

# the volunteer center of the East Bay

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Volunteers wait to be “processed” through the Emergency Volunteer Center

## The Volunteer Center Steps Up Its Disaster Preparedness

As wildfires raged throughout California both this year and last, we were reminded that when our hillsides turn golden, our fire danger also rises significantly. It served as a stern reminder that Contra Costa County is not immune to natural disaster.

Luckily, our large county is full of caring people willing to help. But without a system for managing volunteers during a disaster, even the response from the community can be overwhelming.

We do not want to find ourselves in a situation where people who want to help cannot reach those in need. As the local hub of volunteer activities, The Volunteer Center fills the crucial coordination role. We partner with local government agencies and nonprofit agencies to advance our plans for utilizing volunteers in emergency situations.

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## Board Link Launch

Last month, we launched our Board Link service that helps match potential board candidates with community nonprofits.

We kicked-off Board Link with Board Recruiting Roundtables in Pleasant Hill and Oakland. Over 50 nonprofit Executives Directors and Board Members attended the roundtables representing a diverse group of agencies from Girls on the Run to the Child Abuse Prevention Council. All of the representatives have one thing in common... they are looking for committed board members who can bring professional skills and business experience to their boards.

All nonprofits have a Board of Directors who is a governing board composed of people who believe in the mission and have the responsibility of monitoring, overseeing and providing direction in pursuit of the mission of the nonprofit. Board members are called upon to look at the “big picture”—to think strategically and possibly make decisions that affect the long term future of the nonprofit.

Nonprofits also look to their boards to provide a variety of resources from financial management, human resources, strategic planning, fundraising, marketing and information technology to ensure they are providing appropriate direction.

Through Board Link, potential board members can search for opportunities based upon their areas of interest and connect with nonprofits that need their skills and nonprofits are able to recruit people who are enthusiastic supporters of their mission.

Volunteers who are interested in making a difference by becoming a board member can check out opportunities at <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/vccc/org/board>.

A talented, engaged board can make all the difference in the success of a nonprofit. ♦



Karla McCormick records characteristics of good board members.

- Diplomacy
- Self-Starters
- Experience
- Ethics
- Visionary
- Advocate/Marketing
- Networker
- Numbers Financial
- Follows Through

## All-Star Volunteers: Marcia Carlberg and Eileen Kempker

### MARCIA

Marcia Carlberg first came to The Volunteer Center during the holiday season in 1998 to answer phones and handle requests for the Center's holiday programs. A new retiree, she was looking to fill her time in a meaningful way. Though the position was temporary, the affect on Marcia was not.



"I liked the people at The Volunteer Center so much, I asked to stay," says Marcia.

At first, she filled in for other volunteers when they went on vacation and began proofreading the Center's newsletter. Soon thereafter, a spot at the front desk opened up and Marcia filled it. She's been coming to the

Center every Wednesday for 10 years, and she fulfills a key role in compiling all the information to support the Share the Spirit grants during the holidays.

"We rely on Marcia's thoroughness and attention to detail to help us manage Share the Spirit and other data-oriented projects" says Karla McCormick, Program Director. "She is a volunteer we can count on to take a project and run with it to the very end."

Marcia also shares her seemingly effortless "can do" attitude with other local organizations. Over the past ten years, she has put in an average of 10 hours a week at The Volunteer Center, the Family Stress Center and the MS Society.

Anyone who meets Marcia would never guess that this vibrant volunteer has coped with multiple sclerosis for over 30 years.

"I was diagnosed with MS in the mid-1970s," Marcia says. Yet, she has never let her diagnosis slow her down.

"I know how to pace myself. Having MS is not a part of the decision of whether or not to volunteer. With the type of MS I have, you have to keep on going, stay busy and positive. I am very lucky not to have any chronic pain, so I push myself," says Marcia.

Marcia's fervor for volunteering shows no signs of flagging any time soon. In addition to her Wednesdays with The Volunteer Center, she is looking for a way to help recently returned veterans.

"There are a lot of volunteer opportunities out there," Marcia says. "People don't realize what it is to put themselves out there and help. But if you like what you do- you'll do a good job and really enjoy it and you'll stick with it."

