

the spirit of GENEROSITY

holiday special edition

This holiday season, The Ark profiles several Tiburon Peninsula residents who give back, dedicating their time — and money — to causes that help improve the lives of others and their communities.

THE ARK



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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026 | Weekend Weather: ☁ Friday 54° 42° ☀ Saturday 55° 42° ☁ Sunday 56° 43° | thearknewspaper.com



AMELIA PLUMB / FOR THE ARK

Hilary Sessions of Strawberry is a volunteer and board member for Make It Home, a nonprofit that helps furnish homes for those transitioning from being unhoused.

Strawberry resident helps transform homes for those coming out of crisis

By **CATHERINE TANDY**
news@thearknewspaper.com

For those transitioning out of crisis, obtaining housing can provide much needed stability — but it takes a lot more than a roof over their heads to make a house feel like a home.

“One of the problems, if you have a family or someone that’s really on the edge, if they move into a vacant home and they don’t have any money to spend on furniture or even a bed or a desk or pots and pans, there’s a good chance that they will slip back into the system because they don’t re-

ally have a home, they have a place to sleep,” says Strawberry resident Hilary Sessions.

That’s where Make It Home steps in — and where Sessions, 59, has found her calling as both a volunteer and

See **SESSIONS**, page 28

Tiburon man advocates for youth, the unhoused in volunteer roles

By **EMILY LAVIN**
elavin@thearknewspaper.com

Jim Snipes first learned about court-appointed special advocates, volunteers who work to support youth in the foster-care system, during a lunchtime presentation at his San Francisco law firm.

He recalls being struck by some of the statistics shared about the risks facing foster youth, including a higher likelihood of ending up unhoused.

Court-appointed special advocates, or CASAs, work to change those outcomes by speaking up for the best interests of youth in the courtroom and as the kids move through the child-welfare system.

At the time, Snipes was winding down his three-decade legal career and was looking for ways to get more involved in the



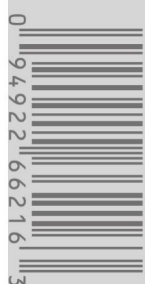
Jim Snipes

See **SNIPES**, page 30

EDITOR'S NOTE — *The Ark's office was closed Dec. 20-Jan. 4 for the holidays. This Spirit of Generosity and the Dec. 31 Year in Review holiday editions were produced in advance, and normal news coverage will resume for the Jan. 14 edition.*

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Volume 54, Issue 1, 40 pages • \$2



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Snipes, *continued from page 1*

community as he entered retirement.

"I thought, 'This sounds like a great prospect,'" he recalls.

Snipes, 72, is now in his eighth year volunteering as a court-appointed special advocate with Marin CASA. In his role, the Tiburon resident is assigned to one or two youth in the foster-care or juvenile-justice systems at a time and works to establish a relationship with them, advocating for their fundamental medical, educational and mental-health needs.

The volunteer role focuses on ensuring youth have a voice as they move through the system, but Snipes says court-appointed advocates also take on an equally important responsibility — being a steady presence in a child's life during a time of significant instability.

He notes kids in the foster-care and juvenile-justice systems have a "revolving door of adult professionals coming in and out of their lives," from social workers to case managers to therapists.

"There's turnover, and kids often develop a cynicism about it," he says. "I think our most important role is being the consistent adult in their lives."

Acting as a court-appointed special advocate isn't Snipes' only volunteer commitment. For the last two years, he's also served on the board of Homeward Bound of Marin, which provides shelter and services to the county's unhoused population. He was named chair of the board in June.

He was personally drawn to Homeward Bound's mission, just as he was with Marin CASA, he says.

"As I began thinking in an intentional way about what I wanted to do in retirement and what causes spoke to me, homelessness was an obvious one," he says.

Volunteer work follows 35 years in law

Snipes says he was raised in a service-oriented family, as his father made a career in the military. As a result, the family moved around a lot when Snipes was younger, but he spent his middle- and high-school years in the Arlington, Virginia, area, just outside of Washington, D.C.

He earned a bachelor's in religion and English literature from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania before going on to earn a second bachelor's in philosophy, politics and economics from the University of Oxford.

He then decided to pursue a law degree, graduating from Yale Law School, though he says the career choice wasn't a foregone conclusion. He says there were no lawyers in his family or among his family's close friends.

"But as I looked at people who were doing things that I thought were worthwhile, people in government, they all seemed to have law degrees," he says.

