Volunteer’s Emergency Skills Boost County’s Covid Response

By Scott Harrop

When Grant Welling volunteered to assist in Marin County’s Covid vaccination effort, he brought a wide range of relevant skills, not least of which was his training as an emergency medical technician.

His career as a firefighter—from working on the lines in Kentfield back in 1971 to engineer to battalion chief—exposed him to multiple challenges in logistics and management.

But, he quickly adds, it was from the entire community of firefighters that he learned the most. “They are an incredible team of professionals,” he says. In fact, the Incident Command System, now in use worldwide for emergency management, originated in California. It has proved valuable not only for firefighters but also for law enforcement and corporations.

When Covid hit, Grant saw an opportunity he couldn’t refuse. As he puts it, “Every firefighter always wants another challenge.” He retired from the fire service and proceeded to volunteer for the Marin Medical Reserve Corps (MMRC), coordinated by Senior Program Coordinator Anne Carta of the Marin County Health and Human Services Department (HHS).

Anne says Grant “fosters a sense of community that has grown within the vaccination team.”

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UC Berkeley Grad Balances Public Health Roles

By Natalie Dybeck

Marintern Luis Dominguez Xala is a first-generation college graduate applying his knowledge while exploring public health work with the Marin County Health and Human Services Department (HHS). Luis recently earned a bachelor of science degree in nutritional science–toxicology from UC Berkeley and now is a California Public Health Corps (CA-PHC) trainee with HHS.

Luis desired a position where he could put his laboratory and humanities skills to the test, and he found the California Public Health Corps-paid trainee program a great fit. “It’s a field that meshed my interests under a flexible health career.” His two-year trainee commitment is being served with Marin HH.

His role is ever changing. “I started last September with the communicable diseases team doing contact investigation and contact tracing for people that tested positive for Covid-19,” he explained.

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Then he added a second role as RxSafe Marin’s naloxone outreach coordinator. (Naloxone is a medication designed to quickly reverse opioid overdoses.)

“The essence of the outcome is to come out as openly gay 38 years ago, he gives talks at local schools. He is touched by grateful responses he gets from teens when they see that it is possible for LGBTQ residents to aspire to this type of career.

Despite a rich family life with his eight godsons and goddaughters, Grant is always up for a new way to give to the community, for a simple reason: “The essence of the outcome is to help people.”

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He was steered to HHS Vaccine Branch Coordinator Dick Daley, who was quick to recognize Grant’s skills: “He has the keen ability to reflect on operations and implement valuable process improvements to enhance vaccine delivery. He is thorough, professional, and a pleasure to have on the MMRC team!”

During his tenure with the vaccination team, Grant was assigned to program logistics, which involved forecasting needs, managing inventories, and distributing vaccines. He also liaised with outside contractors brought in to help with staffing and administration. One day at the Northgate Mall point of distribution (POD) in San Rafael, the team “burned” 24 vials of vaccine, each containing six doses.

Beyond his essential role keeping the program logistics running smoothly, his optimistic, can-do personality contributed greatly to morale. As his former POD boss and current HHS Support

Public Health Division Director Kathy Koblick is Luis’s staff supervisor and has nothing but praise for his work. “Luis has been a great addition to our staff,” she said. “I am delighted to be able to have important assignments for Luis that allow him to gain experience and insight into what Public Health is responsible for in our communities. He has a positive attitude and has been willing to jump into unknown territory and learn how to navigate some complex systems.”

For Luis, delivering an opioid awareness presentation to Terra Linda High School students whose primary language is Spanish has been his most memorable event so far. A teen asked for advice on how to stop drug use among friends and family, and “this was the moment I knew we had built a rapport with the students,” he said. “It was an opportunity to let them know we must be patient and gentle with ourselves and those who use substances because there is always support around them.”

He added, “Growing up, I did not have separate assemblies for those who spoke Spanish. Being the person giving such presentations felt rewarding.”

As he continues with his trainee program, Luis looks forward to new projects and exploring areas of public health such as epidemiology, sexual health, and more. He then plans to return to school for a master’s degree in public health.

When not working, Luis enjoys a variety of activities, most notably dancing and hiking. “I join salsa or bachata events, immerse myself at disco nights, or simply explore new music.”
Fulfilling a requirement for her graduation in June, Marintern Ms. Patty Z found herself last February translating for Spanish-speaking clients of the Marin County Public Defender's Office.

"Patty volunteered as part of her class curriculum to earn a certificate as a Spanish language interpreter," said her staff supervisor, Deputy Public Defender Tyler Hicks.

"Patty is a native Spanish speaker and easily translates to me the slang my clients speak. But what impresses me most is her drive to learn the legal terminology and understand its context to ensure she accurately conveys my message to my clients.”

Patty earned a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education at San Francisco State University in June. She then earned certificates in medical, business, and education interpreting and also in legal translation and interpreting from Santa Ana College.

In addition to her internship, she has several jobs, including as an event producer, personal assistant in the elderly community, and preschool teacher.

“She manages all these responsibilities by being incredibly organized with her time and proactive in scheduling," Tyler said. “She always puts aside time during the week to communicate with my clients. Despite her time limitations, she is flexible and can accommodate last-minute requests.”

Patty returned to college after needing to close her production company when Covid hit.

“I wanted to have a backup plan as I knew my son's work would also be affected, especially since he had just graduated from college,” Patty said. “Going back to school allowed me to have a third career just in case we experience a total shutdown again.”

Patty was born in Peru and raised in San Francisco. She lives in Marin and enjoys paddleboarding to escape the stresses of everyday life and meditate in the silence nature offers. She also enjoys spending time with her son and his dog.

