

NEWS NOTES

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GO RAIBH MAITH AGAT (THANK YOU) MARCELLA RAMIREZ!

Upper School teacher Marcella Ramirez has moved on from Peninsula after 17 years of teaching here. Her creativity, adaptive teaching style, and joy for teaching were a gift to our students and our community. Marcella taught hundreds of students in her time as both 6th and 8th grade head teacher, and left a lasting impact on all who went through her class.

There are many things about Marcella that I want the wider community to know and celebrate.

I'll start this piece by sharing a quote that stood out to me from *The Education of an Idealist: A Memoir* by Samantha Power, our former United States Ambassador to the United Nations and the woman who coined the term "Upstander." "People who care, act, and refuse to give up may not change the world, but they can change many individual worlds."

To understand impact, one must look at context, scale and evidence.



Marcella Ramirez

When a student walks into 8th grade, they are entering into a yearlong agreement to engage in class projects, essays, math, to apply to high schools and make a choice, to enjoy being the oldest kids on campus and facilitate the multi-pronged community events that cultivate a sense of joy, wonder, and belonging for everyone who attends. Additionally, the class agrees upon classroom norms to create expectations for themselves and each other for social safety and accountability so everyone feels like they are contributing to the well being of the class. Marcella's agreement to the class is her strength in her commitment that there is intention behind each teaching moment, decision, and conversation.

Agreements are only as good as they are in daily practice and action.

As a new assistant teacher in her class, I was mystified at the apparent sorcery that

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BREAK A LEG, MERRILL GRUVER

After over two decades as the Drama Specialist, and additional time spent as the Social-Emotional Learning Specialist, Merrill Gruver has moved on from her time at Peninsula. Her talent, creativity, and ability to connect with students and colleagues alike was a gift to our community, and we are so grateful for the decades she spent here! Read on for some words from a few of Merrill's friends and colleagues on staff:



Merrill Gruver

Fierce, gentle, courageous, vulnerable, playful, serious, flexible, exacting... These words come to mind when I think of Merrill and the work she has done to help all of us explore our shared emotions and potential.

Over the years, I have loved watching Merrill create and develop her drama program. It started with more traditional stage

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MARCELLA

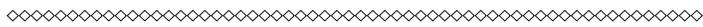
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happened throughout the day. What I witnessed and learned from Marcella over the course of four years is that she holds the class in a way that allows them to solidify as a whole, permissioning them to change the narrative of who they had been as a class to who they want to become. The boundaries of the year-long container are so firmly established that the students feel secure in their exploration, self-expression and community testing and bonding. Allowing students space to make mistakes within a safe environment creates the opportunity for incredible growth and room for building trust and closeness. She turns moments of perceived weakness into a planter bed of vulnerability, so what emerges and blossoms is resilience and conviction of self. Her instincts and natural intuition paired with her mastery of conveying complex content invigorates the students to openly contemplate, create analytical connections, and excitedly engage with the plentitude of projects. She carefully cultivates their reflectiveness by pointing to the themes of who they have come to be as young adults. The students trust her completely because they know she has their best interest at heart. The intention Marcella pours into the yearlong container is the changing agent that turns a classroom into a fully functioning, complex microcosm.

At the end of the year, the big culminating multi-day celebration of finishing 8th grade and their time at Peninsula results in the morning after when the students have become graduates, alums. It is a moment of pause for teachers. The miniature world has vanished and a small voice inevitably asks, "Wow, off they go. I wonder if I made an impact?"

In response, yes, Marcella, you have, in fact, changed the world. I know this because you have changed me. You care deeply. You speak in your power, from a wise internal place. You act with integrity and conviction. Your intention has changed the many individual worlds of all your past students, colleagues, friends, family, wider community, and me.

- ALEXANDRA GRIFFIN



When I first started working here at the Peninsula School, in the first weeks of being part of this community, I was sitting with the teaching staff on the gazebo and just listening. One of the then elders of the staff said something akin to "we are all kinda oddballs here, but like a family. Much of the education is about connecting with students on their level, but in a personal way, and there are so many caring adults that students are going to find someone to connect with. It's about the relationships that form between us all."

It is about the relationships, and few teachers have represented this as truly and clearly as Marcella. She and I have a deep relationship

that is multi-faceted, one that is based in the professionalism of life-long educators, but also based in the truth of spending weeks camping together. It's based in spending time together in close proximity, but our relationship isn't unique in that regard, Marcella spent quality time with each student as well. Our relationship is collaborative, for example we created a full unit around the DAPL protests, dovetailing her native heritage and the science around oil extraction. Students built their own pipelines (which we surreptitiously drilled holes into) over sacred grounds, then transported oil, despite other student's vocal protests. The class then came up with a fundraising project as an action to support the protests. You may still have the water bottle.

Challenges always bring people closer together, and there are several instances of this for us on Peninsula camping trips. They generally involve rain, and the aftermath...One night at 3 am, an unexpected storm rolled in and as the deluge opened up, she and I were the only two awake, in our respective pj's, running around tarping the kitchen, protecting the food, and collecting the various shoes, jackets, and electronics left asunder. We spoke few words, but shared the understanding of taking care of the emerging problem, playing the unspoken caretaker role in the Peninsula family. Also, there was the atmospheric river in Big Sur, 6 inches of rain, and the subsequently student-dubbed 'swamp kitchen'. Again, we bolstered against the storm, creating a dry niche for the students, keeping morale high by making fresh tortilla chips, ramen, tea, and of course turning a 'blind eye' to the screen watching that was going on in tents. The sense of camaraderie we all shared in weathering that storm was amazing. This particular trip to the beach at sunset, the

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, the hikes, the poison oak were all just a bonus... it was about the relationships tempered in this adversity, student and staff alike.

