

## Marin Humane Society announces Humane Educator and Youth of the Year winners

*Local teen recognized for creating program for children with autism*

**(NOVATO, CALIF., August 29, 2013)** — The Marin Humane Society (MHS) honored **Rachel Blackman** of Fairfax as the **2012 Youth of the Year** at its humanitarian awards luncheon on Saturday, August 24. Teachers **Maya Creedman** and **Anne Siskin** of Willow Creek School in Sausalito were also honored as the **2012 Educators of the Year**. The Humane Society's humanitarian awards recognize local individuals for their outstanding contributions to the welfare of animals and people in Marin and beyond.

### **2012 Marin Humane Society Youth of the Year**

The 2012 Helena & Anthony Franklin Memorial Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Youth was awarded to Rachel Blackman of Fairfax. A senior at Sir Francis Drake High School, Blackman has been a volunteer with the Marin Humane Society for nine years. Inspired by her cousin Joseph who has autism, Rachel created a program for MHS called Jumping for Joy, a six-week class held at the Humane Society for children with autism and learning disabilities.

Jumping for Joy provides these children with the opportunity to work with animal-assisted therapy teams on a canine agility course. The agility challenges give each child a chance to increase their confidence and social skills while problem-solving in a fun way. The dogs also provide reassurance, nonjudgmental acceptance, and unconditional love.

"My cousin inspires me to make this world a better place," says Blackman. "If I can accomplish something here in my community to help children with autism, it will help bring awareness to the issue and that will benefit all families."

### **2012 Marin Humane Society Educators of the Year**

Maya Creedman and Anne Siskin, third grade teachers at Willow Creek School in Sausalito, are the 2012 Madelon Tormanen Humane Educators of the Year. Creedman, a former MHS summer camp student, and Siskin used the Marin Humane Society's [SHARE a Book program](#) in their classrooms to help motivate reluctant readers who might benefit from an innovative opportunity to read to dogs.

Dogs in the Society's SHARE a Book program make ideal reading companions because they offer unconditional love and acceptance, dissolving a child's fears and limitations in the process. The yearlong experience was transformational for the students at Willow Creek School. Not only did the students' self-confidence as readers skyrocket, but they all improved their reading skills.

"This was a very special year for many of our students who really needed to grow their confidence, skills and love of reading," says Creedman. Adds Siskin, "The SHARE a Book program has made a world of difference for our students!"

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The [Marin Humane Society](#) (MHS) offers refuge, rehabilitation, and support services to more than 10,000 domestic animals and wildlife each year through a variety of community services, including adoptions, foster care, behavior and training, humane education, pet assistance for people in need, lost-and-found pet services, low-cost clinics, and more. MHS is a local, independent organization and does not receive operating funds from national organizations. In addition to our role as a non-profit, private animal organization, MHS is responsible for upholding county and municipal animal services ordinances through a Joint Powers Agreement contract with the County of Marin.



*Anne Lauck, MHS humane education coordinator, with Rachel Blackman (photo by Kathie Meier)*



*Maya Creedman (photo by Kathie Meier)*



*Anne Siskin (photo by Kathie Meier)*