He spent his entire career of nearly 35 years with multinational law firm Covington & Burling, in part drawn to the firm's commitment to pro bono work. He started out in Washington, D.C., where the

more info

To learn more about Marin CASA, visit marincasa.org. For more information about Homeward Bound of Marin, visit hbomf.org.

firm was headquartered, and spent a couple years in Tokyo as part of a lawyer-exchange program with the largest law firm in Japan. After being named partner, he relocated to Covington & Burling's London office to head the corporate group there. He and his wife, Lynn West, who was pregnant with the couple's now-grown son at the time, expected to be in London for five or 10 years. But it wasn't long before the firm asked Snipes to move to the Bay Area to open the firm's first U.S. branch in San Francisco.

For most of his career with Covington & Burling, Snipes headed the life-sciences transactional practice, specializing in strategic collaborations and licensing transactions for pharmaceutical and early-stage biotech companies. He began winding down his career in 2015 and fully retired in 2021.

Advocates aim to provide stability for youth

Despite his legal experience, Snipes says becoming an advocate with Marin CASA was a bit intimidating, noting he had "really no expertise to speak of."

"What I've learned is that passion and commitment takes you a long way," he says.

Marin CASA volunteers typically spend 10-20 hours a month on the case of the child

they're assigned to, which includes meeting with the child as often as once a week for social activities, like visiting a park or eating a meal.

Snipes has served as a court-appointed advocate for seven kids during his time with Marin CASA; he's currently in his fourth year as an advocate for the same two teenage boys.

As a volunteer, Snipes says, he spends a lot of time contacting those in more official roles to make sure they're aware of any problems or issues the child may be experiencing — for instance, if he discovers the child hasn't had a dental checkup in a while or is having a problem at school or accessing Wi-Fi for homework or other purposes.

"I'm the guy who in a nice way picks up the phone and says, 'Hi, I'm so and so with CASA and we've got a problem, can you help with this?'" he says. "Everybody's well intentioned, it's just stuff falls through the cracks."

The most important and rewarding part of his role, he says, is the time he spends with each of the two teens, "showing up and seeing them every week, spending two to three hours on a Saturday afternoon doing fun stuff."

Forming those relationships can be a challenge, as kids can be wary of another stranger coming into their lives. It's also "the most important piece of the whole puzzle, because without a relationship, you can't do anything," he says.

See **SNIPES**, next page

Karma Club program helps teens explore health-care careers

VIA SALLY NEWSON

Belvedere's Sally Newson, founder of Karma Club, is seen with Marin County Supervisor Mary Sackett and Marin Public Health Officer Lisa Santora at the graduation ceremony for the Future Healers Academy. The Karma Club program gave 25 students the opportunity to explore careers in the health-care industry.

WHO: Karma Club.

WHEN: Summer.

WHAT: In partnership with Sutter Health and Dominican University, Karma Club offered the Future Healers Academy, empowering 25 Marin teens through immersive, hands-on health-care career exploration. Students gained real-world skills while forging college and career pathways, opening doors to brighter futures and strengthening our community's health-care pipeline.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: Karma Club was founded by Belvedere resident Sally Newson. Newson launched the Future Healers Academy, uniting Sutter

Health and Dominican University to implement an experiential program that gives Marin teens meaningful exposure to health-care careers.

BENEFITING: Future Healers Academy serves Marin high-school students who lack access to career-exploration opportunities.

VISIT: karma-club.org; @karma_club_northgate on Instagram.

DID YOU KNOW? Nonprofit Karma Club is currently seeking philanthropic and grant support to relaunch the Future Healers Academy this summer and expand this opportunity for local youth.

Locals sail through history with the Landmarks Society

VIA THE BELVEDERE-TIBURON LANDMARKS SOCIETY

Tiburon's Helen Lindqvist, the lead docent at Old St. Hilary's Landmark, and Terrence Butler were among those who set sail on the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society's 'Float Your History Cruise' in September.

WHO: The Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society.

WHEN: Sept. 27.

WHAT: Landmarks Society members recently set sail on a "Float Your History Cruise," where they enjoyed stunning shoreline views while immersing themselves in the rich history of Tiburon and Belvedere. Local historians brought the past to life: Jennifer Hartung, Landmarks historian and archivist; Dave Gotz, town of Tiburon historian; and Mark Freilberg, Landmarks board vice president and a docent at the Railroad and Ferry Depot Museum, shared stories that connected the landscape to its storied past.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: Thanks

to Maggie McDonogh and Angel Island-Tiburon Ferry.

