

NEWS



NOTES

SPRING 2014



THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR

By *Kathy Koo*

IN REFLECTING upon the last two years, and where the school is positioned today, I feel extremely pleased that we continue to thrive with exceptional teaching and learning, strong demand in enrollment, extremely low attrition, prudent financial management, a banner year in fundraising, committed and philosophically aligned families, happy children, and a climate of appreciation for and confidence in Peninsula's stability and well-being.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve and grow both professionally and

PENINSULA THANKS KATHY KOO FOR HER LEADERSHIP AND HER LIGHT!

By *Stacy Dryer*

AT THE END OF JUNE, Kathy Koo will retire from Peninsula School, having served the past two years as its interim director and as its business director for 7 years before that. With genuine compassion, authenticity, wisdom, and good humor, Kathy has been our guiding beacon during these past two years of transition and change, as we have steadied ourselves and readied ourselves for our next head of school, Jim Benz.

What a school needs in its interim director is often somewhat different than what it needs in its long-term head of school. And, Kathy was, in so many ways, ideal for the interim role. The truth is, even under the best conditions, times of transition can be scary. Before any of us can learn, grow or change – whether adults or kids – we must first feel safe, respected & loved. Because of Kathy's deep and varied connections to Peninsula over the past 15 years – as board member, business director, and Peninsula parent & volunteer – it was clear that she not only loved our school and our community, she also knew it very well. With Kathy at the helm, everyone in our community seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief. We knew we were in good hands.

By her own admission, Kathy knew she lacked the background as an educator to be the school's long-term leader. However, as primary teacher Graceann Johnson pointed out, *"What Kathy may have lacked in educational background, she more than made up for with research, hard work, collaboration,*

REFLECTIONS ON PENINSULA AS I RETIRE

By *Gail Buschini*

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I had my weekly pleasure of being with the children in my class at the library, where we were listening to Mish's wonderful reading of the current book. It is the longest time I have during the week to be quietly enjoying the children's presence.



We were at the mid-point in the four performances of our class play, the culmination of two months of work together. I had watched them generate the idea for their own character (including personality, "motivation," and costume), and then collaborate to come up with ideas for the plot. The two outcomes from this process that I treasure the most are the children growing both as distinct individuals and as important members of the group. Working together in this intense way deepens

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KATHY

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and above all, her sheer love for and joy of being with all our kids." According to admissions director, Mary Lou Lacina, "Out of the many things, that are too long to list here, that come to mind when I think of Kathy is her genuine love of children and the time she will always take to acknowledge and chat with a child or group of kids. For her this is never an interruption." Similarly, Chris Vale, former kindergarten teacher and current HR assistant to the director, commented, "I so appreciate how every day Kathy embraces the Peninsula community with enthusiasm and tenderness, and the courage to always ground her actions in our mission, 'creating a space where children thrive and develop their full promise as confident contributors in the world."

The beauty of Kathy is that her affection and respect for others is not limited to our students. She seems to extend this goodwill towards everyone she meets. According to first grade head teacher, Annie Young, "Kathy has this ability to relate to all kinds of people within our community, taking on challenges, making really hard decisions, and communicating to staff, parents, children, and everyone with kindness, intelligence, a sense of humor, and compassion. She was just what we needed!" One of the things which Kathy herself is most proud of (as she should be) is helping to build and restore a climate of communication and openness. It is perhaps this achievement, more than any other, which has allowed her tenure at Peninsula to be filled with so many other remarkable accomplishments. Feeling held by Kathy, our school was ready to dig in, do some hard work, and grow.

As our community engaged in this work, Kathy's affection for and long history with the school allowed her to hold and protect all that was most sacred about Peninsula's culture, while at the same time being the catalyst for the type of change which could best support Peninsula's long-term well-being. According

to Frank Smithson, Peninsula's facilities director and one of Kathy's long-time colleagues, "Kathy is a gifted strategic thinker and seriously pragmatic problem solver whose contributions have been essential to the process and product of the school for nearly a decade." Veteran 3rd grade teacher Gail Buschini shared, "Kathy has been able to create a balance between compassion and practicality, engaging in an authentic inquiry with members of our community in developing solutions to challenges, and has been able to move forward with decisions in both a respectful and timely manner."

One of the most important relationships at a school is that of the board president and head of school. Back in spring 2012, when Kathy was appointed interim director, our board of directors, led by board chair Amy Fox, knew it was time to take stock. In close collaboration with Kathy and our entire school community, the board set out to determine what type of leader could move us boldly into the next phase of our future.

