

BWS MAGAZINE

SPRING 2026

MODERN RIGOR

If AI has all the answers,
what does it mean to learn?

by Dr. Timothy Cottrell

Also in this Issue:

- *Remembering Mr. Knight*
- *A Solution to Wealth Disparity*





Brentwood School Magazine

Gail Friedman, Editor
Shirley Blake, Senior Editorial Advisor
Meredith Storrs, Assistant Editor
Gennifer Yoshimaru, Assistant Head of School
Emily Manning Ellis '94, Alumni Section Editor
Alyssa Brakey, Director of Giving
Dara LaPrease, Josh Melnick, Research Assistants

Design: WE MUST BE BOLD

Please send address updates to:
Brentwood School
Attention: Kelley Lonergan
100 South Barrington Place
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 873-1123
klonergan@bwscampus.com

Send letters to the editor to
communications@bwscampus.com.

©2026 Brentwood School
All rights reserved

bwscampus.com

Brentwood School inspires every student to:
Think critically and creatively.
Act ethically.
Shape a future with meaning.

Core Values: Trust, Respect, Responsibility,
Honesty, Caring, Diversity, Community

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Looking into the future ... There are few areas these days that aren't speculating about a future very different from our past. For education, looking to the future has always been our business. In the early 20th century, George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak, often stated, "The progress of the world depends almost entirely upon education," when asked to explain his massive donations to educational institutions like the University of Rochester and MIT.

This was as true then as it is now: education shapes the future. However, perhaps more now than at any time since Eastman said this, the future is shaping education. As you will read in this issue of *BWS Magazine*, your school is embracing this work. What will remain unchanged are the timeless aspects of the Brentwood experience — values, character, work ethic, and lifelong relationships — while we embrace a dynamic evolution to best prepare our students for success, happiness, and purpose in a new world of challenges and opportunities.

Enjoy!
Dr. Cottrell

Opposite: Maggie Aldana '26
Photo by Danny Moloshok

Cover image generated by AI



Tangible memories,
in glass: page 42

FEATURES

22 Modern Rigor

If AI has all the answers, what does it mean to learn?

30 Listen Up

There might be an Eagle on your favorite podcast.

38 Closing the Wealth Gap, Saving America

There's a solution, proven in Australia, that you should know about.

42 Etched in our Hearts: Mike Knight

Alumni sent in their artwork to pay tribute to one of Brentwood's most beloved teachers.

4 NEWS DIGEST

18 ALUMNI PROFILES
Monica Medellin '11
Bob Sanders '86

49 IN MEMORIAM

50 PARENTS ASSOCIATION NEWS

52 ALUMNI EVENTS

60 CLASS NOTES

70 WHAT I'VE LEARNED
Efrén Hernández '07



PUPPY THERAPY

Building a caring community requires the dedicated involvement of every member — it's all hands on deck ... or now, all paws on deck! We have two new helpers on campus: Gus (pictured here), our Middle School therapy dog, and Hazel, his Upper School counterpart (and sibling!).

The mini-Bernadoodles are being trained as official therapy dogs, each managed by (and living with) a school counselor. Gus and Hazel are here to support our students' emotional well-being, reducing stress, increasing connection, and creating moments of comfort and joy.

Photo by Fab Fernandez



LEGALLY BLONDE

Bend and snap! The cast of “Legally Blonde: The Musical” lit up the stage with heart, humor, and high-energy choreography, proving that staying true to yourself never goes out of style. From courtroom confidence to sorority sparkle, our cast and crew poured countless hours of collaboration into a production that proved you can be both “serious” and seriously fabulous.

Photos by Kaelan Barowsky



Bagels for a Cause



Students selected three nonprofits to support in the annual 3rd Grade Bagel Sale: Panthera, GivePower, and Kiva. The sale is the only fundraiser in the Lower School Service Learning program, which generally centers on giving time and heart in our local community; however, in 3rd grade, students journey through the seven continents and consider how they can make a difference in the world. They managed every detail of the sale — from handling payments to schmearing — and raised over \$5,000.



Celebrating Autumn

Harvest Festival once again delighted our Lower School students. Created as a gathering time for Brentwood families, it remains a wholesome day of activities celebrating autumn. Students enjoyed giant bounce houses, face painting, a petting zoo, games, and much more. With the exception of a break during the pandemic, Harvest Festival has been a consistent Brentwood School tradition since 1996, a year after the Lower School opened.

Josh Lefkowitz/Moloshok Photography



SPECIAL DELIVERY

Coco Robotics visited 2nd grade for a presentation featuring their self-driving delivery robots — the colorful vehicles seen zipping through the streets of Los Angeles. The visit complemented the 2nd grade transportation unit and inspired students to consider the ways that technology is shaping the future of deliveries.