BENEFITING: The Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, which works to preserve Old St. Hilary's Landmark, the Railroad and Ferry Depot Museum and the Art and Garden Center in Tiburon, along with Belvedere's China Cabin.

VISIT: landmarkssociety.com.

DID YOU KNOW? When the archdiocese planned to sell Old St. Hilary's in the late 1950s, a small group of Belvedere residents led by Beverly Bastian organized to save it. They jokingly called themselves the "Protestant Protective Society for the Preservation of Old St. Hilary's Catholic Church."

Snipes, from previous page

Eliza Graumlich, the program director for Marin CASA, says Snipes is particularly skilled at forming those relationships. He really makes an effort to get to know each kid he serves as an individual, Graumlich says, and “demonstrates a great degree of curiosity and interest in the youth he works with, which I think has allowed him to develop very meaningful relationships with a wide range of youth across his time as a volunteer.”

As he gets to know the kids, Snipes says, he tries to stretch himself when possible to give them experiences they might not otherwise have. For instance, he notes, one of the current teens he serves loved the idea of snowboarding but had never been. Snipes recalls picking him up from Santa Rosa, driving him up to Tahoe for a lesson and driving him back — a long day for both of them, but “a dream come true” for the boy, who he says appreciated the effort Snipes and others put in to make the day happen.

He says it’s one of his favorite memories from his four years as the boy’s court-appointed advocate, “sitting in the car and singing songs together and eating junk food.”



CLARA LU / FOR THE ARK

Longtime Tiburon resident Jim Snipes has been volunteering as a court-appointed special advocate with Marin CASA for about eight years, supporting youth in the foster-care and juvenile-justice systems. Snipes, a retired lawyer, also serves on the board of Homeward Bound of Marin, which provides shelter and services to the county’s unhoused population.

The impact volunteers can have on youth often shows itself in smaller moments spending time together, rather than giant breakthroughs, he says, and the weekly outings, though often simple, can be very meaningful.

“I think, ‘Well, he had a fun afternoon, and I hope he looks back on that and that helps him hold

on until the next good thing happens,’” Snipes says.

Supporting kids as they experience the child-welfare or juvenile-justice system means navigating ups and downs. He notes one of the kids he mentors had been in a relatively stable place before getting himself into some trouble that ended up having legal rami-

fications and ramifications for his home placement.

The stability CASA volunteers can give kids, he says, is by continuing to show up for them, even during the hard times.

“I’m trying to tell him, ‘We’ll get through this together,’” Snipes says.

He says volunteering with

Marin CASA has reinforced for him how kids who are in the foster-care or juvenile-justice systems often lack the same safety net that other people do.

“Any of us could have been born into that situation,” he says, adding that his volunteer work with Marin CASA “inspires some gratitude for all these things that go right and gratitude now that I have the chance to spend a few years working with these kids.”

A ‘heart-forward’ approach to board role

Snipes brings that same passion to his role on the board of directors for Homeward Bound of Marin.

He first got involved by doing some pro bono legal work for the organization during the pandemic, noting he was impressed by the nonprofit’s mission. In addition to providing shelter and supportive housing to individuals, families and veterans, the nonprofit offers job training through its Fresh Starts Culinary Academy and operates several social enterprise businesses staffed with employees who were once unhoused.

Snipes says while some who are unhoused have mental-health or addiction problems that need to be addressed, the main driver

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Pop-up shop helps nonprofit serve seniors across Marin

WHO: Marin Villages.

WHEN: May 29-June 1.

