

Mid-Peninsula High School

# CONNECTIONS

MAGAZINE :: SUMMER 2023

*The*  
*Guild*  
*Theatre*  
MENLO PARK, CA





Since I walked in the door at 1340 Willow Road, I've been hearing stories about the myriad ways that Mid-Pen changes peoples' lives for the better. After two years as the Head of School, I know that our commitment to prioritizing relationships and fostering a kind and inclusive school culture puts students in the best position to thrive academically and socially. Our singular goal is to graduate students who are the healthiest, most authentic versions of themselves and are proud of who they are.



One of the most striking manifestations of our commitment to building an inclusive community is our athletics program, which is intentionally designed to serve all kinds of athletes no matter how much or how little experience they have. Many of our Dragons have never played on a team before coming to us. Thanks to the visionary leadership of our beloved Athletic Director, Kurt Lange, we offer a significant number of different sports and teams for every student who wants to play.

Were you a member of your middle school volleyball team? We have a spot for you. Are you the kid who never made a team and is skeptical you can learn how to play at the advanced age of 15? We have a spot for you too. Have you ever wondered if you could throw a shotput, or if you could make a Steph-Curry-worthy three-point shot? Come find out. You'll be coached by people whose primary goal isn't to win at any cost but to help you get better and be a kind and supportive teammate to your peers.

We are starting to learn from researchers just how powerful this kind of athletic experience can be for students who otherwise would not play at all. Contrary to popular belief, we know that students who do not specialize in a particular sport through high school are much more likely to be better athletes and to stay active through adulthood.

Not surprisingly, a low coach-to-student ratio of the kind we have at Mid-Pen has been shown to benefit both experienced and less experienced athletes, and the camaraderie that is built between students of different skill levels makes a significant difference in the team's ability to play together. Best of all, students are more likely to become "lifetime athletes" when they have experienced exercise as fun, not a chore.

Our students represent so many kinds of diversity—neurodiversity, racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity, socio-economic diversity, just to name a few. The fact that our diverse students learn together in our small classrooms every day prepares them for a world where they will work with people from all sorts of different backgrounds—and that is truly a gift. The fact that they get to play sports with students with different skill sets is also a gift, no matter what ability a player possesses.

Like some of our students, I was the kid who never made a team in elementary school...and middle school...and, unlike our students, in high school. It was the 80s, and everyone was "sorted" into fairly rigid boxes—the nerds, the jocks, the theatre geeks. While I was quite happy to spend all my time in the theatre, I never thought I could possibly be a theatre kid *and* a volleyball player *and* a strong student who got good grades. As Head of School, I am proud to be part of a school community that encourages students to embrace their multifaceted selves to experience the joys of winning and losing together with a team... right after turning in a big project and right before going to the music performance that night. What a gift! 🐉

Karen Eshoo

## CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS is published twice yearly for the parents, alumni, faculty, and friends of Mid-Peninsula High School.

Ann Diederich,  
Communications Manager

Henry Trevor,  
Director of Development

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Mid-Peninsula High School  
1340 Willow Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
[www.mid-pen.org](http://www.mid-pen.org)

To submit alumni news and address changes, please contact [alums@mid-pen.org](mailto:alums@mid-pen.org)

The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors.



## Dragons Dive Deep Into the World of Biotech Engineering

This spring students in Meenu Baloda’s Advanced Biology class gained insight into the world of biotechnology through a series of labs that transformed bacterial cells to produce human insulin.

Funded by the biopharmaceutical company Amgen and run through Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley, the Amgen Biotech Experience gave students the opportunity to work with equipment and learn techniques that are used in a typical biotechnology lab.

The task challenged students to use recombinant DNA technology to begin the process of synthesizing human insulin, which in 1982 was the first genetically engineered pharmaceutical product to receive FDA approval. When segments of DNA are cut and pasted together to form new sequences, the result is known as recombinant DNA. When recombinant DNA is inserted into cells, the cells use this modified blueprint and their own cellular machinery to make the protein (insulin in this case) encoded by the recombinant DNA.

Using a process similar to the cutting-edge science Amgen uses to transform bacteria to make human insulin, over the course of four weeks students took DNA from a sea anemone and introduced it into *E.coli* bacteria, which programmed the bacteria to produce a fluorescent protein, causing it to glow red, an indication that it is producing insulin.

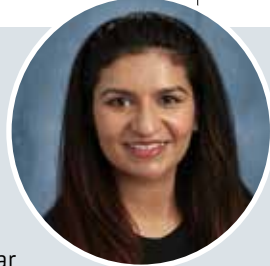
The process, of course, is far more complex and time-consuming than it sounds. Prior to undertaking the actual experiment, students spent a lot of time analyzing plasmid configurations using paper models to understand the process of cutting and reconfiguring recombinant DNA. During the experience, students learned rigorous micro-pipetting techniques, gel electrophoresis, growing cell cultures in solid and liquid form, running a PCR (short for a “polymerase chain reaction,” which makes millions of physical copies of a specific DNA sequence), and how to use a spectrophotometer to analyze their results. Students kept detailed lab notebooks where they compiled all their results.



Science teacher Meenu Baloda, center, supervises, from left, Abby Wee '24, Kaavya Chavan '24, and Quin Birkeland '23 as they work through a lab as part of the Amgen Biotech Experience.

For decades, Meenu explained, insulin had been extracted from the pancreas of cattle and pigs and purified. The chemical structure of insulin in these animals is only slightly different than human insulin, which is why they were used. However, scientists realized that if they could use a simpler organism, like yeast or bacteria, they could produce genetically engineered insulin in unlimited quantities. It also would not contain any of the animal contaminants.

“These techniques are very common in biotech-focused labs, including all the labs around the corner from Mid-Pen in Menlo Park,” said Meenu. “However, most of the equipment is too expensive to be found even in large schools. Because of Amgen, we got the opportunity to explore these tools and see what it’s like to work in a real lab. Mid-Pen students get to do the type of science that I got to experience only during my graduate program.”



### Staffulty Milestones

The only staffulty member marking a major milestone this year, **Meenu Baloda** celebrated her fifth year teaching science at Mid-Pen this spring. Meenu received her B.S. in Biotechnology and her Ph.D. in Biochemistry from North Dakota State Univeristy, where she also worked as a teaching assistant supervising undergraduates and graduate students. She lives with her husband and daughter in Hayward.



## DragonWeek Class Transforms Campus with Spectacular Mural

The drop cloths spanned the entire length of the corridor running through the school's first floor. Working on a monumental mural, 15 artists spread out from end to end. Andy Hoffman '25 was reaching high to add detail along the spines of the colossal red dragon anchoring one end of the mural. Liv Kats '25 was crouched down nearby, bringing a whale to life. All were working furiously because the undertaking was significant, and the school's intersession, known as DragonWeek, when Mid-Pen students conduct a deep dive into a project or adventure, would soon be wrapping up.

