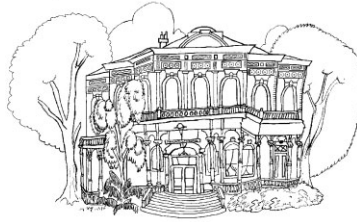


News



Notes

FALL 2015

LETTER FROM OUR
HEAD OF SCHOOL

by Jim Benz

DURING A GATHERING OF PARENTS who were touring Peninsula for the first time, considering the school as an option for their children next fall, I said to them that there are some things they will see during their tour and some things they won't see on their tour. They will see kids at play or working in small groups with a teacher, a relaxed environment, student-centered learning activities, and a beautiful campus that is lived in and loved. What cannot be seen on a short visit and can only be experienced over longer periods of time are things such as how ample free time allows kids to practice being responsible. How we build an environment based on trust and respect rather than rules and obedience. How the democratic process works in each classroom to provide students with a voice and to help them understand how a community works. And about how we stimulate and maintain intellectual curiosity through play.

As I begin my second year, I too am able to see more with the benefit of time. Yet I've also profited from spending much of my first year immersed in the entry process of meeting with members of the community and absorbing the history, culture and people of Peninsula. I don't pretend that a year of listening, watching and working at Peninsula supplants the depth of experience of people who can be considered part of the architecture here, but Peninsula School, I'm learning, is made up of intricate layers that, when combined, define the essence of this extraordinary school.

All the meetings I had with staff, board members, alumni, current parents and parents

SHARING FLARE

By Romina Arciniega

PENINSULA CHANGED MY LIFE. It is where my flare got started. After college, I decided I wanted to apply for an AmeriCorps program, *Public Allies*. Through this program, *Allies* serve in full-time apprenticeship positions at local nonprofits, where they create, improve and expand services that address issues including youth development, education, public health, economic development, and the environment. In addition, *Allies* participate in a rigorous leadership development program in which local community leaders and experts lead workshops to build the leadership skills in these apprentices. Also *Allies* participate in community building activities, contribute to team service projects, and receive individual coaching to support their

professional development during their apprenticeship. It was a two-month process, but I made it through and was accepted. I was excited to become a Public Ally because social justice and educational equity are two very important values of mine. Here was a way to spread to others a chance to light up their passion for education.

Throughout my education, I was always among the few students of color or the only person of color in the classroom, including my peers and teachers. This impacted my perspective growing up, I did not see teachers who looked like me or had similar experiences to mine. Part of the reason I do the work that I do, is because I want other students of color to achieve the same kind of successes that I have achieved due to my education. I realized that I want to become a champion teacher who can be a role model to other students of color. I want students of color to know that one of their teachers can relate to their experiences and understand what they are going through.

I feel very privileged to have been able to attend Peninsula, a school that taught me how to be a person who cares about others. Teachers like Lynne, Garv, Jerry, Rebecca, Barbie, the list goes on, believed in me and taught me to love education. This experience, along with my commitment to working in underserved communities and providing equal opportunity for students of color are primary reasons I want to become a teacher.

At *Public Allies*, I was able to do weekly professional development trainings on various topics. *Public Allies* focuses on leadership development, which was great for me. As an aspiring



Continued on page 2

Continued on page 2

LETTER FROM JIM

Continued from page 1

of alumni students resulted in the best education a school head could hope for. From those meetings I was able to peer deep into the school, and then, like an early explorer, accurately report back what I had seen from that privileged vantage point.

The experience of relating my findings in Spring 2015 News Notes was, in effect, like holding a mirror up to the school and the community. From this perspective of time, immersion and reflection, I've been able to outline seven broad categories for the school to work on as goals.

1. Affordability and Accessibility to Support Teachers and Families
2. Program Enhancement to Serve the Student Population
3. Communications to Tell Our Story and Build Prospective Student Enrollment
4. Development to Build Our Future
5. Facilities to Maintain the Beauty of the Campus and Enhance Programs
6. Financial Stability to Weather Economic Swings

7. Diversity and Equity to Honor our Values and Mission of Inclusivity and Social Justice

These goals are not in any order of priority; however, the board has exhibited great leadership by setting "Affordability and Accessibility" as their top goal, and it is one of mine as well. This goal is focused on examining the pathways necessary for ensuring that Peninsula remains financially affordable to families from a wide spectrum of socioeconomic levels and culturally accessible to families from every background, culture, ethnicity and race.

Program enhancement is worked on continually. Yet maintaining a high level of engagement in professional development is critical in meeting the needs of teachers and learners in our era marked by rapid change, exponential innovation, and giant leaps in our understanding of the brain and how children learn. In the past year alone teachers have participated in exceptional professional development resulting in enhanced programs in math, equity and social justice, literacy, and learning support, to name a few.

