

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Where Are They Now?

Returning home to Marin after college, **Talia Smith** joined the County of Marin in 2014 as a communications and budget intern in the then-County Administrator's Office (now the Office of the County Executive or OCE). The internship became the foundation of her career. A copy of a quote by her then-supervisor **Brent Ainsworth** still hangs in her office: "Intern Talia Smith has made a smooth transition between college life and ... the nerve center of county government."

That internship led to a county analyst position, followed by a City of San Rafael job. While earning a Master of Public Policy degree, she returned to the county in 2021. Talia now is a deputy county executive for legislative affairs, economic vitality, climate, and more. A highlight of her job is the OCE's internship program. "We went from hosting one intern a year to a robust cohort that welcomed 21 undergraduate and graduate interns this summer," she said. "These opportunities make public service accessible, tangible, and appealing to the next generation."



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Volunteers Tackle Two Sides of Elder Financial Abuse

By Scott Harrop

PHOTO BY BOB DELL



Financial Abuse Specialist Team member Beth Fernbacher speaks about avoiding fraud during a well-attended Scam Jam event in Tiburon earlier this year.

MarinShares volunteers **Sylvia Roye** and **Salamah Locks** represent two sides of the Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST), which has received the county's Volunteer Team of the Year Award. (See award details on page 3.)

Sylvia, a retired certified public accountant, serves on the investigative side.

Salamah, a retired nurse, handles community outreach, teaching people how to spot signs of fraud.

The group consists of 15 volunteers split between investigations and outreach. This diverse bunch includes attorneys, real estate professionals, bankers, and health-care professionals. They are supported by Senior Program Coordinator

Mandy Reyes of the Health and Human Services Department's Aging and Adult Services.

Each member is vetted and fingerprinted before gaining access to confidential information.

Continued on page 3

Intern Team of the Year Explores Public Policy

By Natalie Dybeck

The energetic Board of Supervisors District 2 Intern Team has been named Marin County's Intern Team of the Year. Throughout last summer, MarinInterns **Jessica Mendieta**, **Calvin Gundee**, **Lizbeth Mendieta**, **Sydney Tzur**, **Hava Rossitter**, **Riley**

Merkin, **Ashley Wang**, and **Henry Houser** gained experience while learning how local government works in real time.



Supervisor Brian Colbert, left, compliments the top intern team as members Jessica Mendieta, Henry Houser, and Calvin Gundee respond.

At a special ceremony on May 18, team members received resolutions of commendation from Board President

Continued on page 2

PHOTO BY LAINE HENDRICKS

Continued from page 1

“Rather than observing from the sidelines, interns were empowered to take initiative, contribute original ideas, and take ownership of meaningful

The team of unpaid Marinterns embraced that opportunity, demonstrating curiosity and initiative while learning about collaboration. They asked thoughtful questions, participated in meetings, and conducted research.

Archie Williams High School rising junior Calvin Gundee explained that “Placer.ai is an advanced location intelligence and foot-traffic analytics platform that shows consumer behavior, visitation patterns, demographics, and market trends.”

“I wasn’t familiar with Placer.ai before the internship, so it was exciting to see how community events like Live on the Avenue or larger events like the Marin County Fair can be measured to help make data-driven decisions,” Jessica said.



Intern Team of the Year members smile alongside county leaders during the recognition ceremony in board chambers. From left, Marin interns Henry Houser and Calvin Gundee, Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, Marin intern Jessica Mendieta, Board of Supervisors President Eric Lucan, who presided, Supervisor Brian Colbert, Chief Executive Officer Derek Johnson. Not pictured: team members Lizbeth Mendieta, Sydney Tzur, Hava Rossitter, Riley Merkin, Ashley Wang.

Each of the team's interns balanced long-term projects with experiences in county government. They attended public board meetings, observed Supervisor Colbert's meetings with constituents, and helped organize the first-ever District 2 Commissioner Appreciation Reception.

Jessica agreed: “It was very collaborative, and having other people around you to bounce ideas off of was incredibly helpful. Everyone was super kind, and we all got along really well.” Every day, there was “something to look forward to.”

"One challenge I didn't expect was the number of processes involved in getting projects off the ground," Jessica said. "In government, there are a lot of channels and approvals required along the way.

Calvin canvassed for Supervisor Colbert when he ran for office, and that civic involvement “inspired me to apply for the internship.” For Calvin, the relationships he built stood out. He found assignments “interesting and unfamiliar,” while “the people I met ultimately made the internship far more rewarding than the work alone.”

For their staff supervisor Sonia, the team's accomplishments reflected the true purpose of the internship. "They demonstrated that internships are empowering spaces where young people are trusted with real assignments, encouraged to think creatively, and supported in building confidence, skills, and a strong sense of civic engagement." ■

Jessica plans to pursue a master's degree in public administration or a related field after completing undergraduate studies.

