



Marin County School Volunteers NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009

Since 1997 - 2,800 Volunteers & 265,000 Hours in 44 schools - Helping Kids Learn

Silver Threads and Golden Needles

By Judy Katsin & Anne Kellogg

Here at Marin County School Volunteers, the heart and soul of our program is generally considered to be adult volunteer tutors, working in classrooms to help students with reading, writing and math. It turns out that our volunteers are changing the lives of kids in all kinds of amazing ways. Dian Simpkins, a retired Home Economics teacher and a volunteer at West Marin School in Point Reyes Station, has taken "heart and soul" in a new direction and has hit new heights. Dian is a volunteer in Karen Koehler-Craig's sewing class, an elective for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Last spring, at the end of the school year, she gave away a refurbished sewing machine to a very surprised graduating 8th grade sewing student. Dian intends to make this a tradition.

Recently, Anne Kellogg, MCSV West Marin Program Manager, caught up with Dian, Karen, and Terra Hargens, the lucky recipient of the sewing machine, and asked them all about the experience. "Volunteering is exciting. I love being with young people and sharing what I love to do. At this age they are so open and willing to try things. Their eyes just sparkle when they realize they really can sew and finish a project." said Dian. She explained that her mother first taught her to sew, and then a very stylish teacher really got her excited about the activity. Not only did she learn about design, color and fabric, she discov-



Dian Simpkins and Terra Hargens

ered that sewing required thinking and planning – skills that were important for all sorts of projects. "Learning to sew is a creative outlet that encourages self-expression. It teaches students to take care of their own clothes and to become better consumers, and it gives them real life skills. Sewing enables young people to mend ripped pants or sew on buttons, but it also allows them to create something that could last for generations. I handed down a doll quilt to my granddaughter that my mother made for me." Sewing machines were once present in nearly every household. These days, few homes have sewing machines, and most schools do not offer Home Economics classes. Dian's commitment and passion is enabling these students to experience the tradition and pride of this age-old skill.

Terra Hargens is now a Freshman at Tomales High School. Since receiving the sewing machine from

Dian, she has made decorative and useful pillowcases for her family, a shirt for herself, and she has begun to piece together parts for a quilt. "I was grateful for Dian Simpkins' complete willingness to show me how to sew even though I had never sewn before. She was very patient. I was so surprised when she gave me the sewing machine! It completely caught me off guard. I was asked to stay after class. I thought I had left a machine plugged in or something like that! Instead, Dian and Karen told me that Dian would like to give me this sewing machine. I stood there in shock and disbelief."

Teacher, Karen Koehler-Craig said, "Dian is such a joy to work with in the sewing room. She is thoughtful, patient, generous, and creative as well as being a clear and consistent teacher. In addition to sharing her skill and knowledge of sewing, she has helped me clear out the sewing room, and helped to organize each sewing station by buying containers, tape measures, seam rippers and other miscellaneous sewing supplies. She generously donated enough quality fabric for the students to make pillowcases with the pattern and directions she supplied. And of course, Dian bought and gave away a sewing machine to our only 8th grade student, Terra Hargens. Dian's knowledge and love of sewing is contagious. Her generosity is a true gift to the students at West Marin School." 🏠

Books, Bus Backs and Back-to-School Buzz

by Judy Katsin, Executive Director



Welcome to another school year! We begin this semester finding our volunteer tutors once again in great demand as funding for education continues to falter. We're up for the challenge, and are working hard to recruit the many talented and enthusiastic community members who want to help Marin's public school students succeed. We are experimenting with a variety of approaches to reaching out for new volunteers. Many of you have noted our advertising campaign in the Marin Independent Journal, which was so

generously created for us by Art Director Marc Marvin, Copywriter Chuck Guest, and Photographer Rise Justman Cohen. Now, you may have seen our very exciting bus back panels on Golden Gate Transit as you travel around the county (with thanks to Jen Carlenzoli - see page 6), or our posters in the kiosk display donated by the Town Center in Corte Madera. You can help us by encouraging your friends to volunteer.