Articulating and communicating the wondrous things that happen on a day-to-day basis that benefit young children and early adolescents at Peninsula is an enormously challenging goal that the staff and I will be working on this year. We have made progress already by launching a newly revamped website this fall. I hope you've had a chance to see it and read some of the new content.

We have demanding work ahead in the other topics of development, finance, facilities, and equity, and we are already working hard in these areas: building institutional stability with sound planning and continuing to keep equity, inclusion and social justice at the center of our conversations.

Through time and a reflective process, each of us is able to gain a better understanding of the layers and nuances of the school and of the imperative to improve and adapt in order to prepare children for a rapidly changing world. It is a challenging process, but in doing so we as a community demonstrate our commitment to children, to progressive ideals and to maintaining a bright and exciting future for Peninsula School.

ROMINA ARCINIEGA

Continued from page 1

teacher I would like to be the best leader I can be, in and outside of the classroom. *Public Allies* created a safe space for me to learn and grow as a leader and educator.

Working at *Building Futures Now* in East Palo Alto through *Public Allies* this past year was an unforgettable experience. It solidified my desire to be an educator and work with students of color. I was able to work closely with students and their families and support their journey to higher education. It was a powerful experience through which I learned a lot about the non-profit sector and the East Palo Alto community.

After working at *Public Allies* and *Building Futures Now*, I have decided to pursue my teaching credential. I am now working at a charter school in East San Jose called Alpha Public Schools. I am continuing to pursue my passion of working with students of color from underserved communities. I am so grateful I got to go to Peninsula and have amazing examples of what it means to be an effective teacher. I plan to model that same spirit in my own classroom!



INTRODUCING OUR NEW HEAD TEACHERS

NANCY LEECH

Our new kindergarten teacher, Nancy Leech, is a very familiar face to most of our school community, having assisted in a myriad of Peninsula classrooms for more than two decades. If you were a student of Graceann, Gail or Josie, or enrolled in one of Nancy's wonderful Summer School classes, you are sure to have experienced her warm and welcoming presence and deep knowledge of nature and all of its creatures. Before her tenure at Peninsula, Nancy received her undergraduate degree at University of Michigan in French, and her M.A. from Monterey Institute of International Studies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Nancy then taught ESL to adults before coming to Peninsula where she discovered her true passion for teaching children.

Although Nancy has assisted in many classrooms over the years, the past three years working in Josie's made clear her affinity for teaching five and six year olds. Along with her extensive knowledge and experience in the classroom, Nancy brings her love of the outdoors, gardening, languages, travel and, of course, animals to her teaching. Living on a small farm in East Palo Alto where she cares for chickens, ducks, geese, goats (and lots of cats) allows her to create unique learning opportunities in her classroom. Animal friends from her farm are brought to her class occasionally so that kids can observe, learn and care for them hands-on. Continuing some of the traditions of Josie's class such as making Day of the Dead skeletons, field trips and Tu-Tu Day have also been delightful and meaningful experiences so far this school year. Occurring on the 22nd (two-two, tu-tu) of each month, Nancy's class collects, counts and sorts canned good donations for Second Harvest, a local organization that provides food for hungry children. Nancy has noticed that many of the kids are especially enthusiastic about Tu-Tu Day and their role in helping those in need, a tradition of service that she is happy to be carrying on with her class.

In addition to many projects centered around literacy, math and art and plenty of play, Nancy's focus has been on encouraging kids to explore and be outside on these beautiful autumn days, fostering their connections to nature, and helping them to learn that they can rely on themselves and their natural environment for the best kind of entertainment. The day new sand was delivered to the yard was a great example of this, the entire morning consumed with digging, planning and working together outside with excitement and purpose. Nancy says the days seem to be "magically rolling along" teaching with her assistants Gail and Lidia, who she has deemed her "Dream Team", and working with a wonderful group of kids and parents. She is enjoying them all.



AKASH PANDEY

Akash Pandey has re-joined the Upper School teaching team, this time as our 7th grade Head Teacher. After spending two years (2011-13) as the Upper School Assistant, Akash left Peninsula to study for his M.A. in Elementary Education at the University of Chicago. He taught in Chicago public schools as a resident teacher, enjoying the opportunities to teach and work with kids of varying backgrounds and cultures. Although Akash expected to continue living and teaching in Chicago, when he heard there was an open teaching position in the 7th grade, he found himself seriously considering the possibility of returning to the Bay Area. One of the most important considerations for Akash in deciding where he wanted to teach was school culture and environment, a factor that greatly influenced his decision to return to Peninsula. The autonomy and freedom teachers have in creating their curriculum, the openness and respect for varied approaches, the feeling of community, history of non-conformity, and value for individuality are just some of the aspects of Peninsula's school culture that he appreciates.