Her career goal

Volunteers Tackle Two Sides of Elder Financial Abuse

Continued from page 1

PHOTO BY LAINE HENDRICKS



Financial Abuse Specialist Team members smile after receiving their resolutions of commendation for Volunteer Team of the Year honors in Board of Supervisors chambers.

Meeting every other month, they attend presentations by guest speakers on subjects such as cybercrime and developments in banking. They discuss individual cases referred by Adult Protective Services, law enforcement, health professionals, and members of the public who have had previous contacts with team members.

Each case represents someone, usually an older person, who is potentially a victim of financial abuse, often by advisors or family members.

Outreach efforts by Salamah and her fellow FAST presenters involve teaching elders about frauds such as fake Publishers Clearing House awards, romance scams, and embezzlement by financial advisors. She notes that many schemes originate overseas.

“Salamah’s colorful and enthusiastic participation in FAST presentations to older adult community members has helped warn and educate countless Marin residents about the dangers of frauds and scams,” said Marin County Public Guardian **Mark Vanderscoff**, who leads the team.

Salamah urges caution over incoming texts or calls you didn’t solicit, and to beware of falling into a con game.

“Our brain naturally links things,” she said, which encourages us to believe in a story suggested by a scammer. “Pull back,” she advised. “Ask a friend. Google it. Check resources, like the primary phone number listed in *AARP: The Magazine* or *AARP Bulletin*. Do not call a number in an unsolicited text, email, or phone call.”

With fellow team members, Salamah sets up a table at events like Fire Safe Marin’s Ember Stomp festival, using props to promote FAST’s message. She coordinates with like-minded organizations to help get the word out.

She got an early start in advocacy from a third-grade teacher, who taught her, “If you have something to say, stand up and speak!” She learned her skills while speaking and advocating for her clinical clients, and teaching and chairing committees.

Sometimes the most effective message is simple and direct. For example, if you receive an unsolicited phone call, “you have permission to be rude and just hang up,” she said.

Born in Oakland, Salamah was raised in San Francisco. She moved to Marin with her husband in the late 1960s. Her

Continued on page 4

Board Honors FAST

The Marin County Board of Supervisors has recognized the Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) as the Volunteer Team of the Year for 2025–2026.

FAST is coordinated by the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department’s Aging and Adult Services division and chaired by the Marin County Public Guardian’s Office.

The team consists of 15 MarinShares volunteers: **Hans Adler, Chrisula Asimos, Diane Cokely, Oak Dowling, Beth Fernbacher, Charles Fracchia, Stan Green, Maria Gregoriev, Irv Gubman, Salamah Locks, Lee Notowich, Susan O’Brien, Roberta Robinson, Paul Royce, and Sylvia Royce.**

Team members bring expertise in law, finance, banking, and more.

They alert the public to risks by educating older adults, families, and caregivers about scams.

They also provide forensic accounting in cases of suspected fraud, partnering with the District Attorney’s Office, local law enforcement, Adult Protective Services, and the Marin Ombudsman Office.

The team has earned a national Aging Achievement award and last year expanded its outreach program to include Marin, San Francisco, and online audiences.

Board President **Eric Lucan** presided, Human Resources Director **Christina Cramer** emceed, and department leaders **Lisa Warhuus** and **Kari Beuerman** represented HHS at a ceremony honoring FAST members on May 18 at the Marin Civic Center.

We Remember Internships Sponsor Marlon Washington

We mourn the loss of Probation Department Chief **Marlon Washington**, who died suddenly on July 10 at age 52. Upon joining the county six years ago, Chief Washington became an immediate champion of the Career Explorer summer program, which is managed by the Probation Department and welcomes students from a wide range of backgrounds. He described the program as “more than just a stepping stone—it’s a lifeline.” Some participants “have walked through the justice system themselves or watched family members do the same. But here they find hope, purpose, and the power to rewrite their future.”

“He was passionate about making people feel a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to thrive.”

Career Explorer program coordinator **Fatima Roldan** said the chief “took great honor in expanding this program to create further opportunities for our young people here in Marin. He was passionate about making people feel a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to thrive.” While he led the department, more than 300 explorers took part across the county organization and at local nonprofits. Chief Washington also supported year-round opportunities for regular interns and last year was delighted when a Probation Department college intern, **Camilo Ibarra**, was named the county’s Intern of the Year. Marinerns program coordinator **Joy Fossett** said she will always remember “the smile on the chief’s face and his enthusiasm for the young people.”



PHOTO BY BILL JOHNSTON JR.

Volunteers Tackle Two Sides of Elder Financial Abuse

Continued from page 3

four children were educated in Marin schools and live within an hour and a half of her San Rafael home.

