COUNTY OF MARIN

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MarinfoNOW

NEWS FOR MARINSHARES AND MARINTERNS

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Arts & Crafts Fair!

Everyone is welcome at the 2026 Arts & Crafts Fair, featuring live music, handcrafts, and original art by county staff. MarinShares volunteers are key to the event as they coordinate, register vendors, and more. This pop-up fair at the Marin Civic Center cafeteria is open to the public from 11:00 to 4:00 on November 18 and 19. There are different vendors each day, and admission is free.

We Remember Becky Dahlstrom

MarinShares volunteer usher **Becky Dahlstrom** has passed away, according to Cultural Services Department Front of House Manager **Todd McQuade**. Todd described Becky as "a light and a friend to other volunteers." She supported Marin Center programming as an usher, a greeter, and at the Marin County Fair. Becky joined in 2022 and "brought an enthusiasm and energy that we will miss," Todd added.

Holidays

County offices will be closed November 11 for Veterans Day, and November 26 and 27 for Thanksgiving.

marin shares marinterns

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Legal Fellows Add Fresh Perspectives at Public Defender's Office

By Natalie Dybeck

The Marin County Public Defender's Office is currently home to two attorneys gaining valuable experience in public defense through the Bridge Fellowship program. The fellowship provides financial support for new attorneys to gain experience in public service while pursuing careers in government and nonprofit organizations.

UC San Francisco (formerly UC Hastings) alum **Michael Li** and University of San Francisco alum **Derick Morgan** began their time with the office as law clerks, then advanced to attorney roles after passing the California State Bar exam in November 2025.

As law clerks, Michael and Derick learned alongside staff attorneys and

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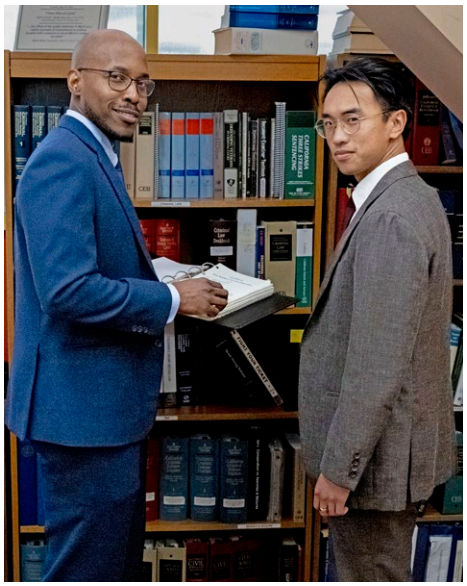


PHOTO BY BOB DELL

Derick Morgan and Michael Li

Volunteer Helps on Trails, in Tower, and on Radio

By Marjorie Grannan



PHOTO BY GREGG TURNER

Michael Fischer at Old Mill Park.

Michael Fischer built a harpsichord and a clavichord for his wife, Jane, surely making him a Renaissance man. He even tunes them for her. But "I don't play music, just enjoy it," he chuckles, and "I can't tune the Steinway."

The Renaissance doesn't stop there. Since 2021, the MarinShares volunteer, now in his eighties, regularly walks the Blithedale Summit Preserve trails. He wears an Open Space Patrol Volunteer hat and shirt and logs an impressive 25 to 30 miles a week. He provides help and recommendations to any hiker, biker, or horseback rider who wants such support.

And since 2018, once a week during fire season, Michael volunteers at the

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Volunteer Helps on Trails, in Tower, and on Radio

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Dickson Fire Lookout on Mt. Barnabe in West Marin, surveying the area and looking for "smokes."

"The lookout shift is 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 pm.," Michael said. "I show up at 10:30 because at 11:00 we must radio in the first of two detailed weather reports."

As a lookout volunteer, he wants to be alone. Marin's other fire tower, the Gardner Fire Lookout, is on Mt. Tamalpais and it is "a tourist destination, rightly so," Michael said. "There's often quite a hubbub just below the Gardner lookout—and I am up there to find solitude. Dickson has it, where Tam does not."