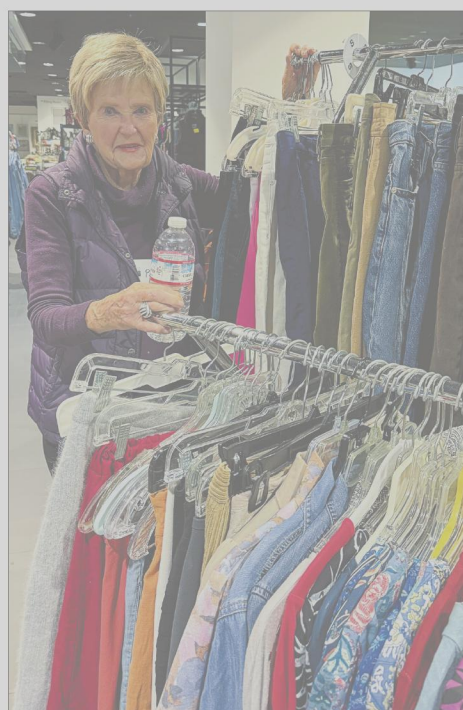
WHAT: Marin Villages’ fourth annual Pop-Up Thrift Boutique was created from scratch with donations that are collected, organized, displayed, priced and sold by a tireless group of volunteers, including many from Tiburon, Belvedere and Strawberry. This year, volunteers turned the huge former H&M store at San Rafael’s Northgate Mall into a shopper’s paradise full of gently used, high-quality clothing, home goods, jewelry and more.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: Tiburon Peninsula volunteers included planning committee members **Patty Powell** and **Cherie Sorokin**, **Bill Brinkman**, **Barbara Derana**, **Julie Hanan Friedman**, **Shirley Kosciusko**, **Matt Masson**, **Didi Maillard**, **Bill Tiedje**, and **Betty Williams**.

BENEFITING: The pop-up raised more than \$66,000 for Marin Villages, a nonprofit that helps older adults continue to be independent and active in the communities where they live. Loulie Sutro, Marin Villages’ founder, is being inducted into the Marin Women’s Hall of Fame in 2026 in recognition of the impact Marin Villages has had since inception in 2010.

VISIT: marinvillages.org.

DID YOU KNOW? Tiburon Peninsula Village is one of six local villages that make up Marin Villages. In addition to providing a variety of direct services, such as rides, shopping, organizing,



VIA CHERIE SOROKIN

Patty Powell was among the Tiburon Peninsula volunteers who helped organize Marin Villages’ Pop-Up Thrift Boutique. The pop-up raised \$66,000 for the nonprofit, which helps seniors age in place.

handyman fixes, tech help and companionship visits, Tiburon Peninsula Village hosts social events that benefit Tiburon and Belvedere businesses while providing connection and fun for its members and volunteers. Tiburon Peninsula Village activities are coordinated by Tiburon resident **Cherie Sorokin**.

Garden tour, fashion show benefit MarinHealth Medical Center

WHO: Friends of MarinHealth, the Belvedere-Tiburon fundraising branch of the MarinHealth Volunteers.

WHEN: May 6 and Nov. 14.

WHAT: Friends of MarinHealth, also known as The Raccoons, held two fundraisers in 2025. The Raccoon Garden Tour in May featured a self-guided tour of several Belvedere Island gardens, plus a boutique of vendors selling accessories, clothing, jewelry, and home-and-garden décor at the San Francisco Yacht Club. In November, the Raccoons hosted a fashion show and boutique shopping event at the Corinthian Yacht Club. The show featured styles from Trina Turk’s winter collection, while participating vendors included Turk, Ashley Ashoff, Brimroad, Classy Bag Lady, Cob, Kate’s Single Batch Toffee and Vivo.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: Belvedere Raccoons include **Robin Eber**, **Anne Feinberg**, **Stacy Fuller**, **Elizabeth Hachman**, **Diane Kahn**, **Meredith Lyons**, **Lisa Mathews**, **Annie Mendenhall**, **Azita Mujica Beavers**, **Kathy Niggeman**, **Stephanie Pugash**, **Betsy Hooker**, **Claire Slaymaker**, and **Dawn Vroegop**.

Tiburon Raccoons include **Karen Akin**, **Mimi Breck**, **Sabrina Clark**, **Monica Coleman**, **Sarah Cox**, **Karl Cusack**, **Kerry Davidson**, **Lisa Evers**, **Felicia Goldstein**, **Cindy Goodman**, **Abby Harle**, **Sydney Joyner**, **Marla Kelly**, **Cynthia Kenneally**, **Jane Marra**, **Elizabeth Moffett**, **Patricia Mon-**



VIA FRIENDS OF MARINHEALTH

Friends of MarinHealth President Anne Feinberg and member **Diane Kahn**, both of Belvedere, at the organization’s May fundraiser, featuring self-guided tours of several gardens on Belvedere Island and boutique shopping at the San Francisco Yacht Club.

tag, Karin Peters, Evon Rieden, Jinnie Simonsen, Ellie Smith, Julie Soja, Marney Tenney, Amy Thimmig, Christina Werner, and Laura Whitlock.

