

# NEWS NOTES

PENINSULA SCHOOL  
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CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

THERE IS A CARD TACKED TO THE WALL beside my desk that reads “*May we grow back not to what was, but instead toward what we may become.*” I received this card from one of our teachers not long after I stepped into the Head of School role last February. Each day, it reminds me that our school has vital roots and history, and also that growth and change is necessary for our ongoing health and vitality. Our values and our mission call us to continual reflection and renewal in response to our world, and the children we serve. Our community and students – past, present, and future – and our shared values, sit at the heart of what drives and inspires change.

Peninsula School is emerging from the pandemic in a strong financial position, with full enrollment and a deeply committed staff. Our family community is back on campus, and gatherings and events have returned, albeit in modified ways. We have also learned a tremendous amount about our areas of growth, and how to further support our teachers and students as we continue to respond to the broader challenges of Covid-19, the increasing urgency of climate change, economic inequalities, and ingrained systemic racism. Our school is uniquely positioned – through our commitments to social justice and engaged student-centered learning – to do more. As we move toward our 100 year anniversary, we strive to become even more resilient and relevant. I am excited to be a part of the school, and to serve our mission alongside so many others, at this vital time.

Our current Strategic Plan, approved in 2019, is our guide toward intentional and mission-aligned change. This plan has led us to make some exciting additions to our staff. As of this year, we have added several important full time positions including a Director of Equity &

Belonging, a Learning Specialist and Counselor, and an Associate Head of School for Program and Community. In the following pages, you will meet each of the people who have joined us in these roles. Together, they work in tandem to support internal professional development, student support and belonging, and the development and articulation of our progressive program. Additionally, our teachers continue

to explore exciting curriculum, partner with one another, and form professional learning communities to examine practice and curriculum across classrooms. Our commitment to progressive principles and practices – including play, community, social justice, taking children seriously, collaboration, and attending to the whole child – is strong, as is our commitment to ensuring that our students with diverse learning profiles and diverse identities, backgrounds, strengths and needs are fully supported. Like all schools – there is always more to do!

Peninsula School’s centennial is right around the corner. 100 years is a long time for a school, and we will certainly celebrate! As part of that celebration, we will also set the stage

for the next 100 years with essential facilities and grounds upgrades that center our campus as core to student experience, enhance program and professional development supports, improve staff recruitment and retention practices, grow our ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) work, and beyond. I am excited to keep you updated on the work at hand, as well as many of the ongoing aspects of our school and community that you know and love.

This winter, I also want to pause and honor all of the ways we have remained connected and resilient through a very challenging time. In our classrooms we highlight that learning is a social process. Just like our students, we do not change or grow alone, but in community. Our resilience and that of our friends, family members, institutions, and societies – is tied together. We need each other. I know that Peninsula School exists and sustains because of the deep care and commitment of many people and many moments and decisions over many years. Thank you for nurturing both our roots and our future growth. In community,

Warmly,  
Mary



Mary enjoying a Peninsula pastime.

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INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF

THIS YEAR, PENINSULA HAS ADDED THREE NEW ROLES to our Administration: Director of Equity & Belonging, Associate Head of School for Program & Community, and Learning Specialist & Counselor. Sakeenah El-Amin, Joanne Walsh, and Allie Hersh have stepped into these roles with excitement and a passion for Progressive Education. These three positions work closely together to ensure that our program supports our students and teachers as best it can. Read on to learn more about these three!

SAKEENAH EL-AMIN

We want to give a warm welcome to Sakeenah El-Amin, our new Director of Equity & Inclusion. Sakeenah has come to us with a wide breadth of experience, ranging from Law to non-profit work around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. We're excited to have Sakeenah and the compassionate and thoughtful way she approaches her role!

*The Gifts of Change*

I've moved often – from the East Coast to the Midwest, and finally settling in the precious redwoods of California.

Each time I've moved, I've had to leave things behind. A couch in Philadelphia. A perfectly carved wooden table in Chicago. A beautiful Billie Holiday painting in Jersey City. In each move, I reassessed what still fit, and what I had outgrown. I let go in order to move toward the new, fresh-faced vision unfolding in my life.

I welcomed each shift in location as an opportunity to grow and evolve. And in place of those old things, I added new Marie Kondo friendly items – things that sparked joy – pieces that called me forward.

When I close my eyes real tight, I see a clear divergence between the world pre-2020 and our world now. We've stumbled out of four years of a presidency littered with regressive policies and hate. COVID-19 has stolen over 800,000 American lives. We've seen the rise of a new civil rights movement, and now a swift and almost disarticulating backlash to progress and truth.

Yes, we are in a new world. As a country, we have moved. We are not the same.

