

VOLUNTEER NOTES

Explorers on the Job

Career Explorers are learning about work in over half of Marin County's 22 departments. The six-week program for people ages 15 through 22 has 34 paid participants this summer. Hosts include the County Administrator's, County Counsel's, District Attorney's, and Public Defender's offices, plus the Health and Human Services, Human Resources (HR), Information Services and Technology, Library, Parks, Probation, Public Works, and Fire departments. The Board of Supervisors and some nonprofits are also hosting.

Explorers build confidence as they complete projects. **Fatima Bham**, a UC Berkeley student, participates with HR. "I am getting a good sense of HR, from audits to writing onboarding scripts," she said. "The experience is showing me what I like and what's challenging. I feel very comfortable with all the people I am working with." Fatima recommends the program, especially for high school students and college freshmen who can fine-tune their goals after exploring careers.

Public Health Advocate Finds Meaning Outside His Comfort Zone

By Natalie Dybeck

PHOTO BY ANITA RENZETTI



Colyn Heimerman

Marintern **Colyn Heimerman** may not have grown up in Marin County, or even California, but his full-time work as a NARCAN® Outreach Coordinator and AmeriCorps

VISTA member since last August has community-wide impact.

As the outreach coordinator for OD Free Marin, Colyn addresses the problem of rising overdoses. Rates are up across the nation and here. The OD Free Marin website notes, "Marin saw a leap from 42 overdose deaths in 2020 to 62 in 2021, mainly attributed to fentanyl,

a synthetic opioid 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine."

Colyn grew up in Kansas and graduated from Kansas State University in May 2022 with a degree in human health biology. After graduation, Colyn moved to the Bay Area and joined AmeriCorps. "I wanted to place myself outside my comfort zone, develop practical knowledge, and grow professionally," he said.

In his outreach role, Colyn recruits volunteers, plans events, distributes naloxone, and creates digital content. "I lead events where I hand out the lifesaving overdose-reversal medication NARCAN® and provide administration training. I have been at events such as the Sunday San Rafael Farmers' Market, Ember Stomp, and the Marin County Fair."

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Responding to the First Responders

By Boone Dickins

As a chaplain for the Marin County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), MarinShares volunteer **Dan Christian** supports local law enforcement on personal and spiritual levels. Dan has served as a chaplain since 2021, and it's apparent to him just how vital the chaplain role is.

"I think it's wonderful for me to be of service, because Marin has a great sheriff's department," says Dan. "There aren't a whole lot of chaplain programs across the country, and so for us to have one in our community, I am grateful to be able to do my part."

Dan was recruited by a friend in Marin County's chaplaincy program who believed Dan would be perfect for the

role because of his work as an ordained Presbyterian minister. After accepting, Dan underwent standard and specialized law-enforcement training, including taking the same oath required of all Marin County Sheriff's Office members.

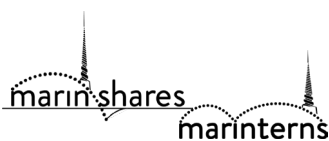
As a volunteer chaplain, Dan is always on call and responds to requests from

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Dan Christian

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH



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Responding to the First Responders

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the department at any time. When a request arrives, he immediately provides support in person or over the phone. Along with his MCSO role, Dan also assists the Novato and Tiburon police departments. Chaplains may be called to support first responders after traumatic work events, for personal reasons, and on family matters. For example, after the death of a staff member, Dan provided extended confidential counseling to survivors.

Lt. Sean McKrell is Dan's staff supervisor in the coroner's division of the MCSO. He recognized Dan's impact immediately.

"Dan has quickly made himself an invaluable asset to our sheriff chaplaincy team," said Sean.

"Sheriff chaplain work is very specialized and difficult, but Dan hit the ground running," Sean said. Dan has given "countless hours of spiritual guidance to people who are hurting or need someone to talk to. He deserves to be recognized for the selflessness and care he provides professionally, spiritually, and mentally."

Dan started while Covid-19 was prevalent. Although unable to receive regular in-person training, he received valuable mentoring from the late **Dan White**, a veteran MCSO volunteer chaplain.

Dan earned a master's degree in divinity from the UC Berkeley Graduate Theological Union and a bachelor's degree in film from San Francisco State University. He is the pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Novato.

In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family, which includes playing sports and listening to whatever popular music his kids are playing.