600+ TOYS

Lower School students collected more than 600 new toys for families in need in December. The toy drive began with explanations about the work of our partners, One Voice, Hanna's House, and Saban Community Clinic. The personal stories sparked enthusiasm, making this year's toy drive one of the most successful.



CARDBOARD ENTERTAINMENT

During their Halloween celebration, Lower School students played cardboard arcade games that they had created. Over six weeks, they designed, built, decorated, and tested games, such as mini-basketball, bowling, and ring toss. The project was a BCIL Challenge of the Month.



Photos by Danny Moloshok '00



Good Acting, Bad Actors

The Middle School Theater Company presented "Bad Auditions by Bad Actors" by Ian McWethy. The one-act play follows a casting director who tries to find the leads for a community theater production of "Romeo and Juliet," only to see a parade of crazy actors.

Photos by Kaelan Barowsky

A Win for the Eagles at Homecoming

The Eagles dominated at a tradition-packed Homecoming on September 26, with a 49-20 win over Rosamond. Varsity football, cheer, and drill celebrated Senior Night, and cheer and drill teams performed at halftime.

A pep rally revved up the spirits, and many alumni returned to campus to cheer on their alma mater.



Photos by Danny Moloshok '00



ROCKING WALL STREET

Student members of Rock the Street, Wall Street, an organization that empowers high school students, especially young women, to focus on financial fundamentals, visited Oaktree Capital in Downtown LA during a five-week program focused on financial and investment literacy. Thank you to Oaktree Capital and to Brentwood parents Raghav Khanna and Ramzi Habibi for sharing their time and insights!



Josh Lefkowitz/Moloshok Photography



A Showcase of Soaring Voices
Singers from two Upper School choirs performed in small combos, duets, and solos at the fall Vocal Showcase.

Coffeehouse for Vets

Veterans shared beautiful original poetry, essays, and personal reflections at the VCRE Veteran Coffeehouse at the West Los Angeles VA Campus. The Veterans were students in the VCRE creative writing class, taught by VCRE (Brentwood's Veterans Center for Recreation and Education) coordinators Samara Rosenbaum and Alison Rinehardt, both Brentwood employees. "Witnessing the culmination of their creative work was absolutely wonderful — and the gratitude they expressed for this class at the end was very touching," said Director of Veteran Education Dr. Susie Lyons.





Girls Who Code (at Google)

The Girls Who Code Club welcomed back Juliet Lévesque '17 (above) to talk about her experience as a senior software engineer at Google. She shared how Brentwood prepared her for her career and her path to understand the fundamentals of coding. "It was so special returning to the campus where I first discovered coding in Mr. Kim's freshman class," Juliet said. "I'm incredibly impressed by how the computer science

program has grown and so excited for the future of Brentwood's student coders."

Two other alumni in tech also inspired students this year. Bella Yadegar '23 and Elvis Ha '06 visited Brentwood's AI Literacy class. Bella discussed her AI for Business major, a joint degree in business and engineering at USC, and her AI consulting project with Korean Air. Elvis, Vice President of Product Management at Paradox, explained how his Brentwood School education helped him in his AI career, stressed important skills to cultivate, and encouraged students to focus on client relationships.



In the Nation's Capital

Upper School Service Learning Coordinator Becca Marcus, Luna O. '26, Joelle N. '27, Jayme P. '27, and Upper School history teacher Hasani Sinclair (pictured) joined Lower School Service Learning Coordinator Whitney Abramo at the Close-Up National Network of Schools in Partnership (NNSP) conference in Washington, D.C. Students and faculty presented there: students discussed civil discourse in the classroom, Whitney presented on the effect of taking young children's ideas seriously, and Hasani shared insights on navigating political discussions and redirecting them toward broader democratic principles.



TWO COCA-COLA SCHOLARS

It's rare for a school to have even one Coca-Cola Scholar, one of the most selective scholarship programs in the nation, and Brentwood School had two this year! Eric Gu '26 and JoJo Friedman '26 joined 150 high school seniors nationwide who were recognized for academic excellence, leadership, and service in their communities. According to the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, fewer than 1/7 of 1% of applicants were chosen, and more than 107,000 applications were submitted.



BEST INSIGHTS

Jude A. '27, Henry U. '27, Lexi K. '27, and Alexa G. '26 represented Brentwood at the annual Bain & Company High School Consulting Competition. Working alongside mentors from Bain, UCLA, and the BCIL's Zach Chien '13, the team secured the Best Insights Award for their presentation, which addressed this prompt: What drives teenagers (13-18) to discover, choose, play, and stay engaged with their preferred video games?