Peninsula is a nearly 100-year-old school, with a rich history and a beautiful tapestry of values. Embedded in our mission is the duty to create "...a space where children thrive and develop their full promise as confident contributors in the world." Our vision statement calls us to "...adapt to the ever-changing world holding on to our core values."

In this new world, we are being called to reexamine the internal and external expression of our mission and values. We are being called to hold every piece of our institution up to the light – to reassess and rearrange. As a community, there are things that we must hold on to, and things that we must let fade away.

I have an altar of sorts with George Floyd at the center in my office. I see the through-line between his death, and what happens to black boys in educational spaces across the country every day. I think about George Floyd as a student at Peninsula and what he would have needed to feel whole here.

In my position, I hold a vision. I hold hope. I have hope that we can disrupt the complicated history of independent schools in America as spaces that reinforce structural inequalities, and design a school where we center the needs of students who are the most vulnerable in our society.

I have hope that we will live into the value of representation – that our students will see themselves on campus, reflected at every level of leadership. I have hope that we can continue to play while engaging in the uncomfortable act of transformation – for ourselves, but more importantly for our students.

And when the world shifts and evolves again, in the next 5, 10, or 20 years, I imagine that we will come back to this place and these questions. And like the chrysalis, we will release to meet the promise of the day.



Sakeenah El-Amin

*“We are being called to hold every piece of our institution up to the light – to reassess and rearrange. As a community, there are things that we must hold on to, and things that we must let fade away.”*

JOANNE WALSH

We are pleased to welcome Joanne Walsh as our new Associate Head of School for Program and Community. Joanne joins us with an extensive background in Progressive Education as both a teacher and in Administration, most recently as Head of School at Woodside International School in San Francisco. We're excited to have her thoughtful, engaged, motivated presence joining the Peninsula Community this year!

*1. This is a new position at Peninsula, can you tell us about it?*

Much of my time will be spent supporting and recognizing the work of teachers. As a longtime educator, one understanding has remained constant – teachers hold enormous knowledge, experience and wisdom. They are the most valuable resource a school has. We will harness this collective power to cocreate a learning pathway that tells the story of Peninsula's N-8th grade education. The school vision comes alive every day in our school in the beautiful ways our educators approach their work. We witness children working to support voting rights, utilizing math skills to plan a vegetable garden, writing poetry to explore identities, or forming deep connections to others and nature during outdoor adventures. Together we will build this cohesive story to center the many contributions that form a N-8 Peninsula education and showcase all that it offers to children.

The heart of my work includes forming professional learning communities to leverage teacher's wisdom. These communities use cycles of collective inquiry and action to continuously examine professional practice and foster camaraderie, reflection, and renewal. Collaborative processes are sometimes messy and require continual attention to nurturing trust, ease with mistakes and risk tolerance. It's important and necessary work as we strive to provide a progressive education that best serves each one of our learners' needs.

It's with great honor and excitement that I assume the Associate Head of School role. I come into it with curiosity, gratitude and dedication, cherishing an opportunity to be part of a community working to realize vision goals based on values that I hold dear. I am eager to engage!



Joanne Walsh

*2. What is it about Progressive Education that appeals to you?*

My first nine years of teaching were in a progressive, public school that challenged and transformed my understanding of education. This school was in an area of profound social and economic challenge. Our school was a place of belonging and joy. We formed a curriculum that met the children where they were, bringing opportunities for creativity, learning by doing, and independent thinking. Children's expression was deeply valued and showcased through art, music, drama, and word. It hung from the walls, it filled tables, it could be heard in hallways. At this school, I saw the transformative effect this had on children and recognized such an education should be a right for all.

More recently, I was Head of a San Francisco international school. I was privileged to work with adolescents from around the world, hearing their stories and supporting them as they adjusted to a new life. These deeply courageous students moved alone to a new country at 14, using a second language, immersed in a profoundly different living situation and school. Yet, some were reluctant to use their voice, believing that students' roles in education are to listen and comply. Working with these students, we encouraged expression of thought, ideas and challenge. I often reflect on how their sense of empowerment would have been different had they been taught skills and given opportunities to express themselves at a younger age. Progressive education encourages kids to speak for their own needs and those of others towards a more just world.

*3. What drew you to Peninsula?*

When I met Mary, her vision of how this role would support and empower teachers and the care around the selection process inspired me. I met teachers and administrators, whose carefully

considered questions focused on hopes for this position and commitment to finding someone philosophically aligned with Peninsula. I met Sakeenah and Allie whose thinking and communication ensured that a Peninsula education reflects and includes all. I read and reread the vision goals and yearned to be part of something that would bring hope and change lives. I recognized that this role focuses on areas of the school where I can add value and feel rewarded. I wanted to be part of Peninsula's commitment to Equity, Belonging and Social Justice, its promise of progressive education, its dedication to introspection and growth.