Nearly 75 feet long, a project this ambitious would not have been possible if art teacher Lesly Vazquez had not had the vision and the personal network in the local art community to attract world-class muralist Jose Castro to help guide students through the process.

Students began by soliciting input from the school community to understand what fellow Dragons, who would soon be living with the artwork, wanted the mural to communicate. Then Castro, who uses only his last name professionally, met with the students, reviewing their sketchbooks to think about how to leverage the range of artistic styles best. He and Lesly grouped students into teams they thought could paint well together—the Surrealist, Abstract, Landscape, Characters, and Symbolism teams—and tasked each with executing a different portion of the mural.



Muralist Jose Castro, left, collaborated on the mural with art teacher Lesly Vazquez.



Parents admire the school's new 75-foot mural during Night of the Arts in May.



Before completing the design, the class took the very important step of going into the field to experience how murals affect the viewer in context. They visited a two-story mural on Middlefield Road in Redwood City that Castro created in 2019 with colorful papel picado (punch paper) flags spelling out “North Fair Oaks.”

“Before this DragonWeek experience, I didn’t know that murals were so impactful. I just thought of them as paint on the wall, but now I see how they can tell a story that itself becomes an element of the city.”

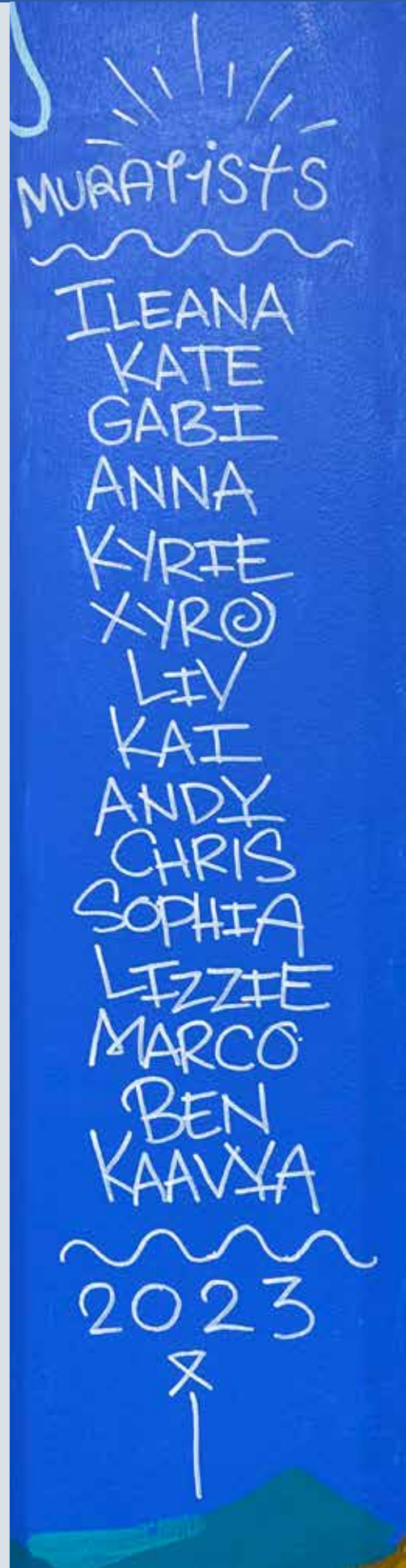
With their research complete, the students began designing a mural that speaks very specifically to the Mid-Pen community. Andy described how much he learned from Castro’s advice on mural design, including suggestions to incorporate elements such as depth of field and symbolism into the project. “Now that I appreciate how important symbolism is to the design of a mural, and just how much effort they take to create,” he said, “I look at them with new eyes.”

The most important theme—in addition to Mid-Pen’s core values of Respect, Kindness, Acceptance, and Responsibility, which are spelled out in block letters across the top—was to tell a story of representation that spans from first peoples to the many facets of life at Mid-Pen today.

The Mid-Pen campus sits in an area once occupied by the Costanoan, or Ohlone, group of Native Americans, and a section of the mural pays tribute to those who occupied this ground as early as 5,600 years ago. Large flowers represent each of Mid-Pen’s sports teams. Some of the symbolism utilizes more subtle nods, such as the numbers on the buildings representing milestone dates in history. Others are quite literal, such as the large campus willow tree and the market across the street, where students enjoy going for lunch or snacks. The mural also pulls important signifiers of place from around the Peninsula, including a range of animals native to the region.

And tucked into a subtle spot next to the door to the Enrichment Center are the names of the members of the DragonWeek class who created the mural. Although their signatures are hidden when the door is open, the impact these artists had with this project, under the leadership of Lesly and Castro, will leave a lasting mark on the Mid-Pen community. 🐉

Hidden behind a door are the names of the 15 student artists who created the mural.





# ROCKING AT THE GUILD

## Student Bands Take the Stage for an Unforgettable Performance



Since its reopening as a live music venue a year ago, big-name national acts such as Jewel, Macy Gray, and The Wallflowers have parked their tour buses outside the Guild Theatre in Menlo Park. On May 8, 2023, the van full of equipment sitting beneath the neon letters of the Guild’s marquee had a big red dragon painted on the side, and the roadies unloading instruments were Mid-Pen music students.

class talent with state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems. To give Dragons access to this professional musical experience, several families generously helped to underwrite the expense. Students enjoyed the vibe of the venue’s stage and lighting but agreed it was the sound system and acoustics that most enhanced the performance.

“When performing in our gym, the sound can blend together because it was designed for sports and not acoustics,” said drummer Matthew Evans ’23. “At the Guild, the professional sound equipment enabled each musician to hear themselves and others much more clearly, which helped us to play better together.”

Although he had a musical background prior to coming to Mid-Pen, Matthew hadn’t played percussion before taking up the drums in his sophomore year. As with many activities at the



The spectacular evening that lay ahead was the culmination of a year of hard work by students in the school’s six music ensembles, under the direction of Jameson Swanagon, who has been helping Mid-Pen students grow, musically and personally, for over a decade. The use of the Guild, instead of the Mid-Pen gym, for the school’s annual Spring Concert was just one of the several innovations in the program this year.