Lastly, our relationship is a story of a personal friendship that is infused with professionalism, adversity, and our shared passion for education. It is the parallel time in life of raising children, honing your craft, becoming an 'adult' in a way that we were not when we started teaching. It is family camping trips, it is drinks in the backyard, it is taking a group of students on a weeklong trip to Costa Rica to explore our passions of surfing and yoga, plus ziplining, horseback riding, tidepooling, swimming, cooking... It is families traveling through Europe and holding hawks, hiking in the rain, enjoying a true Irish Guinness. It's jumping cliffs, swimming in freezing water, talking politics and ethics, sharing in the triumph of her master's degree, sharing in the losses and challenges of life. It's the subtle humor, the delicious meals, the unexpected bravado, the humble honesty, and the shared love of the place, people, and times. These are our shared experiences, but Marcella connected with students in the same way, deeply, broadly, and personally.

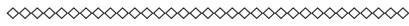
Interestingly, as I was asked to write something about Marcella, a former Peninsula Student, now a sophomore in college, reached out.



Marcella and Upper School Science teacher Jeff.

She was doing a project on how her time at the school felt more like a family, and had far reaching impacts on the trajectory of her life. At this moment, I realized, again, that Marcella has had these types of diverse relationships with every student that passed through here. She is a friend, mentor, teacher, comedian, confidant, disciplinarian, and more... to hundreds. There are literally hundreds of students who have benefitted from being taught by Marcella, by the relationship that formed between them, both as members of a class and as individual humans. It's about the relationships...

-JEFF ZOTZ



My time with Marcella goes back to the year 2005. Marcella was returning to Peninsula as the 6th grade assistant teacher, and I was going into 6th grade. There are very few specific things I remember about that year, but two facts about Marcella that have withstood the test of time in my brain: Marcella absolutely loved the *Wizard of Oz*, and Marcella really wanted to get married. These two facts had distinct impacts on my life at that time; firstly, Marcella's love for the *Wizard of Oz* inspired me to present a project on prehistoric humans by pitchily singing my report to the tune of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* (I can only imagine her eardrums are still ringing, all these years later). Secondly, my friends and I made Plan W, which was an entire folder's worth of Marcella's wedding plans crafted by a hoard of 6th grade girls. It included, among other things, A Lot of butterflies, endless purple accessories, and a minimal representation of Jasper, the man she's now been married to for over 15 years.

I was lucky enough that Marcella followed my class through 7th and 8th grade as Swing Teacher while she prepared to take on the role of 8th grade head. While the concrete details from that time are, once again, minimal, I do remember the feeling of having a teacher that I really connected with. Marcella was someone I could confide in, someone I could laugh with, and someone who made me feel seen, respected, and valued. She knew when to be a friend, and when to be a teacher, and how to balance and combine those two aspects.

It was fitting that since she had started her time at Peninsula as my 6th grade assistant, I would come back after college to be the 6th grade assistant in her classroom. Even though I was no longer her student, I was constantly learning from her about how to teach, how to support students, and how to shift my outlook when I needed to. I will always

remember the wise and comforting words she gave to our 6th graders the morning after the 2016 election, when all of us were experiencing the emotions of that day so intensely.

One of Marcella's greatest gifts is her creativity and willingness to collaborate with other teachers to take a unit to the next level. She worked with Ayla leading students through a thoughtful, age-appropriate and impactful unit on the Holocaust, where each student created a butterfly based on a poem from a child in the Terezin Ghetto. The year I worked in her class aligned with the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, so she and Jeff put their heads together to create a hands-on lesson



Marcella with the class of 2018.



Pins made for the No DAPL fundraiser.

that helped our students understand why those protests were happening. On a sunny Friday morning, our 6th graders went outside in small groups and built towns on the ground, then went to a different group's town to build a "refinery" (made from a salad container) complete with a straw pipeline. We poured vegetable oil into those refineries, and watched as it leaked out of the pipelines all over each town. She

made this lesson so experiential that it inspired our students to do a fundraiser supporting the fight against the pipeline.

She truly saw each one of her students for who they are, and supported their endeavors no matter what. Her talent and passion for thoughtful teaching was inspiring, and I feel truly lucky to have gotten to experience her gift as both a student, a colleague, and a friend.

-MILLY SIEGEL

Thank you, Marcella, for an incredible 17 years teaching here. Your thoughtfulness, humor, and wisdom was a true gift to our students and our entire community.

MERRILL

Continued from page 1

performances that evolved into more experimental kinds of presentations, then expanded on that to the outdoors with roving plays that took place all over campus. During Covid, these outdoor plays were critical to adapting her program for safety guidelines; she did a huge modification with the Ramayana in moving it outside. It worked so well and was a completely joyous reinvention and adaptation of this beloved annual performance.

I've always been so impressed with the social-emotional growth that she helped to foster through the process of putting on a play. Everything from the decision-making about which play to perform, to the (sometimes several-day-long) casting process. The way Merrill involved the kids and had them figure out ways a production can work was fundamental. She encouraged creative problem-solving, thinking outside of the box, was open to having multiple people be in the same role, and adapted roles to evolve and fit with the circumstances.

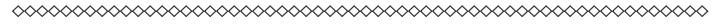
Several years ago, she began doing Earth Day related performances with the 8-9-year-old class. This was another outdoor performance, and she would involve poetry, music, and movement in unique and creative ways to honor the Earth and its seasons, and each child's unique voice. There was something for every student in these productions, a channeling of their own special essence, as well as the particular personality and vibe of the cohort.