### EILEEN

Three years ago, Eileen Kempker came to The Volunteer Center to find out how she could get more involved in our community. At the time, she was a recent widow looking for a meaningful

## Center Recognized by California Parks and Recreation Society

The Volunteer Center was honored for being an outstanding nonprofit partner by the California Parks and Recreation Society last spring. The Center was nominated by Volunteer Hayward, a city-funded volunteer program, for its invaluable contributions toward creating community through volunteer recruitment, referral and Week of Caring coordination. Lorraine Meuleners, our Center's Executive Director, accepted the award from Donna Fitzwater, Director of Volunteer Hayward. ✨



### THE VOLUNTEER CENTER OF THE EAST BAY 2008 BOARD ROSTER

Position	Name	Position	Organization
Chair	Robin Raber-Luna	Senior Vice President	Wells Fargo
Vice-Chair	Dalen Randa	Deputy Probation Officer	Alameda County Probation
Treasurer	Luis Aguilar	Manager, Finance Development Program	Chevron
Secretary	Peter Meadow	Attorney	Law Office of Peter Meadow
Officer	Elaine K. Lai	Business Instructor	City College of San Francisco
Officer	Chris Styles	Student	UC Davis
Officer	Debbie Nordstrom	Marketing Manager	Contra Costa Times
Officer	Marlo Johnston	Human Resources Manager	Sutter Health
Officer	Lonna Coleman	Vice President	Bank of the West
Officer	Carmella Icaay-Johnson	Retired	Clorox
Officer	Eileen Barry	Banking Professional	
Officer	Paul Wehrley	Retired	Chevron
Officer	Christian Ting	Student	Monte Vista High School

way to spend her free time. A few years later, she juggles five volunteer positions at four nonprofit organizations and loves every minute of her volunteer service.



"I don't want to be shopping, nor cleaning," Eileen says. "Volunteering is a better way to use your time. I am so happy to be able to do it. I am lucky because I am blessed with good health."

Eileen volunteers every Thursday afternoon at The Volunteer Center's front desk, spreading her cheery attitude to all who pass by her desk.

"I always look forward to Thursdays," says Eileen. "It is so varied; it's never the same routine. And it is such a pleasant working environment."

Eileen enjoys working at the Center so much; she's coming in extra hours to help plan this year's RSVP volunteer recognition event.

"Eileen is amazing—she's put energy to work helping us plan, organize, and put on our RSVP volunteer recognition luncheons," Ann Wullschleger, Program Director of RSVP. "Her creativity and organizational skills contribute greatly to the success of our events."

When she's not at The Volunteer Center, Eileen also volunteers her time at the Walnut Creek Senior Club as a dispatcher, as a volunteer driver and phone friend for Senior Helpline Services and as a hospice volunteer for Hospice and Palliative Care of Contra Costa.

Eileen volunteers for many reasons, but first and foremost is her desire to be a good role model for her four daughters. She says, "At some point in their busy lives, they need to know we all have to 'pay back' to the community. When they have spare time, I hope they will do this as I have."

"We should all be open each day to new people, new ideas and new projects, which is what the Volunteer Center affords us," Eileen says. ✨

## Break Out the Paint Brushes, It's Time for Week of Caring!

Every fall, The Volunteer Center and United Way of the Bay Area work together to deploy 3,200 corporate volunteers to nonprofit organizations to complete much-needed projects during the Week of Caring. This year, the program runs from September 8–13.

Over the years, our partnering agencies in the East Bay have come to rely on Week of Caring and schedule their critical projects for this week in September. Projects range from painting and landscaping to entertaining seniors at nursing homes. Yet, the outcome is always the same. No matter the size or the scope of the project, Week of Caring volunteers get the job done.

Last year, the SS Red Oak Victory registered as an agency with the Volunteer Center and participated in its first Week of Caring. The Red Oak is the last surviving cargo ship built at the Kaiser/Richmond shipyards and is being restored in Richmond by the Richmond Museum of History. "We are one of the best kept secrets in California and that was part of the reason we wanted to get involved," says Tom Horsfall, Restoration Manager.

"I can't adequately express our appreciation to everyone at [The Volunteer Center] that helped make Week of Caring such a success for us, as well as the people behind the effort at Chevron and Wells Fargo," says Walt Neff, Marketing Director for the Project Victory Ship. "We must have accomplished three or four months of work in the short six day period."