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*4. What are you looking forward to the most?*

I look forward to working with teachers the most. This is where I believe I can be of greatest service. As a teacher, there were times when I did not have the opportunity to work closely with peers, when I could not see the children's education holistically nor contribute outside of my classroom. There were also times where I worked alongside fellow teachers, gaining a whole educational experience perspective and impacting children's lives inside and outside my classroom. I loved those years. It was rewarding and fun. Through this work I formed lasting friendships and support systems that endure to this day. I now get the chance to bring this to others – an opportunity to foster a culture where staff are part of their own classroom community *and* a movement.

*5. Any experiences you've had so far that you'd like to share?*

Currently, I'm seeking to understand the school and am enjoying one-on-one meetings with staff. We talk about hopes professionally and for Peninsula. I am struck by their commitment to children, the expertise that they bring to progressive education and their thoughts about how my role can help our school. The ability to get to know individuals and hear their stories has been a wonderful introduction to Peninsula.

*6. A fun fact about yourself not related to work!*

After a 30 year hiatus, I have taken up French again during the past 18 months. I began learning French at school when I was 11 years old but once I left school I let it lapse. I enjoy the struggle and the rewards of learning a new language and delight in ongoing brain plasticity, something that we didn't consider in the 1980's! It's estimated that by 2050 French will become the most widely spoken mother tongue in the world, so although it may take until then to become fluent, I will have plenty of opportunities to engage!

**ALLIE HERSH**

We'd like to give a warm welcome to Allie Hersh who came on board in August as our Learning Specialist and Counselor! Allie grew up in a Progressive Education environment, and after many years as a counselor in Las Vegas, returned to the Bay Area, and found Peninsula. We're so happy to have her on our team!

*1. Tell us about your role*

In this role, I serve kids, their families, and their teachers to thrive in the learning environment and beyond. I advocate and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students, including shared understanding of learning profiles, socio-cultural backgrounds, and developmental goals and needs. This takes a lot of forms. The role includes building relationships, understanding community values and practices, and "piloting" some strategies with the community. My first year in this role will entail:

- Observing in classes and consulting with teachers for strategies to meet the needs of all learners
- Teaching whole class lessons and activities around emotions, connection, and learning
- Consulting with families about their young person's learning and development
- Creating Learning Plans for neurodiverse students and helping to educate and support staff on supports and accommodations



Allie Hersh and her dog, Honey.

- Meeting with students one-on-one or in small groups for support and encouragement
- Gathering information from staff, leadership, and families to get a clear picture of who we are, and determining our learning profile data as a school
- Collaborating with our Director of Equity & Belonging, Associate Head of School for Program, and our Reading Specialist
- Supporting neurodiverse students in their classes
- Helping teachers and families navigate outside care

*2. What made you want to be a learning specialist & counselor?*

Well, if you go by an essay I wrote in 4th grade, my career goal was to "own a boutique in Paris after winning a silver medal in the I.M. relay in the Olympics." Still chasing that dream!

In all seriousness, my family is made up of people in helping fields – psychologist, speech therapist, pharmacist, doctor, teacher, defense attorney, wine merchant; by the time I was in high school, I knew that I wanted to be in the mental health field in some capacity. I was attuned to the suffering of others, as well as being in awe of the capacity of humans for connection and healing.

*3. What is it about Progressive Education that appeals to you?*

I'm a product of progressive education, and in many ways had an idyllic education in childhood. I believe that teachers and schools can

be transformative for young people; it is educators' responsibility to inspire and nurture students, working to repair injustices in the world, and to grow along with them.

*4. What drew you to Peninsula?*

I decided to move back to the Bay Area during the pandemic. Since 2012, I had been working in rigorous high schools where stress and pressure were ubiquitous, and I wanted to work with younger people to help with their early educational and emotional experiences. I searched for a school that honors young people's need for freedom and choice, as well as the commitment to social justice and action. And, gratefully, found Peninsula.

*5. How are you liking it so far?*

I recently said to a friend who asked how I was liking it, "I feel like I can be my genuine self at Peninsula School." The trees and people are a balm for my soul. I've loved seeing the creative, inspiring, and masterful teaching in classes. From Rasha's original sci-fi skill and sensory stories, to Marcella's Humane Design Project, young people are immersed in inspiration and creativity. Another thing I love is the early morning rope swing crew--barefoot, messy headed, and soaring into their days. Having my dog, Honey, here at school is an absolute gift. Not only does she draw many kids to the office to chat and play, but she is also so happy to be on campus, sniffing the squirrels and trees, walking with Amy's dog Cody, and getting treats from Ryan.