It amazes me how magical the transformation is during the process of a production, both in the participants and the resulting performance. The entire project was so full of magic. Each performance was a unique living thing, and never felt stale. These productions were so incredible to witness because Merrill cultivated a journey for each student and the class as a whole. The end result was never the primary goal, it was the importance of the process itself. This was evident in how supportive the audiences at Peninsula are of the endeavors and inevitable mistakes. Merrill emphasized how important it is for students' and groups; growth process when it comes to self-acceptance, as well as team-building.

The social-emotional learning workshops Merrill offered in various classrooms outside of facilitating performances were really helpful and valuable. She always deeply supported kids' self-knowledge and peer connections, and could do this work effectively with any age group. Her intuitive balance of patience and frankness was truly impressive!

Merrill's passion, energy, vision, and dedication are her legacy to us all. I cherish and value the time that we've spent working together as colleagues, as friends, and as fellow chicken moms, and miss her a lot!

-NANCY LEECH



Merrill Gruver is a woman of many talents. She can cast a play when everyone wants the same parts, she can turn the entire campus into Ithaca for Odysseus' trials and tribulations, and she can set Shakespeare in the sixties allowing us to watch love unfold with the hippie Capulets.

She brings an eye of creative brilliance and outside-the-box thinking that captivates the audience. When she lays out her vision for the next play, the classroom teachers quietly wonder "how the heck are we going to pull this off?" Without fail, they always do, and it's even better than imagined. Most importantly, Merrill captivates the children throughout the process, and in turn the students offer her their trust and, many times, their devotion.

The trick about Merrill is that she makes magic happen and I believe some of that magic comes from the power of sight. When a student steps into a new role, she begins to see the 5th grader as Beowulf, the 3rd grader as Ravana, the King of Demons in the *Ramayana*, or



Merrill goes over a script with a student during lunchtime.

the 8th grader as Grandpa Vanderhoff from *You Can't Take it With You*.

Through Merrill's direction the student can then find the character and be louder, sillier, meaner, more commanding, more subtle. The student suddenly has access to this whole new way of being, maybe to unfamiliar emotions or a new-found voice, and when they firmly step into their role they are greeted with a whole-hearted yes from Merrill. The vulnerability and the nervousness melt away into opening night butterflies because their confidence in themselves as this character is steadfast.

And here is the magic: Merrill has already been seeing the student in all their capacity. As they explore the traits of the character, she is holding them as they traverse the breadth of their being. As they put



Merrill on Halloween with her husband Ted, and their daughter Willa.

on a character’s costume shoes, she is permissioning them to step more fully into their own shoes. As the audience watches the students engage in the poetry of Shakespeare, she is witnessing the transformation of a student as they uncover the richness of themselves.

The gift of sight extends beyond the students. Throughout the many years that Merrill and I have known each other, our relationship has had significant shifts, from drama teacher and student, to colleagues, to close friends. She had many opportunities to settle on any one of the many identity traits that served me at a given time, yet she encouraged me to grow by continually choosing to see the bigness of my being. She saw what I had to offer even before I did. I believe this is one of many ways she impacts her community of people. Her trust, her guidance, and her confidence brings us closer to becoming the versions of ourselves that we truly want to be in the world.

– ALEXANDRA GRIFFIN



I have known Merrill Gruver as a teacher for my son and daughter (now adults), and also as a Peninsula coworker. She is a woman of many gifts, including a very large and open heart and an open mind. For roughly

23 years, she brought the benefits of drama and improvisation to students, staff, parents, and friends of Peninsula. She additionally shared her gifts outside of Peninsula, including putting on unique events and happenings in San Francisco and voluntarily teaching improv to inmates on a regular basis.

As A Peer: Her Peninsula peers are many. In full group staff discussions or in conversations with two or three participants, Merrill was *always* so much more open-minded than most of us can even hope to be. When an issue comes up, she keeps her mind open for longer than anyone I’ve ever known – always reaching mentally to hear the issue, hear the feelings, and to offer “what if’s”.

Regarding Improv: Merrill enriched the minds, hearts and the ability to be brave of more students than probably even she is aware. I did not learn improv from Merrill, and yet, I did. One of my offspring surprised me mightily as I watched her years ago on a campus outdoor stage, stepping up in improv to anything that came her way, as Merrill had taught her and coached her – as Merrill did for so many – and gave my daughter some true life skills. My daughter in turn helped me to not just know, but to see what a gift improv skills can be, and are – in “real life”. Conversations take a course that they would not have – for my offspring, for their peers, for hundreds of Merrill’s students, and sometimes – even for some parents. Merrill herself is probably unaware of just how truly wide the impact is of her patience, expertise, and natural gift, and how she has changed and enhanced the lives of many.

Her Whole Human Self: Merrill gave our students her ALL – and along with the coaching and the repeated “hanging in there” with students, she was not afraid to give an occasional “mini lecture” to a student, or to a group of students. It was clear that the students respected her, learned life skills from her, had great fun with her, and listened to her in a way that I suspect many teachers hope for. They loved her.

They still love her. It is rare to encounter a human with such an ability to pour meaningfully into her students while maintaining her own sense of lightheartedness and mirth.

Merrill We Miss You So: This school year is the first year that I have not had the pleasure of seeing the willowy and exuberant Merrill at who-knows-where-next on campus – finding props where she may, speaking earnestly with a student about their challenges in a role, or researching and selecting plays, and more – overseeing an entire performance as it slowly grows out of the efforts of Merrill and of her students. Merrill is a refreshing and singularly unique combination – she has the ability to be calm, professional, supportive – or to exude energy, joy (and somehow maintain decorum) as she bounds about the campus.

To her family Ted, Buck, Willa and Cory: Thank you sincerely for sharing Marvelous Merrill with us. You may not need to be reminded of this but: Know that wherever she goes, she repeatedly makes the world a better place.