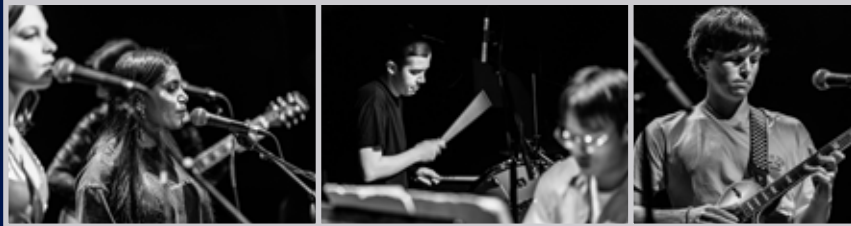
Built in the 1920s, the Guild Theatre underwent a \$35 million renovation and reopened last year as a premier local venue for live music, attracting world-





school, students aren't required to demonstrate mastery when they sign up for music, and Jameson always encourages students to try something new. He welcomes students with all kinds of experience and skills and brings them together as an ensemble so that everyone's contribution is significant and meaningful.

The process of making music begins with the students in each class exploring what musical genres and songs inspire them. They then work collaboratively to develop arrangements, taking full advantage of every ensemble member, from the virtuoso about to graduate and pursue music in college to the new music student just beginning to explore their talents.



To cap off each semester, the ensembles produce an album. In addition to documenting their musical accomplishments, the recording process hones a different skill set. Jameson believes recording is an artistic process that differs significantly from rehearsing for a live performance. Music that works very well in the moment, in front of a live audience, might not hold up to repeated listening or have the same impact on someone listening on headphones. Jameson says, "I love doing this because it makes us think more deeply about how we make music – moving our student musicians beyond craft into the realm of art."

This spring's album, entitled *Dreams*, was a collaboration between music and art classes. Recognizing that both disciplines can often be solitary pursuits, Jameson and art teacher Lesly Vasquez brought their classes together, with Lesly's art students creating images inspired by the recordings, which were then integrated into the digital album. "For an artist to work within a scene is absolutely paramount, as it inspires and pushes the art and creates a greater sense of belonging," said Jameson.



The six Mid-Pen ensembles did the Guild proud, playing a wide range of styles, from Amy Winehouse to Glen Campbell to The Strokes, culminating in a rousing rendition of Led Zeppelin's *Over the Hills and Far Away*. At the close of the evening, the musicians returned to the stage to express appreciation for this extraordinary experience, with senior Kate Beach saying, "This is the best music program I have ever been in in my entire life, and I am forever grateful." 🐉



In March, drummer Jordan Glenn spent a day sitting in with the Mid-Pen music ensembles, inaugurating a new program to bring musicians, actors, directors, and other teaching artists to the school to lead master classes for students in music and drama.

A well-known local percussionist, composer, and conductor, Jordan grew up in Oregon, where he studied jazz, classical, and rock music. In 2006 he relocated to the Bay Area where he received an MFA from Mills College. Since then he has collaborated with guitarist Fred Frith, percussionist William Winant, and free-jazz legend Roscoe Mitchell, among others.

Jordan rehearsed with each class and worked with student drummers to perfect their parts. "The students were so open to learning," he said. "I found it hard to believe that some of them had just picked up drumming in the last year or two."

Jordan's visit was funded by the Dominic Vogel Fund for the Performing Arts, which was established in memory of Dominic Vogel '20, a talented guitarist and dedicated student actor, who died in 2022.

Scan to listen to *Dreams* and to watch Mid-Pen's Spring Concert at the Guild Theatre.





## Graduating Seniors Honored at 43rd Annual Commencement Ceremony

The Mid-Pen community celebrated the 40 members of the Class of 2023 in an outdoor commencement ceremony on May 27. The lively event was nothing short of inspiring as family and friends gathered to celebrate the graduates' achievements. In the school's new tradition, the seniors were presented for graduation by their Core teachers, who offered thoughtful and personal tributes to each student prior to Head of School Karen Eshoo handing them their diplomas.

In another Mid-Pen tradition, four student speakers delivered inspiring messages of hope, gratitude, and perseverance.



**Milo Buckner** talked about coming to Mid-Pen following two years at a residential therapeutic school. They recalled the fear they felt in meeting new people, learning new things, of meeting with failure before success, but "I fell in love with being alive when I found Mid-Pen... Mid-Pen taught me how to live life unbound by fear and to be free."

While college presents a new challenge, "I am confident I will come out the other side, not necessarily unscathed, but a better person," said Milo, who is attending Western Washington University in the fall. "I have Mid-Pen to thank for that confidence."

**Mayrin Ceja** recalled coming to Mid-Pen as a freshman and fearing that she would feel out of place. In her previous school, she had known most of the other students for years, and, like her, they were mostly



Latino and low income. She feared that she would not fit in at Mid-Pen, but on the first day made three fast friends. That year was also the inaugural year of the LatinX club, which helped her appreciate her Latino heritage and take pride in sharing it with others.

In her sophomore year, Mayrin's father passed away suddenly, after being diagnosed with stage four brain cancer four months earlier. In the midst of the pandemic and still in mourning, she found she had to instantly mature, taking care of her nine-year-old brother while her mother worked long shifts.

Mayrin, who will be attending UC Berkeley next year, finished that year with a 4.0 GPA, served as a reading and math tutor to elementary school students, and won a place in Stanford's competitive Pediatrics Internship Program, a six-week internship focused on learning about science, medicine, and research careers.

"Mid-Pen and the community made me feel normal during an abnormal time, even though I went from being an older sister to becoming a second mother to my younger brother," she said. "Mid-Pen helped shape me into the person I am today. I discovered a vocal, kind, hard-working, and, as my mom likes to say, 'warrior' side of myself."



Reading from a letter she wrote to her future self when she was 12, **Amber Rodriguez-Valladares** recalled starting middle school and wondering if she would eventually be able to realize her goal of going to college. She thanked her Mid-Pen teachers for helping students even when they didn't ask for it.







“I have been that student,” she said. “I never took the initiative to ask for help, and I didn’t know how to advocate for myself, so I want you to know that I appreciate the times have you reached out to me first.”

She ended with a thank you, in Spanish, to her parents and all the parents of the members of the class of 2023: “All your sacrifices have been worth something. To all our parents, this is your graduation as much as it is ours.”

Amber hopes to major in biochemistry, and plans to attend DeAnza College in the fall, before transferring to a four-year college.



**Jay Oram** spoke about embracing failure. “The way we as society view failure as an inherently bad thing creates little room for personal

growth, instead of accepting and learning from our mistakes,” they said. “Why are we not taught that so-called failures are really just learning experiences? Why are we not taught to try to understand our mistakes, so that next time we try that task we have a better understanding of how to approach it?”

Jay, who before speaking was presented with the school’s highest honor, the Founders’ Award, will be attending Sarah Lawrence College in the fall.