NATIONAL ARTS HONORS

Outperforming 13,000 applicants in the YoungArts competition, Eric Gu '26 was named one of the top five classical flute players in the U.S., and Chase Klein '26 won Winner with Distinction in Theater/Musical. Chase also was a semifinalist in the competitive Music Center's Spotlight, and Eric made All-State Orchestra for the fourth time.

GIRL IMPACT WEEK

Our Girl Impact leaders organized activities to celebrate Women's History Month, honoring women's leadership and impact. They included visits from women in business and film, such as entrepreneur Amy Liu of Tower 28 and a lunchtime panel with Monica Medellin '11, Nora Weinstein, and Karin Klein (below).



4th Graders Visit Senior Home (a 30-Year Brentwood Tradition!)

Fourth graders make regular Service Learning trips to Los Angeles Jewish Health, a senior home in Reseda (previously called the Jewish Home for the Aging). Students interview the residents; play games such as chess, backgammon, and Connect 4; enjoy sweets; and work together writing cards and packing toiletry kits for Veterans.

Those same residents, along with Veterans from CalVet, traveled to Brentwood later in the year for a special

dress rehearsal of "The Little Prince," the after-school production with 4th and 5th grade actors.

Around Valentine's Day, students performed songs like "Imagine" by the Beatles and "Sunrise, Sunset" from "Fiddler on the Roof" for their senior friends, accompanied by Olga Nevin on piano. One senior said the day "made her month" and was "the greatest antidepressant imaginable."





ADDAMS FAMILY: CREEPY, KOOKY, AND DELIGHTFUL

Bravo to the Middle School cast and crew of “The Addams Family,” a delightfully dark musical comedy, featuring catchy songs, plenty of laughs, and one of pop culture’s most beloved and morbid families.

Photos by Kaelan Barowsky



A COLORFUL CELEBRATION

The South Asian Family Association (SAFA) and the Indian Subcontinent Student Alliance (ISSA) invited families to a Holi Festival on the West Campus. Holi celebrates the renewal of life, joy, and abundance that comes with spring. To celebrate, our community gathered to throw vibrantly colored powders on one another, a Holi tradition.





KARAOKE WITH THE COTTRELLS

Seniors were invited to have lunch and take the mic at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Cottrell, enjoying Mrs. Cottrell's classic musubi as well as hot dogs and boba drinks. Several students bravely sang popular songs, while others explored the backyard, climbed in the treehouse, and fed goldfish in the backyard pond.

MARS AND VENUS

Pete Dymock, an expert in adolescent male development, led a workshop for Middle School boys on the teenage brain, focused on the biological roots of impulse control and self-regulation, giving the boys practical, healthy strategies for high-pressure situations. Dymock also facilitated a powerful dialogue on shaping a healthy mindset around masculinity, encouraging the group to redefine strength through empathy and accountability.

At the same time, the Middle School girls had an empowering session with activities based on their December session with Chelsea Goodan, author of *Underestimated: The Wisdom and Power of Teenage Girls*. Thirteen members of the Upper School Girl Impact group led this work, supporting mentorship across divisions.

Students Perform at Carnegie Hall

Maddi D. '29 and Ryan H. '30 performed at the Winners' Showcase of the Magnum Opus International Speech and Drama Competition, at New York's Carnegie Hall. They earned their spots after winning 1st place in Prose Interpretation and Poetry Interpretation at last spring's Southern California Junior Forensics League's SoCal Championships. Ryan presented two rousing Amanda Gorman poems addressing the climate crisis, taking 1st Place in Poetry Interpretation.

They were not the only Eagles soaring at Carnegie Hall this year. Fifth grader Lorne B. won the Elite International Music Competition against candidates from all around the world and played Mozart's "Rondo alla Turca" at Carnegie Hall in February.



"The Play that Goes Wrong" Goes Right

Upper School students delighted audiences with a hilarious rendition of "The Play That Goes Wrong." Written by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shields, the comedy follows enthusiastic amateur actors who are trying to put on a 1920s murder mystery, when everything goes wrong, from collapsing sets and missing props to forgotten lines and actors fainting.

Photos by Kaelan Barowsky

Tasty Scholastic Arts Awards

Seven Upper School students were recognized with Scholastic Art & Writing Awards in the Ceramics & Glass and Sculpture categories. The works, according to Scholastic, were recognized for "outstanding merit in originality, skill, and the emergence of a personal voice and vision."