– BETTE HENLEY

Thank you, Merrill, for a wonderful 23 years of helping Peninsula students and colleagues alike grow, learn, and become thoughtful, compassionate people in their time here.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF

KAI ALDEN

We are pleased to welcome Kai Alden, who has joined our Lower School teaching team this year as the head teacher for 8-9 year olds!

Kai has spent many years working with children in ages ranging from infancy to adolescence, but has always been drawn to the age group she's working with now. Prior to working in education, Kai utilized her birthing doula training while working at a teen parenting program, where she offered workshops for participants. She designed a curriculum about childbirth to educate staff, which she then adapted to educate her teen participants as well. Throughout running these workshops, Kai found that she loved the creative process involved in designing a curriculum and then sharing that information with a group, which eventually led to becoming a teacher.

While working with teens, Kai heard about many struggles that reflected her own experiences in school, and this ultimately shaped

her values around education. Kai aims to teach in ways that she would have liked to learn; she's a strong believer in learning through play, and incorporates play into her curriculum. She's also interested in how education applies to real life, so she's started implementing activities such as baking projects that teach both math and practical skills, such as fractions, measuring, accuracy, and responsibility when it comes to cleanup time.

When Kai's son Renn started here last year, Kai felt that it was the easiest transition into the community in a way that she had never experienced in any setting before. She immediately felt welcomed and quickly got to know many staff members and other families. She also developed an appreciation of the grounds and even tried out the rope swing.

As a teacher, the things that Kai loves about Peninsula is that sense of community, the way that each classroom is its own unique space, the small size that has allowed her to get to know a lot of people across the school, and she particularly loves collaborating with the Lower School teaching team. Outside of school, her favorite things to do include reading, running, sewing, camping, and being a parent to her two sons Renn and Wells.

Welcome, Kai!

ANNA TENCKHOFF

We are excited to welcome Anna Tenckhoff to our teaching team as a head teacher for K-1! Anna grew up in Chico, California and began her first teaching job at sixteen-years-old. Upon finishing high school, she moved to the Bay Area, where she attended San Francisco State University for her undergraduate degree in Liberal Studies. During her time at SFSU, she got a job working as a substitute teacher for an early childhood education company called Bright Horizons, and worked with them for nearly five years until the pandemic hit.

After graduating from San Francisco State, Anna moved to New York and began her graduate program at Bank Street. While working towards her masters degree, she worked with VIP Kid, where she taught English online to students in China. Her time student teaching was spent with 2nd graders in Brooklyn for a semester, and then a semester teaching 5th graders in Manhattan. Her passion, however, has always been teaching the younger age group that she works with today.

During her time in her graduate program, Anna successfully wrote curriculum for two different social studies units for two different grade levels. The first was surrounding indigenous peoples in a contemporary setting, as well as a unit about child labor in the Lower East Side. At the same time as she did these



Kai with her two kids in the puddle.

written projects, she completed a research project on the US immigration system's impact on child development. Using a strength based approach, she examined the systemic inequalities that affect individuals coming to the U.S., and finding that it's the system intended to serve them that's failing.

Throughout her teaching career, Anna has found that it's often the little things that impact children the most. When she taught 5th grade in Manhattan, she made a point of coming into the classroom and greeting the students by saying "Good morning" each day. When she finished her time there, the notes she received from those students all mentioned how that morning greeting made them feel seen and cared for.

Anna's favorite thing about Peninsula is the welcoming and supportive educator community that she has found within the staff. Outside of school, she loves going to museums and the beach, and enjoys walking her dogs Bruce and Cheddar.

LIZ PANG

We're thrilled to re-introduce Liz Pang in her new capacity at the school as the 8th Grade head teacher!

Liz has a longstanding history with Peninsula, attending here for eleven years and graduating in 2013. Since that time, she has sought out opportunities to work with kids, starting when she worked in Childcare as an 8th grader, and returning to work during *Summer at Peninsula* for a year during high school, and two years more recently. In addition to the summers, she continued to work with kids during her high school years at Castilleja by coaching middle school basketball and softball.

The summers throughout high school and college were packed with jobs working with middle school students in different capacities. Liz was a counselor for five years at Camp Winnarainbow, and spent four years working at Castilleja's Summer Camp. In her final year of Casti Camp, Liz ran the Counselor In Training



Anna Tenckhoff



Liz examines the puddle bugs.

Program for 7th-9th grade girls. This leadership program taught about what being a Junior Counselor means, how to contribute and be a productive member of a community and how to stand up for oneself.

Liz attended Occidental College for university, where she majored in American studies and double minored in History and Studio Art. Unfortunately, her last year and a half as a college student was interrupted by the pandemic, but she came back to Peninsula and worked part time in Colleen's class while she completed her degree as a full time student over Zoom.

Last year, Liz moved to the Upper School, working in Christy's class as an assistant teacher where she brought her enthusiasm for Peninsula and teaching to the classroom and connected with the students. This year she was hired as the 8th grade head teacher, and her enthusiasm has carried into working with this age group.

So far, her favorite part of being the 8th grade teacher is carrying on traditions while encouraging her students to interpret and make those traditions their own. In addition, she encourages her class to create new traditions as well, which she sees as an opportunity for current 8th graders to serve the school and future 8th grade students in a unique way.

Outside of Peninsula, Liz loves camping, baking, sewing, quilting, and the Oakland A's. Here on campus, the simple joy that she has loved since being a student at Peninsula: the little yellow puddle bugs (if you've never seen these creatures, look closely and you'll be able to see them swimming along the muddy edges any time the puddle is present)! As a child, Liz always loved looking at them, and that same delight has carried into adulthood. She shares this passion with her students; a few weeks ago, she spent a sunny Activities time with her 8th graders hunched over the puddle looking at the puddle bugs.