Re-defining and reaffirming our mission and core values was an important first step in this process. According to Amy Fox, board chair, "Kathy's leadership is rooted in her ability to embody the mission and core values of Peninsula School, and to create and sustain a school community that reflects those values." Kathy and Amy, leading the staff and Board respectively, worked in parallel to ready the school for the search and recruitment of our new head of school. Beyond publishing Peninsula's new mission and values statement, the work also involved clarifying decision making models, clearly delineating the authorities of the head of school and the board, and updating the



Kathy 'at home' visiting with some of Peninsula's younger students.

bylaws of the school to allow for the appointment of board members – all critical and fairly groundbreaking work. Although it was, at times, extremely challenging and time-consuming for Kathy, Amy, the board, and the entire community, Peninsula now finds itself extremely well-positioned to welcome its new leadership in July.

Upon reflection, Amy shared, "From time-to-time folks thank me for all of the work the board has done over the past two years. People seem aware that the departure of a head of school can be disruptive to enrollment, staff morale, community perceptions and fund development so they are especially thankful our school is doing so well. Of course the board has worked hard, but here is our secret: Kathy Koo! Her skilled leadership creates an environment where change and growth can occur. Honestly the school would not be in the fantastic shape it is in if we had not had her as our interim director during this critical time."



involved clarifying decision making models, clearly delineating the authorities of the head of school and the board, and updating the

Kathy has had a very full (sometimes over-full) two years as Peninsula's director. In addition to all the work she accomplished in partnership with the board, she helped facilitate the graceful, honored retirement of many veteran teachers and the hiring and mentoring of our next generation of exceptional new educators; she supported in important ways our ongoing diversity work as well as nurtured our new parent association, POP (Parents of Peninsula); and she made certain there was ample focus on kids, curriculum, classrooms and our beautiful grounds. Perhaps what is most striking about Kathy's time as interim director is that in spite of being the mother of five and carrying the workload of at least two full time people, she took the time to stop and smell the proverbial roses. Celebrating community and creating opportunities for us to be together seemed to be one of the hallmarks of Kathy's tenure and also one of the favorite parts of her job. In her own words, some of the things Kathy will remember most fondly are *"seeing more closely the love, spirit and dedication with which our teachers and staff hold the children; being embraced and loved by kids myself, especially those tiny tots – nursery, kinders – pure and genuine, stopping by my office, excitedly showing me their library books, screaming my name as I walk by nursery, seeing their smiles left and right; seeing the wonder and appreciation of our grounds from the eyes of prospective parents and staff; spending time together as a community dedicated to the hire of a new fabulous head of school AND achieving a ton of productive work and joy along the way."*

Mel Carvalho, 7th grade teacher, summed it up beautifully for us all: *"I hate to imagine what could have happened to Peninsula if Kathy had not been willing to step up and hold our mission, vision, and values dear while helping us to prepare to transition to a new director! Kathy has been kind, present, knowledgeable, and inspiring, challenging and supporting the staff in the most positive way. I don't know how she mustered all the time and energy it must take to handle so many things so gracefully! I feel a deep gratitude for all she's done, and I hope that once Jim arrives she is able to get some R&R and family time."* For everything you've done for us, Kathy, over the years, we all wish that for you and so much more.



GAIL

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their relationships and sense of community. This day, I was filled with appreciation for the intimacy and ease the children had with each other, cuddled up on the couch, sprawled on the floor, sharing a chair, touching a foot to someone else's leg, occasionally resting a head on a shoulder. I also love seeing how beautifully different they are from each other.

I believe that the children experience Peninsula as a home. Generally comfortable in the classroom, "playground" and Big Building, they are spontaneous and engage naturally in what appeals to them during their unscheduled time. I love the way the adults in their lives make their school available to them for this experience of ownership. Their freedom is made possible by providing them just the right amount of guidance and boundaries, moment to moment (a truly dynamic and not always easy balance to achieve).

The relationships between teachers and children at Peninsula are more multi-dimensional than those I had with my teachers in school. While we are often in the position of imparting knowledge, guiding lessons, or communicating expectations, we are also giving the children opportunities to explore possibilities, make their own decisions, and discover consequences. Those opportunities expand as the individual children grow in their capacity to be responsible for themselves and their actions. I had no idea, when I began teaching, that I would so often experience friendship with the children in my class. It

manifests both in our casual interactions and class times, where we are often truly learning together.