Dan hopes to continue making a difference as chaplain. "Law enforcement is a very difficult job," says Dan. "I have the utmost respect for local law enforcement, and I am honored to provide support in any way that I can." ■

Happy Anniversary

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

26 YEARS

Gary Thomas (San Rafael), Air Patrol Volunteer, Marin County Sheriff Office (MCSO)

22 YEARS

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

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

16 YEARS

Thomas Cromwell (Belvedere), Marin Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer, Health & Human Services (HHS)

15 YEARS

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

13 YEARS

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

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

10 YEARS

Germaine Krase (San Rafael), Marin Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer, HHS

Salah Locks (San Rafael), Financial Abuse Specialist Team Volunteer, HHS

9 YEARS

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

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

8 YEARS

Sarah Brewster (Woodacre), **Alan Lubow** (Lagunitas), **Carl Miller** (Lagunitas), **Phil Sotter** (Woodacre), **William 'Bill' Teufel** (San Geronimo), **Mel Wright** (Woodacre), Open Space Stewards, Marin County Parks

Jane Gould (Tiburon), Broom Buster, Marin County Parks

Sally Hutchinson (Inverness), **Carl Miller** (Lagunitas), Senior Peer Counselors, HHS

Michael Koonce (Berkeley), Air Patrol Volunteer, MCSO

7 YEARS

Roan Burns (San Rafael), **Shay Cook** (Concord), **Wendy Dalia** (Mill Valley), **April Kelly** (Mill Valley), **Kevin Lundquist** (Dublin), **Paul Tewhill** (Corte Madera), **Michelle Tripp** (Mill Valley), Marin Search & Rescue Volunteers, MCSO

6 YEARS

Phil Danskin (Sonoma), California Room Map Archive Docent, Researcher & Cataloger, Civic Center Library

5 YEARS

Scott Harrop (San Rafael), Newsletter Writer, Human Resources

2 YEARS

Pegan Brooke (Bolinas), Shelver, Stinson Beach Library

Daniel 'Dan' Christian (Novato), Sheriff's Chaplain, MCSO

Roger Dickerson (Ross), Radio Communications Volunteer, Department of Public Works

Marjorie Grannan (Mill Valley), Newsletter Writer, Human Resources

1 YEAR

Mark Gainer (San Rafael), Ombudsman Volunteer, HHS

Ruben Gillaspay (San Anselmo), Student Service Intern, Fairfax Library

Ruben Gillaspay (San Anselmo), **Thomas Riggle-Watson** (San Anselmo), Packet Assembly Student Service Interns, HHS

Colyn Heimerman (Berkeley), OD Free Marin AmeriCorps VISTA Intern, HHS

Sahiti Namburu (San Rafael), Student Service Intern, South Novato Library

Christina Righetti (Petaluma), Volunteer Firefighter, Marin County Fire

Sandra Wilkinson (Novato), Client Assessment Volunteer, HHS

Volunteer Improves ‘Every Section She Touches’

By Tiyona Pariani



Barbara Byers

Since 2013, MarinShares volunteer **Barbara Byers** has assisted in improving the Novato Library, specializing in the children's area.

“Thankfully, she was able to return to us after the pandemic as we slowly began adding back volunteers,” said Marin County Free Library Assistant **Laura Beam**, her staff supervisor.

“Barbara is a stellar volunteer who knows our library very well,” Laura said. “She is conscientious, kind, and efficient. The areas she shelves always look tidy and neat after her volunteer shifts. She improves every section of the library she touches.”

Barbara volunteers on Tuesdays, primarily in the children's section. This is where

the Novato branch had an opportunity when she began, so she focused there and assisted in other areas as needed. During the Covid-19 closures, she had to pause along with most other volunteers and interns across the county organization. Last year she was asked to return and resume her role in the children's section. In addition to shelving, she sometimes helps during story times by keeping count of the participants for program records.

Barbara particularly enjoyed assisting library staff in preparing materials for last year's summer programs. “I've always appreciated everything you can find and do in libraries,” said Barbara. “I wanted to help after I retired.”

Her mother was a librarian in San Francisco and taught her how to find books. Later, Barbara simply reversed those finding skills to quickly learn the shelving system.

Barbara retired as a classified employee from the Novato Unified School District (NUSD) in 2013. Her initial position with NUSD was as a paraeducator. She then became a library clerk in an elementary school and eventually transitioned to a high school. She completed her career at the district office, first in reception, then as an accounts receivable clerk.

Barbara was born in San Francisco and graduated in 1970 from the last class at San Francisco's Notre Dame des

Victoires High School—an all-girls institution. She then majored in anthropology at UC Berkeley. She moved with her husband in 1978 to Novato.

Barbara's favorite hobbies are reading, hiking, and bird watching.

Her biggest takeaway from her role with the county is the connections she makes. “You can meet an incredible group of people while volunteering—staff, other volunteers, and the public,” she said. “The staff, especially, are an incredible group of knowledgeable, friendly people who are happy to help anyone with anything, as well as constantly working to improve the public's experience at the library.” ■



MarinShares volunteer Barbara Byers shelves books at the Novato branch.

PHOTOS BY BOB DELL

Who's New & Welcome!