How did she come to join FAST? Out at a Chinese restaurant with friends she opened her fortune cookie, which read: “You will be called to fill a position of high honor.” She took that as a sign and has never looked back.

Meanwhile, Sylvia, a FAST member for 16 years, is “always up to the challenge of reviewing and chronicling the financial losses incurred by older adults who have been victimized by financial abuse,” said Public Guardian Vanderscoff.

Her investigative work aims to document fraud, embezzlement, and financial abuse perpetrated upon elderly clients by trusted advisors. Often this involves family. For example, an adult child acting as primary caregiver feels entitled to more of a parent’s resources, and raids accounts. Or family members don’t pay close attention to an outside caregiver handling their relative’s finances. One recurring challenge for FAST is that

parents often won’t press charges if their own children are involved.

Friends, bankers, and neighbors refer cases to Adult Protective Services, whose tip line can be reached 24/7 at 415-473-2774 to report suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect of adults aged 60 and up or of dependent adults aged 18 to 59 with physical or mental limitations.

Attorneys and law enforcement staff seek warrants for bank records, statements, or trust documents. These are already obtained by the time a case comes to FAST. Sylvia follows the money, builds the spreadsheets, and wraps it all up for the DA’s Office. She sometimes finds a reference to an account that no one knew about and recommends obtaining those records via a search warrant.

Although she has occasionally testified at trial, ideally forensic accounting provides so much detail that the case doesn’t need to go to court. “The object is to

provide evidence that could be used in court to convict the alleged perpetrator.”

The DA usually pursues criminal charges, even though they do not lead to financial awards. Those would require filing civil charges.

Sylvia, a Chicago native, moved to California in 1968 and came to Marin with her husband in 1980. She has done lots of volunteering over the years. “I’m always the treasurer,” she says with a smile.

There’s little turnover on FAST, and many members have served 15 or more years.

“Fun fact,” says Mark Vanderscoff, “Sylvia is part of the only husband-wife duo on the team. She is married to **Paul Roye**, another dedicated FAST veteran who likewise began in 2010.”

“It’s rewarding work to stop someone from victimizing other vulnerable adults,” says Sylvia. Salamah agrees. “It’s doing right by older people. Like nursing...it’s advocacy for the patient.” ■

Environmental Science Intrigues County Parks Intern

By Diana Jones

PHOTO BY STEVE ZIMAN



Carter Cain

Marintern **Carter Cain**, a recent Archie Williams High School graduate, is fascinated by environmental science thanks to inspiration from his grandfather, David Cain, who is devoted to the field.

When Carter discovered his school's SEA-DISC program (Social and Environmental Academy Dedicated to Improving School and Community) he put that interest into action and applied what he learned to an internship with Marin County Parks.

SEA-DISC focuses on environmental science and social justice, typically for upperclassmen, featuring integrated curriculum and community action projects, according to [The Pitch](#), a website run by Archie Williams High School students.

Carter's internship began in November and spans Marin, with his most recent focus being a restoration project at the hill at the south end of the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. Carter and Parks Ranger **Michael Campos** put in planter beds with drought-tolerant plants such as California poppies, lavender, catmint, and jasmine. They trimmed grass and

trees and made the area more accessible to all.

"The internship has really helped me see the real-life jobs connected to the study of environmental problems," Carter said. "What motivates me is knowing that all the work that is experience for me also helps the environment in the parks. I hope this experience will lead me to narrow down my career choice and what I want to focus on in college."

"Carter possesses a good foundation of knowledge about local plants and weeds and demonstrates an excellent ability to pay attention to detail and produce thoughtful and thorough work," said his staff supervisor, Parks Volunteer Coordinator **Kirk Schroeder**.

Kirk recalled Carter's can-do spirit at a community event held at Hal Brown Park in Greenbrae last December. "That day we had a lot of rain and strong wind as well. Carter borrowed some of our rain gear and was undeterred by the tough conditions," Kirk said. He stayed "for the entirety of the event and, in the end, was soggy and muddy but all smiles."

Carter has one younger brother, Desi, parents Karen and Ben, and two dogs, Michael and Alcito. His family enjoys

Marin's outdoors, especially Creekside Park. During the pandemic, Carter and his family relocated to Costa Rica and lived in a small town where he attended school and adopted Alcito.