Thank you for bringing your joy and enthusiasm to our 8th grade class, Liz!



An older Buddy reads a story.



Buddies sharing the love after ice skating.



Buddies making Valentine mailboxes in 2023.

THE BUDDIES PROGRAM

PENINSULA'S BUDDIES PROGRAM ORIGINATED IN THE FALL OF the 2019-2020 school year with an idea from our Library Specialist, Margot. What if we paired classes together so that our older and younger students had a friend across campus? Meetings between classes have always been a part of the school, and students mix classes during Activities; the Buddies Program has taken that and run with it. This program has been structured in a way for students to have a designated friend from another class, with time during the school day once a month to spend doing something fun together.

As individual events, Buddies times are fun, hands-on activities, but on stepping back to look at the larger picture, Buddies is an age appropriate stage-setter for community building. The older students have an opportunity to be nurturing and guide their younger buddies as mentors, role models, and friends. At the same time, those older students get to play with their younger friends, and are encouraged to go on the swings or dig in the sand box with their buddy. As students get older, one can see them come into themselves and gain a sense of their role in the Peninsula School community beyond their classroom.

Like all other things in the world, Covid threw a wrench in class get-togethers, but the Buddies Program adapted. Paired classes became penpals, writing letters and drawing pictures for each other. Last year, when Upper School and Lower School were still separated, students in 5th Grade and in what was Loli's class continued writing to each other. Two buddies drew airplanes on their letters to each other, and in doing so formed a bond through this creative outlet. As the year went on and restrictions were lifted, buddies from the two classes began playing two-touch and handball together during recess times. These friendships, formed via letter, naturally became student-driven free times spent together.

The Buddies Program is overseen by Margot, who coordinates monthly activities and get-togethers. This takes cooperation from the

participating teachers – their concerted effort is important so that going into a Buddy's activity they know if any student needs some extra support on a particular day to make the class go smoothly.

Buddies activities vary and change from year to year so that the student's have something new to look forward to. In the past four years, classes have bonded through letter writing, field trips, playing outside, games of two-touch, and they even incorporate some of Peninsula's beloved lessons from years past. Each class has an opportunity to work together with their buddies to make nature mandalas, bringing the younger kids into that long standing tradition. This year, among other things, our Buddies have made Valentines for each other, gone ice skating together, and read to each other in the library.

There is an unparalleled joy children have when they play together and learn from each other that is central to Peninsula School and at the heart of the Buddies Program. Children from Rasha's class through Christy's class are participating this year – meaning that 173 students out of 250 (69% of our students!) have a buddy they spend time with on a regular basis. The class get-togethers are wonderful in their structured projects, learning opportunities and play, but it is sometimes out and about at the school that the relationships between the buddies fully blossom.

During Activities, younger buddies can be heard squealing in delight if they found themselves having made the same choice as their older buddy. Kids will often call out greetings to each other across the campus – and how great is that? For a child to hear their name called by a friend from an entirely different class it inherently says to them: you matter, you are part of a community, you are valued. By making space in our time at school for Buddies, we see our community strengthen, bonds develop among the children, similarities and differences celebrated. Once again, we see the qualities we want in our society at large demonstrated so beautifully by our children.

THE CONTINUED RETURN OF BELOVED CAMPUS EVENTS

GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, Peninsula is delighted to continue to have events return to campus! This past fall, we welcomed our students' loved ones to Peninsula for Grandparents and Special Friends Day. We had a wonderful day starting with breakfast and time for folks to mingle and chat. In the late morning, we had a sit-down program that included a story by librarian Margot, a



Grandparents and Special Friends attend the morning program.



Peninsula Grandparent Zeni spoke.

song from Colleen's class led by Lower School Music Specialist Christy, and speeches from Mary as well as a Grandparent who has had five of her grandchildren attend Peninsula (three alums, and two current students!).

After the morning program, our guests signed up for tours of the Big Building led by our 8th graders. These tours included facts about how the building has changed over the years, noted individuals who have come through Peninsula (Joan Baez slept in our Admissions Office while her parents were the caretakers!), and of course the lore of Mrs. Coleman, the resident ghost.

Our students then got to spend time with their grandparents and special friends in their classrooms, showing their loved ones what a day in the life of a Peninsula student is like!

We had folks come from a huge variety of places – some from London, and some from Menlo Park, and lots of people came from somewhere in between the two! No matter how far they traveled, we thank each and every one of the grandparents and special friends for attending!

CRAFT FAIR

On the first Sunday in December, we welcomed dozens of professional and student vendors for our annual Craft Fair! Much like last year's Spring Fair, this was our first Craft Fair in person since 2019. It was such a treat to see the smiling faces and experience the festive joy of the season at Peninsula.

We saw the return of longstanding Craft Fair traditions, like delicious homemade soup from our incredible soup-making volunteers, a Kidtopia zone, and some returning vendors who have been attending the Craft Fair for decades, including our very own crafting community, Busy Fingers. We also had a record number of student vendors, from Kai's Class through 8th grade, who sold an assortment of goods! We saw homemade cake pops, custom greeting cards, unique Peninsula art, acorn-hat people, friendship bracelets, and no Craft Fair would be complete without the oranges with candy canes.