*5. Is there an experience you've had so far at Peninsula that you'd like to share?*

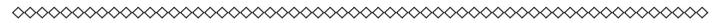
One day during activities, a few students came to the office to pet Honey. We all decided to go for a walk in the garden, with the kids all holding the leash together. By the fence to Nursery Blue, one child spotted a robin, dead on the ground. She said, "Well, that's the circle of life." Another said, "we should make a circle of rocks around it for protection." They all scattered to gather rocks, coming back to form their own circle of protection.

*6. A fun fact about yourself unrelated to your job!*

I collect antique animal figurines and art. The kitchier, the better!

*We're excited about what Sakeenah, Joanne and Allie bring to Peninsula! The ideas, enthusiasm, and joy have already*

*shown through in their first few months, and we look forward to what the future holds.*



CHRISTY KIM

We are so delighted to welcome Christy Kim as the new Lower School Music Teacher. She has been engaging as a part of our community by watching students grow, learn, and play so joyfully, noting that their love for Peninsula School is undeniable and their enthusiasm is contagious. She's enjoying being surrounded by beautiful trees and the rustic nature of our campus, which is one of the reasons she was so drawn to this job. Most of all, she cherishes being able to create community and connect to our school through music- with both her students and other teachers. She enjoys jamming on the front porch with fellow musicians on staff, particularly John, Eliza, and Aran, and is enthusiastic about the newly formed flute duo with Aaron!

When not at Peninsula School banging on drums and Boomwhackers, you can find Christy playing flute professionally as a freelance musician and teaching her private studio of lovely flute and piano students. Some of the organizations she has had the pleasure of performing with are the Chicago Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and St. Louis Symphony. Upcoming works include recording a piece on an album of new works on Delos Records and a performance with WomenSing.

Outside of work, Christy enjoys cooking (mostly the eating part), doing yoga, hiking, swimming, watching movies, and spending time with her group of close friends. She recently moved to Redwood City, which has brought her the good fortune of living five minutes away from her childhood best friends with whom she has great fun.

We are so thankful to have Christy as part of the Peninsula Community and are very happy she's here!

DAVID BAILEY

David Bailey – known to all as Bailey – joins us this year as our new Facilities Manager. Bailey was born and raised in the Bay Area, and is a Licensed General Contractor with 15 years of homebuilding experience.



Christy Kim



David Bailey

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He prefers the days when cleaning the dirt from under his fingernails seems impossible, because it signifies a day well spent doing something he loves.

Because his prior working experience was in more individualized settings, Bailey wouldn't normally have considered a job in facilities management at a school. However, when he heard that Peninsula was looking to fill the role, he knew that being a member of this community would provide immense value to him. Bailey has embraced the learning opportunities that have come with working within an organization, seeking insight and counsel from others who have previously worked around campus.



Lidia Luna



Milly Siegel

Outside of work, Bailey is an enthusiastic beekeeper and father of two empowered young women. He notes that when playing a game of *Who'd You Be?* with his daughter, she said that if he were a Harry Potter character he would be "Hagrid, of course, because you always take care of my friends and you always tell us the truth, even when it's difficult," a line that Bailey notes "didn't make it onto my resume but probably should have."



Masa Tasovac

#### LIDIA LUNA

We are thrilled to have Lidia Luna back this year as our Office Manager and Administrative Assistant. Lidia first came to Peninsula as a parent for her twin daughters, who both graduated in 2018. While they were here, she did multiple volunteer roles including Co-Coordinator of the Spring Fair. She joined the staff as an Assistant Teacher, and subsequently transitioned to accounting and acted as Staff Liaison for People of Peninsula (POP). Lidia left the school when her daughters graduated, and we feel very lucky to have her return in this new capacity. In her spare time, Lidia loves crafting and working with fabric, and spent many years as a dedicated member of Busy Fingers!



Kati Baksa

#### MILLY SIEGEL

We are happy to have Milly Siegel join the Development and Communications team this year as our new Communications and Outreach Specialist. Milly is no stranger to Peninsula – she graduated in 2008 and was an Assistant Teacher for a year in 2016-2017. Since her departure in 2017, she's lived in Scotland, gotten a Master's Degree, visited 12 US National Parks, and marginally improved her baking skills. Milly is excited to be back at Peninsula, and we are equally excited to have her on our administrative team.

#### MASA TASOVAC AND KATI BAKSA

We are excited to have two familiar faces stepping into our Childcare Coordinator roles!

Masa Tasovac is our new Kindergarten – 8th Childcare Coordinator. She is both a parent at the school and long-time Associate Teacher, having taught in Annie's, Toni's, and Taylor's before transitioning into her new position.