This year’s alumni speaker was **Kendall Anderson ’12**, who recalled a Mid-Pen experience very similar to the students who spoke. She remembered

coming to Mid-Pen in the middle of her freshman year from a large public school, where freshman pranks, criticism of her style of dress, and teachers who didn’t understand her learning challenges left her demoralized and frustrated. “I thought Mid-Pen was going to be my last chance to take control of my education,” she said. “Little did I know, it was my first chance to be seen for who I really am.”

After graduating from Mid-Pen, Kendall attended Mills College, where she earned a BA in Political, Legal, and Economic Analysis. While Kendall was a student at Mills, she successfully advocated for changes in the Oakland Police Department’s treatment of victims in the Special Victims Unit. After college, she spent three years in sales at The RealReal, an online luxury consignment and fashion startup, where “nobody knew that at one time, one

of the top performers on the sales team had barely been able to conceive of graduating from high school.” Recently Kendall earned an MA in Urban and Public Affairs from the University of San Francisco and is currently a Client Advocate at Justice at Last, the only independent nonprofit law firm in the Bay Area exclusively serving the legal needs of survivors of human trafficking.

Noting that her interest in social justice was cultivated at Mid-Pen, Kendall advised the members of the Class of 2023 “to seek out communities that remind you of Mid-Pen. Look for communities that see you as an individual, value your strengths, and support you in conquering your fears. Seek out communities that advocate for justice and inclusion and that celebrate diversity.” 🐉



This year’s Founder’s Award was presented to **Jay Oram**. The school’s highest honor, the Founder’s Award is given to the senior who best exemplifies the founding principles of Mid-Peninsula High School, including growth and change, achievement, determination, and character.

**Ronan Furlong** received the Douglas C. Thompson Award for Inspired Growth, given to a senior who has achieved the greatest personal and/or academic growth during their time at Mid-Pen.

The Leonard W. Ely Community Award, given for the greatest contribution to the well-being of the school and/or outside community, was shared this year by **Mayrin Ceja** and **Milo Buckner**.

**Ada Sussman** received the Senior Award for high academic achievement.

## Boys Volleyball Gets a Huge Turnout in First Season

By Kurt Lange, Athletic Director

The winter and spring sports seasons brought a mix of challenges and successes to Mid-Pen's various teams. Among the many highlights, however, was the exciting first season of the boys volleyball team, which garnered enthusiastic student interest, ensuring future league competitions for the team.



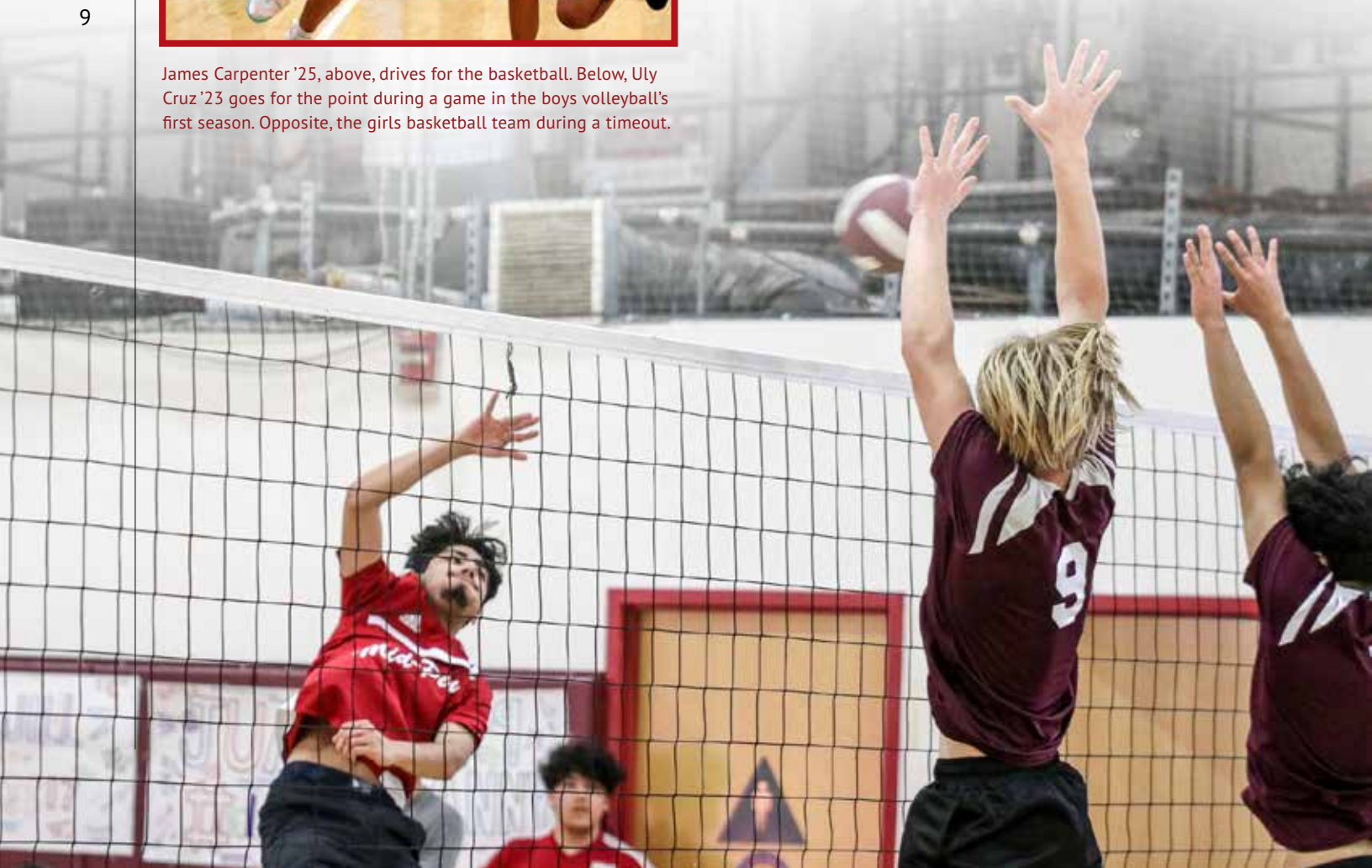
James Carpenter '25, above, drives for the basketball. Below, Uly Cruz '23 goes for the point during a game in the boys volleyball's first season. Opposite, the girls basketball team during a timeout.

### BOYS BASKETBALL

Coaches: Erin Whitaker '93, Kurt Heise, and Aragorn Healy P '24

From a won/loss standpoint, our boys varsity had a tough season. Despite having nine seniors on the roster this year, most of them did not have a lot of varsity experience prior to this season. After going 1-5 in the pre-season, we lost our first league contest in January but came back with a win against Ace Charter of San Jose. Perhaps our best game of the season came a week later at home in a close 42-36 loss to a very good DCP Alum Rock team.