Outside of work and her internship, Patty is involved in her community and with various organizations such as Project Commotion, a project helping children grow through movement, the Sausalito Chamber of Commerce, the Sausalito Women’s Club, and Sausalito Sister Cities.

“I hope to continue learning and working in the legal field. I truly enjoy helping those in need,” said Patty.
Library Aide Dedicates Decades
By Marjorie Grannan

Jane Slack walked into the Stinson Beach branch of the Marin County Free Library in 1988 and kept visiting as an employee or volunteer for more than 30 years.

A long-time resident of West Marin, Jane was the librarian at the small Stinson Beach branch for three years. Then the one-room library moved, expanded, and went online.

“Computerization was too hard for me,” Jane said, so when the library went online, Community Library Specialist Kerry Livingston took over for Jane, who became a part-time volunteer.

“When I took the job, Jane became a dedicated weekly volunteer,” Kerry said.

“That was 1991. Every Friday since then she has come to the library with vim and vigor, ready for any task I could hand to her. She shelved books, recovered material, tidied up after the kids, and had good ideas on how to manage the daily tasks. She got a lot done while staying cheerful and energetic. She was also the archivist for the Stinson Beach Historical Society, keeping the albums of wonderful old photographs in good order.”

“Volunteering is an important part of the library experience,” added Kerry, who is the current Outstanding Staff Supervisor of Volunteers for the county’s central MarinShares: Marin County Volunteers program. “It’s good for patrons to feel that this is their place. It’s good to be with other community members, to feel that you are doing something useful, that you are supporting a beloved community asset. I appreciate that Jane worked with me for such a long time and I know she loved every minute of it.”

After decades of loyal and rewarding service, Jane has decided to retire from her role as a MarinShares volunteer.

“I miss “seeing all the locals, chit-chatting, and seeing all the new books come in.”

Her favorite activity now is her beach walks along the ocean side of Stinson’s Seadrift community. She used to pick up sand dollars on those walks, and because she has a whole collection, she now just counts the ones she sees. Her favorite reading materials are mysteries, especially those by Dorothy Sayers.

Jane and her husband Don have had a fascinating 61 years together. They met in a sailing class, and their first home after marrying was a Chinese junk. They have flown to exotic destinations in Don’s small plane to sail, snorkel, and scuba dive. “We’ve been so very fortunate,” Jane says. Before the pandemic, their favorite outing was a Monday night dinner at the Sand Dollar Restaurant when their favorite band played. They look forward to resuming that activity when the pandemic eases.

The Marin County Free Library has 10 branches. Interested in volunteering at your branch? Ask a library staff member about opportunities or contact MarinShares Coordinator Anne Starr.
Happy Anniversary

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

**33 YEARS**
- Marilyn Bagshaw (San Rafael), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service/Auxiliary Communications Service Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO)

**28 YEARS**
- James Allen (Kentfield), Marin Civic Center Tour Docent, Cultural Services

**22 YEARS**
- Jon Pittman (Novato), Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Parks

**15 YEARS**
- Rich Riechel (Mill Valley), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, MCSO

**13 YEARS**
- Kay Gross (Novato), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

**10 YEARS**
- Linda Witong (San Rafael), Cold Case Investigator, MCSO

**9 YEARS**
- Joan Brown (Kentfield), Marin Civic Center Tour Docent, Cultural Services

**6 YEARS**
- Theresa Campbell (Novato), Marin Center Usher, Cultural Services

**5 YEARS**
- Martin Bogetz (Kentfield), Marin Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer, Health & Human Services (HHS)

**4 YEARS**
- Maureen Carlin (San Rafael), Mary Lou Dibbern (Mill Valley), Deborah Fox (Corte Madera), May Britt Goldblum (Novato), Stan Green (Greenbrae), Barbara Parkman (Novato), Patricia Prorok (Novato), Everil Robertson (San Rafael), Robert ‘Bob’ Robertson (San Rafael), Marin Center Ushers, Cultural Services

**3 YEARS**
- Lucre Cufé (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteer, MCSO

**2 YEARS**
- Claire Austin (San Rafael), Christianna Gatti (San Rafael), Teen Leadership Crew, Marin County Free Library

**1 YEAR**
- Michael Cann (Mill Valley), Ciara Cox (Point Reyes), Daniel Felling (San Rafael), David Grover (Petaluma), Dennis Hughes (San Francisco), David Landa (San Anselmo), Nicole McConneloug (Fairfax), Rahul Narang (Mill Valley), Gregory Olson (Novato), Nick Slane (San Rafael), Fred Stemmler (Mill Valley), Frank Wang (San Francisco), Kelly Weidner (San Rafael), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, MCSO

**33 YEARS**
- Claire Austin (San Rafael), Christianna Gatti (San Rafael), Teen Leadership Crew, Marin County Free Library

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**Moon Shot**

The moon glows behind the Gardner Lookout Tower on Mt. Tamalpais in a striking image by Marin photographer Herman Privette. The tower is used by Marin County Fire lookout volunteers during fire season. (A historic landmark, it’s named for Edwin Burroughs Gardner, the first chief warden of the Tamalpais Forest Fire District.) Former volunteer fire lookout and professional photographer Gary Yost reports that the moon and tower were “shot from well over a mile away, in the College of Marin parking lot down in Kentfield, with a very long lens—the only way to compress those features like that. And of course Herman had to get that alignment to work perfectly, which is no small feat.” Herman shared the photo on Facebook, and then Gary took the digital image and spent time preparing it to print at larger sizes.