Katalin (Kati) Baksa began at Peninsula in 2018 as a Childcare Teacher, and the following year worked in Nursery Green. In the Summer of 2020, she became Interim Childcare Coordinator for the year, and this year is officially the Childcare Coordinator for Nursery.



Elizabeth Pang



Jamie Meraz



My Do



Juliet Norvig



Matison Hall



Nathaniel Griffin

## A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW ASSISTANT TEACHERS!

### ELIZABETH PANG

Elizabeth graduated from Peninsula in 2013 and returned last year as a long-term substitute. This year, she's an Assistant Teacher in Christy's 6th grade class. When asked what her favorite part of working at Peninsula is, Elizabeth said: *The close connections with kids and colleagues is my favorite part of working at Peninsula – the classroom teams, the broader Upper School team, and the staff as a whole work so hard together to create the environment which facilitates great learning and important personal connections!*

### JULIET NORVIG

Juliet Norvig joined us in January as the Interim Library Assistant and a long-term substitute. This year, she joined the Upper School team as the 8th grade Assistant. From Juliet: *My favorite part of working at Peninsula is the unique connection to the outdoors! Whether it be walking to Flood Park with the Lower School, playing outside during Summer at Peninsula, or camping with the Upper School, Peninsula offers so many opportunities for the students to connect with nature.*

### LYDIA "JAMIE" MERAZ

Jamie is an alum ('98) and last year returned to work as an Assistant Teacher in Jesse's. From Jamie: *After spending 10 years abroad it has been such a beautiful and unexpected homecoming to be back in the Peninsula school community after so many years away. I love experiencing some of my favorite parts of childhood from a whole new perspective as well as working with fantastic colleagues and serving an amazing community of students and families.*

### MATISON HALL

Matison joined the Peninsula community last year as an Assistant Teacher in Lori's, and this year works with Toni's class. From Matison: *My favorite part about working at Peninsula is being a part of such a supportive community and being able to learn from the inspiring children and adults I spend each day with.*

### MY DO

My came to Peninsula last year as a parent, and this year has joined our Lower School teaching staff as an Assistant in Betty's. From My: *To me, Peninsula was love at first sight. The*

*moment I saw my kiddo take off her shoes to climb up the dinosaur without reservations, I knew this was the place where she would belong. Even now, having set foot on campus at least a thousand times, I still feel my heart flutter to the cadence of children chirping across the wooded terrain. Being a staff member offers me an incredible opportunity to steward and build up this precious space for our young people to learn and thrive. For that, I am truly grateful.*

### NATHANIEL GRIFFIN

Nathaniel is an alumnus ('12) who has returned this year to work in our Childcare Program. *My favorite part of working at Peninsula is the support I receive from my coworkers and the parents of our students. Everyone is so welcoming and kind. The fact I also get to help continue the traditions I learned while attending the school is really special as well. Like not wearing shoes!*

## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME...

by *Ryan Helton*

THESE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS have taught us a lot as a society, and nowhere else is that more evident than at Peninsula School. Through this challenging time, we have seen a loss of togetherness, and many folks I have spoken to have felt a difficult-to-describe languishing feeling. This ebb and flow from pandemic, to societal racial reckoning, to the challenging of the very fabric of our democratic foundations, has left some with an inability to replenish their cups. While it is easy to focus on these and solely think of them as dark, we here at Peninsula have taken this opportunity to harness this unique time, and hopefully, make some changes for the better. We'd like to refill that hopeful energy by boldly heading into this school year equipped with newfound adaptation skills and a fresh determination to make sure Peninsula is an inclusive community for all.

This reflective time has allowed our Development and Communications Office, in conjunction with many other departments and groups on campus, to reimagine some of the ways that we have approached certain topics, such as our Annual Giving Campaign and our events. It has also allowed us to make new strides in tackling issues that, until now, have not been held by a specific person or group at Peninsula.

Our annual giving campaign (AGC) has been a tradition at Peninsula for decades. While we have always strived to make this initiative open to all, we have not always been successful at making each and every person feel a sense of belonging within the program. This year, we hope to change that by modifying the AGC in a couple of exciting ways. First, we have amended our materials to be more descriptive of the work we do each and every day here at Peninsula. This has allowed us to dive into why the dollars you choose to share with Peninsula are well spent. It allows us to more clearly articulate how we are building "confident contributors to the world," and exactly how those dollars go to support these efforts. Additionally, we have begun a new program that was born from our staff-giving efforts. An anonymous donor has stepped forward to provide a gift for any family that may have the inclination to participate in annual giving efforts but may lack the funds to do so. Any current family that would like to give, but may feel the pressure of the current economic environment, simply needs to state their intention to us, and a gift will be given on their behalf from this anonymous donor. We

hope that these changes to our AGC efforts will make our campaign more inclusive, with a sense of belonging for all.