Junior Henry Chant was our lone representative for league honors this season. He narrowly missed a spot on the second all-league team, earning an honorable mention instead. Departing seniors include Danny Bellomy, Nic Locsin, Will Cook, Uly Cruz, Alex Magana, Roydon Ho, Charlie Hubbell, and Quin Birkeland, and Jonathan Wu.







### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Coaches: Colleen Carter

Our girls varsity team was able to turn some of the close losses over the past two seasons into wins this year. We won our first pre-season game of the year against Kathleen MacDonald HS from Santa Clara. We were also victorious against Apostles Lutheran, both home and away, by pretty large margins. Although we only won one league game this season, our seven losses in league play were by a combined total of just 59 points, and two of them were by four-point margins.

Point guard Jay Oram capped a great career this season, averaging 12 points per game. Jay was voted second-team all-league and junior Cherilyn Rodriguez-Valladares made honorable mention. At the end of the season, we say goodbye to seniors Jay Oram and Amber Rodriguez-Valladares, who were a huge part of the team this year.

### CO-ED TENNIS

Coaches: Raul Salazar and Kurt Heise

This year's tennis team ran into the toughest opponent of all: the weather. We had five rain-outs and because of tight schedules and continuing rain, we were unable to reschedule any matches. As a result, we played only three matches this season, one each against Woodside Priory, Stratford Academy, and Kehillah Jewish School. Outstanding senior Mathew Evans will move on after playing for the past three seasons.

### BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Coaches: Alec and Franc Salazar

This year was a trial season to see if there would be enough interest in boys volleyball to eventually enter league competition in a year or two – and with 16 players on the roster, the answer was a resounding “Yes!”

The team played 10 non-league matches this season, winning just one against KIPP Esperanza. However, a majority of the other nine were very competitive, and three were decided by scores of 3-2. We'll continue playing non-league matches for one more season and hope to enter league competition the following year.

Standout players include seniors Juan Lara, Uly Cruz, Danny Bellomy, Nic Locsin, and junior Walter Bachman. Additional departing seniors include Charlie Hubbell, Will Cook, Alex Magana, and Jeffrey Wang

### CO-ED TRACK AND FIELD

Coach: Alan Cameron

Like boys volleyball, our track and field team had a great turnout this spring, with 18 athletes on the roster. We participated in three league meets, with the boys finishing 9th, 7th, and 7th out of 17 teams, and the girls finishing 11th, 7th, and 6th out of 13 teams. Junior Bryce Lawson was our lone qualifier for the CCS Section trials in the long jump, with a leap of 20 feet 4 inches. Senior Jay Oram narrowly missed qualifying, tying for 2nd place in the high jump at 4' 6”, but getting beaten out on a tie-breaker rule.

Because of the large turnout, we were able to compete in relays, both boys and girls, as well as sprints, middle distance and hurdles. Field events include long jump, high jump, triple jump, and shot put. Departing seniors include Jay Oram, Quin Birkeland, Milo Buckner, Wim Castellano, Jared Fore, Alex Magana, and Jonathan Wu. 🐉



## Young Alumni Reunion Rekindles Connections and Memories

The sun was shining, and the air was filled with laughter and animated conversation as Mid-Peninsula High School's first Young Alumni Reunion BBQ took place on the evening of June 5 on the patio behind the school. With an impressive turnout of 40 enthusiastic members of the classes of 2019 to 2022, the event was a true celebration of the tight-knit community that is Mid-Pen. Athletic Director Kurt Lange and Facilities Associate Raul Salazar manned the barbeque, and the scent of freshly grilled burgers and hot dogs wafted through the air as old friends reconnected and reminisced.

What made the reunion extra special was the presence of several beloved teachers and administrators who had guided these students throughout their high school years. The event was a testament to the lasting connections formed at Mid-Pen, and it left everyone with a sense of renewed camaraderie and nostalgia, eagerly looking forward to future reunions.

We hope to make the Young Alumni Reunion BBQ an annual event for our college-aged alumni and expect to add an additional reunion for older alumni next spring. Email [alums@mid-pen.org](mailto:alums@mid-pen.org) if you're interested in helping to organize either event. 🍷



From left, Class of 2022 alums Yness Riedel, Liam Perrone, Alex Tolosko, Benjamin Clement, and Chris Tolosko.

### REUNION ATTENDEES

#### 2019

Nathan Cooper  
Thomas Hagenah  
Hannah Lee  
Rebecca Newman  
Aryana Ong-Beith  
Madison Trembley

#### 2020

Anouk Butler  
Keri Chu  
Audrey Harris  
Joren Mahal  
Emma Marek  
Alfredo Moran  
Kiarra Plaza  
Isaac Rodriguez  
Gose Salvadori

Elsie (Cole) Smitherman  
Rachel Vogel

#### 2021

Sam (Will) Barrett  
Andries Castellano  
Bridget Cruz  
Connor Johnstone  
Grace Marek  
Ethan Slafsky

Sebastian Strachan  
Taylor Young  
Cameron Young

#### 2022

Nyla Byers  
Benjamin Clement  
Mayan Dolev  
Claire Elkes  
Tripp Lyons

Cameron Main  
Stefan Minkowski  
Liam Perrone  
Yness Riedel  
Jennifer Sanchez  
Karina Sanchez  
Noah Takatsuno  
Alexander Tolosko  
Christian Tolosko





With English teacher Tara Theobald-Anderson, second from right, are members of the Class of 2020 Anouk Butler, Rachel Vogel, and Keri Chu.



From left, Ethan Slafsky '21, Andries Castellano '21, Taylor Young '21, Tripp Lyons '22, Stefan Minkowski '22, Audrey Harris '20, and Gose Salvadori '20.



Classmates Cameron Main '22 and Claire Elkes '22 enjoy a moment together during the barbecue.



From left, Isaac Rodriguez '20, Joren Mahal '20, Ary Ong-Beith '19, Tom Hagenah '19, and Madi Trembley '19.



Emma Marek '20 reconnects with music teacher Jameson Swanagon.

**Grant Van Den Bosch NG '09** dropped by the school in April during DragonWeek and visited with Assistant Head of School Heidi Schiessler. Grant left Mid-Pen at the end of junior year and graduated from high school in San Jose in 2009. He attended the University of Hawaii with the intention of becoming a lawyer, but found that "debating wasn't me." After a year of college, he enlisted in the Navy, where he served for 10 years, including eight in the reserves, working with their search and rescue teams. "In all that time, I wasn't ever assigned to a ship," he said. He is currently working next door to Mid-Pen as a Moves Manager at Meta, working on their real estate construction and renovation projects. Grant and his wife live in Hayward and are expecting their second child soon.



**Hannah Lee '19** graduated from the San Francisco Cooking School in 2022 and is currently a baker working at a cookie bakery named Crumbl Cookies in Foster City.