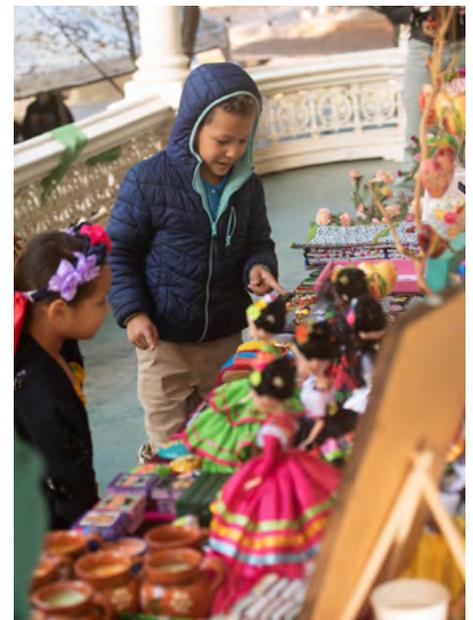
Along with those beloved staples, our amazing Craft Fair coordinators added some new traditions to the mix! The Gallery was transformed into a bustling Gingerbread House Decoration Extravaganza. All afternoon we saw kids come in and out, unleashing their creativity on beautiful (and

delicious!) gingerbread houses from local bakery Lavender 'n Cream.

We had a wonderful day celebrating with all who attended! An extra special thank you to all those who volunteered, starting with our Work Day crew who persevered through some serious rain, to those on the day-of who oversaw soup, gingerbread decorating, cleanup, and so much more!



Gingerbread Houses were a new feature at this year's Craft Fair.



Students check out the items at one of the professional vendors.

IN MEMORIAM

Nathaniel Takatsuno ('14)

It is with tremendous sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Peninsula alumnus Nathaniel Takatsuno this past December. Nate attended Peninsula from Nursery Blue through 8th grade. He had a deep love and appreciation for spending time outdoors that was fostered here at school. In addition to annual class camping trips, he went on many backpacking trips with Choice classes.

He attended Kehillah Jewish High School, before attending UC San Diego, where he studied and received a BS in Molecular and Cell Biology. Nathaniel had been working as a research assistant in a plant lab at UCSD and looking into graduate school options to study genetics.

Below are some words from Nate's family:

"Nathaniel Takatsuno was a wonderful young man who touched many people's lives during his all too brief time with us. He had many passions – backpacking, climbing, carpentry, social justice, scientific exploration... Nate was funny, social, loving, and full of intellectual curiosity. He had already come so far in his life – those of us who knew him could hardly wait to see how far he would go. Nate was so loved and he will be fiercely missed."

We send our deepest condolences and love to Nate's parents April and Michael, his brother Noah ('18), and all of his extended family and friends.

Kenneth Coale ('69)

It is with a heavy heart that we honor alumnus Dr. Kenneth Coale ('69), who passed away in July, 2022. Kenneth's connection to the outdoors began at a young age, and was fostered during his time at Peninsula; he carried this connection with him throughout the rest of his life. Kenneth left his mark on the world through his groundbreaking oceanography research, studying how the addition of iron acts as a fertilizer that helped the ocean's ecosystems thrive. Kenneth eventually became the Director of the Moss Landing Marine Lab, while simultaneously teaching Chemical Oceanography at San Jose State University. Although retired from his director position in 2011, he stayed on as a faculty member at SJSU until his retirement from teaching in 2018. In

September, Kenneth posthumously received the Panetta Sea Star Award from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the organization's highest honor. Kenneth's younger brother David (Class of '71), recalls not only Kenneth's scientific explorations, but also his kind, generous character:

"Kenneth was also very generous with his time and community mindedness. He and [his wife] Susan were involved with so many causes and activities, from horse patrol at Wilder Ranch to CASA events and equestrian evacuation to name a few, and so much more."

An example of his community mindedness; I was visiting and I noticed that some trees were down on Empire Grade. They were not blocking the road, but were covering the bike lane and encroaching on the car lane. With very little discussion we loaded up his truck with a chainsaw and other tools and had the trees cleared out in about ½ hour.

You can't say he was larger than life because he was soft spoken, though animated at times, but the loss and the holes left in our hearts and in the community would have you think otherwise."

We send our condolences and love to Kenneth's family and friends.

A Tribute to Sandy Carnahan

Last year the Peninsula School community lost a dedicated long-time parent volunteer. For decades, Sandy Carnahan was a stalwart trustee of the Peninsula School Endowment and Trust Fund, serving in that capacity long after his son David ('99) had graduated. Sandy was not only the institutional memory and chief champion of this fund, he also volunteered to handle much of the fund's operations including recommending and carefully tracking investments, recruiting new trustees, completing the annual taxes, and keeping years of meticulous records. Today, Jerry Hearn, David Quinn, and Alison Elliott continue Sandy's work to oversee this unique fund – but we all miss Sandy, his dedication to Peninsula and the trust fund, his quiet chuckle, and even his stubborn insistence to keep certain things exactly the same.



Nathaniel Takatsuno

Sandy loved Peninsula, and in appreciation for the unique and loving education that the school offered to his son, he generously shared his time and expertise to help assure Peninsula would be here for generations to come.

Pat English 1930-2022

Pat English, former Peninsula School Art Teacher from 1965-2001, and mother to alums John ('77) and Aaron ('75), passed away peacefully on December 20th, 2022. She was a much loved member of our community, and will be dearly missed. Below is an excerpt from Pat's son, John:

My mother lived a full and vibrant life filled with music, art, and a passion for life and social justice issues that she passed on to my brother Aaron and me and shared with many others. She also inspired hundreds of her young students over the years as the art teacher at Peninsula School. She had a wry sense of humor that was still present up until this past year.

Pat and her husband William relocated to Menlo Park in 1958, where they raised my brother Aaron and me, and Pat began her long involvement with Peninsula School.