Like his grandfather, Carter wants to follow his passion for environmental science, plus his own interest in psychology. He hopes to attend Lafayette College in Pennsylvania or College of Charleston in South Carolina this fall. ■

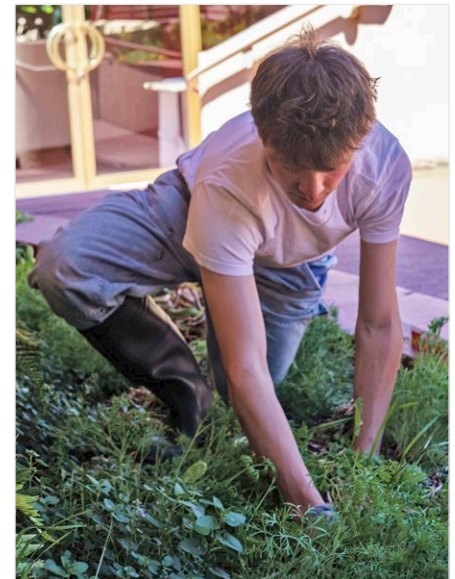


PHOTO BY STEVE ZIMAN

Carter Cain adds new plants to landscaping outside the south end of the Marin Civic Center's fourth floor.

Who's New & Welcome!

Ellen Boesner (San Anselmo), Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator, Health & Human Services (HHS)

Samuel Fishman (San Anselmo), Building and Safety and Land Development Shadow, Community Development Agency and Public Works Department

Tamara Gonzalez (Novato), One-on-One Tutor, South Novato Library

James Harris (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Erik Humber (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Spencer Kitzel (Mill Valley), Summer Legal Research Intern, County Counsel's Office

Maya Kux (San Rafael), Pre-Law Intern, District Attorney's Office

Toni Macdonald (Point Reyes Station), Senior Peer Counselor, HHS

Savannah May (Mill Valley), Student Service Intern, Marin City Library

Polly McGinness (Mill Valley), High School Intern, County Counsel's Office

Camila Ordonez Rodriguez (Novato), Student Service-Learning Intern, South Novato Library

Lester Rodriguez (Novato), Building and Safety and Land Development Shadow, Community Development Agency and Public Works Department

Colin Rohla (San Rafael), Teen Volunteer, Civic Center Library

Brennan Wenck-Reilly (Larkspur), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Happy Anniversary

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

25 YEARS

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

Dennis Sarantopoulos (Tomas), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

18 YEARS

Donald Jennings (San Rafael), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

16 YEARS

Kathryn Mitchell-Ball (San Rafael), Volunteer Attorney, District Attorney's Office

Leo Coppeta (Mill Valley), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

13 YEARS

Salamah Locks (San Rafael), Financial Abuse Specialist Team Volunteer, Health & Human Services (HHS)

12 YEARS

Jeff Davidson (Novato), **Clint Mason** (Petaluma), Fire Lookouts, Marin County Fire

Eleanor Lau (Petaluma), Graphic Design/Production Artist, Human Resources

11 YEARS

Sarah Brewster (Woodacre), **Alan Lubow** (Lagunitas), **Carl Miller** (Fairfax), **Phil Sotter**

(Woodacre), **William 'Bill' Teufel** (San Geronimo), **Mel Wright** (Woodacre), Stewards and Broom Pull Volunteers, Marin County Parks

Sally Hutchison (Inverness), Senior Peer Counselor, HHS

Michael Koonce (Berkeley), Air Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office

10 YEARS

Shay Cook (Concord), **Wendy Dalia** (Mill Valley), **April Kelly** (Mill Valley), **Michelle Tripp** (Mill Valley), Search & Rescue Volunteers, Marin County Sheriff's Office

8 YEARS

Scott Harrop (Napa), *MarinfoNOW* Newsletter Writer, Human Resources

5 YEARS

Daniel Christian (Novato), Chaplain, Marin County Sheriff's Office

Pegan Brooke (Bollinas), Shelver, Stinson Beach Library

Marjorie Grannan (Petaluma), *MarinfoNOW* Newsletter Writer, Human Resources

4 YEARS

Eric Aguirre (San Anselmo), Student Service Intern, Fairfax Library

Riley McClure (San Anselmo), **Vlad Tymchyshyn** (San Anselmo), Packet Assembly Student Service Interns, HHS

3 YEARS

Laurie Ozone (Novato), Restrictive Covenant Assistant, Assessor-Recorder's Office

2 YEARS

Naomi Patel (Larkspur), **Janice Sargiotto** (San Rafael), Marin Center Volunteers, Cultural Services

Stephen Ziman (San Rafael), Photographer, Human Resources

Kelly Pieczonka (Novato), **Katherine Ransom** (San Rafael), Friends of the Family Volunteers, HHS

Maddy Kearney (San Anselmo), Packet Assembly, HHS

Marie Begg (Kentfield), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

1 YEAR

Nance Becker (Corte Madera), **Kathleen Eagle** (San Anselmo), **Maria McVarish** (Point Reyes Station), **Susy Miller** (San Rafael), **Richard Scott** (Mill Valley), Senior Peer Counselors, HHS

Michael Li (Daly City), Certified Post-Bar Law Clerk, Public Defender's Office