Relationships between staff members and parents are also richly complex. Our deepest shared commitment, of course, is to the children, each in our own ways. Our successful partnership is essential to the wellbeing of the children, and calls upon us to have the same respect and appreciation for others that we are committed to having the children develop. Many staff members have also been parents at Peninsula, which I think benefits the school in multiple ways. We are fundamentally grateful that parents have chosen Peninsula for their precious children.

Our way of teaching at Peninsula is predicated on the belief that children are naturally curious about the world, and eager to explore and discover its wonders, patterns and possibilities. We aim to nurture those feelings, to make information and paths to learning available, to respect diversity of interests and ways of learning, and encourage creativity and passion. We support children in mindfully taking risks, respecting themselves and others. Honestly, my favorite attribute of Peninsula is how children learn to both express themselves personally and to care for others as well, rather than choose one or the other, as is so often the case in our society.

I have been a parent, a Board member, a teacher, and a grandparent at Peninsula over the last 44 years. I have learned so much more than I could have imagined, and am deeply grateful to the children, staff members, and parents I have known over the years.

REBECCA REYNOLDS RETIRES

AFTER 36 YEARS teaching at Peninsula, Rebecca Reynolds is moving on to retirement. Looking back, here are a few memories and thoughts from students and staff who knew her along the way.

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Our 6th grade class had Rebecca early in her teaching career. I remember feeling cared for and respected by Rebecca both as an individual and as an entire class. We weren't an easy class and we certainly made Rebecca earn our respect.

I don't remember the exact circumstances or what I had done (it was something vaguely naughty) but Rebecca decided that I needed a "talking to." I thought I was in trouble and kind of expected some sort of reprimand. Instead Rebecca took me out for burritos. Rebecca had noticed my sadness and hurt that I thought I had cleverly disguised as anger. She listened to me. She asked me questions. She cared. And she cared enough to ask me these things away from school and away from the other kids. I don't think I owned up to much that day, but this idea that someone else noticed that I was hurting and thought a burrito and a private chat might help was wonderful. Rebecca may have been a new teacher then, but she really saw this kid and it made a difference. Thanks Rebecca. Congratulations on your well deserved retirement.

With love,

ARIEL FRAGER, CLASS OF '84

Rebecca always had an amazing way of encouraging us students to bring our unique best to the task at hand. This is an encouragement that I apply daily in my life and am deeply thankful for her role in helping me be the person that I am today.

HOLLY MILLER (SABELMAN), CLASS OF '92

I have many memories from my class time with Rebecca – cool class activities, plays,



Rebecca pictured in 2014 (left) and in 1986, admiring the face-painting of a student at the Learning Fair (right).

unique books she read us, painting the pillow room, etc. Among these, one field trip stands out. We were on a camping trip at Turlock and somehow Rebecca managed to organize a field trip to the Hershey's chocolate factory in Oakdale! This was a student's dream come true. Afterwards we all went back to our campground to eat our chocolate souvenirs and roast peanut butter cups over the fire. I'll remember it forever.

KENNY MEEHAN, CLASS OF '94

I have lots of memories of course. But the one that most comes to mind is when Rebecca, Rebecca Bell, and I would run toward each other every so often screaming "Rebecca!" It was lots of fun. I also remember her generosity and warmth. She was patient and supportive with my extreme test anxiety that materialized in high form when we had to take standardized math tests during the 6th grade, the year I was in Rebecca's class. She always thinks of the little things (and big things!). She is a person with a big heart. Congratulations, Rebecca, I hope to see you at the Learning Fairs!

REBECCA SEEMAN, CLASS OF '84

When I became Rebecca's assistant, I had very little experience teaching. I had my ideals, my beliefs, and my dreams, but I didn't know what working in a classroom meant. Working

for Peninsula School as a whole was inspiring, but the experiences I took away from working in Rebecca's classroom have stuck. In challenging teaching situations, I often try to think how Rebecca would handle them. In the case of chatty students, she often relegated them to the window seats and I quickly learned that this helped these students feel special instead of punished. This was an ongoing theme in Rebecca's work with kids and I was lucky to see it play out over the years I was there.

EMILY (WALTERS) SOUTHER

When I worked for a year with Rebecca, I loved that she always had a book she would read aloud. Soon after the first Harry Potter book came out, she read it to the class. When the class rather strongly voiced the opinion that Hermione's name should be pronounced "her-me-own," Rebecca went along with it. I think fondly of her grace and aplomb as she read the name, over and over, with that off-beat pronunciation.