After taking the spring semester off for health reasons, **Emma Marek '20** plans to return to Reed College in the fall, where she is majoring in history, with a minor in music.

Following the Young Alum Reunion, **Sam Barrett '21** (formerly Will) wrote, "I'm attending Bard College, in training as a Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation therapy tech, and publishing indie role-playing games while working on writing short stories. It was nice to be at the reunion!"

On leave from college, **Andries Castellano '21** recently wrapped up a season helping to coach for the Mid-Peninsula basketball teams. "I will be spending my summer as a head teacher at Casa Círculo Cultural in North Fair Oaks," he writes. "I am teaching and supervising a group of 10-14 year olds. In the fall I will continue to pursue my undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Redlands."

**Taylor Young '21** texted, "It was great going to the reunion. I am an incoming junior at Chapman University working towards my bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in real estate and a minor in disability studies. I hope to use my degree to help manage various projects across the West Coast and build a more sustainable future. I am also looking forward to studying abroad this spring in London and playing pickup football with all of my uni peers."

**Liam Perrone '22** writes, "I'm really enjoying Santa Clara University but my summer plans are still up in the air. Thinking of majoring in computer science, but I've been having trouble even getting the intro course."

**Yness Riedel '22** just finished her first year at Chapman University. "I'm majoring in strategic and cooperate communication and hoping to double major in screen acting. I will be joining the Chapman Democrats executive board. My favorite part of the year was meeting Austin Butler (who played Elvis) at a Chapman University actors master class event, and I was able to talk to him during the Q&A portion."

# thankyou

## With Gratitude, From the Mid-Pen Board Chair

On behalf of everyone at Mid-Peninsula High School, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our generous parents, staff, alumni, alumni parents, trustees, and friends for their invaluable support in achieving unprecedented levels of philanthropy during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Philanthropy is often defined as the generosity of time, talent, and treasure. When combined, these three gifts not only build the foundation of an exceptional school but also foster a flourishing and supportive community. Our mission to empower students with the knowledge and purpose to make an impact in our complex world is made possible through this collective generosity.

This year's Annual Report on Giving serves as a recognition and celebration of those who played an integral role in the continued success and development of Mid-Pen. Our families, alumni, and friends are the lifeblood of our institution, joyfully and generously contributing to Mid-Peninsula High School through annual and capital giving, as well as in numerous other ways.

Our students learn from and are inspired by the actions of our community. Over 225 individuals and families, including more than 85% of our current families and all of our



trustees and staff, contributed to the school's **2022-2023 DragonFund**, which raised a remarkable \$404,768. The DragonFund is a vital component of our school's financial strength, providing support for nearly every area of school operations, including educational programs, salaries and benefits, flexible tuition for students, and campus maintenance and improvements. Equally important, the DragonFund enables us to seize new opportunities across all aspects of programming and operations.

As you will see in the pictures on the following pages, **DragonFest: A Night at the Movies**, our annual auction and gala, was both immensely enjoyable and tremendously successful. The event raised over \$134,000 in support of the school's educational programs, including the renovation of the school's weight room. Separately, we raised \$127,400 in support of the school's flexible tuition program and received contributions totaling \$17,016 for various restricted purposes, including the Douglas C. Thompson Fund, which ensures that all our students can participate in school trips to places like London and Washington, DC, as well as the Sunshine Fund, which provides financial assistance to Mid-Pen families in need.







Lastly, under the tireless leadership of Mike Gordon P'22, our **Think Big Be Bold Campaign** garnered an additional \$1.2 million in gifts and pledges for the renovation and expansion of our Willow Road campus. This marks an exciting chapter for Mid-Pen, and we eagerly anticipate unveiling detailed plans for a new 8,500 square-foot building that will transform our campus.

The success of our fundraising efforts is largely due to the sustained and thoughtful contributions of numerous individuals. Members of the Board of Trustees, school administrators, and parent volunteers dedicate hundreds of hours to help Mid-Pen achieve its goals, providing invaluable guidance and planning, and acting as liaisons within our community. We are deeply grateful to all those who volunteered their time and talent in the past year, especially DragonFund Chair Jackey Garcia



P'26, Parent Association President Heather Hoffman P'25, and DragonFest Chair Andrea Potischman P'23, as well as the many parents who assisted them. Thank you for being part of our students' journey and for investing in their futures.

In closing I simply wish to say *thank you*. It has been my honor and privilege to serve on Mid-Pen's Board of Trustees for the past seven years, the last four as Board Chair, and to work alongside our extraordinarily dedicated and thoughtful trustees and head of school, Karen Eshoo. However, it is your unwavering support—your enthusiasm for the Mid-Pen mission, your commitment to the success of our students and staff, and your generous contributions—that make all of this possible. For this, we are truly grateful.

Debbie Vielbaum  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*



## DRAGONFUND GIFTS

### INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous  
 Phil Abrahamson & Dana Shelley **5**  
 Antonio & Anne Abreu  
 Kate Ague  
 Janet Ague-Kennedy  
 Richard & Sue Alvarez  
 Eric & Jennifer Amdursky  
 Kendall Anderson '12 **5**  
 Christopher & Kerry Andrasick  
 Jill Andre  
 Mark Ankenman & Amanda Edmonds  
 Mark Anson & Mary Hayes **10**  
 Mark & Sandra Asher  
 Jon Austin **5**  
 Sebastian Bachmann & Laura Haunschild  
 Majd Bakar & Carla Hindie  
 Jeff Baker & Shaula Kumaishi  
 Meenu Baloda **5**  
 David & Emily Beach  
 Gregory Bellomy & Karen Bloom  
 Caitlin Berka **5**  
 Tim & Carolyn Biglow **10**  
 Darren Bonnstetter & Katherine Johnson  
 Steve & Gabriella Bowling **10**  
 Lisa & Detlef Braun **10**  
 Bruce & Agapi Burkard  
 Ryan & Catriona Cairns  
 Angelica Camacho  
 Alan Cameron **10**  
 Jonathan Carpenter & Caroline Nolan  
 Colleen Carter

