

Marin youth camp promotes healthy living, positive habits

By [Adrian Rodriguez](#)

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Ricky Fonseca is glad to be gaining valuable life skills.

As part of the Youth for Justice Summer Academy, the 17-year-old Novato resident said he's learned the importance of community service and being environmentally conscious. One of the daily activities involves preparing and sharing healthy meals, allowing him to practice the art of cooking, he said.

"I feel like I'm going to need those skills later in life," he said. "I'm really happy that we actually get to learn that now."

The two-week summer camp is a program of Alcohol Justice, a San Rafael nonprofit in the Canal neighborhood, and the Marin County Probation Department. The program offers lessons on social justice, health education, drug and alcohol prevention and leadership.

Photo below: Ricky Fonseca, a member of the Youth for Justice Summer Academy, picks up trash Thursday in a community garden in San Rafael's Canal area. "We have to respect the gardens," he said. (Robert Tong/Marin Independent Journal)



“We do all kinds of things to introduce the youth to different aspects of what it is to be healthy and lead a healthy life away from alcohol and drugs, basically because it’s a prevention program,” said Maite Durán, community organizer for the nonprofit and founder of the Youth for Justice program and the summer academy.

[WATCH THE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCWkLnaKAGY) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCWkLnaKAGY>

Alcohol Justice, formerly the Marin Institute, is a nonprofit watchdog that monitors the alcohol industry. Once a week, its leaders meet with youths for drug and alcohol prevention programs.

The summer academy is in its fourth year and is offered to underserved youths ages 10 to 20, Durán said.

“We’re interested in investing in prevention efforts that lead to safe and healthy communities for the youth of Marin,” Kevin Lynch, director of the county juvenile probation division, said in released statement. “We recognize that youth who are engaged in these activities are far less likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system.”

This year, the team of some 15 youths has had field trips to Stinson Beach and Muir Woods learning about plants, food and medicine.

On Thursday, the group visited a community garden at an apartment complex in the Canal neighborhood. The teens picked up litter, pulled weeds and performed maintenance tasks.

The 40 plots in the garden were filled with corn, apples, berries and other foods. They were planted seven years ago by students who worked with the volunteers at Planting Justice, an Oakland-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting social justice in the food industry and the accessibility to healthy foods.

On hand was Haleh Zandi, cofounder and director of education of the Planting Justice.

“Today we are doing lessons on how to garden, how to grow your own food, how to prepare the food that comes out of your garden and also about social movements,” she said.

The group concocted homemade vitamin water infused with fresh fruits and herbs in a lesson that highlighted the benefits of fresh foods as opposed to sugary bottled drinks packed with high fructose corn syrup.

The exercise resonated with Fonseca, who said, “One of the most important things in a community is be able to feed each other and nourish each other, so we have to respect the gardens.”

Beatriz Hernandez, 15, of Fairfax, said she joined the program because “I believe in making my community a better place, and the camp helps us and we do projects ... like the garden project. We are helping communities.”

San Rafael resident David Martin, 15, said participating in the program gives him a sense of belonging. “It makes me feel like I’m actually valued, like I’m important, like I’m helping a cause,” he said.

The Youth for Justice Summer Academy continues through Aug. 4.

Adrian Rodriguez covers Mill Valley, Belvedere, Tiburon, Corte Madera and Larkspur for the Marin IJ. He also writes the weekly business column Movers & Shakers, which appears in Friday's paper. Reach the author at arodriguez@marinij.com or follow Adrian on Twitter: [@adrianrodri](https://twitter.com/adrianrodri). Reach the author at arodriguez@marinij.com.

La Youth for Justice Summer Academy iniciará el lunes 24 de julio en Alcohol Justice, en el barrio Canal de San Rafael

Se ofrecerán ocho semanas de capacitación en liderazgo para jóvenes locales, centradas en la buena nutrición, el ejercicio físico, la prevención del uso de alcohol y drogas y la acción directa

News provided by [Alcohol Justice](#) Jul 21, 2017, 21:25 ET

SAN RAFAEL, California, 21 de julio de 2017 /PRNewswire-HISPANIC PR WIRE/ -- La cuarta edición anual de la academia de verano Youth for Justice Summer Academy, financiada por [Alcohol Justice](#) y el Departamento de Libertad Condicional Juvenil del Condado de Marin, se llevará a cabo por dos semanas, desde el lunes 24 de julio hasta el viernes 4 de agosto, en las oficinas de Alcohol Justice, ubicadas en el 24 de la calle Belvedere, en San Rafael.

"Esperamos tener entre 20 y 25 participantes de entre 10 y 20 años, provenientes en su mayoría del barrio Canal", dijo Maite Durán, organizadora comunitaria de Alcohol Justice y líder de Youth for Justice. "Desde nuestro enfoque de la prevención del uso de alcohol y marihuana, estaremos explorando los principios de la organización comunitaria, al mismo tiempo que nos conectaremos con la naturaleza en lugares hermosos de Marin, como Stinson Beach y Muir Woods. Seremos guiados por guardaparques y aprenderemos sobre la sabiduría indígena de las plantas, el uso de los alimentos y la naturaleza como medicina, y disfrutaremos de estar juntos y reunirnos como comunidad a través de la cocina y compartiendo deliciosas comidas".

La academia cuenta con el apoyo constante de la División de Libertad Condicional Juvenil del Condado de Marin, cuyo director Kevin Lynch, declaró: *"Estamos interesados en invertir en esfuerzos de prevención que conduzcan a comunidades seguras y saludables para los jóvenes de Marín. Reconocemos que los jóvenes comprometidos en estas actividades son mucho menos propensos a caer en el sistema judicial juvenil".*

"Estamos ayudando a una nueva generación de jóvenes del barrio Canal a convertirse en los futuros líderes de Marín", agregó Durán. "Queremos darles a estos jóvenes una perspectiva completa; y no sólo predicar que 'el alcohol y las drogas son malos'. Queremos que aprendan que los líderes verdaderamente exitosos son aquellas personas que cuidan de sí mismas y son saludables y fuertes -física, mental y espiritualmente-, y que el alcohol y otras drogas no tienen lugar en la vida de los líderes jóvenes".

Para obtener más información acerca de Youth for Justice, póngase en contacto con Maite Durán llamando al 415 257-2488.

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