiasm for reading and community quickly stood out.

According to her staff supervisor, Community Library Specialist **Héctor García**, Joselin embodies the goals of the Library Ambassador program. “At South Novato, we strive to open up opportunities for younger children through volunteering so they can develop lifelong skills,” Héctor said.

He explained that the program aligns with the library’s five-year Anti-Racism & Equity Strategic Plan, which aims to create joyful learning opportunities and foster community power.

As a library ambassador, Joselin is gaining an understanding of how the library works. “I’ve learned how the library is organized by different types of books, like fiction, non-fiction, Easy Reader, and Easy Chapter,” she said.

Beyond shelving books, Joselin is building connections. “My favorite part is meeting new kids,” she said. Also, “on my birthday, I got a cake, and the staff sang happy birthday to me.”

When not volunteering, she enjoys hip-hop dance classes, reading adventure series like *The Baby-Sitters Club* and *Magic Tree House*, and spending time with her mom. Looking ahead, Joselin hopes to become a doctor and travel the world.

For now, she encourages other children to discover what the library has to offer. “They have lots of activities, books for reading, and you can spend time here to play or to read,” she said.

Through her dedication and enthusiasm, Joselin shows how young volunteers can help strengthen community, one book at a time. ■



PHOTO BY BOB DELL

Joselin Ordoñez

County's Top Supervisor of Volunteers Supports Fire Lookout Team

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To recruit volunteers, "I collect interested parties in the springtime," he said. "If they show up for training, they're serious about it."

Fire seasons are weather dependent, and the lookout towers atop Mt. Tamalpais and Mt. Barnabe are open from May to December. "You can have one lookout spot a fire, then once you have the second lookout spot it, you can get a point of reference," he explained.

Bjorn's supervisor is Marin County Fire Captain **Jamal Cook**, who credited him for "being instrumental in transforming the fire lookout program into a thriving and highly sought-after volunteer organization." The program has grown to "a large, dedicated team with a waiting list of individuals eager to participate," Jamal said. "Bjorn recruits, trains, mentors, and supports volunteers throughout the fire season, ensuring they have the knowledge, equipment, and resources needed to be successful. He has expanded training opportunities... while fostering a positive and collab-



PHOTO BY LAINE HENDRICKS

Board of Supervisors President Eric Lucan, left, displays a resolution of commendation alongside honoree Bjorn Anderson, holding award. Pictured with them are Dep. Fire Chief Chris Martinelli, Supervisors Dennis Rodoni and Brian Colbert, and Chief Executive Officer Derek Johnson.

orative environment where volunteers feel valued and invested in the program's success. His commitment to continuous improvement, volunteer development, and program excellence has made the program an important asset to Marin County Fire and a rewarding experience for those who serve in it."

On June 27, new and returning lookout volunteers gathered for this season's orientation and updates. They learned about identifying different types of smoke, naming landscape features correctly, the importance of recording their service hours, and more—including

where to shelter should a fire ever approach the Mt. Tam tower.

"It's hard for people to imagine (Mt. Tam burning in a wildfire)," Bjorn said. "I don't know if a red flag warning is enough to make the public aware of what could happen, but red flag days are impactful."

With his wife, Mollie, Bjorn also operates a sailing club,

SailTime SF. Their daughter, Olive, is "an incredible ceramicist" and will start at Tam High this year. Son Bear, a swimmer, will attend Mill Valley Middle School. "I love celebrating my wife and my kids," he said. "And I love participating in the community."

In recognition of his outstanding supervision, Board of Supervisors President **Eric Lucan** presented Bjorn with a resolution of commendation and award on May 18 at the Marin Civic Center. During the ceremony, Deputy Fire Chief **Chris Martinelli** praised Bjorn's practical efforts and leadership. ■

Who's New & Welcome!

Landon Allen (Belvedere Tiburon), High School Intern, District Attorney's Office

Andres Davidson (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Amy Dietz (San Rafael), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Catheryn Elliott (New Orleans, LA), Summer High School Intern, District Attorney's Office

Wendy Fuchs (Mill Valley), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Jennifer Fung (Novato), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Steven Giang (San Rafael), Teen Volunteer, Civic Center Library

Gregg Hosfeldt (Half Moon Bay), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Laura Machado (Petaluma), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Tim McGuire (San Anselmo), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Sydney Phillips (Novato), Service Learning Volunteer, South Novato Library

Alexander Reyes (San Rafael), Marin Center Teen Volunteer, Cultural Services

Seth Rosenthal (Tiburon), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services and Event Aide, Human Resources

Robyn Stephens (San Anselmo), Public Administrator Intern, Department of Finance

Berta Zavala Garcia (Novato), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Lookout Volunteers Prep for Fire Season

PHOTO BY GREGG TURNER



Volunteer lookouts discuss a fire-related issue during their annual in-person training on Saturday, June 27, in Mill Valley. Staff supervisor **Bjorn Anderson** led the workshop for 25 new and veteran lookouts. Presentations included instructive photos from past fires, Q&A sessions, and more—all with the goal of increasing community safety. During fire season, lookouts sign up for day-long shifts. If they spot smoke, they immediately radio detailed observations that help firefighters reach the source as quickly as possible. These MarinShares volunteers operate seven days a week from the Marin County Fire Department's two lookout towers, one high on Mt. Tam and the other on Mt. Barnabe, near Samuel P. Taylor State Park in West Marin. The 2026 lookout program is full; those who would like to volunteer in future can find information on the Fire Department's [get-involved page](#).

Happy Anniversary

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

41 YEARS

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

29 YEARS

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

28 YEARS

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

24 YEARS

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

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

18 YEARS

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

16 YEARS

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

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

14 YEARS

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

Armory Willis (Sausalito), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

11 YEARS

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

10 YEARS

Pamela Ross (Greenbrae), MarinfoNOW Copy Editor, Human Resources

8 YEARS

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

6 YEARS

Deborah Gregor (Novato), Administrative Aide, Human Resources

5 YEARS

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

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

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

4 YEARS

Sandra Bushmaker (Sausalito), Ombudsman Volunteer, HHS

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

1 YEAR

Angie Alvarado (San Anselmo), **Cristos Giotes** (San Anselmo), **Getty Mitchell** (San Anselmo), **Jaylan Turner** (San Anselmo), Packet Assembly Youth Volunteers, HHS

Caren Gately (Point Reyes), California Room Volunteer, Marin County Free Library