Peter Cass  
 Armando Castellano & Andrea de Wit  
 Gerald Chacon  
 Lily Chang & Peter Eldredge  
 Benedict & Jean Chant  
 Mukund Chavan & Minoti Amin  
 Atul & Michelle Chawla  
 Jill & Wes Christensen  
 Benjamin Chung & Tandy Aye  
 Kitty Cook  
 Nathan Cooper '19  
 Craig & Georgina Cooper  
 Christopher & Deborah Crouse  
 Joe De Primo **5**  
 Shari DelCarlo & Ron Johnson  
 Jim & Susanne Dern **10**  
 Patrick Devine & Linda Jiang  
 Patricia Diaz  
 Mark & Donna Dillard  
 Thomas & Maureen Dollente  
 Steve Dowling & Petra Wright  
 Katrina Drury '20  
 Richard & Jean Duda **5**  
 Carrie Dungan  
 Michael Dybbs & Elizabeth Kitchens  
 Robert & Nicole Emens  
 Marie Encrantz  
 Brian Eng & Nancy Poon  
 Karen Eshoo  
 Rachel Esquivel  
 Matthew & Caroline Evans  
 Robert & Jana Fore  
 Stacie Foreman  
 Cathleen & Michael Foster



Mike & KT Foust **10**  
 John Furlong & Sara Valentine  
 Quin Garcia & Theresa Strawn **5**  
 Edward & Jacqueline García  
 Ernesto Godinez & Fedra Romero **5**  
 Laurence Gonsalves & Miranda Zhai  
 Aurora Gonzalez & Rigoberto Concepcion  
 Baudelia Gonzalez  
 Michael & Loren Gordon **5**  
 Sudhakar Gundubogula & Jayasree Bade  
 Hans & Melissa Gustavson  
 Richard & Anjali Hanley  
 Merrilee Harris **10**  
 Audrey Harris '20  
 Aragorn Healy & Jennifa Gosling  
 Kurt Heise  
 Andrea Henderson & Andre Cotton **5**  
 Sigfredo Hernandez  
 Gabriele Hilberg  
 Colin Hirschberg '18  
 Raymond Ho & Yolanda Cheung  
 Gene & Heather Hoffman  
 Rusty & Kasia Hopewell  
 Robert Hubbell & Dana Shields  
 Edward Hunter & Michelle Garcia  
 Cory Huttenga **5**  
 Randy Johnson **5**  
 Sheree Johnstone **5**  
 Sunir & Padma Kapoor  
 Christopher Kaprielian & Petra Pino  
 Michael & Jennifer Katz  
 Frank Knowles & Cynthia Newth **5**  
 Sisir & Palvi Kudva  
 Christopher Kummerer & Emilie Blase  
 Kurt Lange **10**  
 Lili Larios  
 Kirk & Lise Latour  
 Derek Lawson & Cherie King-Lawson  
 Mary & Robert Lazarus  
 David Lehman & Maryam Arjomand  
 Lucinda & Rob Lenicheck  
 Mark Lentczner & John Horigan  
 Logan Levine '22  
 Sarah Levine & Adam Schwartz  
 Raymond & Mia Locsin  
 Todd Lowpensky & Cinda Bailey





Naiesha Luckey  
 Austreberta Luna & Gerardo Guzman  
 Eleazár Madrid  
 Yaneth Madrigal Ceja & Roberto Duenas  
 Alejandro Magaña & Araceli Marcial  
 Diane Main 5  
 Georgios Margaritis & Annette Odello  
 Eduardo Martins & Susana Martins  
 JR Matthews & Jennifer Matthews  
 Christopher Maxcy & Daniele Levy  
 Darsy Meghinasso  
 Dan & Sandra Miley  
 Adam Miller & Shelley Knowlton  
 Laurie Miller & Van Whitis 15  
 Mark & Diana Minkowski 5  
 David & Lianne Mintz  
 Britt & Rachel Miura  
 Elizabeth Moore 15  
 Ryan Moriguchi '91 15  
 Michelle Mosman  
 Eloisa Nava-Vazquez  
 Robbie Nero-Young  
 John Northway & Lisa Grote  
 J.D. Northway 15  
 Larry O'Rourke 15

David Oliver 5  
 Clint & Brigid Oram  
 Edgar & Ravit Ortiz  
 Evan Palmer  
 Annmarie Papp  
 Gregorio & Felicitas Payan  
 Liam Perrone '22  
 Francis Phiri 5  
 Paul Pitlick & Janet St. Peter 5  
 Sherri & Carlos Plaza 5  
 Lanier Poland '21  
 Lynn Poland & William B. Poland III 5  
 Neal & Andrea Potischman  
 Gregorio Prieto & Maria Hernandez 5  
 Tim & Lorinda Reichert 15  
 Ana Reyes & Jeff Gielow '98  
 Jose & Claudia Rivera  
 Jennifer & Brian Rodrigues  
 Jorge Rodriguez  
 Marco Romani & Teri Felix  
 Joshua & Emily Ross  
 Raul & Irma Salazar  
 Randal & Christina Salvatore  
 Karina Sanchez '22  
 Jennifer Sanchez '22

Jo Ann Sanders  
 Barbara & Bob Sanner 5  
 David & Sarah Santoro  
 Renee Saville  
 Richard & Rachele Schainker  
 Brian Schar  
 Anne Marie Schar 15  
 Heidi Schiessler 15  
 Jamie Schiessler '99 10  
 Jackie Schmidt-Posner Ph.D. & Dr. Barry Posner 5  
 Lisa & Ellis Schoichet  
 Bran Scott & Elane O'Rourke  
 John Scott & Kimberlee Scott  
 Mira Sears '17  
 Mark Shaw & Allison Kluger  
 Theodore Shen & Fan Zhang  
 David & Jacqueline Smith  
 Teri & Garry Spanner 10  
 Tobias Speckbacher & Jean Ray  
 Mary Speiser  
 Mike Speiser  
 Jessica Spence '22  
 Mark & Ariela St. Pierre  
 Zia Steffen '21  
 Josh Stein & Jenny Shilling  
 Edward Stern 5  
 Sebastian Strachan '21  
 Stuart Sussman & Hannah Frost  
 Jameson Swanagon 10  
 Edward Swierk & Petros Maniatis  
 Peter & Jennifer Tanner  
 Hans ten Cate & Alison ten Cate

Tara Theobald-Anderson 10  
 Robert & Allyson Tobias  
 Brent Tolosko & Deborah Marshall 5  
 Aneea Toomajian  
 Henry Trevor & Elizabeth Werter 5  
 Paul & Elizabeth Tucker  
 Simon Tumansky  
 John & Callie Turk  
 Cammie & Tim Vail  
 Lesly Vazquez  
 Paolo Vescia & Amelia Hansen  
 Debbie & Gary Vielbaum 5  
 Luna Vu  
 Wells Wadleigh & Elizabeth Tsuji 5  
 Jing Wang & Hongjun Zhu  
 Anna Waring  
 Fredric Wee & Cynthia Lee  
 Ethan Weker 5  
 Wendi Wells & Kelly Scholten 10  
 Annette & John Welshofer  
 Sean & Jennifer White  
 Shelley & Keith Willig 5  
 Malcolm Willig '17  
 Richard Willits & Nicola Willits  
 Philip Wollman '21  
 Lester & Ava Wollman 5  
 Charlotte Woo & Scott Posternack 5  
 Eric & Veronica Wood  
 Kevin & Ellen Woods  
 Hsi-Jung Wu & Emily Chow  
 Krishna & Annapurna Yarlagadda  
 Morgan Yee '17



