

Contra Costa Council on Homelessness

Homelessness Awareness Month 2022
Recognitions for “Outstanding Volunteer”

The Outstanding Volunteer category is to recognize individuals or groups who have enriched the lives of people facing homelessness in Contra Costa County through volunteer efforts. Outstanding efforts can be demonstrated by length of involvement, by a strong concentration of service or impact of efforts. Nominees must volunteer in Contra Costa County and the volunteer activity must be without pay

Nominees

1. Colin "Jack" Fliemann (District 4)
2. Kevin Murray, Passion to the Streets (District 5)
3. Reina Ortega, Delta Peers (District 3)
4. Florence Davis (District 1)
5. Maureen O'Rourke, Trinity Center (District 4)
6. Kim Hunter Reay, White Pony Express (Serves Entire County)

The following pages contain descriptions of each nominee as provided by the person (s) who nominated them.

Colin "Jack" Fliehm

Nominated by: Sharon Schutjer, Acquaintance

Supervisorial District: District 4 (Clayton, Concord, Pleasant Hill, part of Walnut Creek, and the unincorporated Contra Costa Centre)

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: *Colin "Jack" Fliehm has been serving the homeless for many years. Concord is the city he lives in and focuses on. "Jack" as he is known by many has been feeding many homeless persons breakfast and lunch for many years. he is an unsung hero and really he probably prefers it this way. He has a route he travels every morning. Every person he comes in contact with is talked to with respect and humanity. This invisible population feels seen, heard and treated like a human being. He has a saying " loved, known and not alone." Jack also has arranged with a local doughnut shop to give anyone who is hungry the ability to have coffee and doughnuts and use of the restrooms because he has put his own credit card on file. Not one person has abused this privilege or been disrespectful to the business or its owners.*

The difference that the Nominee's service makes to individuals facing homelessness: *Colin "jack" Fliehm has been serving the homeless for many years. Concord is the city he lives in and focuses on. "Jack" as he is known by many has been feeding many homeless persons breakfast and lunch for many years. he is an unsung hero and really he probably prefers it this way. He has a route he travels every morning. Every person he comes in contact with is talked to with respect and humanity. This invisible population feels seen, heard and treated like a human being. He has a saying " loved, known and not alone." Jack also has arranged with a local doughnut shop to give anyone who is hungry the ability to have coffee and doughnuts and use of the restrooms because he has put his own credit card on file. Not one person has abused this privilege or been disrespectful to the business or its owners.*

This person and his "angels" who also dedicate their time and money to help these people by being consistent with their meals and their friendship and making these people feel valued and still part of a community. "Jack" does this because he has been there. Many years ago he found himself in the same situation. He is now giving back and has found his inspiration with the help of god who he has spent many years reading the homeless receiving a meal a passage or inspirational blessing to all the people he serves.

"Jack" may not want this recognition because he is not one for the spotlight. He does it because he is a selfless human being. I had the pleasure of going around with him one Sunday and he is well respected by all he serves in his community and he does it all without county or government money as does his "angels" who help with the cost of food and supplies. Jack's wife sacrifices having him at home 7 days a week both mornings and afternoons allowing him to make his rounds.

Kevin Murray, Passion to the Streets

Nominated by: Lara DeLaney, Friend

Supervisory District: District 5 (Hercules, Martinez, Pittsburg, portions of Pinole and Antioch, and unincorporated communities of Alhambra Valley, Bay Point, Briones, Rodeo, Pacheco, Crockett, Tormey, Port Costa, Mt. View, Vine Hill, Reliez Valley, and Clyde)

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: *Kevin Murray has been an integral part of the organization 'Passion to the Streets' since its formation in Martinez about a decade ago. <https://passiontothestreets.com>. He currently serves as the Executive Director, and in that role, he works tirelessly to support the needs of our unhoused in the the Martinez community. Passion to the Streets Inc is a non-profit organization that supports families in need in many ways. They provide food and basic necessities for those in need, and help children and families transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing. They also provide advocacy, along with promoting community awareness, education, collaboration, and support.*

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Kevin and the organization Passion to the Streets are helping meeting the crisis needs of our unhoused. They also collaborate with serving the unhoused at Camp Hope in Martinez. They are valued by members of the community, including the City Council, because they are serving some of the neediest people in our community, and doing it with both passion and compassion.

Kevin organizes many fundraisers throughout the year to support the work of the organization including car shows, Cookies4Clothing, Christmas Stockings, and meal preparation at local shelters.

Reina Ortega, Delta Peers

Nominated by: Jo Bruno, Friend

Supervisorial District: District 3 (Bethel Island, Blackhawk, Byron, Diablo, Discovery Bay and Knightsen, as well as the cities of Antioch, Brentwood, and Oakley)

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: *During the 2021 PIT count, Reina stepped up to partner with me in the city of Antioch. Her ambition and level of compassion was appreciated. It was her first time getting involved, and since then, she has stayed engaged.*

The difference that the Nominee's service makes to individuals facing homelessness: *During the 2021 PIT count, Reina stepped up to partner with me in the city of Antioch. Her ambition and level of compassion was appreciated. It was her first time getting involved, and since then, she has stayed engaged.*

The volunteer work that Reina put forth toward the PIT count was unseen by the unhoused population, but it was felt within the system. There was a shortage of volunteers, so she stepped up to take responsibility for a certain section of our mapping the county. I wouldn't of been able to do it without her.