EILEEN VAN RHEENEN

I am teaching at Peninsula School because Rebecca knocked on my door almost 30 years ago. We'd never met before that day. I had recently moved back to the area and had, nearly fifteen years after graduation, left my old elementary school far behind.

But Rebecca's car broke down and she needed a phone. My door was the closest one.

One thing led to another and I drove Rebecca first to the local garage and then down to school. By the time I got to school, I was curious. Rebecca was a newcomer to the school I had known, and yet it felt like I'd known her for years. In her own, unique, calm-with-a-twinkle-in-her-eye way, she belonged in among the wise oaks and the graceful columns of the Big Building. The people change, but the heart of the school endures. You can go home again.

Since then, I've seen Rebecca leave her imprint on a school that will be forever strengthened by her having been there. I'll miss working with this gem of a woman who keeps her fingers on the pulse of what is right while never losing the humor that makes it all worthwhile.

BARBIE PAULSEN, CLASS OF '71

Rebecca and I started working together in 2001 on *The World of the Brothers Grimm* with the 5th grade and spent many subsequent Januaries in fruitful collaboration. Her combination of inspiration, problem-solving, and incredible competence meant that every production we did together looked great and ran smoothly. Many a year I would walk into the auditorium on the morning of our first performance to find Rebecca high up



*A familiar sight to generations of Peninsula kids, Rebecca helps a student during math class.*

on a ladder, adding beauty and detail to an already terrific set. She was a master of the big bang for the small buck costume.

The greatest gift Rebecca gave me was as a teacher to each of my three kids. The depth of her experience and her broad perspective about pre-teens made her an indispensable resource. Her compassion

and insight in conference after conference went a long way to ease a worried parent's heart. Thank you, Rebecca, for being there for me in so many ways.

MERRILL GRUVER

Rebecca is kinetic energy. She is always in motion, always taking care of some responsibility. She is a teacher first, but also an organizer, a mentor, a sounding board, a colleague. She is a juggler, one who has many balls in the air and never drops one, or misses a cue. She is always willing to lend a hand; be it pulling weeds in the garden, heading out on a hike, or offering insight to a tricky situation. Rebecca, thank you for all you have given to the upper school, its students, and us, the staff.

JEFF ZOTZ

I had the pleasure of working with Rebecca both as a student during my time at Peninsula and as a teacher ten years after graduating. Rebecca's mentoring was an essential part of my transition into teaching 8th grade and her steady guidance helped make that transition a smooth one. Rebecca's tireless energy and wisdom as well as her desire to help those around her has helped to shape the upper school over the previous thirty years and has been influential to all of us. It won't be the same without her.

BRIAN ADAMS, CLASS OF 2000

## THANK YOU

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personally in this interim director role. I feel extremely fortunate to have received the support of our entire community as evidenced in the genuine warmth, goodwill and hard work exhibited throughout the last two years by every member and at every juncture. We have used our time together to hire a wonderful new head of school, prepare our institution

for new leadership, and accomplish the everyday, important work of teaching kids and operating a school. What heartens me the most as I transition out of this role, is finding that while we, dare I say, change (we do, we really do!), we also remain very true to our mission, core values and institutional heart. My hope for the future of Peninsula is that we continue to be wise, conscientious, intentional and strategic in our decision-making while remaining cognizant and embracing the fact

that our current philosophical and operating model works very well for our school.

There will certainly be moments of wistfulness as I relinquish the reins, but I am genuinely excited for new leadership and the prospects for our future. And of course, as a parent of two alums, three currently enrolled students, including a kindergartener, I will never be too far away. Thank you for a great ride and partnership!

## ALUMNI CONNECTIONS



Barbara (Smith) Willis with "Barney's Group" Auction, April 1965.

### Barbara Smith (Willis) '67

I live with my husband and children on a small raw milk dairy farm near Ithaca, NY. I attended Peninsula for the 5th grade in 1964-65 and Barney was my teacher. I spent most of my days with Billie in the craft shed! It was a formative experience for me and it was a sad day when our family relocated to Germany and I had to leave part way through

the year! Now that one of my children attends a Friends School I think of my experience at Peninsula often and wish she could be there. But the world is changed and the values Peninsula held are being threatened, even among Friends schools. It was a precious time for me and I wish Peninsula all the best in standing against the educational tide.