Originally drawn to teaching while at UC Berkeley, Akash coached middle school basketball as he pursued his B.A. in Political Science and South & Southeast Asian Studies. Sports (especially basketball), reading, hiking and writing are all great interests of his, as well as making time to hang out and connect with friends. He has always been social justice oriented, and sensitive to how others experience history perspectives. It is clear when speaking with Akash that he is particularly passionate about social justice and equity, and that sharing this passion with students is important to him. He believes that with information about what is happening in the world and in society around them, his students can be informed and active participants in life.

Akash enjoys the "freshness" of teaching, how "every day is new and brings its own opportunities and challenges". His classroom feels dynamic, and is a place where learning flows from students to teachers as well as teachers to students. Having the experience now of teaching at Peninsula, and in other schools, he is impressed by the insight, knowledge and care that Peninsula teachers have for and about their students. He feels that kids here are being supported in meaningful ways that really allow them to come into their own and see themselves as valuable. We are very happy to have him back to be a part of it all.



GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY

THE SCHOOL IS STILL BUZZING and overflowing with the energy from a fun filled day that was one of those treasured moments at Peninsula. Grandparents & Special Friends Day comes but once every three years, and November 24, 2015 was that moment. This has always been a feel-good event since Florrie Forrest and a group of parents started it in the early 2000's. How can one go wrong putting grandparents and family friends together with our kids and teachers? On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving 150 guests joined our Peninsula School day from as far away as southern India and as near as across the street. It is hard to put into words the lovely morning and lunchtime that followed.

Our grounds were crowded and bustling. In the morning, as our students made their way to the classrooms, the front porch filled with our visitors. Parent volunteers welcomed our guests with information packets, maps, tour sign ups, and scrumptious breakfast treats. A slideshow filled with great Peninsula photos as well as student and alumni quotes drew our guests into the Auditorium. Beautiful displays of student work from classrooms and our Art, Clay, and Choice programs adorned the Big Building walls. After some words of greeting, grandparents and family friends heard from our Head of School, Jim Benz, as well as a fellow grandparent, and parent of alumni, Barbara Fourt. Then our Chorus came bubbling in with their music teacher, Sally Mitchell. Accompanied by Florrie Forrest on piano, Ray Dacanay on drums, and Aaron Tinker on guitar at various points, they filled the room with joyful sounds and lovely voices! The morning set the warm and friendly tone for the fun yet to come in the classrooms.

There was a bit of rain and wind as our guests exited the Auditorium in search of their grandchildren's and friends' classes, giving it a true Peninsula autumn feel. Many visitors made their way across our puddled landscape to the classrooms, and joined classes in progress, from Math to Reading, to special projects prepared for students with these guests. The usual Big Building sounds of happy students were joined by chatting visitors viewing the displays and tour groups led by 8th grade students. These 8th graders worked on a Peninsula History unit this fall as well as a mini architecture lesson related specifically to the Big Building, and they did a stellar job of sharing a bit about our mansion's history and some added tidbits about the school.

Our event concluded with grandparents and family friends having the option to eat lunch with their young hosts and say their farewells. The energy of the mixed generations and of the kids getting to show off and share their school was wonderful and positive. We simultaneously had guests very familiar with the school getting



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAIGE PARSONS

a little extra time and those new to our grounds getting their first peek at this unique educational environment. Compliments from our guests abounded. One grandfather, who regularly picks up his grandkids, said, "It was entirely different to experience class time with the kids. I didn't know I would get so much out of this visit. It gives me a whole new perspective." A grandmother of one of our upper school students, who was visiting for the first time, showed how well a morning at Peninsula can demonstrate what we do here when she came back excited about the Math class she saw. "The kids were brainstorming together and helping each other understand, but they weren't giving each other the answers! They were really working together and making sure each person could understand and do the work on their own. What a wonderful way to learn!" We are so happy that a morning at school not only gave our guests a good sense of our teaching and philosophies, but also an enjoyable visit with their special friends.

THE TREE PROJECT



A surprising and fantastic gift of this wonderful day was the results of our tree project. We invited grandparents and family friends to send in pictures with trees ahead of time, to create a display for our November 24th event. The instructions we sent were simple, "We are hoping each of you will send in a photo or drawing of you, either in younger years or now, with a tree. If you are inspired to write about why that tree, or another tree is important to you, we would love that too!" The grandparents and family friends took this idea and made it even better! Here are a few of the submissions to share.