Additionally, there may be some changes to some familiar events. During our two-year hiatus from in-person events, we have been able to reimagine some of the old traditions that were in place that, sometimes, made people feel less than fully accepted in our community. One example of this is the Peninsula Auction. Alongside POP, we are in the process of retiring the name, and some of the more problematic elements of the auction, in an effort to make the event inclusive to all.

Currently being called the Peninsula Community Celebration, we have decided to rename the event and reshape it, as the former name had a difficult connotation for community members. We aim to make this event one where each and every attendee feels at home. We will remove elements that award prizes to the highest bidder, and instead, craft opportunities that give each and every community member a chance to walk away a winner – all while supporting the school we love.

Another exciting opportunity that these times have afforded us is the ability to focus more closely on the bonds between us as a community. Partnering with the Head of School and the Admissions Office, the Development and Communication Office has teamed up to form an advancement effort aimed at the retention of families and staff. This coordinated and thoughtful effort has allowed us to introduce events like our open houses, community coffees, and planned open studios that foster a sense of community cohesion after a period where

that lack of in-person connection was very palpable. The Advancement Team will work with other departments and groups to have heart-felt and meaningful conversations and interactions with each and every member of our current parent and staff community. We hope that this will help to bind our community closer together and allow a pathway for those that may have not felt included, a sense of belonging.

However these last two years have affected your family, please know that there is always a place for you within our community. No matter if you are a current parent/staff member, alumni student/family, former staff, or longtime friend, we here at Peninsula want to make sure you feel a sense of belonging each and every time you think of these magical six acres.

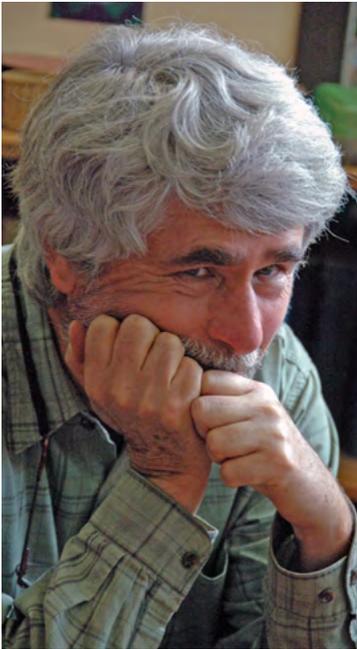


## FAREWELL FRANK SMITHSON

*By Bette Henley*

FRANK SMITHSON – beloved teacher and guardian of our campus, is retiring.

Now that he is moving on, who he is and what he’s done for so many people for so many years has become almost painfully apparent. We have become used to seeing him everywhere, every day, day after day – making sure that we are all safe, and that we have what we need



to get through our day. We became used to constantly seeing him make sure that our glorious trees and soul-nourishing campus continue to exist in the best possible way.

For most of his time at Peninsula, Frank worked two gigs: keeper of the buildings and grounds, and teacher to our younger students. He has a gift of seeing who each young student is, and patiently guides them on their path. He happily read them book after book, annually helped them build a very large and exploding volcano in the sandbox, oversaw kindergarten wrestling matches, and arranged for the “echo” at the annual pretend campout.

There are two Frank Smithsons. The first Frank is retiring, and the other one is staying behind. The flesh and blood Frank (really, “dirt and mud” would be more appropriate) is headin’ out – planning trips to visit family, planning trips solely to be on a moving train (the dude loves trains), and thinking about the postcards he’s going to write and send. Frank loves to send postcards.

Staying behind is Frank’s thirty years of care – here in the beams and nails and sand and dirt and the pine cones and the squirrels and the many, many, many puddles. And of course – in the trees. And the memories. The vast quantities of memories – his, and ours. The staying-behind Frank is in every little piece of Peninsula that has been part of his life at one time or another. He has touched every single space; there is not a cranny or nook that he doesn’t know. There isn’t a doorknob that he hasn’t rattled to make sure that it’s locked at the end of the day.

Frank and his family have been part of Peninsula for over thirty years. Daughters Meg and Abigail are Peninsula alums. His wife Jane served many years on our school board and gave us her expertise, time and heart. Thank you, Smithsons, for sharing Frank with us. Thank you, Frank – for everything.