Norman & Katherine Yoshida  
Collette Zubizarreta '22  
Gabriel Zubizarreta & Hannah Brooks <sup>5</sup>

**CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND MATCHING GIFTS**

- Adobe Inc.
- Amazon Smile
- The American Endowment Foundation
- Amgen
- The An Jie Foundation
- Apple Inc.
- Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
- Bank of the West
- The Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Cerity Partners Foundation
- Community Outreach Foundation of the Inland Empire
- The eBay Foundation
- Fidelity Charitable
- Genetech
- Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund
- Google Inc.
- The Hopkins Carley Law Corporation
- I-Give
- Insperity

- Intuitive Surgical
- The JP Morgan Charitable Gift Fund
- Salesforce
- The San Francisco Foundation
- Schwab Charitable
- Silicon Valley Bank
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- The Mid-Pen Parents Association
- Vanguard Charitable
- Volkswagon

**DESIGNATED GIFTS**

The following donors requested that a portion of their gifts be designated for specific purposes.

**DragonWeek**

Philip Wollman '21

**Class Trips**

Lisa & Detlef Braun

**Theatre Program**

Anonymous

**RESTRICTED GIFTS**

The following donors requested that a portion of their gifts be restricted for specific purposes.



**The Douglas C. Thompson Fund for Class Trips**  
Lisa & Detlef Braun  
Georgios Margaritis & Annette Odello  
Laurie Miller & Van Whitis  
The Mid-Pen Parents Association  
Teri & Garry Spanner  
TDA Investment Group Inc.

**Flexible Tuition Program**

- The Eucalyptus Foundation <sup>5</sup>
- The Hurlbut-Johnson Charitable Trusts <sup>10</sup>
- Becky & James Morgan
- Mike Speiser
- Mary Speiser

**Music Program**

*Thank you to the following donors for helping to underwrite the cost of bringing Mid-Pen's Spring Concert to the Guild Theatre.*  
David & Emily Beach  
Armando Castellano & Andrea de Wit  
Atul Chawla & Michelle Chawla  
Kitty Cook  
Matthew & Caroline Evans

Aragorn Healy & Jennifa Gosling  
Raymond Ho & Yolanda Cheung  
David & Lianne Mintz  
Evan Palmer

**Sunshine Fund**

*Established in 2019, the Sunshine Fund assists Mid-Pen families in need, whether due to a medical emergency, a temporary financial setback, or some other unexpected crisis.*

- Karen Eshoo
- The Mid-Pen Parents Association
- Henry Trevor & Elizabeth Werter

**THINK BIG BE BOLD CAMPAIGN**

*The most significant fundraising initiative in the school's history, the Think Big Be Bold Campaign will transform our Willow Road home, with the renovation of our current classrooms and the addition of a new building housing classrooms and a new performance space. Thank you to the following supporters whose generous gifts, pledges, and pledge payments*





received in 2022-2023 have helped bring our campus renovation and expansion a big step closer to reality!

- Anonymous
- The Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Tim Biglow & Carolyn Biglow
- Steve Bowling & Gabriella Bowling
- Lisa Braun & Detlef Braun
- Dean Chu & Wilma Chu
- Shari DelCarlo & Ron Johnson
- Steve Dowling & Petra Wright
- Cathleen Foster & Michael Foster
- Andrew Galligan & Patricia Galligan
- Mike & Loren Gordon
- Merrilee Harris
- William Harris & Cristina Harris

- LinkedIn
- The Marek Family
- Christopher Maxcy & Daniele Levy
- Adam Miller & Shelley Knowlton
- The Myrtle L. Atkinson Foundation
- John Northway & Lisa Grote
- Gregorio Prieto & Maria Hernandez
- Tim Reichert & Lorinda Reichert
- Josh Stein
- Andrea Thurber & Charles Thurber
- Henry Trevor & Elizabeth Werter
- Jing Wang & Hongjun Zhu
- The David P. Wheatland Charitable Trust
- Debbie Vielbaum & Gary Vielbaum
- Anna Waring

### HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

- In honor of Cameron Main '22*  
Diane Main
- In honor of David Oliver*  
Gregory Bellomy & Karen Bloom
- In honor of John Northway and Lisa Grote*  
J.D. Northway
- In memory of Alex Dybbs*  
Michael Dybbs & Elizabeth Kitchens
- In memory of Dominic Vogel '22*  
The Marek Family

### GIFTS IN KIND

- Jeff Birkeland & Charlene Prince Birkeland
- James & Mary Hinson



- 5 or more years of consecutive annual giving
- 10 or more years of consecutive annual giving
- 15 or more years of consecutive annual giving

The list of donors includes gifts received between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. We have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of this report. We sincerely apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions. Please contact the Development Office at henry@mid-pen.org with any corrections.

## THE JOHNSTON SOCIETY

Beloved science teacher Larry Johnston dedicated more than 35 years to Mid-Pen, teaching almost right up until his death in 2015. Over the years, he inspired hundreds of Mid-Pen students, who often imitated his distinctive style.



Larry loved his Mid-Pen students, and he loved to travel. When he died, he left a bequest to help ensure that all students, regardless of financial need, are able to participate in Mid-Pen's travel program, which takes students to places as far afield as Ecuador to learn Spanish or Great Britain to study British history.

At the time, Larry's was the first bequest the school had ever received. The Johnston Society was established in his memory to recognize those donors who have named Mid-Pen as a beneficiary of a planned gift. Such gifts might include a bequest, gifts of life insurance, naming the school as a beneficiary of a retirement or other account. Planned gifts of any amount qualify and membership is purely honorary, meaning there are no dues, obligations, or solicitations. The greatest benefit of joining the Johnston Society is the satisfaction derived from making a lasting contribution to Mid-Peninsula High School's long-term prosperity.

### JOHNSTON SOCIETY MEMBERS

- Matthew James '87
- Lawrence P. Johnston\*
- Merrilee Harris
- Dolly Paterson
- Anne Marie Schar

\* deceased



Mid-Peninsula  
High School

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## CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

*Parents of Alumni: If your Dragon no longer maintains a permanent residence at your home, please notify the Development Office at 650-321-1991 or [alums@mid-pen.org](mailto:alums@mid-pen.org). Thank you for helping us keep our alumni records current.*



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**You might be a graduate, but don't be a stranger.  
You always have a home at Mid-Pen.  
Scan to keep in touch.  
We'd love to hear from you!**