Giselle Arreaga (Novato), College Intern, Human Resources

Ari Berlfein (Daly City), Law Clerk Intern, District Attorney's Office

Kai Cooper (Fairfax), Data Team Intern, Information Services & Technology

Caitlin Horan (Novato), California Room Archives Intern, Marin County Free Library

Finlay Mallard (Mill Valley), High School Intern, Public Defender's Office

Jack McLean (San Francisco), Law Clerk Intern, District Attorney's Office

Diego Sanchez (San Rafael), Fire Foundry Intern, Marin County Fire

Leslie Silva (Novato), Summer Reading Program Volunteer, Novato Library

Amelia Smith (Novato), Teen Shelver, Novato Library

Parinaz Sotoudeh (Novato), Student Service/Teen Volunteer, Novato Library

Akshara Subramanian (Novato), Pre-Law Intern, District Attorney's Office

Priyanka Thatipamala (San Jose), California Department of Public Health Preventative Medicine Resident, Health & Human Services

Public Health Advocate Finds Meaning Outside His Comfort Zone

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PHOTO BY DA GREEN



Marinterns Kate Kennedy and Colyn Heimerman offer free NARCAN® opioid-overdose reversal spray—and training—in Marin City on May 1, the first day of the Marin County Health and Human Services' Mobile Van outreach. The OD Free Marin program continues to support free distribution of NARCAN.® For details, visit odfreemarin.org.

During Colyn's time as an AmeriCorps VISTA member, both he and the county program have changed and grown.

"Probably the greatest challenge was when I first started," he said. "I was completely new to this area. I not only had to adjust to a new work environment, but also a new location with different ideas, resources, and people. Although this was a challenge, I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Marin. What helped overcome this challenge was always staying open to learning more, and not beating myself up if I hit a dead end.

"In November 2022, in response to the overdose epidemic shifting from prescription pain meds to illicit opioids such as fentanyl, we transitioned from RxSafe Marin to OD Free Marin," explained Colyn. "To rebrand and raise awareness, we hosted a summit to bring community partners and Marin residents together to discuss our mission and goals moving forward. I was asked to emcee the event, which went well. I felt inspired to see how many

people attended from different areas and expertise."

Health and Human Services Senior Program Coordinator **Anita Renzetti** coordinates the OD Free Marin program. Anita described Colyn as "a peak performer" who "has done an amazing job of training people across Marin. Colyn's leadership role as our outreach coordinator showcases his ability to rally volunteers around an initiative, resulting in thousands of naloxone kits distributed with step-by-step trainings on how to use them."

"It has been extremely rewarding seeing the impact that our outreach has had in Marin and the increase in public awareness since I started," said Colyn. "When I led my first NARCAN® distribution event at the San Rafael Farmers' Market, we gave away 30 kits. Now, at the last two farmers markets, we distributed over 200 kits of NARCAN® each time." In his spare time, Colyn enjoys hiking and spending time with his dogs, Mustard and Hades. Colyn's OD Free Marin

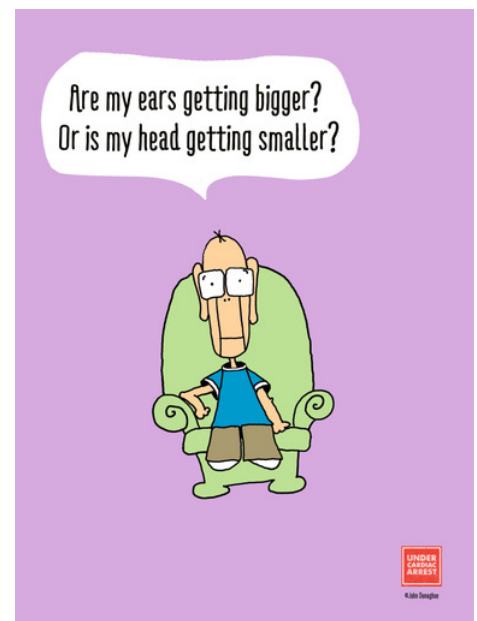
internship ends this month, and in the fall he will begin an online master of public health (MPH) program. "Besides starting my MPH, I will be looking for my next career adventure. If the opportunity arises, I would love to work in Marin again," said Colyn.

Colyn hopes to become a medical doctor. "I see myself 10 years from now working closely with the community I am part of, promoting the best possible health outcome for each person I serve."

He added, "For anyone hesitant to take on a new opportunity, such as a move or career change, I say, 'Go for it!' Joining AmeriCorps and moving to Marin to work in opioid abatement was intimidating, but it turned out to be one of the most rewarding decisions I ever made." ■

Interested in saving lives by reducing opioid problems? Visit odfreemarin.org and click on "Join our team as a (paid) full-time AmeriCorps VISTA." Questions? Contact [Anita Renzetti](mailto:Anita.Renzetti@marin.org).

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CARTOON BY JOHN DONAGHUE