**MMRC is Marin’s 2021 Top Volunteer Team**

By Tiyona Pariani

The Marin Medical Reserve Corps (MMRC) is the Marin County 2021 Volunteer Team of the Year for outstanding efforts in fighting the spread of Covid-19. Hundreds of corps members have collectively served more than 21,000 hours for Covid operations, supporting a range of response activities and shoring up the county’s pandemic response.

The corps’ mission is to recruit, train, deploy, and retain volunteer health professionals and others who contribute skills and expertise in response to public health emergencies, threats of terrorism, and other community needs.

“Marin Medical Reserve Corps volunteers are dedicated, brave, and caring healthcare and support professionals,” continued on page 3

**Covid Testing Group Shares Honor for Intern Team of the Year**

By Tiyona Pariani

For their outstanding perseverance in facing the Covid-19 pandemic, six Health and Human Services Department (HHS) interns have received resolutions of commendation celebrating them as Marin County’s 2021 Intern Team of the Year. The Covid Response Mobile Testing Intern Team members are Marinterns Ryan Samway, Jillian Hickey, Max Manwaring-Mueller, Ana-Sofia Arena, Ian Duncan, and Celine Bennett.

The HHS team tied with a Marin County Free Library teen group for 2021 Intern Team of the Year honors.

Covid Response Mobile Testing Intern Team members were on the front lines

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Library Teen Crew Shares Top Intern Team of Year Honors

By Tiyona Pariani

For their commitment to connecting teens during the Covid-19 pandemic when almost everything went virtual, the Teen Leadership Crew (TLC) — Harita Kalvai, Simon Scheuer, Sofia Casano, Kate Lane, Claire Austin, Christianna Gatti, James Bah, Stella Vazquez, Madeline Knightly, and Sajiv Kumar — is Marin’s 2021 Intern Team of the Year.

This group of Marinterns serving with the Marin County Free Library tied for Intern Team of the Year honors with a Health and Human Services student team.

While many public libraries halted teen volunteering during the pandemic shutdown, the county library created a virtual volunteering opportunity to connect socially isolated teens.

Teen volunteers from Marin County began meeting twice weekly online in the summer of 2020 to brainstorm. Shortly after, they began hosting Friday night programs for their peers, and for younger kids, such as open mic and trivia game nights, cooking tutorials, magic demonstrations, and drawing classes.

The resulting benefits were mutual. As TLC member Simon Scheuer put it, “Though we are volunteering to help other people, there is a benefit and value to us as well. We have created a community, and that is cool.”

“The Teen Leadership Crew has been such an inspiration to me as their librarian facilitator,” said Fairfax branch Librarian April Hayley, who started this program. “They have boundless energy and are a truly self-motivated and service-driven group of diverse students.”

Librarian Rashida Skaar, the team’s supervisor, said, “I have loved every moment of getting to know the Teen Leadership Crew. They have all worked so diligently to bring high quality programming to the children, teens, and adults of Marin and have handled everything from creating the advertisements for the programs to assisting with the actual events.”

“I chose an internship at the Marin County Free Library because I wanted to work somewhere that benefits my community,” said team member Sofia Casano. “I love working with the youth in my area because we have a lot of shared experiences, and I feel like we help each other grow.”

When school resumed in the fall, a new project was created that brought Marin teens together even if they had not joined the TLC or attended its events: their own magazine. They spent the fall and winter developing The Spire e-magazine (first issue shown to the right), named after the gold spire at the Civic Center. Team member Harita Kalvai chose the name.

The TLC contacted peers via social media, newsletters, and word of mouth to generate submissions. The final product includes artwork, interviews with local teen activists and influencers, social justice essays, poetry, hobbies, and recipes.

The students also wrote, directed, and acted in a video, “Cinderella’s Online Love.” The short film was shot entirely on Zoom. It tells the story of a handsome prince hosting the first-ever online ball and Cinderella’s adventures in love, technical difficulties, and friendship.

Crew members received resolutions of commendation signed by Board of Supervisors President Dennis Rodoni and were recognized during a board ceremony on November 2. The team award was given to staff for display at the Fairfax branch.

The ceremony format was hybrid, with some participants attending in person and others on Zoom, including the emcee, HR Director Mary Hao, and Library Director Lana Adlawan. Lana said the library staff was happy to have the students honored. “We are so thrilled,” she said, “and our staff is incredibly honored to be able to work with young people — they are our future leaders.”

PHOTO BY RASHIDA SKAAR

Library Teen Leadership Crew members Jamie Bah, Stella Vazquez, Kate Lane, and Claire Austin attend a Zoom meeting with their internship supervisor, Librarian Rashida Skaar. Peer activities and meetings are happening online during the pandemic.

The Spire • art • photography • poetry • social media • hobbies • social justice

SPRING 2021
said the group’s coordinator, Anne Carta of the Health and Human Services Department. “We could not have achieved the high level of Covid vaccinations or served the community so thoroughly without the unwavering contributions of the MMRC. Thank you to all of the wonderful MMRC volunteers for rising to the call of duty time and time again!”

“I love that I am able to spend my time this way, with such an interesting group of people,” said MMRC volunteer Maxine Gilbert. “There are nurses, medical doctors, pharmacists, admin personnel — and everyone is absolutely essential to making it as easy as it is to come in and get vaccinated. There’s so much quiet work from so many people with different backgrounds who come together every day and make it all work smoothly.”

“Volunteering and giving back to my community is in my DNA,” said Stuart Tanenberg, another team member. “As an MMRC volunteer I have had the opportunity to serve on the leadership team for the past 12 years and have served the MMRC as a training officer and as an operations, logistics, and planning specialist. I work with a corps of wonderful people who care, and in some small way I hope our efforts have benefited the Marin community.”