Maybe he gets time alone, maybe he doesn't, but according to his staff supervisor, Fire Engineer **Bjorn Anderson**, "Michael is an outstanding volunteer whose dedication and hard work have played a crucial role in the success of our program. His reliability, positive attitude, and meaningful contributions make a significant impact, and we are truly grateful for everything he brings to our team."



PHOTO BY MICHAEL FISCHER

Michael Fischer at Old St. Hilary's Open Space Preserve.

Retired after a long career with environmental organizations—including serving as executive director of both the Sierra Club and the California Coastal Commission—Michael began volunteering as a ham radio operator. In 2010, he signed on with RACES (Marin's Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service), then part of the Sheriff's Office and now with the Fire Department. A different pursuit was working in the radio room of the USS Pampanito, a WWII submarine moored at Fisherman's Wharf and open for tours. "We were able to bring that part of the ship to life," he said.

Open Space Patrol Ranger **Erica Frazier**, Michael's supervisor for those hikes around Blithedale Summit Preserve, said, "It is an absolute treat to know Michael. I have even heard comments from visitors, such as, 'A very nice man in an Open Space volunteer vest helped me find my way around,' or 'I chatted with this volunteer guy, and he gave me information about the preserve.' Ambling the trails and fire roads of Mount Tamalpais is one of his cherished joys, and he puts those miles to good use in our Open Space Patrol," Erica continued. "He has intimate knowledge of Mount Tamalpais and the county, and a strong understanding of environmental policies and philanthropy."

Volunteer activity "keeps what I call 'the dwindles' away," Michael said with a smile.

While he also enjoys model yacht racing and the delicate intricacies of Japanese tea ceremonies, Michael's favorite pastime is "being alone in the woods, spotting a wildflower, listening to the wind in the trees." Yet he doesn't let volunteer hours run late, because "I have a lovely wife, so why would I want to miss a candlelit dinner with her?" ■

MarinShares and Marinterns at the Senior Fair



PHOTO BY ANNE STARR

Marinterns Coordinator **Joy Fossett** speaks with a fairgoer at the Western-themed Marin Senior Fair in September. More than 2,000 people attended the popular annual event at the Marin Center Exhibit Hall, and scores of them learned about the county's volunteer and intern opportunities at the MarinShares and Marinterns booth. Newcomers to the community inquired about getting involved as volunteers, job hunters asked about County of Marin work opportunities, and **Lindy Burgon** from the Marin County Office of Education stopped by to discuss internships for high school students. Also at the fair were representatives of several county programs that engage volunteers and interns, among them the Senior Peer Counseling program, the Financial Abuse Specialist Team, and the Elections Department, which hosts the Student Elections Ambassadors Program.

Legal Fellows Add Fresh Perspectives at Public Defender's Office

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gained experience in client interviews, court appearances, legal research, and drafting motions. Today, they have their own cases, representing clients from their first court appearance through resolution or trial.

"My typical day involves calls and meetings with clients, preparing arguments and briefs for upcoming hearings, reviewing case files, and of course hearings in court," described Derick.



Michael Li



Derick Morgan

PHOTOS BY BOB DELL

While the work can be demanding, both emphasized the collaborative nature of the Public Defender's Office.

"Nobody knows everything, but if you ask enough people, someone will have an answer."

"We all manage our own clients' cases, but we discuss issues and strategy with each other," Derick said. "Everyone is very generous with their expertise."

Michael noted that attorneys and law clerks regularly bounce ideas off one another, review each other's work, and share sample motions and advice. "Nobody knows everything, but if you ask enough people, someone will have an answer," he said.

"Derick and Michael's service with the Public Defender over the last year, first as post-bar volunteers and then as Bridge Fellows, has been nothing short of amazing," said Chief Deputy Public Defender **Peter Arian**. "They each have helped hundreds of community members and learned a lot in the process. Not only are they outstanding litigators, but they care about our clients and put countless hours into affecting positive changes in their lives. Derick and Michael quickly assimilated to the Public Defender's model of holistic care and are valued members of our team."