Skylar J. '28,
Silver Key



Alexis P. '29,
Silver Key



Liam S. '28,
Silver Key



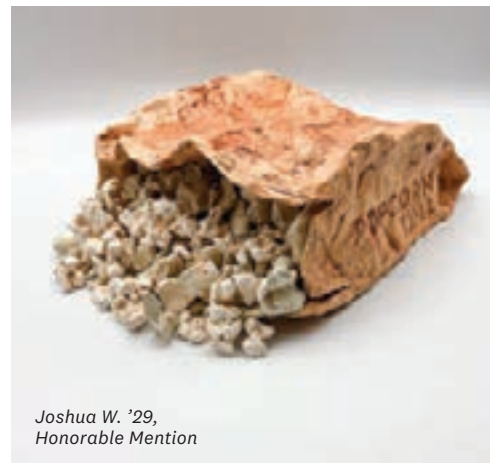
Miles T. '29,
Honorable Mention



Leo M. '29,
Honorable Mention



Avery K. '28,
Honorable Mention



Joshua W. '29,
Honorable Mention



Laura Fox
 (Trustee 2006-15)
 USC Marshall
 Adjunct Professor of
 Entrepreneurship;
 President, Fox Foundation

An accomplished entertainment executive and nonprofit leader, Laura brings expertise in governance, education, and the arts, alongside a deep commitment to service and mentorship.

“Brentwood’s strength is its ability to prepare students for what’s ahead. I’m happy to support Dr. Cottrell in his ambitious vision to build on past innovation and continue to move the school forward.”



Jim Lippman
 (Trustee 2003-09)
 Chairman and CEO, JRK
 Property Holdings

A devoted parent and grandparent, Jim’s alliance with Brentwood spans generations. He reflects a deep belief in forward-looking education and the enduring strength of community.

“For me, relationships and mission endure well beyond board service. Staying connected is my way of honoring Brentwood’s impact on my children and supporting the school for my grandchildren — and for generations to come.”



BRENTWOOD SCHOOL
Legacy Trustee Council

The Brentwood School Legacy Trustee Council honors the lasting impact of former trustees whose leadership helped shape the school we are today.

Established last year, the Council supports Dr. Tim Cottrell by drawing on deep institutional knowledge and the continued engagement of former trustees. Inspired by his leadership, the Council has begun reconnecting past trustees through small-group conversations around key priorities and meaningful opportunities for strategic, forward-looking engagement with the school.

Legacy Trustees remain an important part of Brentwood’s story — as trusted voices, partners, and ambassadors — helping to strengthen the school’s future while staying meaningfully engaged with its present.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Page Adler | Emily Corleto | Joseph Hartnett |
| Kimm Agam | Edward Costello* | David Ho |
| Drew Alphson | Charles Davis | Bryan Hudson '09 |
| Antonietta Arango | Susan DeLaurentis | Robin Hursh |
| Abbas Ardehali | Jeffrey Ehrenpreis '95 | Vicki Iovine |
| Bess Armstrong | Marc Ezralow | Lynn Jacobson* |
| Erika Aronson | Lani Favvre | Bahram Jalali |
| Alexander Babcock | Calista Flockhart | Mary James |
| Eleanor Bartman | Christopher Forman | William Johnson |
| Lara Baumgarten '84 | Laura Fox* | Saul Kahan |
| Judith Beckmen | Eric Freedman '96 | Martha Karsh |
| Rebecka Belledegrun* | Nancy Freedman | John Karubian |
| Jordan Bender | Laura Gallagher | Cece Karz |
| John Bendheim | Marc Gamsin | Scott Kaufman '95 |
| Richard Benfield '83 | Julie Gilbert | Cindy Kay |
| Shawn Bookin '83 | Joann Gloege | Katherine Keck |
| David Booth | Irwin Gold | Charles Kenworthy |
| Lorne Buchman | Brian Good '88 | Linda Keston |
| Elizabeth Casparis | Tom Gordon* | Scott Klein |
| Jones '87 | Jerry Greenberg | David Knight |
| Peter Chernin | Kelly Griffin | David Kohl |
| Nina Cohen | Z. Wayne Griffin* | Joseph Kouba* |
| Gregg Colvin '90 | James Halper | Kyle Kozloff |



Dr. Cottrell welcomes members of the Legacy Trustee Council at the group's inaugural gathering.



Loren Montgomery '87
(Trustee 2011-20)
Founder and President,
Montgomery Clark Advisors

After years as a land use and environmental partner at Latham & Watkins and now as a strategist on large development projects, Loren tackles complex issues with a thoughtful legal perspective and a deep commitment to civic life, community, and public-private partnerships.

“My time at Brentwood as a student, board member, and parent has shaped how I think about community and responsibility. I value staying engaged and part of that ongoing conversation.”