More than 400 of the team’s 847 members supported a Covid call center, healthcare provider hotline, contact investigations, testing, vaccination clinics, and outreach to individuals with limited access or functional needs. These dedicated volunteers rise to the occasion, diligently supporting whatever task is laid before them.

Corps members not activated yet during the pandemic are standing by to serve at a moment’s notice during the pandemic response and in case of a new disaster.

“The Marin Medical Reserve Corps has been a vital partner and supported the County of Marin during the longest emergency activation for the Covid pandemic,” said Hy Hinojosa, director of the Marin County Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates the county’s pandemic response. “MMRC volunteers have helped us fully immunize 84 percent of our population and have served in vulnerable communities throughout Marin.”

The Board of Supervisors recognized the team on November 2 by approving a resolution of commendation and hosting a ceremony. The team award was given to staff for display at the MMRC office.

HHS Director Benita McLarin spoke at the ceremony, noting that the Marin corps is among the busiest in California. After listing the action areas — community call center, physician hotline, medical supply logistics, vaccination clinics, contact investigations, testing, and outreach — Benita quipped, “I’m tired just thinking about that!”

Addressing MMRC volunteers, she added, “We are so fortunate in Marin. Without you, we could not have made it through this Covid response and be in a position of the number-one team in the state [for vaccination rates]. We have achieved everything we have based on your support. Thank you!”

**Who’s New & Welcome!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam Almedilla</td>
<td>Packet Assembly Student Service Intern, Health &amp; Human Services (HHS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexis Ballinger</td>
<td>Legal Intern, Public Defender’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leanna M. Dewydiak</td>
<td>Volunteer Legal Research Attorney, District Attorney’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darlene Evans</td>
<td>Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanna Ferguson</td>
<td>Cultural Services Intern, Cultural Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marlin Flamer</td>
<td>Packet Assembly Student Service Intern, HHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Patterson</td>
<td>Radio Communication Volunteer, Department of Public Works</td>
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PHOTO BY ANNE CARTA
of response in the early days of the pandemic response. Before vaccines, and with personal protective equipment in short supply, they were constantly exposed to risk yet acted with courage and energy.

The students served at different sites daily in areas with many cases, including congregate living sites and lower income areas that were disproportionately impacted by the virus.

“TAt a time when we were ramping up testing and experiencing staffing challenges, this team of interns came in with energy, smiles, a willingness to learn and work hard, the ability to adapt, and huge hearts that are committed to supporting their community,” said team member Ryan Samway. “As I worked alongside inspiring clinicians and volunteers, I understood the magnitude of effort required to help keep our country safe.”

In their non-clinical roles, team members supported documentation and specimen collection and provided general administrative support of the operations. They interacted with HHS health partners Kaiser and MarinHealth, community agencies such as Canal Alliance, and county staff. The interns learned important procedures necessary to serve as volunteer disaster service workers during a pandemic.

“At a time when we were ramping up testing and experiencing staffing challenges, this team of interns came in with energy, smiles, a willingness to learn and work hard, the ability to adapt, and huge hearts that are committed to supporting their community,” said the team supervisor, HHS Senior Department Analyst Kristen Seatavakin. “Quite simply, we couldn’t have done it without them, and we are forever grateful for their participation and support.”

The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved resolutions of commendation for team members at a November 2 ceremony during which HHS Director Benita McLarin praised the students’ work ethic, willingness, and flexibility.

“As I worked alongside inspiring clinicians and volunteers, I understood the magnitude of effort required to help keep our country safe.”

“They came to us independently, outside their school programs, to support primarily non-clinical roles,” she said, noting that they became “a beloved and supportive group that was willing to learn. They stepped up fully in the face of the pandemic during a very unsettling time.”

A glass team award was presented to staff supervisors for display in HHS offices.

To learn about County of Marin internship opportunities, contact Marinterns Coordinator Joy Fossett, JFossett@marincounty.org and 415-473-7447
Look Out for Holiday Lights

Thanks to autumn rains that ended wildfire season, members of the Marin County Fire Department’s volunteer lookout team had time to put up lights at the county’s two lookout towers this year. Pictured here is the Mt. Tamalpais tower interior decorated by MarinShares volunteers John Gazzoli and Doug Hitt. The compact room has windows on all four sides, and local residents can look up on clear nights and catch the colorful glow signifying the team’s wish for happy holidays across Marin.

Happy Anniversary

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

27 YEARS
Ray Peterson (Petaluma), Air Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO)

19 YEARS
Gregory Felton (Stateline, NV), Air Patrol Volunteer, MCSO

9 YEARS
Tim Graves (Tomales), Volunteer Tomales Firefighter, Marin County Fire

8 YEARS
Louise Berto (San Anselmo), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

6 YEARS
Kenn Kovitz (Novato), Gail Mitchell (Novato), Spanish Tutors, Novato Library

5 YEARS
Michael Warner (Petaluma), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, MCSO

4 YEARS
Valerie Lels (Kentfield), Volunteer Attorney, District Attorney’s Office

3 YEARS
Denise Kovacik (Sausalito), Public Defender Law Library Aide, Public Defender’s Office

2 YEARS
P. J. Nave (San Rafael), District 1 Intern, Board of Supervisors

1 YEAR
Angelica Almanza (San Rafael), Nutrition Wellness Program Intern, Health & Human Services (HHS)
Gabriela McElligott (Oakland), Electronic Medical Records Intern, HHS

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

CARTOON BY JOHN DONAGHUE

PHOTO BY DOUG HITT