For Michael, the opportunity to get to know and represent clients has been especially rewarding.

"Some of the most compelling lawyering I've seen comes from attorneys who excel at highlighting their clients' stories and the positive things they have going on in their lives. That's what I always hoped to do," Michael said. "Clients are people too, often going through the most stressful time of their lives because of involvement in a criminal case. As a PD, I'm lucky to get to know my clients, to learn about their backgrounds, and to advocate on their behalf."

Derick finds the experience rewarding for a different, but complementary, reason. He compares public defenders to firefighters, explaining, "We show up when our client's rights are on fire."

The two attorneys described their assignments as intellectually challenging and rewarding. Michael said finding solutions that best serve a client often requires thinking outside the box. For Derick, working on a case can feel like solving a puzzle, and "that feeling when you solve the puzzle" is his favorite part of the job.

While their paths to public defense were different, both brought experiences that shaped their interest in the field. Michael developed his advocacy skills through law school mock trial competitions. Derick's previous work on state policy alongside attorneys and public defenders inspired his interest in public defense. Both were drawn to Marin by the office's reputation and commitment to its clients.

He compares public defenders to firefighters, explaining, "We show up when our client's rights are on fire."

Outside the office, Michael enjoys tennis and ultimate frisbee, while Derick is rarely without headphones and enjoys listening to music.

For both attorneys, experience as Bridge Fellows has reinforced the importance of teamwork, mentorship, and getting to know the people they represent, and has confirmed their commitment to careers in the public sector. ■



We Remember Oak Dowling

Former Volunteer of the Year **Oak Dowling**, left, and **Mandy Reyes** of the Marin County Public Guardian's Office smile outside the office where Oak served with the Financial Abuse Services Team (FAST). Oak died September 25 of complications following a heart attack while traveling in France. "Oak had tremendous impact in his volunteer role, and for many was synonymous with FAST," said FAST Chair and Public Guardian **Mark Vanderscoff** of the Health and Human Services Department. "He was in demand as a speaker and could always be counted on to give a lively and interesting presentation full of good humor and his famous quips." A retired attorney, Oak applied legal expertise and public speaking skills to teach people how to avoid financial abuse. His simple advice about scam calls: "Just hang up." A FAST volunteer since 2011, Oak and fellow presenter **Roberta Robinson** were co-Volunteers of the Year in 2012–2013 for their contributions. Earlier this year, Oak and the rest of the team were honored as the county's Volunteer Team of the Year for supporting investigations and educating the public in person and online. Mark noted, "Oak had a tremendous impact in his volunteer role. The team will not be the same without him."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MANDY REYES

Happy Anniversary

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

21 YEARS

Steve Wilson (Mill Valley), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service (RACES/ACS) Volunteer, Marin County Fire

18 YEARS

Richard Sievers (Healdsburg), Air Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff's Office

17 YEARS

James Campbell (Belvedere), Steward, Marin County Parks

16 YEARS

Charles Campbell (San Rafael), Chaplain, Marin County Sheriff's Office

Jerry Riessen (Tiburon), Steward, Marin County Parks

11 YEARS

Brian Crawford (San Anselmo), California Room Researcher and Writer, Marin County Free Library

Lindsay Going (San Rafael), Environmental Steward, Marin County Parks

10 YEARS

Michael Simon (Tomales), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

8 YEARS

Kathleen Safford (Mill Valley), Ombudsman Volunteer, Health & Human Services (HHS)

5 YEARS

Lynn Bloom (San Rafael), **Ida Hill** (San Anselmo), **Elfriede Weideli** (Mill Valley), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

Tracy MacLeod (San Anselmo), **Maureen McManus** (Fairfax), Ombudsman Volunteers, HHS

4 YEARS

Nancy Castor (San Rafael), California Room Archivist, Marin County Free Library

Lynette Greenlief (San Anselmo), **Beverly McClendon** (Novato), **Margie Schwartz** (San Anselmo), **Jennifer Taekman** (San Rafael), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