Ron Radziner
(Trustee 2009-17)
Design Partner
and Co-Founder,
Marmol Radziner

A visionary architect, Ron brings a design sensibility grounded in connection — between people, spaces, and ideas — to his long-standing relationship with Brentwood.

“Brentwood is a place that evolves thoughtfully. Staying involved is a way to continue contributing to that sense of purpose and possibility.”

Moses Lebovits
 Timothy Leiweke
 Keith Liberman
 Charlene Liebau
 Jim Lippman
 Cameron Liu
 Erica Lockhart '93
 Janet Lonner
 Tanya Lopez-Brooks
 Jimmy Lustig
 Joan Mackey
 Arnold Malcolm
 Michael Marshall '83
 James McIntosh
 Raymond McLaughlin
 Steve Meadow
 James Mercer
 Vicki Mercer*
 Marla Messing
 Lance Milken '94*
 Lori Milken
 Lowell Milken
 Sarah Milken '93

Jonathan Monkarsh
 Loren Montgomery '87
 David Nathanson '94*
 Angella Nazarian
 Ben Nazarian
 Michael Nyman
 Jill Olofson
 Dawn Ostroff
 Missy Polson '90
 Martha Porter
 Ron Radziner
 Angela Reddock-
 Wright '87
 Raymond Rosenthal
 Robert Ross
 Dominick Rubalcava*
 Reade Ryan*
 Barry Sanders
 Richard Sandler*
 Eric Schiffer
 Sheila Scott
 Robert Shahin
 Barry Sholem

Douglas Shumway*
 Tony Skvarla
 Cam Starrett
 Stanley Stogel
 Eric Suddleson '85
 Penny Sue
 Katherine Sung
 Jeffrey Tamkin
 Thomas Tellefsen
 Bobbi Tillmon
 John Tipton
 James Valeo*
 William Vaughn
 Cecilia Victor
 Casey Wasserman '92
 Scott Watt
 Nadine Watt '86
 Dominique Wirtschafter
 Andrew Wolfberg '88
 David Wong*
 Walter Ziglar

**Served as Board of
 Trustees Chair*



BRIAN LEE



EDEN ROMICK



RYAN GUTIERREZ



KYLE HOSHIDE



ASHLEY CASSIR

THANK YOU TO OUR OUTGOING TRUSTEES

Our outgoing trustees served Brentwood School with remarkable dedication, insight, and heart. Through their thoughtful leadership, creativity, and deep commitment, they helped steward Brentwood with wisdom, care, and vision for the future.

Brian Lee departs the board after nine years, including two years as chair during the pandemic. A calm presence under pressure, he led the board throughout the challenges of that period and continued his dedication to the school, chairing the Governance Committee and also bringing his financial acumen to the Advancement, Audit, Finance, Investment, and Long Range Planning committees.

Eden Romick leaves the board after nine years, including two as vice chair. For the past four years, she thoughtfully

guided the composition and character of the board as chair of the Governance Committee. Eden also chaired the Advancement Committee; served on the Audit, Capital Campaign, Education, Finance, Long Range Planning, and Master Planning committees; and helped create the Legacy Trustee Council, bringing strategic insight and deep commitment to Brentwood's future.

Ryan Gutierrez leaves Brentwood's Board of Trustees after nine years, serving on the Advancement, Audit, Governance, and Master Planning committees. Notably, she is a landscape architect and chaired the Long Range Planning Committee for several years. Ryan was hands on and was often seen walking the campus taking note of potential landscape improvements.

Kyle Hoshide's six years on the board were characterized by quiet leadership and wisdom, astute observations, and generous legal advice on a wide range of issues. Kyle served on the Advancement; Buildings and Grounds; Community, Culture & Values; Finance; and Governance committees. He was also on the search committee that resulted in our new Head of School.

Ashley Cassir joined the board as the Parents Association Chair for the West Campus, following extensive, long-term involvement in the PA, including as Lower School president, vice president, and West Campus volunteer coordinator. Ashley also volunteered on the Brentwood Annual Fund committee for three years. As a trustee, she served on the Community, Culture & Values; Development; and Finance committees.



DANYELLE FREEMAN



ANDY HOWARD '94



SCOTT KAUFMANN '95



TAL TAYLOR

WELCOME TO OUR INCOMING TRUSTEES

We are delighted to welcome the talents of four new trustees; all are current Brentwood parents and two are alumni: Danyelle Freeman, Andy Howard '94, Scott Kaufman '95, and Tal Korn Taylor.