Florence Davis

Nominated by: Lea Murray, Friend

Supervisorial District: District 1 (Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito, part of Pinole, and the unincorporated communities of Bayview, East Richmond Heights, El Sobrante, Kensington, Montalvin Manor, Tara Hills, North Richmond, and Rollingwood)

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: *Florence Davis served as a Rydin Road Ambassador to almost everyone on Rydin Road. Although she was matched to one person she was essentially the "Mother of Rydin Road". Florence is faithful, loyal, and knowledgeable about services that benefit the unhoused.*

The difference that the Nominee's service makes to individuals facing homelessness: *Florence Davis served as a Rydin Road Ambassador to almost everyone on Rydin Road. Although she was matched to one person she was essentially the "Mother of Rydin Road". Florence is faithful, loyal, and knowledgeable about services that benefit the unhoused.*

Florence is a giver. She genuinely loves people and it shows by her actions. She visits the encampment regularly and checks on everyone. She advocates for residents in person and on Zoom.

There is no one else like Florence. She is hands down our best ambassador

Maureen O'Rourke, Trinity Center

Nominated by: Pamela McGrath, Volunteer coordinator

Supervisory District: District 4 (Clayton, Concord, Pleasant Hill, part of Walnut Creek, and the unincorporated Contra Costa Centre)

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: *Trinity Center squared off against Covid 19 early in 2020. One of the biggest changes we made in order to keep people safe was to suspend our entire volunteer program. We had hundreds of volunteers providing a huge array of essential and high level services in partnership with our operations team and case managers. We are immensely proud of our staff who persevered through the lockdown managing to keep the doors to Trinity Center open each and every weekday to offer essential services to our unsheltered neighbors. There was a volunteer who was determined to come back as soon as we would allow her to do so. Maureen was committed to serving the under-served. She knew how important it was for our clothing room to continue to provide fresh clothing to our unsheltered members. She was persistent in her desire to serve and persistently asked to back to Trinity Center to serve. Maureen was the first volunteer to sign up when we re-launched our pilot post-Covid volunteer program. She took on the huge task of coordinating our clothing room needs with the inventory provided by White Pony Express. Over the last few months, she has built up and trained a team of clothing room volunteers that allow our members to "shop" for fresh clothing 5 days a week. She carefully manages the inventory to ensure that our members will receive what they need most. Besides coordinating with White Pony Express, Maureen has coordinated clothing drives at local faith and civic organizations. Without her tireless efforts, we would not have been able to provide the 16,437 articles of clothing that we distributed from our clothing room in calendar year 2021. She's still on the job and we are so grateful that she is! In the first 6 months of 2022, our clothing room has distributed 10,296 articles of clothing! Thank you, Maureen, and team!*

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Maureen is so compassionate and humble. She knows each member by name and enjoys visiting with them and serving them. She remembers what hard to find items they are looking for and tries her best to procure those items for them. She is happy to be nominated especially since it will bring awareness to the need for compassionate care and friendly community connections for our unsheltered neighbors.

Kim Hunter-Reay, White Pony Inn

Nominated by: Peter Brooks, Neighbor and Fellow Volunteer

Supervisorial District: They serve the entire county

Nominee's outstanding volunteer service: Kim Hunter-Reay has been a volunteer for White Pony Inn since 2014. Her services have focused on helping people avoid homelessness, or for people moving out of homelessness, to set up livable residential environments. This includes facilitating access to food, clothing, furniture, supplies, transportation and hands-on help with moving, as well as help locating apartments and coordinating efforts of friends and neighbors to assist with a variety of needs.

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"Jenny," a woman of 62 with substantial physical disabilities who lived on the streets until a year ago, moved into an apartment where the rent has mostly been privately paid by a sponsor. Kim collected furniture, helped arrange the space to make cooking accessible, provided donated items such as a microwave and portable air conditioner, curtains, bedspreads, etc. , as well as finding volunteers to take her to medical appointments. She also gathered a support group of neighbors who have assisted Jenny with multiple needs over the past year. This is only the most recent example of the work that Kim has done entirely on a volunteer basis over the past 8 years for individuals and families affected by homelessness. Mona Rachita, Director of Future Colours, an Adult Care facility in Clayton, says "Kim is wonderful. She found someone who wanted to give away the furniture in their home and arranged for them to donate it so we could furnish our place. I am sitting on of the donated couches right now." Steve Krank, of St. Vincent De Paul, praises Kim for not stopping at the goal of simply getting someone housed, but rather "making sure they have all they need to really make a home." Beyond mobilizing resources, it is typical of Kim that she will help someone organize their living space and their physical belongings. For someone who has not had their own space and adequate possessions, this service, sometimes including free interior design and personal fashion consulting, goes a long way to instill confidence and well-being in a person who is newly housed.

Kim's style of working is striking in that she does not depend on agencies or established channels alone to get things done that will be of service and meet someone's needs. She has partnered with White Pony Express to provide individuals and families with needed food and St Vincent De Paul for furniture. At the same time she has mobilized friends, neighbors and acquaintances to accomplish the task at hand, such as driving a truck and loading furniture, helping repair electrical problems, finding suitable clothing, bedding, cookware or human support systems. "Housing First" is a familiar term for an approach to resolving homelessness. It could well be expanded to say, "Kim Next"!