Dear Milo,

Here is a picture of a tree planted about 40 years ago by your Dad and me. The seedling was very small and had only 2 little branches... about 4 inches tall! Look at how giant it has grown to be. You are like this tree, starting out small but growing bigger every day. Do you think you can grow as big as that tree?

Love, Grammie Kittock
(Grandmother to Milo)



Greetings from Northern California! This is Kymani's grandmother, Jahanna and my Black Russian Terrier, Micco in this beautiful mama madrone tree that towers over a creek. She is special to me for her soft smoothness and strong roots that ground me in solitary meditation- my refuge on daily walks! Thanks to the Peninsula community for bringing me and Jahvita back home and for welcoming Kirk and Kymani to this great school! Looking forward to many years of fun!!

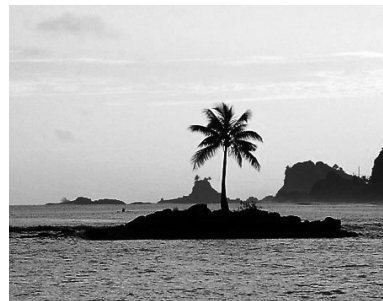
Jahanna Tafari (Grandmother to Kymani)



I am Louie Adriano and my granddaughter is Emilia Rose. In this picture is a guava tree in my country the Philippines. The fruit of this tree is so rich in calcium. I love this tree. This tree is so important to my life because when I was growing up, I used to climb guava trees and pick the fruits for

two to three hours during rainy season (June to September) and sell them in the market as a supplement income for our family.

Louie Adriano (Grandfather to Emilia Rose)



This tree is called "Lonely Palm" or "Niu Aveve" in Samoan. It's located in our home village of Leone, American Samoa.

Pemasa & Pua Aumavae (Grandparents to Seipua)

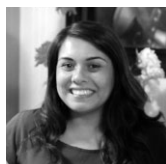
TEACHING ASSISTANTS

NEW AND FAMILIAR FACES IN NEW PLACES

WE HAVE A TERRIFIC GROUP of new teaching assistants joining our staff this year! Many have existing connections to Peninsula, and a few are brand new to our community. We are warmly welcoming to our staff Vicky Velazquez in Nursery Blue, Kari Seligman in Nursery Green, Lidia Luna in Nancy's, Andrea Parkes in Betty's, Monica Erviti in Livy's, and Margot Berrill as our new Friday Library assistant. Here is what they have to say about their experience teaching at Peninsula so far:

"So far this year is off to a great start. I really enjoy coming to school every-day and feel so lucky to be part of this amazing Peninsula community"

VICKY VELAZQUEZ, NURSERY BLUE



"It has been a great joy be part of the Nursery Green team this year. I love getting to know each individual child and all of the gifts they bring to the nursery community. It is amazing to witness and be part of all that takes place as they are learning about themselves and how to be with one another. It is a busy space and I am always finding ways to help

whether it's creating a calm space to read a story, helping with little scrapes and bruises, mediating a conflict, singing songs, or helping to facilitate an art project. I am happy to be part of the Peninsula community in a deeper way."

KARI SELIGMAN, NURSERY GREEN



"Working at Peninsula School I keep wondering who's teaching who, there's so much to learn from the kids."

LIDIA LUNA, NANCY'S CLASS

"I am so grateful to be part of Betty's class and the Peninsula staff. It's inspiring to be at a school with such a sense of community and purpose, where everyone, adults and students, have such sincere care and respect for each other. I am having a blast!"

ANDREA PARKES, BETTY'S CLASS



"The fifth grade class has done an exceptional job of welcoming me into the family and teaching me what it means to be a part of the

Peninsula Community. It has been a joy to experience their unbridled enthusiasm and creativity in the classroom and around campus."

MONICA ERVITI, LIVY'S CLASS



"The library at Peninsula School is such a really special place, and I love spending time with the students while we explore books together! It's rewarding and inspiring to join this community of staff as well as be a parent here."



MARGOT BERRILL, LIBRARY

Some of our wonderful teachers and assistants can be found in different classrooms this fall as well. Toni has become a Primary Head Teacher (formerly Graceann's), Gail Blackmarr is assisting in Nancy's, Masa Tasovac has joined Toni's, Michael Fredrickson is in Nursery Blue, and the assistants in Upper School have moved as well, with Damien Kardokas Johanson assisting in Mel's, Kaitlin McGill in Akash's and John Christie in Marcella's.

