

## [These 8 nonprofits are making a difference: North Bay Gives Awards for 2022](#)

North Bay Business Journal

North Bay Business Journal recognizes the following organizations for their impact on their communities in Marin, Napa, Sonoma and Solano counties.

Winners of the 2022 North Bay Gives Awards will be recognized at an event in Santa Rosa on Wednesday afternoon.

### **Community Matters**

What is this organization's mission?

Community Matters works with schools and youth serving organizations across Sonoma County in the North, South, East, West and Central county.

They have trained approximately 10,000 youth and 1500 adults in Sonoma County alone. The organization has been able to provide the programs and services to local schools for little or no cost through funding supplied by Sonoma County donors, foundations and grantor's.

Why was the organization created?

Founded in response to the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in 1999, it has created a Safe School Ambassadors program to train students. "Student bystanders see, hear, and know things adults don't, can intervene in ways adults can't and are often on the scene of an incident before an adult. They are a critical and necessary resource for positively impacting the crisis of bullying in our schools," the group's website states.

"Community Matters recognized the need to include a method were students were empowered, engaged and given a voice to make their schools better. Diverse socially influential clique leaders are trained to be

Upstanders with skills to intervene and de-escalate in situations of mistreatment, creating a ripple effect and a culture where all students can feel safe, welcome and included.”

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### **Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County**

What is this organization’s mission?

Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County brings people together to build homes, communities, “and hope,” the organization states.

Habitat homeowners build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage.

“With our help, those homeowners achieve the independence they need to build a better life for themselves and their families.”

It operates an “aging in place program, a home repair program enables seniors to age safely, independently, and comfortably in their homes. In October, it added a “Fire Safe Sonoma” component to the program.

In addition, the nonprofit has a 27,000 square foot ReStore on Industrial Drive which sells building supplies, furniture, and other home products that are “priced affordably” and keep the material out of landfills.

Why was the organization created?

The local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity was formed by a group of volunteers in 1984. Volunteers performed 18 home rehabilitations in the first seven years.

Since its founding, it has completed 48 homes, has four in the final permit stages with City of Sebastopol. Also, it has completed 71 Aging in Place / Neighborhood Revitalization projects. Habitat homeowners are low-income families, defined as 50-80% of area median Income.

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## **Napa Valley Community Foundation**

What the group says about its mission

“Pooling the financial and intellectual capital of civic-minded people, the Napa Valley Community Foundation focuses on fighting poverty, championing community, investing in youth, and helping the most vulnerable in our community recover from and prepare for the next disaster.

“Napa Valley Community Foundation was launched in 1994 by a group of civic leaders who looked around and saw that the nearby communities of Sonoma and Marin had Community Foundations that were working with local donors to make positive impacts in their communities. Since Napa did not have a foundation to support the larger needs of the community, this group of visionaries began the work of making sure that Napa Valley had the resources it would need to keep the community thriving.”

What are some of the organization’s key accomplishments and programs?

- Collaborated with Napa Valley Adult Education, Napa Valley College, On the Move, and UpValley Family Centers to launch a construction training program to address the critical shortage of construction labor while helping local workers build the necessary skills to gain employment in the higher-wage construction sector.

To date, 74 men and women have graduated from the program, 47% are now employed in the construction trades, 35% have received promotions and/or salary increases post-graduation, and 46% are enrolled in continuing construction education classes(welding, plumbing, etc.).

- Partnered with Community Foundation of Sonoma County to launch the Napa Sonoma ADU Center to help local homeowners build accessory dwelling units (granny flats) which can typically be rented for more affordable rates.
- In 2022, Napa Valley Community Foundation awarded local education grants and scholarships totaling \$520,875 to support local education programs and provide college scholarships; and \$173,375 in grants were awarded to an array of programs that level the academic playing field and expand the college access pipeline. Programs ranged from a bilingual kindergarten readiness program to programs to help students prepare for studies and careers in the digital industry.

## **Northern California Public Media**

What the organization says about its background

“Seeking a locally owned and operated public radio and television outlet, an organizational group was founded to secure the licenses from the FCC and to fund raise to sustain operations. In 1984, the TV station KRCB was launched, followed 10 years later by FM station KRCB. In 2017, NorCal acquired KCSM TV and changed the call letters to KPJK. In 2021 NorCal acquired 104.9 to expand its radio signal.”

Since then, we had recent achievements

“2022 was focused on youth including television programs that focused on student environmental activism and education, the launch of a YouTube series, for and about young people and environmental anxiety and climate change science and understanding.

“NorCal also partnered with Sonoma County on the ‘Raise a Child’ initiative to encourage adoption among the LGBTQ+ community.

“We partnered on the Petaluma Music Festival which supports music education in the school system, and partnered with CreaTV cable access on the DocuMentorMe program to teach young people about filmmaking...In addition to youth, we focused on issues of homelessness with a live call in program on TV and Radio, and streaming live on Facebook and YouTube, produced an Emmy-nominated story on the Sebastopol Morris Street RV situation, and launched our Sonoma County First News podcast.”

And the challenges of operating a public media company?

“Community funding (grants and membership) is an ongoing challenge to support our work.

“Awareness of our service is also a challenge. In a world of 1000’s of podcasts, hundreds of TV channels, streaming video, and social media – it is hard to break through the salacious posts and programs and celebrity-based ‘news’ to present in-depth, local stories that matter to people’s everyday lives.”