### Michael Becker '83

Can't believe 30 years have passed, boy does it go fast! June will be my 20th wedding anniversary. I have two kids Lauren (9) and Tyler (7). Life has been filled with adventure – international travel, start up and studies. I recently started a new company ([www.mcordis.com](http://www.mcordis.com)), have been chipping away at a doctorate for 10 years (this is the year to get it done) and am spending more time with the family and friends. Peninsula is always on my mind. In fact, I swung by at 5:00 AM on the way to the airport the other day just to get grounded before flying off again. Here is to the next 30 years!

### Kai White '87

I live with my husband and daughter on the most remote island in the world. Yup, technically Hawaii is the most geographically isolated island chain in the world. But the good news is we have jet airplanes. I've been working as



Dave Hershgold helping his friends with their Go-Cart, 1969.

a freelance consultant to our national treasures – Historic buildings. I also review books for ForeWard Magazine and have worked as an adjunct in English composition. I would love to hear how the Big Building is doing and what the rest of you crazy kids from the 70's and early 80's are up to now. I recently went on Zillow and realized to my horror that my childhood home off Coleman Avenue is now valued at more than \$2 million. Gasp what has happened to the neighborhood??!

### Dave Hershgold '74

Hi All, I attended Peninsula from 1968-1970 (2nd -4th grade) and was in Woody Nichols' class. Some of the best memories were made while I was there. My friends Aaron English,

Allan France, Peter Carnigan, Charlie Shapiro and others were my childhood anchors. I wish I could do it all again. I attribute much of my creativity, problem solving ability and desire to keep my mitts in everything from music to homebuilt airplanes to my time at Peninsula. I am now a husband to Robyn and a Dad to two wonderful kids (9 and 12) and an engineer in the medical device industry. Thanks for everything,

### Jay Streets '74

I live in San Francisco and work in San Jose as Union Representative for the Carpenters Union. I have a 28 year old son, Ian, who was at Peninsula early on but finished public school in San Francisco. I volunteer with a group through the San Francisco Library, City Guides, and we give free walking tours in San Francisco. My parents



Michael Becker and his family.



Kai White, in a recent performance playing cello.



Jay Streets

are still married, alive and healthy, living in Redwood City in the house my brothers and I grew up in. I am actively involved in historic sports car racing with my father and I attend a lot of San Francisco Ballet with my mother.

### Holly Sableman Miller '92

I have enjoyed the transition into the area of Mission Advancement and Development at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch (a treatment center for youth and adults in 3 campuses throughout North Dakota). I am also beginning the process this spring of receiving my credentialing in Nonprofit Leadership and look forward to this assisting me as I continue to serve in the positions I am placed in.



Holly Sableman Miller and her family.

My husband Jason and I continue to treasure all the joy of watching our now one-year-old Kayla grow up and experience the wonder of the world!

### Kenny Meehan '94

I moved from LA where I was working as a video editor and am living locally again, in Redwood City. I recently completed a documentary with a fellow alumnus from class of '94 – Matt McCroskey. The film is titled *Big*



Kenny Meehan

*in Bollywood* and follows us on a trip to India investigating the fame and follies of a new star in a Bollywood blockbuster. (We are very excited that *Big in Bollywood* is being released in theaters later this year and will be available online as well.) To fund my film projects I work at Apple helping to develop their video editing software. Additionally, my wife Misha and I just had a baby boy, Zander Meehan, who is the light of our lives.

### Kristie Nelson '91

I love getting these alumni News Notes. Peninsula community – you're like my extended family. Peninsula was so instrumental in forming the person I am today. I was

always allowed, encouraged, to be Kristie the bird-girl. I could care for a nest of baby finches in the pillow room that needed feeding every hour. Get a *whole day* (4th grade nonetheless!) to stuff a Barn Owl in the Science Room with Doris. I remember conversations with Henry Scott – awed to hear about a tame Cooper's Hawk he had as a boy. And the campus – so many birds whose lives (and nests) were there to be discovered. The California Thrashers, the screech-owls... I spent days, years, watching the birds around campus in intricate detail. I dread to think about the ordinary person I would've turned out to be if not for Peninsula! And, Peninsula taught me to love freely, be honest, and have fun. I'm so grateful.



Kristie Nelson with her husband at their farm.

I live at Mono Lake in eastern California with my husband Joel in a rustic cabin without electricity. I work as a part-time bird biologist and part (or full?) time farmer. We have the full array of farm animals, grow most of our food (and store it for year-round), and seasonally provide produce and farm products to local customers. Hello to my Peninsula friends and connections.



Our beloved Woody Nichols, as so many of us remember her, reading with her students (1965).