Danyelle Freeman, mother to Harlow '32, Braxton, and Ellis, is the founder of Le Seul, a luxury women's footwear brand that combines orthotic innovation with high design. Prior to launching Le Seul, Danyelle served as the first, non-anonymous restaurant critic at the *New York Daily News*. Danyelle became known as "Restaurant Girl," appearing as an expert on television shows, including "Top Chef Masters," "Iron Chef America," and "Beat Bobby Flay." A Harvard graduate, Danyelle is also a consulting partner at Pound for Pound, where she has advised on hospitality and real estate.

Andy Howard '94 is co-president of Shamrock Capital, a \$7 billion asset manager focused on investments in the media, entertainment, and communications sectors. Andy's charitable and civic engagement have always centered on education, health, and wellness; the many boards he has served included the Independent School Alliance, for which he was treasurer.

A Brentwood School and Stanford graduate, Andy is the father of Josh '24, Ryan '26, and Brooke '30.

Scott Kaufman '95 is the founder of SRK Properties, a real estate acquisition, development, and management firm, and is also an executive at The Allison-Kaufman Company, a family-run diamond jewelry business that his grandfather started in 1920. A graduate of Claremont McKenna and Brentwood School, Scott

served on the Board of Trustees from 2013 to 2015 as President of the Alumni Association and remained involved in the Finance, Transportation, and Master Planning committees. He is the father of Noah '25 and Sasha '28.

Tal Taylor, the Parents Association Co-Chair for the West Campus, is an employment attorney, advising employers on developing effective workplace policies and mitigating risk. She spent 20 years as a litigator, focusing on employment, business, medical malpractice, and general liability matters throughout California.

A graduate of the University of California, San Diego, with a J.D. from Loyola Law School, Tal is the mother of Benny '33 and Juliet '36.



REAL TO REEL

Monica Medellin '11:
It takes a diehard athlete to document women's sports.

By Meredith Storrs,
Assistant Director of Communications

Every champion deserves a hype person. And Monica Medellin '11 — once the Brentwood team captain for both track and field and volleyball — understands this from both sides.

At Brentwood, Monica inspired her teams to victory in competition, but was equally enthusiastic to amp up the crowd from the sidelines, rallying support for her fellow student-athletes. That instinct to amplify others' stories has become the foundation of her career — notably in recent documentaries celebrating female surfers and flag football players.

After college, Monica worked full-time as an associate producer at the *LA Times*, spending nights and weekends producing independent short documentaries about women in sports and uploading them to her YouTube channel. Fueled by her love of sports and storytelling, Medellin credits her capacity and drive to the grit and resilience she developed through hours of digging hard-driven hits as the defensive libero on the Brentwood volleyball team,



As the countdown to the LA Olympics begins, Monica Medellin (pictured with Diana Flores, captain of the Mexican women's national flag football team) sees "The Future Is Flag" as just the beginning of the hype. "My eyes are on women's sports at LA 28," she said. "Women are driving the momentum, and there are so many stories still to tell."

getting back up after hard knocks on her surfboard, and other lessons from her years as an athlete.

That persistence paid off. A passion project about emerging professional women surfers caught the attention of Reese Witherspoon and her media company, Hello Sunshine, leading to "Surf Girls," Amazon's first women's sports documentary series. Now in its second season, the show helped establish Monica as a filmmaker covering athletes who are pushing the boundaries of their sport.

Her latest project, "The Future Is Flag," in partnership with Michael Strahan's SMAC Entertainment, builds on that momentum. As a Mexican-American filmmaker, she was drawn to the career of Diana Flores, the quarterback of Mexico's national flag football team, and began developing a pitch to tell her story in the lead-up to flag football's debut at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. When the grant to fund her original Flores film was turned down, Monica was undeterred. In a moment of serendipity, Under Armour approached Flores merely months later about a documentary on her career and her rivalry with U.S. player Ashlea Klam. And who was top of mind among Flores' team to direct the project? Monica Medellin.

Determined to honor the culture of Mexico, Monica conducted her interviews with Flores in Spanish, despite limited experience with the language. She prepared questions with her mother and aunt so that she could invite Flores to express herself fully in her own language.

"I knew it would mean a lot for her to express herself in her native Spanish," Monica said.

That commitment to authenticity runs through all of Monica's work. "It's the human behind the athlete that makes the story great," she said — a philosophy that shapes not only how she tells stories, but why she tells them.

For athletes like Flores and Klam, visibility hasn't always been a given. Both have reached the highest levels of their sport, earning gold medals in international competition, despite growing up without clear pathways toward professional futures in flag football. But they — and Monica — are committed to changing that narrative for young girls today.

The work is especially important given what research continues to show — girls are twice as likely as boys to drop out of sports by age 14, often citing confidence and body image concerns. For Monica, storytelling can be part of the solution.

