

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **A Life Dedicated to Improving Young Lives Gets Conservation Corps North Bay Executive Director Inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame.**

**For immediate release** - On March 20, Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) Executive Director, Marilee Eckert will be inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame for her tireless efforts helping disenfranchised youth find productive, fulfilling paths for their lives.

Eckert felt her calling early on. Her childhood and teen years on a small horse farm in rural Pennsylvania, with ample time for trail riding in the Blue Ridge Mountains, contrasted sharply with what she knew of teens struggling with drug addiction in a well-known residential treatment program in a neighboring town. This awareness made her want to be a change agent helping youth keep their lives on track.

During her senior year in high school, her mother died of ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Transitioning to college after this was difficult for her and she dropped out before completing one semester. After working at various jobs for two years, she received what she calls "a letter from God". It was from the university stating she had been re-admitted and when to report for classes. Eckert had not re-applied but the letter made her stop and think about her future. She returned to college, finished her Bachelor's degree and went on for a Master's in Counseling Psychology.

Since then, Eckert's vocation and avocation has been to give disenfranchised youth the means and support necessary to turn their lives around. She taught children with learning disabilities in

New York City, guided university students navigating the transition to independence and directed an inner-city youth employment program in Oakland, CA. Her ten summers working at Girl Scout camps reignited her love of the out-of-doors and nature. From that, she developed her passion for protecting the environment.

Since 1992, Eckert has melded her two passions as the leader of Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB). Eckert grew the fledgling \$1.2 million organization into a \$7 million operation that now serves hundreds of youth annually in three corps-owned facilities in San Rafael, Novato and Cotati.

The program philosophy and structure designed under Eckert's supervision has given thousands of local young people educational work experience that connects them to their communities and teaches them to become voices for a just and fair environment. In the process, the young workers have improved Marin County's environment, school curriculum, parks and open spaces.

Eckert welcomes the challenge of helping young people build and maintain a work community of mutual respect. She initiated a charter school at the corps so participants could earn high school diplomas, instituted a formal Corps-to-Career program to track and support graduates for two years after they leave the corps. She even added programs to serve a larger and a more diverse group of youth, from middle school students through college graduates. All of which she believes, contributes to the positive life transformations reported by so many corps graduates.

Eckert does not limit her focus to local efforts, or even her job. She is a leader in the youth development and service corps movements in California and nationally. As a global visionary who believes that all our decisions and actions have impact that ripples around the world, her concern about the crisis in Africa led her to adopt four daughters from Ethiopia, which she calls the most rewarding part of her life.

“There is nothing more satisfying than watching my children flourish and grow into uniquely beautiful, talented and loving people. I have nothing but gratitude for all I have been given and all I’ve been able to give back.”

The award ceremony will take place on March 20<sup>th</sup> at the Women’s Hall of Fame 22<sup>nd</sup> annual gala in San Rafael.

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### **About Conservation Corps North Bay**

Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) is a recognized leader in youth service. Founded in 1982 as the nation’s first local nonprofit conservation corps program, CCNB’s mission is to develop youth and conserve natural resources for a strong, sustainable community. For the past 27 years, CCNB organization has helped thousands of young people, while improving local parklands and communities, cultivating strong environmental leaders, and promoting environmental sustainability. Each year CCNB provides more than 120 young adults, primarily ages 18-28, with the job training, education, and social services needed to transform their lives.

<http://www.conservationcorpsnorthbay.org>

### **About Marin Women’s Hall of Fame**

The San Rafael based organization is focused on identifying and honoring leaders, encouraging mentoring, and offering leadership development. It has recognized and documented the achievements of 110 honorees since its 1987 founding. <http://www.marinwomenshalloffame.org>.