Other members include **Tish Misterio** of Strawberry; **Sydney Cresci** of San Francisco; **Camille Dibble** of San Rafael, and **Elaine Nolan** of Corte Madera.

BENEFITING: The two events helped the Raccoons raise nearly \$150,000 in 2025 toward MarinHealth Medical Center patient programs, staff education, state-of-the-art medical procedures and the Aspire Program, an intensive outpatient behavioral health program for adolescents.

VISIT: arkn.ws/marinhealthraccoons.

DID YOU KNOW? Friends of MarinHealth has been actively working with the local community to support the hospital since 1961.

Snipes, *continued from page 31*

of homelessness is simply that there is not enough available housing.

He says he views the issue like a game of musical chairs.

“We don’t have enough chairs there, so when the music stops and everybody grabs a chair, guess what, it’s the vulnerable who aren’t going to be able to get the chairs in time,” he says.

He says he appreciates Homeward Bound’s focus on building supportive housing. The nonprofit in 2024 opened two new housing complexes, Puett Place, with 24 new apartments for unhoused veterans, and Sweeney Place, with 26 apartments for unhoused families and individuals. Both are in Novato.

“What I love about Homeward Bound is that they’re doing what needs to be done,” Snipes says.

Paul Fordham, the chief executive officer of Homeward Bound, says that as he has gotten to know Snipes, he’s been struck by both his intelligence and his kindness. Snipes’ combination of those qualities makes him an ideal board member for the organization, which Fordham says is trying to solve a “very complex issue” while centering real people who are experiencing homelessness.

“Jim just seemed to embody those two qualities, caring about the work and the people we serve and yet bringing this high level of analysis and thoughtfulness about how we can improve what we’re doing,” he says.

As a board member, Snipes helped the

organization develop its latest strategic plan, Fordham says, and as board chair is helping to guide the organization toward enacting the initiatives laid out in the document. Snipes has handled his role as chair deftly, Fordham says, fostering collaboration and inclusion.

“Jim has come in and really helped to professionalize the board, but in a way where everybody’s voice is heard,” he says.

Snipes is driven by a genuine desire to help others, Fordham says, something that is obvious whenever Snipes attends any Homeward Bound event, whether that’s the opening of a new building, the unveiling of a new playground at the nonprofit’s family shelter or simply a staff celebration.

“He comes with a lot of questions and this big, beaming smile,” Fordham says. “His heart-forward kindness is very clear.”

Snipes says he relishes the opportunities he has to give back with both Marin CASA and Homeward Bound. Some of his motivation for getting involved comes from his religious faith — he’s an active member of Westminster Presbyterian Church — as well as an internal calling to simply try to make the world a bit better in any way he can.

“It strikes me that this is what we are put here to do,” he says, adding that he’s grateful to be able to devote his time and energy to causes he’s passionate about.

“A lot of people are just scrambling to make ends meet,” he says. “I feel very lucky to have the time to do this.”

Reach Assistant Editor Emily Lavin, The Ark’s education and youth reporter, at 415-944-3841.

Meetings, *continued from page 3*

council chambers at Town Hall, 1505 Tiburon Blvd. Attend in person or by teleconference using the Zoom app or by calling 669-444-9171 with meeting ID 892-1708-7066. The following items are on the agenda:

- Recap of 2025 programs.
- Discussion of call for 2026 proposals.
- Update from Police Chief’s Citizens Advisory Panel: Lights On Program and Officer Wellbeing Program.

Tiburon Town Council agenda

The Tiburon Town Council meets at 6:30 tonight, Jan. 7, in council chambers at Town Hall, 1505 Tiburon Blvd. Attend in person or by teleconference using the Zoom app or by calling 669-444-9171 with meeting ID 892-1708-7066. The following items are on the agenda:

- Adopt minutes for the Dec. 3 Town Council meeting.
- Announce pending vacancies in 2026.
- Receive and adopt annual report on the status of Tiburon’s AB1600 Impact Fees pursuant to California Government Code.
- Provide direction to staff as to the amount of subscription deposits property owners in the proposed Mar West Underground District must contribute and the amount the town is willing to contribute prior to district formation; consider authorizing the town manager to execute a professional services agreement with CSWST2 Engineers not to exceed \$105,600 once subscription deposits are received;

and consider approval of a fiscal year 2026 budget amendment in an amount equal to the town’s contribution, if necessary.