"This is the time to show young girls that they can do this — and that they can make a career out of it," she said.

In a way, Monica's work as a sports documentarian is the natural evolution of the girl who pumped up the crowd all those years ago in the Brentwood EagleDome. Only now, the stage is bigger — and the voices she's amplifying can be heard far beyond it.

The message also extends beyond athletics. For young people — including Brentwood students watching her journey — Monica emphasizes the importance of pursuing your passions, even if you don't quite feel ready.

"Fear of failure is real," she said. "It's part of the process, but you have to keep pushing through it." In fact, as Medellin can attest personally, one derailed pursuit often leads you on a different path to success.

Off-screen, that mindset underlies her commitment to mentorship. She regularly speaks on panels and at schools, including a talk with the Girl Impact group at Brentwood in March. Monica is especially passionate about supporting women entering the film industry later in life or returning to creative careers after raising families, as well as women of all ages whose paths are less traditional but no less valuable.

She encourages women to move boldly. "No one will know how to find you if you don't put yourself out there," she said. "You can't wait for someone to give you permission."

A WINDING ROAD TO OUTER SPACE

Dr. Bob Sanders '86: An unconventional path leads from the arts to Antarctica — and ultimately to NASA.

Photo courtesy of NASA



By Shirley Blake,
Director of Communications

For Dr. Bob Sanders '86, the journey from Brentwood student to NASA flight surgeon still feels remarkable.

The doctor who monitors the health of astronauts aboard the International Space Station was a theater major, worked in entertainment, taught diving, treated

patients in a hyperbaric chamber, and eventually — after 38 rejection letters — attended medical school.

Needless to say, his path has been anything but linear. One influence was his Brentwood experience, which encouraged curiosity and experimentation — a freeing mindset that would take him from the stage to the depths of the ocean, across the frozen expanse of Antarctica, and into Mission Control at NASA.

After graduating from Brentwood, Bob majored in theater at Williams College, which offered a creative outlet and a chance to develop storytelling and performance skills. “Theater gave me a place to explore creativity in a serious way,” he said.

He remained deeply curious about science and medicine and became involved in community service and emergency medical training during college, teaching

Bob helped manage a serious medical emergency aboard the space station, prompting an early return for the crew member.

CPR and first aid. He also enrolled in an electron microscopy course at Williams, which, combined with his background in scuba diving and emergency care, led to an unusual job offer.

Researchers were looking for someone to assist with scientific work in Antarctica — someone comfortable in extreme environments and capable of handling technical equipment. “It was an incredible experience,” Bob says of his work as a research diver. “You’re working in one of the most remote places on Earth, supporting scientific research, and learning to adapt quickly to whatever challenges come up.”

The experience reinforced an idea that would guide his career: the value of diverse skills. When he went to medical school in 2001, he was already well prepared to specialize in emergency and undersea medicine, ultimately becoming the medical director for a commercial diving and clinical hyperbaric company in Alaska. He developed expertise in both diving medicine and commercial diving operations — specialized fields that combine physiology, engineering, and medicine, skills that eventually caught NASA’s attention.

Bob joined NASA in 2014 as a flight surgeon and medical director of the Neutral Buoyancy Lab, a role that blends medical expertise with operational support for astronauts. His diving expertise helped him become the lead physician for spacesuit development, then the senior medical advisor for spacewalking and lunar rovers. Currently, Bob is the Deputy

Increment Surgeon for the International Space Station mission.

Bob and his colleagues do extensive pre-flight evaluations to make sure crew are healthy when they depart, then hold weekly medical conferences and assess health issues through video chats. “We have quite advanced telemedicine capabilities,” he said, “something that NASA has truly pioneered since the 1960s!” The medical team meets regularly with nutrition, exercise, and behavioral health teams, and at least one person with advanced first aid training is on board the space station. Bob and his colleagues prescribe treatments and even order remote blood testing and ultrasound (with experts guiding the tests from the ground).

His work can be both routine and high stakes — though “routine” to Bob means flying to Russia and Kazakhstan and joining Russian search-and-rescue forces during a crew member’s landing from the space station. In another instance, Bob helped manage a serious medical emergency aboard the space station, prompting an early return for the crew member.

“You train for those situations constantly,” he said. “When something happens, the team comes together to solve the problem.”

While this sounds infinitely far removed from his Brentwood experience, it is not as distant as it seems. “I didn’t follow a traditional route,” Bob said. “But the things I learned at Brentwood — communication, independence, and being comfortable exploring different interests — made it possible.”