# THE POWER OF OUR KIDS

IN THE AFTERMATH of Typhoon Haiyan, our 7th grade (Mel's) and 4th grade (Betty's) classes sponsored a school-wide event to support relief efforts to the Philippines. They researched the country as well as the disaster, looked into charities supporting relief in the region, and picked two organizations based on their findings. Mel and Betty's students then shared what had happened in the Philippines and what they had learned with each of the other classes in age appropriate ways, from the Nurseries through 8th grade. They invited everyone to join them in their efforts and hosted a whole school jog-a-thon and food sale on January 10th. It was a beautiful day of strength, togetherness, and care at our school.

In representative Peninsula fashion, everyone participated in a way that really worked for them. Students completed laps around the Big Building at their own pace and in their own way, ranging

from hardcore runners and endurance runners to giggling walkers, friends and siblings holding hands, and even a few kids reading books as they went. It created a truly heartwarming day. Ultimately, through the efforts of these admirable kids, the Peninsula School community came together and raised over \$25,000 in support of Typhoon Haiyan relief! However, in addition to raising money for an important cause, this student-led event was a way to support student leadership development, social justice, and global stewardship, goals that were established at the outset by the students themselves. The jog-a-thon inspired community activism in responding to world events and inequities, and created opportunities to discuss and learn about current events, climate change, global socioeconomic issues, and aid. It also fostered cross-grade level and school-wide collaboration, resulting in learning, play, and helping others.



# PENINSULA SCHOOL · SPRING 2014

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## A FAREWELL TO KATE

FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, our staff, kids and their parents have had the pleasure of Kate Vander Ploeg's gentle, patient, and wise teaching, all delivered with a smile and a laugh. When Kate came to work at Peninsula in 2009, she slid so naturally into the community that before the year was out, many had already forgotten it was just her first year. She, however, noted that on arrival she remembers being in awe saying, "(Peninsula) was unlike any community I'd been in before . . . I did not know a community could be like this." While she felt welcomed and appreciated right away, it took time to settle in and then genuinely feel a part of this school community. For her, the connection started in the classroom, and then rippled out.

Starting her transition work with Marion Bowers Newton in the summer before her first year, her face became quickly familiar, and her innate understanding and care for kids came to the forefront immediately. Frank Smithson noted, "She appreciates and values the differences and strengths in each child and supports every one of her little friends with extraordinary insight." Adding to her grace and connection with children was her ease working with adults collaboratively. This meant that she blended perfectly with Frank Smithson and Camerina Lozano, our two veteran assistants who worked as a collaborative team with Marion prior to Kate's hire.

Kate loves many things about Peninsula. The intergenerational connections stand out for her as being special and she loves working with the other great teachers she found at the school. However, her favorite element

is the 'little society' of her classroom. She appreciates laughing and learning, working out issues with the kids. She especially loves that Peninsula's community leaves room to understand that even the youngest children can communicate in these ways. Some people never get to see that, and she is so glad that is not the case at Peninsula.

In conversations about Kate two things are always highlighted, her patience and her great sense of humor. This sense of humor clearly helps her keep her calm and patience even with the most rambunctious groups. Frank observed, "Kate really enjoys laughing. She keeps the kindergarten experience for kids and staff alike . . . light and fun, not too serious, while caring." One feels the positivity instantly when entering the classroom, and the connection Kate has with her students is equally apparent.

As to the future, this position was Kate's first out of school, and she is ready for further adventures. She is wanting to pursue other opportunities working with children and their parents, using all that she has learned at Peninsula. There is no chance that Kate will be a stranger, and she plans to visit in the coming year. Kate knows how unique and special Peninsula is and feels blessed to have begun her teaching here, in a school that values the relationships between teacher and student as much as Kate herself does. "It is such a gift to be able to work in a place where you can make true and deep bonds with children and families." These bonds are why we will miss her so much, but we wish her well on the endeavors to come.

## LAKI TAKES LEAVE

LAKSHMI EASSEY WILL BE MOVING ON after her year as an assistant teacher in both Kate's class, with five and six year olds and in Mel's class, with 7th graders. "I really appreciated working with both Kate and Mel, seeing their different styles, both being experienced teachers. It was really helpful as I was taking credential classes," Laki noted. She also mentioned that the wealth of valentines she received from kindergarteners and 7th graders alike surprised her a bit this past February . . . until she realized how indicative it was of the love there is at Peninsula between kids and staff. Her highlights with each class ranged from the "About Me" books in Kate's to the "History and Activism" projects with the 7th graders and discussing with students how historical movements relate to today. Laki had a twinkle in her eye as she talked about the students, and it was apparent that she



honors these kids, at any age, as individuals. Looking forward, she is excited to be heading to Cal Berkeley to pursue her Masters in Journalism (with a focus on multimedia and international reporting). This area of study is full of interesting facets, and she intends to focus on India and emerging technology, specifically as it relates to young people and women. We know that Laki will live her life as she encourages the kids to do, being true to herself and being confident that she can accomplish anything. As an alumna and staff member, and having family ties still here, we are sure she will stay in close touch with the Peninsula community.