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## **Okizu**

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## What we're about

In 1981, founders John Bell and Dr. Mike Amylon noticed that the kids who were impacted by childhood cancer (both patients and siblings), more often than not never got a chance to go to camp and experience life as a normal kid.

“Camp started with just a few medical staff volunteers and children, and has grown into a community with five different programs- both in person and virtual now, family picnics, and a number of other gatherings or community events.”

Though a 40-year collaborative effort between Okizu and the pediatric oncology treatment centers in Northern California, Okizu operates peer support programs for children and families affected by childhood cancer based on “the community-forming nature of a residential camp experience.” All of Okizu’s programs are offered free of charge.

And what have been the near term challenges?

Okizu suffered a loss in 2020 when Camp Okizu was in the path of the Butte County/Bear fire in 2020....

For camp years 2020 and 2021, Okizu was able to pivot its camp programs to make them completely virtual, and this year, it was able to provide camps in person. Okizu is still focused on figuring out how to move forward with the current land they own for their previous camp (whether to re-build, or buy a new camp site).

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## **United Policyholders**

What does this nonprofit group do?

Co-founded in 1991 by Amy Bach, a consumer advocate and attorney, and Ina Delong, a 22 year insurance professional, the nonprofit’s first project was providing services to people who were devastated by the Oakland/Berkeley firestorm that destroyed 3,000 homes.

UP developed a series of programs, services and partnerships aimed at problem-solving, correcting misinformation and “helping impacted households be their own best advocates and make good decisions on their road to recovery.” It has since worked with North Bay residents after the Mt. Vision, Carr, Valley,

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Atlas, Tubbs, Kincade, and Glass wildfires and the Napa earthquake.

Its accomplishments

- 1) Helping establish official wildfire risk reduction standards and insurance rate adjustment regulations that will reward home hardening and defensible space improvements and help property owners access affordable insurance.
- 2) Helping businesses be fairly compensated by insurers for COVID-19
- 3) Serving as a voice and resource for insurance consumers on matters related to climate change and the cost and quality of insurance.

While facing this challenge

“After every major wildfire that two-thirds of impacted households continue to find themselves under insured. UP works steadily to solve this chronic problem through educational programs, legislative and regulatory reforms, but it remains a challenge due to advertising focused on price savings and other factor.”

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## **Vivalon**

What the group says is its mission

“Formed in 1954, Vivalon has served as the central resource hub for Marin County’s older adults and people with disabilities. It provides specialized transportation, nutrition programs, classes and other means of social connection.

“What ties our services all together is an even more vital force at work: the power of human connection. It’s grassroots beginnings were marked by creating the first ride program in 1968, a senior center in 1971, and a nutrition program in 1976.”

“Vivalon’s services have expanded over the years to include supplying meals and groceries, specialized and affordable transportation, classes and activities. In addition, Vivalon’s Healthy Aging Campus broke ground in April 2022 in San Rafael, and is expected to open its doors in 2023 to provide services and

affordable housing for older adults.”

And its greatest challenges

“One of the primary challenges facing Vivalon is managing fallout from COVID-19. Because the majority of our volunteers are older adults with higher risk factors, we have increased our paid driver force with an impact on our operational budget.

“In addition, dealing with inflation has proved just as challenging, with increased costs for our core of critical nutrition programs, such as Meals on Wheels and Nourish. Meanwhile, clients are also dealing with inflationary costs and must rely on services at Vivalon to meet their basic needs.

“Our biggest long-term challenge is planning to adequately serve the rapidly expanding older adult population in Marin. Vivalon’s services provide a foundational layer of safety net services to meet a range of basic needs for older adults and people with disabilities and advance healthy aging paths and aging in place.”

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### **Workforce Development Board of Solano County**

What’s the mission of this nonprofit?

Founded in 1982 as Private Industry Council of Solano County, Inc., the Solano WDB began operating as the Workforce Investment Board in the 1990s before becoming the Workforce Development Board of Solano County in 2016. It provides employment-related services for job seekers and businesses in Solano County.

What are some of its accomplishments?

The Solano WDB and Solano-Napa SBDC partnered in 2022 to administer three grant programs –the Solano County COVID-19 Relief Grant, the Napa County COVID-19 Relief Grant, and the City of Vallejo Small Business COVID-19 Microgrant. Through these programs, the WDB and SBDC introduce the resources and no-cost services they offer to businesses.

Meanwhile, in job seeker services, the America’s Job Center in Fairfield and Vallejo served over 15,500 individuals between July of 2021 and June of 2022. Over 36,600 various services were provided.

And are its challenges?

“A continuous challenge has been staff capacity to oversee the various grant programs in the community; however, staff’s dedication to the small business community has led to its successes.

“Additional challenges have been finding ways to help the business community understand and be in compliance with government funding that has sourced the grant programs, as well as ensuring non-English speaking businesses have had equitable access to grant funds.

“SBDC and WDB staff provided technical assistance and workshops to grantees to aid in understanding of government funding sources, and effectively partnered with local chambers (particularly the Hispanic chambers in Solano and Napa and the Solano County Black Chamber of Commerce) to provide culturally and linguistically competent outreach and support for small business grantees.”

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