- Review committee assignments and make any desired changes for 2026.
- Adopt Town Council regular meeting calendar for 2026.
- Town Council reports.
- Town manager report.
- **Closed session:** Conference with legal counsel over two potential cases of anticipated litigation and one existing litigation (Committee to Preserve the Paradise Cove Salt Marsh, Tidelands and Neighborhood Safety v. Town of Tiburon, Marin County Superior Court Case No. CIV0000086).
- Announce action taken in closed session, if any.

Belvedere City Council tentative agenda

The Belvedere City Council meets at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 12 in council chambers at City Hall, 450 San Rafael Ave. Attend in person or by teleconference using the Zoom app or by calling 888-788-0099 with meeting ID 813-8415-9398. The following item is on the tentative agenda:

- Approval and second reading of an ordinance adopting the 2025 California Fire Code, as modified by Tiburon Fire District Ordinance No. 133.

Belvedere Planning Commission special meeting tentative agenda

The Belvedere Planning Commission

See **MEETINGS**, next page

Rotary’s ‘stock exchange’ raises \$73k for community organizations



VIA THE ROTARY CLUB OF TIBURON SUNSET

Preston Petty (second from right) as Elvis performs with The Rotarettes, from left, Joanne Norman, Marilyn Nemzer, Valerie Castellana and Nora Noguez, at the Rotary Club of Tiburon Sunset’s ‘stock exchange’ fundraiser in June.

WHO: The Rotary Club of Tiburon Sunset.

WHEN: June 27.

WHAT: The Rotary Club of Tiburon Sunset’s annual “stock exchange” fundraiser raised a record-breaking amount, more than \$73,000, in 2025. Attendees enjoyed excellent food by Il Davide restaurant; photo ops with an Elvis impersonator and a vintage truck; live entertainment by the Tiburon Sunset Rotarettes; a drawing, raffle and silent auction, as well as a live auction with the club’s own **Harry Miller** as auctioneer extraordinaire. In keeping with the 1950s theme, all were treated to a showing of “Spark Plug Cowboys,” a short film about the San Rafael car culture of the times produced by Rotary member Kramer Herzog; the film and its soundtrack were a trip down memory lane.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: The evening’s retro-themed festivities were overseen by club members **Joanne Norman, Marybeth LaMotte, Nora Noguez, Randi Brinkman, Cherie Sorokin, Bob Hendry, and Brian Swift**, with the assistance of many others.

BENEFITING: All money raised goes to multiple local and international community projects, as well as many local charitable organizations serving children, older adults, the unhoused and veterans in the Bay Area.

VISIT: tiburonsunset.org.

DID YOU KNOW? Rotary builds friendships, community and a better world through philanthropy and hands-on volunteer activities. Rotary funding and volunteering have been instrumental in the effort to eliminate polio worldwide.

Rotary barbecue helps fund charitable work locally and abroad



COURTESY OF KATHLEEN DEFEVER

From left, Ed Labarre of the Rotary Club of Sausalito and Marianne Strotz and President Kathleen Defever of the Rotary Club of Tiburon-Belvedere take orders at the local club’s barbecue and bar at the Tiburon Classic Car Show in June.

WHO: The Rotary Club of Tiburon-Belvedere.

WHEN: June 14.

WHAT: Rotarians, friends and neighbors worked together to run a barbecue and bar at the Tiburon Classic Car Show, giving visitors a chance to enjoy grilled favorites, a variety of libations and fresh popcorn.

LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS: **Nugget Markets, Servino Trattoria, Safeway at Strawberry Village** and **Woodlands Market** contributed food and drinks. Grill-master extraordinaire **Cindy Siciliano** of the Rotary Club of Tiburon Sunset flipped burgers, roasted corn and more, while **Angelo Capozzi** of Tiburon produced bags galore of popcorn from the club’s popping machine.

BENEFITING: The club’s fundraising efforts provide financial support for the club’s charitable work locally and abroad, including with Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity, the Belvedere-Tiburon Library Foundation, the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, the Book Exchange of Marin, The Ranch, Rotaplast International and Tribe Rising, among others.

VISIT: tiburonrotary.org.

DID YOU KNOW? The Rotary Club of Tiburon-Belvedere was founded in 1977, and among its priorities are education, literacy and community. The club’s first big project was building the access ramp to Elephant Rock, and it took on the project twice because a storm washed the first ramp away.