Endowment Donors

Thank you to all our parents who chose to donate to the Peninsula School Endowment and Trust Fund for the 2015-2016 school year, investing in the long term health of a school which has served students in this area for 90 years. Your contributions help to ensure we are around for 90 more!

Jessica & David Axelrod
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IN MEMORIAM



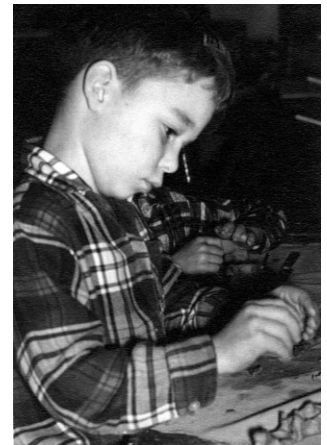
Betty Garbett – Beloved Teacher

Elizabeth Garbett, a parent and one of Peninsula's treasured primary teachers from 1962 through 1972, died on July 3, 2015 at the age of 95. Known by her students at that time as Betty, she co-taught with both Florrie Forrest and Betty Matthews, the latter leading to the famed "Betty & Betty" class. Many alumni, on visits to Peninsula, have recalled the great care she had for her students. After Peninsula, her passion for learning led her back to school to

obtain a Masters in Paleontology from the University of Texas. She and her husband Budge Garbett moved back to their Los Altos home in 1980 and have stayed, working in their vineyard and garden ever since. Elizabeth is survived by Budge, who turned 100 in August, and their children, Rachel, class of '61, Matthew, class of '64 and Rebecca, class of '67. Happy she had a long and full life, our hearts are with her family.

John Bateson – Class of 1965

John Bateson, who attended Peninsula in the late '50s and early 60's, passed away at age 64 from cancer. His family let us know that he remembered Peninsula School fondly until the end. In particular, he said that working as a child with his shop teacher, Isadore Friedman, helped him find his career as a carpenter. John also spoke of the oak trees allowing him to connect with nature, and that climbing up in them gave him a unique chance for time to think and reflect. He felt this was one of Peninsula's greatest gifts. John will be greatly missed by friends and family alike.



SAVE THE DATE



CLASSES OF

'26 '36 '46 '56 '66 '76 '86 '91 '96 '06

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TOGETHER WE MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

by Andromeda Garcelon

SO MANY ALUMNI TALK ABOUT PENINSULA being pivotal in their lives, changing their lives, and quite a few have looked me in the eye and said, "Peninsula saved my life." That all goes to say what an important role this school has played, and continues to play, in the lives of 90 years of students. Can you believe that this is the 90th year Peninsula has had its doors open for 'Creative Education,' uniquely standing for students as a central part of their own education? As alumnus Brian K. Williams said in 2006, "We are among the most fortunate on earth to have had this kind of education."

This year's Annual Giving Campaign theme is "Be a Pillar of Peninsula!" and I can genuinely say that the alumni certainly are one

of the pillars of strength for Peninsula. It makes sense that we alumni want to pay it forward and make sure students today get to have the same type of positive educational environment: close ties to teachers; opportunities to choose, risk, fail, and learn; connection to nature; empowerment to recognize strengths and weaknesses and build on them; fostered enthusiasm and curiosity. We all want those things to remain a part of the school of our childhood. We don't lay it out in numbers often, but the numbers are interesting. For instance, 23% of the total number of gifts to Annual Giving last year came from alumni. Alumni giving is central to the success of our fundraising efforts. However, of the approximately 1100 alumni we are connected to, that 23% of gifts came from just 106 people, or about 10% of all the alumni.

Many alumni in that group of 106 give modest gifts, but added together, they make a big difference. I would like to challenge us this year: I would like to see if so many of us who hold

Peninsula in our hearts can use that feeling this year to make a gift! Wouldn't it be amazing if we could double the number of us who contribute to this school, in honor of our 90th year? I feel sure that more than 20% of us THINK about giving back to Peninsula, so let's make this the year we DO it! Have fun with it – give in honor of a favorite teacher, in memory of a classmate, or in the name of your whole class. Celebrate the 90th year, give \$9, \$90, \$900 or \$9000, or perhaps a set amount each month for 9 months? My fellow alumni always surprise and inspire me, so I look forward to answering this challenge together. Let's help the Peninsula kids of today!

Direct questions to Andromeda in the development office 650.325.1584 ext. 33, email alumni@peninsulaschool.org. Send gifts to Development at Peninsula School, 920 Peninsula Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 or donate online at www.peninsulaschool.org – 'Donate' button on the bottom.

Please contact Heather at newsnotes@peninsulaschool.org for more information about the articles, 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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