## MATH, DIVERSITY AND EVERYTHING!

WHEN LIZ CAULKINS came to work at Peninsula School in 1998 she was no stranger to the school, having been friends with a few Peninsula families, and having attended many Spring Learning Fairs. She was also no stranger to progressive education.

Liz had the great fortune of attending a progressive school called New Lincoln, while growing up in New York. New Lincoln was connected to student teachers from Columbia's Teacher College, who grounded their teaching in progressive philosophies and values such as social justice and diversity. Having kept those two passions with her from childhood, Liz hoped to further them through her teaching at Peninsula, combining them with her great love of math.

Liz found a good fit at Peninsula for a number of reasons. Starting out in Graceann's, Gail's, and Roger's and then expanding across the lower school, one thing Liz loved (and still does) is designing curriculum. She appreciated Peninsula's model, which allows teachers to try things out and continually innovate, so that they can create the best fit for their programs, themselves, and the changing students



Math Liz explains a math concept to a lower school class.

each year. Liz finds that one of the beautiful things about Peninsula is that it celebrates the special interests and qualities of each teacher so their programs are passionate and rich.

She enjoyed that, in her role, she was able to plan lessons and projects that enriched what each teacher was working on THAT year.

Liz appreciates that, at Peninsula, the hope is for the adult experience to emulate the student experience. She enjoyed the freedom to choose how to work with each teacher, parent, and student, which meant she really had to consider carefully each person. She loved the emphasis on experimentation and experiences, and how we encourage teachers and students alike to learn from them. One of the biggest lessons she takes away from Peninsula is learning how to be authentic. "We really do a great job accepting and honoring people for who they are," Liz mused, which helped her realize the importance of being genuine and true to herself with our community.

In her 16 year career at the school there are a few things that stand out as memorable and as proud accomplishments. One career highlight was working on the first strategic plan for Peninsula and advocating for diversity to be its own area of focus in that plan. Liz noted that she feels we have come a long way and are developing a strong foundation for exploring the vast topic of diversity, which touches so many different areas of the school. Another highlight was collaborating with a core group of parents to create the "Fooling Around with Math" events. As part of those events, Liz set up stations around the Playspace, such as "math speak", card games, weighing, and measuring which allowed everyone who came to see how much fun it was to fool around with math ideas. As these events became regular happenings, parents, and upper school students brought their own stations, like mazes and fractions with art. "Fooling Around with Math" encouraged enjoyment of mathematics experientially, and sparked new curriculum, bringing together so much of what Liz loves about Peninsula: collaboration, community, inclusiveness, joy in learning, new approaches, and fun.

As Liz looks ahead, her wish for the school would be to see our students become more engaged with the diverse world and



With an obvious sense of fun, Liz Caulkins enjoys a jump on our beloved rope swing.

social justice - perhaps connecting with neighboring schools for math events or other joint projects. For herself, Liz plans to spend more time with her grandchildren and children, located across the country, reading, gardening and cleaning up 40 years of accumulated stuff in her house and garage! Liz is considering adventures like becoming a Master Teacher, joining the Senior Peace Corps, training for short triathlons, or learning shamanic ways, and we occasionally might even see her subbing at Peninsula or teaching a choice. Wherever her road leads, we wish her well and hope she won't be a stranger to this tree covered campus she loves so well.

## BARB LANGELOH DEPARTS

BARB LANGELOH STARTED WORKING with Peninsula students and families in 1994 and officially became our staff Learning Consultant 15 years ago, working with students and families that have needed extra educational support. Her job has changed over time from working with teachers and students in the primary level, to following our older kids and supporting parents through the upper school as well. She provided an important interface with the Menlo Park school district as well as with paraprofessionals for our kids who required educational testing and follow-up. Barb has also taught phonics lessons in some of the primary classrooms so that kids could get to know her and she could keep abreast of any potential concerns with their learning progress.