"I have nothing but good things to say about the Volunteer Center," adds Tom. "Karla [McCormick, Program Director] is a big help. I would recommend the program to any nonprofit. Any nonprofit that isn't registered with The Volunteer Center is missing out on a great opportunity."

With over 100 agencies participating in this year's Week of Caring, the Center expects this to be our biggest year ever. ✨



### NOTES FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lions and tigers and bears ...oh, my. That is how I feel when I read the newspaper and watch the evening news. The budget crisis, the housing crisis and high gas prices...oh, my.

The good news is that when I arrive at my desk at the Volunteer Center, I see examples of people who are not brought down by the daily news but rather look to where they can help.

I see both the nonprofits that help people out of unfortunate situations and the volunteers who are mentoring in our schools, sorting food for the food bank, networking computers for nonprofits, preserving our open space and frankly, solving problems rather than complaining about them.

Whether it's youth groups, seniors or everyone in between, they all know that volunteering in our community makes them feel better about the world and makes the world a better place.

So if you are tired of all the bad news, help create some good news. To find an opportunity to change the headlines, go to our web site at [www.helpnow.org](http://www.helpnow.org).

—Lorraine Meuleners



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### Disaster Preparedness, cont. from page 1

Over the past year, we held training sessions in Walnut Creek, Richmond and Concord to practice setting up emergency volunteer centers with Volunteer Center staff, and volunteers.

"This is the first volunteer planning and training effort for West County cities in many years. The training was well received by all and will, undoubtedly, enhance the level of preparedness in managing volunteers in these cities [El Cerrito, Richmond and San Pablo] for years to come," says Kathryn Gerk, Emergency Services Manager, Richmond Fire Department.

At these trainings, we set up a simulated center so that participants could see how the entire process works. With some additional planning, each local government agency will be prepared to operate an Emergency Volunteer Center in their community when the need occurs.

"The Emergency Volunteer Center training was an excellent hands-on experience for City staff," says Gayle Vassar, Community Relations Officer for the City of Walnut Creek. "It took away the 'mystery and fear factor' surrounding emergency preparedness, and left staff feeling confident that they can successfully manage volunteers in a disaster."

The Center is working with Lamorinda, San Pablo, Pittsburg, San Ramon and the Contra Costa Community College District to conduct similar trainings so that Emergency Volunteer Centers in East, West, and Central County will be ready when needed.

## Student Volunteer Named as Finalist in Statewide Contest

As Kyun Saiidnia stood at the Concord BART station, she wondered if she would get along with the little girl she was to guide throughout the day. Having little volunteer experience, she did not know what to expect. She never imagined that volunteering on that particular Saturday would change her outlook on community service.

Yet, that is exactly what happened. Kyun loved taking low-income kids to the Cal football game that day and has been hooked on volunteering ever since. Kyun shared the magic of her volunteer experience in the essay she entered in the "Find It. Do It. Share It." volunteer contest sponsored by CaliforniaVolunteers. The contest, sponsored by Disney, was created to highlight inspiring volunteer stories like Kyun's. She was a local finalist.

"It was the first community service activity that I've ever done where we did something directly with people and I really enjoyed it," Kyun says. "That's why I really enjoy volunteering with Youth Action Committee (YAC) because you see and interact with the people whose lives you impact."

Joan Tomasini, Program Director of the Youth Action Council loves having Kyun involved in the program. "Kyun is a very warm and caring volunteer who loves working with children," says Joan.

When we went to the Cal game, Kyun really stepped up to make sure that the whole experience was all about the child," says Joan. "She really treated Esperanza like she was her little sister. She made sure that this was a rewarding experience for her."

The day at the Cal game also proved to be a rewarding one for Kyun. In her contest essay, Kyun sums up her experience.

"All I had expected was for children to go see a football game, but what happened was so much more. I had the privilege of connecting with these children and learning about their lives. Doing this for the children not only helped them but helped me, too. This single volunteer experience is the reason why I choose to volunteer." ✨

### Support the Volunteer Center

The Volunteer Center could not operate without the generosity of individual donors. If you would like to support the Volunteer Center, you may send a contribution in the enclosed envelope or donate online at [www.helpnow.org/support\\_donate.php](http://www.helpnow.org/support_donate.php).

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