In 1980, she fulfilled a lifelong dream of traveling to Europe, immersing herself in history and art by spending hours in museums across the continent. Pat continued visiting museums and art galleries during her retirement, while still working as a substitute teacher and volunteering at Peninsula School. In 2019, she relocated to Los Angeles to be closer to me, my wife Ginny, and our daughter, Astra. She is survived by the three of us, and by my brother Aaron (Diana), and is fondly remembered by generations of students who kept in touch with her over the decades, much to her delight. A celebration of life is planned for the spring.

And a tribute from current Co-Art Specialist, Terra Miller:

When I first met Pat English as the Art Teacher of our daughter just entering into Maida's kindergarten class, Pat had already been an integral mainstay of Peninsula School for 20 years. Pat came to the school as a parent in the mid-sixties and soon after joined the staff as a teaching assistant and summer program teacher. In 1977, when her friend and mentor Paula Cover retired as the school's long-time Art Teacher, Pat was hired for her dream job.



Pat English

Upon joining the Peninsula staff in the '90's, I had the privilege of watching Pat in action, partnering with her on projects, and offering Upper School Choices together. Pat held all of her students, from Nursery to 8th Grade, with the highest respect and regard. Pat innovated new projects and curricula, tying in with classroom teachers' ideas and bringing a myriad of complex artistic concepts, materials, and techniques into the hands of very young people. She recognized the artist in each child, gently guiding them to recognize this in themselves and building genuine artist-to-artist relationships with her students that lasted lifetimes.

Pat retired in 2001 and although many current students and staff never knew her, the deep impact of her profound talents, intelligence, energy, and creativity are everywhere throughout Peninsula School. Pat English earned our deepest gratitude.

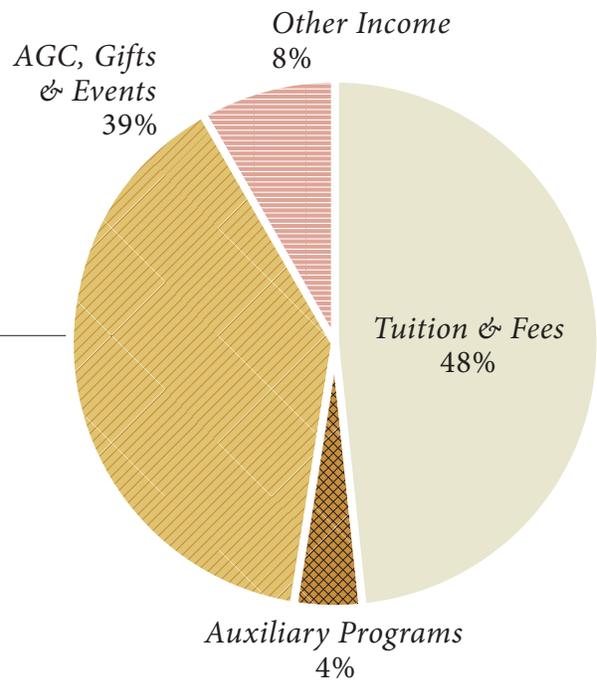
Peninsula School is pleased to present our

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Peninsula School's operating revenue for the fiscal year 2021-2022 was \$11,292,548 compared to \$6,331,429 in the 2020-2021 school year.

2021-22 REVENUE

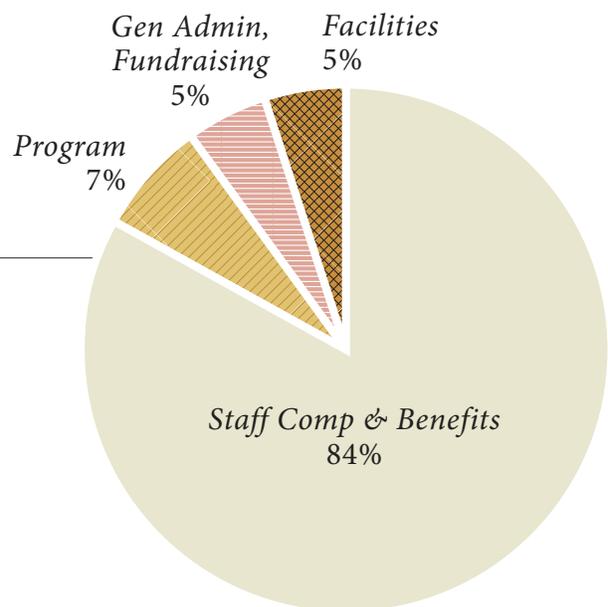
TUITION & FEES (NET)	\$5,446,089
AUXILIARY PROGRAMS	\$446,749
AGC, GIFTS & EVENTS	\$4,456,836
OTHER INCOME	\$942,874
TOTAL	\$11,292,548



Expenses for the 2021-2022 school year totaled \$7,278,485, compared to \$6,313,719 for the prior year.

2021-22 EXPENSES

STAFF COMP & BENEFITS	\$6,078,818
PROGRAM	\$520,318
GEN ADMIN, FUNDRAISING	\$347,341
FACILITIES	\$332,008
TOTAL	\$7,278,485



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2022

ASSETS		LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,787,413	Liabilities	
Tuition and fees receivable – net	3,486,365	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 38,320
Pledges receivable	1,152,368	Accrued payroll and related liabilities	248,636
Investments	12,385,621	Deferred tuition	6,116,664
Prepaid expenses and other assets	144,576	Charitable remainder trust liability	45,790
Charitable remainder trust	127,837	Total liabilities	<u>6,449,410</u>
Property and equipment – net	<u>1,956,159</u>	Net Assets	
Total assets	<u>\$ 21,040,339</u>	Net assets without donor restrictions	
		Undesignated	7,365,714
		Board-designated for special projects	34,022
		Board-designated PRRSM fund	37,405
			<u>7,437,141</u>
		Net assets with donor restrictions	<u>7,153,788</u>
		Total net assets	14,590,929
		Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 21,040,339</u>