Another way that we are hoping to spread the word about Marin County School Volunteers is our second Book Drive October 22 - 26. We are sponsoring a county-wide event wherein elementary, middle and high schools will join with local businesses to collect gently used children's and teen books. These books will be redistributed to Marin schools where books are most needed, and placed in school libraries, classrooms and after school programs to support reading skills. In addition, many children with limited access to books will be given the opportunity to take books home. The Book Drive was initiated in 2008 to bolster the availability of books in schools where the resources are insufficient to meet students' needs. Because access to books is a critical link to literacy, the book drive works to help achieve our mission of closing the educational achievement gap.

We are hoping to duplicate last year's success; over 5,000 books were collected and distributed, at an estimated value of \$25,000. The Book Drive will once again give students across Marin County the opportunity to share their excitement about reading with other children in the county who have minimal access to books.

If you have new or gently used books for children and teens that you would like to donate to the Book Drive, please call us at 499-5896 to arrange a time for drop off. Thanks! 🏠



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Spotlight on Volunteer Coordinators

Our Unsung Heros are the Critical Link for a Successful Program



Joan Flood - Bahia Vista Elementary School, San Rafael

I was drawn to Bahia Vista School because of the dynamic multicultural student population. It is a place of great camaraderie and lively energy. As the Volunteer Coordinator it is very rewarding for me to be part of our organization that allows wonderful community volunteers to bring their interest, support and encouragement to the children and teachers at the school. Over the years I have had the great pleasure to get to know the dedicated teachers, principal and many long time volunteers. I always hope to find just the right placement match for the volunteer and the teacher. I am a former elementary school teacher and have always enjoyed being involved with children and schools. I live in Kentfield with my husband and keep in close contact with our two grown daughters and their families, who live nearby. Our three grandchildren 18, 14 and 3 keep us busy with their activities. I enjoy reading, traveling, race walking, playing the violin in a string quartet and the many cultural and outdoor activities of the Bay Area.



Loryn Sweet-Winer - Bayside Elementary School, Sausalito

I decided to volunteer because I felt I could be of some assistance in supporting the teachers in their classrooms. Their jobs are so demanding, and the students are so hungry for knowledge and acknowledgement. I thought I could be an additional resource. Becoming the Coordinator at Bayside allowed me to become more familiar with the school staff and their needs, and it allowed me to meet many wonderful volunteers. My background is that of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I trained at SF General and Langley Porter, after which I worked in Community Mental Health in Bayview Hunter's Point. My interest was in cross-cultural psychiatry. I currently live in Mill Valley with my husband and two teenage daughters, a parakeet and dog. I dabble in ballet, languages, sculpting, gospel singing, piano, guitar and violin, and I love spending time with my family and friends.



Jennifer Treppa - Lu Sutton Elementary, Novato

I became a Volunteer Coordinator at Lu Sutton because I believe that the MCSV program offers a valuable opportunity for our public schools and the community. The Volunteer Coordinator position is critical to the successful implementation of the program in a school as it is the Coordinator who works with the teachers and volunteers to ensure that a good fit is achieved. It is very special to see the connection our community volunteers make with the kids and classroom teachers. The fact that we have so many volunteers who return year after year tells me that they benefit from the experience as well. In my past life I was a practicing attorney working primarily in the area of employment litigation. After the kids started school I became very involved in the school system culminating with my current position on the Novato Unified School District Board. The kids and my work with the school district keeps me pretty busy, but in my free time I try to be outside as much as possible, hiking or playing at the beach.



Sharon Bluhm - Wade Thomas Elementary School, San Anselmo

I am a retired speech-language therapist and spent my career working in the public school system. My husband and I moved to San Anselmo about a year ago and I was looking for a way to become more involved in the community when I found MCSV on the internet. I like the idea of being able to walk down the hill to Wade Thomas and volunteer in my neighborhood. I also do other volunteer work in our community. My husband and I are involved in a non-profit organization called Coastwalk and we just finished leading a 6-day hiking/camping trip in the Pt. Reyes and Mt. Tam areas. I am grateful to be living in this beautiful part of California where I can access hiking trails from my home. On a personal note, I am a textile artist and love music.

OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS!

- | | | | | | |
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Golden Gate Transit

Carrying Our Message Countywide





Tips From Torri

Two Truths and a Lie

Getting to know your student and your student getting to know you and feel safe with you is THE most important part of your volunteering experience. This process is what creates a meaningful connection which, in turn, actually helps our brains to make neural connections. Yes, caring human relationships create a climate in the brain that helps it to grow and work more effectively. Pretty amazing, don't you think?

Making the time to get to know each other is important but can sometimes be tricky. As some of you may have already experienced, there are kids who would prefer to just talk to you the whole time instead of doing their school assignments. It is important to honor the 'getting to know you' process, but also set boundaries around the time dedicated to this important component of your volunteering experience.

Here is an activity that can help you get to know each other within the boundaries of a short exchange. It is called '2 Truths and a Lie'. Each person comes up with two things that are true about themselves and one thing that is a lie. Take turns delivering all three, doing your best not to give away in tone or inadvertent hesitation, which one is the lie. The other person has to guess which one is the lie. For example, here are three about me: I speak Swedish. I speak Spanish. I speak German. The next time you see me let me know which one you think is a lie!

Have fun!

Torri

Websites

Websites for learning state capitals:

<http://jimspages.com/States.htm>

putting US states in the right place

<http://www.vectorkids.com/maps.htm>

state capitals with multiple choice

http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/states_capitals_10_500.html

gives capital and you click on state

<http://www.ipl.org/div/stateknow/chart.html>

gives state and you type capital, includes chart which has state bird and state flower

Book Recommendations

Adult reading:

[The Brain That Changes Itself](#)

by Norman Doidge, M.D.

It is never too late! This hopeful and engaging book will inspire you to believe that anybody's brain can change and grow. Each chapter explores a different real life story of, what may seem like, miraculous brain changes.

Chapter book reading:

[Sahara Special](#)

by Esme Raji Codell

This is the touching story of an inspiring teacher who helps a troubled but talented student feel worthy and capable.

Picture book:

[Grandpa's Teeth](#)

by Rod Clement

Who has stolen Grandpa's teeth? After turning the whole town upside down to find grandpa's special, Swiss made dentures, the surprise ending will certainly make YOU flash your pearly whites!

Our Apologies -

If you have called us recently on the telephone and experienced difficulty in getting through to our voicemail system, we apologize. Technicians have been trying to fix an intermittent and persistent problem called "Barge In" which occurs at the beginning of our recorded greeting. An automated voice will barge in and say, "Please enter your mailbox number, etc.", cutting off your ability to leave a message. If this happens when you call, just call us back and you will in all likelihood get into our voicemail on your second try. 🏠



VOLUNTEER TUTORS NEEDED

499-5896

mcsv.org



Marin County School Volunteers envisions a day when each child will receive the help needed to succeed in school.

ACTIVITY CORNER

Lists Galore

Making lists is a useful life skill. The simple act of list-making can help to focus thinking. Research has shown that movement anchors thought, and the action of writing a list of intended outcomes might actually make it more likely that the things on the list will happen.

Making a list can be a way to get to know people better, and it can ALSO be a way to help reluctant writers put pen to paper. Try this quick and easy activity with your students or family and friends.

Supplies: Paper and writing tool for all.

Procedure:

1. Number your paper from 1-10.
2. Pick a topic and everyone writes 10 examples of the topic. For example: If your topic is 'things having to do with school' one might write,

pencils, teachers, recess, homework, math, paper, books, desks, bells, games.

3. Compare your list with others and see how many things are alike or different.

Variations:

- * You can turn it into a game by adding points to the process. Either receiving points for matches or for non-matches.
- * You can each make a list on a separate topic and then without looking at the other person's list try to make a list on their topic that includes as many matches as possible.
- * After an outing together, this is a great way to share memorable moments and see how different those are for different people.
- * You can also use this activity to set priorities for an outing or experience. For example: What are the 10 things that you would like to do over the holidays?

Have fun!