After 30 years in Menlo Park, Barb and her husband Rick relocated to Southern California, both for his work and to be closer to their families. While Barb made the move in January, she remained our staff Learning Consultant through the end of the school year so that we could provide as smooth a transition as possible for teachers, students and families. During this time, it worked well to be in touch with Barb via email and phone, and then have her on campus for a few days each month, meeting with teachers and parents. Both during her many years at Peninsula and through this transition, it has been wonderful to have such a skilled professional, and we are so thankful for her years of service.

Barb states that she loves Peninsula School and being a part of the Peninsula community over the last 20 years. She is thankful that her goodbye was more gradual, and knows she will always carry a part of Peninsula with her!

## OUR TRACK TEAM

*By Leo Schneiderman*

For the first time in our known history, Peninsula has a 7th grade cross country team. This team of runners successfully participated in the San Francisco Color Run 5K event. The run benefited a variety of charitable organizations, and left our runners very colorful with lots of smiles on their faces. The team continues to practice three times a week, both before and after school. On April 19th, the team also ran in the first annual Duveneck Dash, located at Hidden Villa, touching base with our school's roots and connection to the Duveneck family. The kids are looking forward to their next running adventure, and are even discussing ramping up to a triathlon.



## BUENOS SUERTE, MOLLY

MOLLY CARR, PENINSULA ALUMNA from the class of 2000, has been working at Peninsula for the past three years. Primarily she has served as our lower school Spanish teacher, working with kindergarteners all the way up to Betty's 4th grade class. She has also assisted in Annie's and Kate's classrooms, helped at reading tables and taught 'canastas' and 'cestería' (baskets and basket weaving) as part of Spanish activities time. Many a student has come home with a beautiful creation, explaining the colors in Spanish to their parents, or singing songs and showing off the dances they have learned from her. She is well loved by students and colleagues alike.



*Molly helps Gail's class practice their Spanish by ordering at a local taquería.*

After careful thought and consideration, Molly has decided that the timing feels right for her to go back to school to further pursue her education, and thus will not be returning to Peninsula next year. She shared that while she loves Peninsula with all her heart, and is very grateful to have had the opportunity to return to her beloved school to teach here, she does feel that personally and professionally it is time for her to head in a new direction.

Molly's strength and passion, both of which we have seen during her time teaching at Peninsula, continue to guide her as she strikes out on a new adventure. She is applying to an all women's computer science program in San Francisco, which is promoting gender balance in Silicon Valley and the computer industries. While we will miss her bright smile and warm spirit as our Spanish teacher, we definitely wish her well in pursuing her dreams.

## Thank You for Your Kind Gifts

Below is a list of all members of our community – current parents, board, staff members, students, alumni, grandparents, alumni parents, friends, community partners and matching programs - who have contributed to Peninsula during the past fiscal year. These gifts make the running of the school possible, and allow us to focus on our work of creating a joyous place to learn and grow, where students can come into themselves and give back to their world.

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*By Stacy Dryer*

ON MARCH 15TH, Peninsula School hosted its 54th Annual Benefit Auction, “*Back to the 80’s at the Coleman Mansion.*” The Live Auction part of the event, which now takes place in a huge tent on campus in the middle of the Big Field, has been brilliantly and humorously led for 30 years by our very own Andy Forrest (class of ’75), along with his trusty side-kick and beloved woodshop teacher, Mikel Kovach-Long. This year, amid the Rubik’s cubes, hair bands, Atari video games, classic 80’s movies, and neon colors that defined a generation, the evening also celebrated a timeless, very special moment. Approximately midway through the evening,

Andy got serious and asked guests to do the same, as he invited them to raise their paddle to support financial aid. Ultimately, the item raised just over \$100,000 in total – *nearly three times as much as any other single raise your paddle item in the history of Peninsula School!!* The extent to which this appeal captured the hearts, minds, & generous financial support of those in attendance reminds us that, as much as the world around us changes, the values & principles upon which our school was founded – equity, diversity, accessibility, and respect for the unique and special contributions of every individual - very much remain the same.

Today, nearly 1/3 of our current families – 28% to be exact – receive some type of financial assistance to attend Peninsula School. Every year, one of the main goals of the Annual Giving Campaign (AGC) is to help ensure that we can continue to provide that support to families who otherwise could not afford to attend. If you’d like to help us “*Mix It Up*” and sustain socioeconomic diversity here at Peninsula, we invite you to send in your gift for AGC in the enclosed remittance envelope. A huge, heartfelt thanks to our entire community for your incredible support!

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