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the Year Ended June 30, 2022

REVENUES AND SUPPORT	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Tuition and fees	\$ 6,865,186	\$ -	\$ 6,865,186
Tuition assistance	(972,350)	-	(972,350)
Tuition and fees – net	<u>5,892,836</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,892,836</u>
Contributions	529,993	4,452	534,445
Contributed nonfinancial assets	<u>3,888,910</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,888,910</u>
Total contributions	4,418,903	4,452	4,423,355
Other			
Investment income (loss) – net	(339,484)	(650,705)	(990,189)
Change in value of charitable remainder trust	-	(18,397)	(18,397)
Loan forgiveness income – PPP	939,000	-	939,000
Other Income	3,874	-	3,874
Total other revenues and support	<u>603,390</u>	<u>(669,102)</u>	<u>(65,712)</u>
Net assets released from restriction	<u>536,351</u>	<u>536,351</u>	<u>-</u>
Total revenue and support	<u>11,451,480</u>	<u>(1,201,001)</u>	<u>10,250,479</u>
EXPENSES			
Program services	5,583,999	-	5,583,999
Management and general	1,505,349	-	1,505,349
Fundraising	<u>386,747</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>386,747</u>
Total expenses	<u>7,476,095</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,476,095</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	3,975,385	(1,201,001)	2,774,384
Net assets – beginning of year	<u>3,461,756</u>	<u>8,354,789</u>	<u>11,816,545</u>
Net assets – end of year	<u>\$ 7,437,141</u>	<u>\$ 7,153,788</u>	<u>\$ 14,590,929</u>

A full set of 2021-2022 financial statements is available on request from the school's Director of Finance, Beth Lee.

STUDENT VOICE

THIS PAST FALL, WE HAD MANY CONVERSATIONS about facilities and the future of our campus and grounds. These talks often started with a question that doubled as a reflection asking folks to think about their very favorite place on Peninsula’s campus. As adults, we can come up with plenty of places as our favorites, but what about the students who experience our campus each and every day? For this edition of *Student Voice*, we decided to get our childrens’ input in response to the question, *What is your favorite place on campus?* Answers vary from students as young as Rasha’s, all the way up through 8th grade!

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <i>“Inside the tree house”</i> | <i>“The roof of the tree house”</i> | <i>“The balcony (specifically the little shell alcove, especially when it’s shady or rainy)”</i> | <i>“The dinosaur area”</i> |
| <i>“The basement”</i> | <i>“Any loft on campus”</i> | <i>“Gaga court”</i> | <i>“The Big Puddle”</i> |
| <i>“Rasha’s class”</i> | <i>“Basement”</i> | <i>“Tree house”</i> | <i>“Weaving room”</i> |
| <i>“The weaving room”</i> | <i>“Behind the stage in the auditorium”</i> | <i>“Weaving “</i> | <i>“It’s all my favorite place”</i> |
| <i>“Basement”</i> | <i>“Trees”</i> | <i>“The big open space where it is when the puddle is dry”</i> | <i>“Weaving room!”</i> |
| <i>“The treehouse net”</i> | <i>“The Library”</i> | <i>“The loquat tree.”</i> | <i>“The Net.”</i> |
| <i>“The gazebo”</i> | <i>“The grand piano upstairs in the Gallery”</i> | <i>“Little field”</i> | <i>“The big puddle.”</i> |
| <i>“The dumbwaiter space on the back stairs”</i> | <i>“Weaving”</i> | | <i>“The U tree!”</i> |
| | | | <i>“Colleen’s class.”</i> |



Library



Rasha’s Class

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS ENDOWMENT GIFTS!

WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST THANKS to the donors listed below who contributed to support the future of Peninsula School through their gifts to the Peninsula School Endowment & Trust Fund (PSE&TF) for the 2022-2023 school year.

**ABOUT THE PENINSULA SCHOOL
ENDOWMENT AND TRUST FUND (PSE&TF)**
The PSE&TF was started by the Board and parents in 1970 to ensure that Peninsula School would continue for generations to come. The PSE&TF provides security for the school and protects Peninsula from unforeseen circumstances, with the added advantage of affording a percentage of its total investments to Peninsula's annual income.

We appreciate your generous donations, which allow future children to one day follow in the footsteps of nearly a century of students and alumni, also enjoying our mud filled grounds and inspiring progressive education.

Candice Alfaro &
Ryan Castaneda
Hiruy Amanuel &
Allison Littlefield
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Jessica & David Axelrod
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Donna Zuckerberg &
Isaac Wolkerstorfer





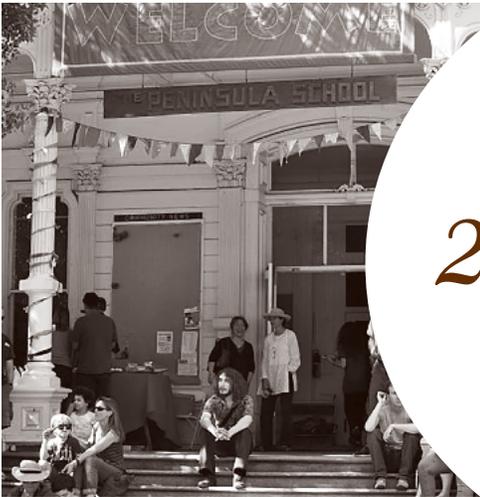
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Please contact communications@peninsulaschool.org if you need additional copies of News Notes, hope to add someone to the mailing list, or no longer wish to receive future mailings from us.

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