## FAREWELL TO LUCILLE DACANAY

*By Terra Miller*

AFTER DECADES OF DEVOTING HER TIME and multitude of talents to Peninsula School, Lucille Dacanay retired last year, taking with her Ray and their beloved little school dog, Bella. Lucille joined the community in 1988 when her son Jesse (’98) entered Maida’s kindergarten. We first met that fall as moms of classmates, both brand new to the school, and soon began carpooling and getting to know one another as our kids played together after school. Little could either of us have known that thirty years later we would find ourselves as long-term colleagues with a cherished friendship.

Most of us know Lucille as Peninsula’s stalwart Office Manager, the one person who always knew where to find an obscure and urgently needed supply, a key to a basement closet, the form one had lost which was now overdue, and who could locate Bob, Frank, Chris, or Ray at a moment’s notice on our sprawling campus – to say nothing of the copy machine which seemed to behave only for Lucille! The quantity and variety of information, large and small, that Lucille held was truly vast and all of it necessary to the daily running of the school. We who were the beneficiaries will always be grateful for everything Lucille was holding behind the scenes.

In her decades with Peninsula, though, Lucille held much more than that wealth of operational know-how the community relied on daily. She held a variety of other roles and contributed in myriad ways right from the start. When her daughter Emma (’01) joined Nursery Blue in 1990, Lucille began assisting in primary classrooms. She worked with Ann Guy and Gail Buschini, then with Marion Conley over her first seven years, and in 1998 began her dual roles as Dance Teacher and the school’s Office Manager. In addition, Lucille was active with Parent Events, committees addressing DEIB issues, and served as a staff representative on Peninsula’s Board of Directors. Lucille taught yoga to both students and colleagues, and delighted many Spring Fair audiences as a founding member of the Merengue Mamas dance group!

With hearts full of gratitude, we wish a fond farewell to Lucille as she and Ray begin this new chapter of their lives full of everything they most love: music, art, nature, friends and family.



## “SPEAK YOUR RHYTHM AND YOUR HEARTBEAT” FOR RAY DACANAY!

by Annie Young

RAY'S FIRST PENINSULA EXPERIENCE was through an invitation from his future wife, Lucille. He immediately observed the joy of kids in the beautiful environment of oak trees and six acres where they explore and play. He saw the openness to new ideas, and kids being their authentic selves. This began a fifteen-year odyssey that touched many aspects of Peninsula, from the classes he was part of to the personal relationships with colleagues, students and families that he formed.



Ray is a natural artist and teacher, bringing his worldview to everything he does. At Peninsula this meant working with Buildings & Grounds, and assistant teaching in Annie's, Elizabeth's, Martha's, and Taylor's. Ray also taught drumming and created beautiful works of art as offerings for fundraisers for the school. As if this wasn't enough, he was Caretaker of the school for twelve years.

He began in Buildings & Grounds, and subsequently became a Lower School Assistant. He worked in Annie's in the morning and Elizabeth's in the afternoons, quickly finding compatibility with

each class using his artistic and social-emotional skills in his work with kids. He became an integral part of the project-based learning taking place in both classes. Whether he was working with kids on math, writing, or elaborate projects like Annie's Madhatters Tea, or Elizabeth's Creatureland, Ray put his creative stamp into the mix with kindness and sensitivity.

Ray saw the need for kids to develop hand strength, dexterity, balance, rhythm, and harmony and began to offer drumming lessons. These classes grew as the kids progressed through the school, culminating in a performance at the Spring Fair each year. Ray used to tell his students "speak your rhythm and your heartbeat, let your body create the sound!"

He loved the many relationships he developed with kids and parents throughout the years. After so many years at Peninsula, Ray summed up his lasting impression of the kids he was fortunate enough to work with. He will always remember them, and the school, as "The growing trees and the six acres!"

## ALUMNI UPDATES

### Laurie Friedman, '62

Survived COVID and took advantage of the confinement by sorting through the thousands of photos from trips on my computer, which I had wanted to do for years! No travel, but starting to plan trips for 2022. I think I inherited Dad's (Isadore Friedman) genes, as he loved to travel and had an artistic eye, and so far I've visited 88 countries, and am deep into photography. Class of 1962: Up for reuniting at our 60th Anniversary at Peninsula?



### Dana Rust '08

I moved to Berlin in 2018 and realized there is no other place I'd rather be – looks like I will stay here for the foreseeable future. In the meantime I have become a farmer, working on a small organic vegetable farm on the outskirts of Berlin. As a Peninsula child, I am the happiest playing outside in the dirt, and now I have finally found a job that will pay me to do that. I will always love Peninsula for nurturing the wild child in me, she helps me in everything I do. Keep it up!



### Alexandra Griffin '07

In 2nd grade, while selecting a new color yarn for my block loom, I heard a distressed yell, "Barbie, something's wrong!" A student had just broken a warp thread on a floor loom. I remember looking at Barbie and the seemingly unfixable problem and thinking to myself, "I'm glad I'm not the weaving teacher..." Two decades later, here I am – the new weaving teacher.