3 YEARS

Kara Halvorsen (Sausalito), Civic Center Tour Docent, Cultural Services

Mark Klein (Novato), Radio Communications Volunteer, Department of Public Works

Anna Kondolf (Fairfax), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

Sylvia Mills (Corte Madera), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

Richard Racich (Tiburon), Fire Lookout, Marin County Fire

Jacqueline 'Jackie' Whelan (Corte Madera), Consumer Mediator, District Attorney's Office

2 YEARS

Lina Campopiano (Novato), **Michelle Gantos** (Tiburon), Marin Center Volunteers, Cultural Services

1 YEAR

Cameron Ericksen (Kentfield), Homework Helpers Intern, Civic Center Library

Emeli Gonzalez (Novato), Teen Volunteer, Novato Library

Zoe Hess (Fairfax), Homework Helpers Intern, Fairfax Library

Andrea Hirsig (Pinole), Marin Wildlife Watch Volunteer, Marin County Parks

Roxana Lucar Vidalon (Novato), Spanish Tutor, Novato Library

Rich Rusdorf (San Rafael), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

Who's New & Welcome!

Claire Anderson (Menlo Park), Council for State and Territorial Epidemiologists Applied Epidemiology Fellow, Health & Human Services (HHS)

Hadley Balch (San Rafael), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

Jaiden Bareng (Berkeley), California Department of Public Health Pathways Intern, HHS

Jose Bejarano (Oakland), Nursing Student in Communicable Disease, HHS

Edan Bowers (San Rafael), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Chase Chakeris (Novato), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

Willa Chan (Kentfield), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

Julia Choucroun (Corte Madera), Homework Helpers Intern, Corte Madera Library

Peter Colwell (Tiburon), Gap Year Intern, Public Defender's Office

Nathaniel Jon De Jesus (Union City), Nursing Student in the Jail, HHS

Grace DePriest (El Cerrito), Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern, HHS

Emmalee Doughty (San Rafael), Student Elections Ambassador, Elections Department

Charlotte Erlingsson (San Rafael), Homework Helpers Intern, Civic Center Library

Casey Escobar (San Rafael), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Gabriel Glover (San Rafael), MCSTOPP/Clean Marin Intern, Department of Public Works

Andy Gramajo (San Rafael), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Rory Krogh-Jespersen (Greenbrae), Homework Helpers Intern, Corte Madera Library

Reana Cara Macatangay (Pinole), Nursing Student in the Jail, HHS

Alessandra Mancini (Novato), Teen Volunteer, Civic Center Library

Paris Marquis (San Rafael), Homework Helpers Intern, Corte Madera Library

Ivan Monterroso (Novato), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Fredy Monzon (Novato), Spanish Tutor, Novato Library

Chelsie Moody (San Rafael), Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern, HHS

Daniel Negrete (Petaluma), Nursing Student in Communicable Disease, HHS

Angela Ochoa Valencia (Novato), Homework Helpers Intern, Novato Library

Avelynn Olague (Novato), Teen Advisory Group Volunteer, Novato Library

Piyanshi Pathuri (San Rafael), Teen Volunteer, Civic Center Library

Jessica Perez (Santa Rosa), Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern, HHS

Zane Pettersen (Pacifica), Marketing Intern, Cultural Services

Sergio Ranguel Quevedo (Richmond), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Caroline Reidy (Ross), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Julian Roumeliotis (San Francisco), Pre-Law Intern, Public Defender's Office

Sandra 'Sam' Rudel (Inverness), Book Scout, Point Reyes Library

Selena Saad (San Francisco), Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern, HHS

Noah Sanchez (Novato), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Mary St. Clair (Novato), Nursing Student in Communicable Disease, HHS

Arman Tavacoli (Mill Valley), FIRE Foundry Education Intern, Marin County Fire

Nancy Vallance (Mill Valley), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Andrea Wang (Novato), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services

Olivia Winn (Corte Madera), Teen Volunteer, Novato Library

Rachel Winningham (Fairfax), Marin Center Volunteer, Cultural Services



CARTOON BY JOHN DONAGHUE