I returned to Peninsula as an assistant in the Upper School after college. Starting this year as the weaving teacher has been a new and exciting opportunity for me. Today, weaving takes place on the Big Building's balcony, weaving on table looms, or working with another student on a newly built community rag rug loom. I'm happy that the little girl who felt so intimidated by the job of the weaving teacher is now settled and excited by the types of challenges the weaving program has to offer.





## STUDENT VOICES

AFTER 18 MONTHS OF HYBRID AND DISTANCE LEARNING, we are thrilled to have a “normal” schedule again this year! It’s been great seeing the kids’ excitement as they swing on the rope swing, stomp through the puddle, and run off to Activities in the afternoon. While

many students are enjoying this return to normalcy at Peninsula, many are having these experiences for the first time. For this issue of News Notes, we wanted to hear from some of them, and asked one question (you may notice a theme with their answers!):

*What is your favorite part of being on campus this year?*

*Being able to go to Activities!*

THREE 7TH GRADERS IN JESSE’S & A 5TH GRADER IN MONICA’S

*Everything, especially Activities!*

6-7 YEAR OLD IN MELISSA’S

*Being connected with friends and PE!!!!*

7-8 YEAR OLD IN TONI’S

*Hanging out with people and getting to make friends!*

7TH GRADER IN JESSE’S

*We get to do the rope swing and Activities!*

8-9 YEAR OLD IN NANCY’S

*Using paper instead of Google Docs!*

7TH GRADER IN JESSE’S

*The rope swing, and Nancy!*

8-9 YEAR OLD IN NANCY’S

*Being able to say that we left our homework at home!*

7TH GRADER IN JESSE’S

*Going to Activities and being with friends!*

9-10 YEAR OLD IN BETTY’S

*Getting to go to Activities and the Ramayana!*

TWO 9-10 YEAR OLDS IN BETTY’S

*Weaving on floor looms!*

9-10 YEAR OLD IN BETTY’S

*It’s my first year doing Activities and I like them!*

6-7 YEAR OLD IN MELISSA’S

*My sibling has been going here so I’ve gotten to come to the events and now I finally get to do those things!*

NEW STUDENT IN CHRISTY’S 6TH GRADE

IN MEMORIAM

**Lowell Braun**

Lowell Braun, former beloved Nursery Blue and Childcare Teacher passed away last year on November 17, 2020. Lowell taught in Nursery Blue from 1977-1988 alongside Margie Rauch and Mary Lou Moses, and in 1980, also helped start the Childcare Program that we still have today. His daughter and alumna from class of 1986, Sara, shared this with us: *One of the things my dad loved to do was to play his guitar to kids. He wrote his own childrens' songs (including the Dinosaur Song, and the Peanut Butter and Jelly Song) and would frequently play them for the kids. In the last years of his life, my dad lived in Little Canada, Minnesota close to many of his siblings, who were a source of great comfort to him.* Our thoughts and love go out to Lowell's family, friends and all of those who loved him.



**Bob Marsh**

Alumni Bob Marsh passed away peacefully this past July. Bob began in Nursery at Peninsula in 1946 and attended for eleven years through to his graduation in 1957. Bob's mom, Betty, was a volunteer in the library from 1961-1994, keeping both herself and Bob involved and closely connected to the Peninsula Community. Bob's dear friend, Kathleen Curry, had this to say:

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*Bob was a pacifist at heart, and his way to avoid conflicts in the Army was to serve by playing the clarinet in a band.*

---

*Bob's time spent attending Peninsula School made a lasting impression on him. Bob was a pacifist at heart, and his way to avoid conflicts in the Army was to serve by playing the clarinet in a band. He excelled in many fields that grabbed his attention – he was a marvelous photographer, a collector of music and books, and an inventor of complex word games. He was a delightful, generous, charming man who created several 'chosen' families, who miss him dearly. We send our love to all of Bob's chosen families.*



## Thank You for Your Generosity

We extend our heartfelt thanks to so many generous donors who gave to Peninsula School during the 2020-21 school year – current parents and parents of alumni, board and staff members, alumni, grandparents, friends, former staff, community partners and employer matching programs. Together you help us carry on our rich tradition of progressive education that creates a joyous place for our students to learn and grow, climb trees and stomp in puddles – all supported by our fabulous teaching staff.

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*In honor of the Class of 1962*  
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# PENINSULA SCHOOL · FALL 2021

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Ann Davidson

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Debbie Baldwin

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Camilla & Tony Rothwell

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Elizabeth & Konstantin Davydov

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