For example, in Dagmar Zilinskas’ art class, Bob remembers exploring sculpture and pottery largely on his own terms. In math, Marla Torre supported his learning style by letting him work through homework problems during class time, which helped him focus. He says writing and analytical skills instilled at Brentwood allowed him to participate meaningfully in

English class discussions — even when he hadn’t finished the book.

“That ability to think on your feet and communicate ideas clearly turned out to be incredibly valuable later in life,” he said, pointing in particular to his theater background.

He also remembers Brentwood teachers encouraging students to connect academic concepts to real-world experiences. In AP Physics, for example, his passion for scuba diving helped him explain complex principles to his classmates. “Being able to translate technical ideas into something people can understand is a skill I still use every day,” he said.

For now, Bob hopes to expand his role at NASA, potentially serving as a lead surgeon for future missions — perhaps even an expedition to the moon. If there’s a lesson in his story, it’s one he believes Brentwood helped instill early: curiosity and openness can lead to extraordinary places.

“None of this was part of a grand plan,” he said. “I just followed things that interested me and tried to learn as much as I could along the way.”

“You never know where your path will take you. Sometimes the most interesting opportunities come from the things you didn’t expect.”



Work as a research diver helped prepare Bob Sanders for NASA.

Photo courtesy of Robert Sanders

MODERN RIGOR

If AI has all the answers, what does it mean to learn?

By Dr. Timothy Cottrell,
Head of School

In an era when artificial intelligence can synthesize complex ideas, draft sophisticated literary analyses, conduct multi-source research, generate publication-quality writing, model intricate scenarios, solve advanced quantitative problems, and execute knowledge-based workflows in seconds — and where these capabilities continue to expand at a remarkable pace — how, and what, must our students learn in order to thrive in an AI-driven future?

The first-order answer is the most apparent and prevalent. Our students need to be expert users of these new tools, supported by developmentally appropriate instruction that guides them along the K-12 path. Like most schools, we are in the process of this transition, and can visualize this implementation.

The higher-order and more essential answer, however, is largely left out of the broader pedagogical discussion. Quite simply, education needs to lean into and continually reinforce all that makes us human and different from AI. Consider the perspective we are calling *Modern Rigor*.

This image was generated by AI with this prompt, following a longer thread about Modern Rigor:

Create a visually striking, conceptual illustration representing "Modern Rigor" in education for an AI-driven future. The image should depict a dynamic balance between structure and possibility, inspired by the scientific concept of Gibbs free energy (the interaction between order and disorder). On one side, show structured, geometric, precise elements — grids, equations, architectural forms, or crystalline patterns — representing knowledge, discipline, and mastery. On the other side, show fluid, organic, expansive elements — light, color gradients, abstract shapes, networks, or branching patterns — representing curiosity, creativity, and exploration. At the center, where these forces meet, depict a human figure or silhouette (student) illuminated or energized, symbolizing the integration of these forces into high-level thinking, creativity, judgment, and leadership. This central space should feel like a zone of energy, transformation, or emergence. Subtly incorporate AI motifs — neural networks, flowing data, or abstract circuitry — blended into the environment (not overpowering), suggesting an AI-augmented world. The tone should be sophisticated, aspirational, and intellectual — suitable for a leading independent school publication. Avoid cartoonish elements. Use a refined color palette (deep blues, golds, whites, and subtle gradients). Style: modern, semi-abstract, editorial illustration (similar to The Atlantic or MIT Technology Review cover art). No text in the image.



Making Students Expert Users



AI education at Brentwood will follow two paths, one focused on expert use of the tool itself (outlined in this graphic) and the other, Modern Rigor, on the habits and perspectives that will help students adapt, change, and grow along with the AI evolution.

AI is not simply a new tool; it is a seismic shift in the educational landscape. It provides us with access to the compilation of human knowledge in seconds, no memorization necessary. This is a fundamental challenge to the knowledge-acquisition model of education of the last century. Modern Rigor emphasizes what AI can't do: human skills such as thinking creatively with habitual curiosity; reasoning abstractly, critically, and ethically; engaging in civil discourse; embracing knowledge in depth over breadth; developing systems thinking; prioritizing social capital; and understanding how to learn, unlearn, and relearn in many different contexts. It addresses the dichotomy between what humans and AI uniquely do well.

Modern Rigor will prepare students not just to keep up with a changing world, but to lead and succeed at the highest levels.

AI is both a tool and a differentiator. Those who use it well will amplify. Those who do not use it, or who merely rely upon it rotely, will fall behind. While AI can expand capabilities, scale, and efficiency, it does not replace human insight or perspective. To use an analogy, AI is like a paint palette. Anyone can use it to create an image. What distinguishes a masterwork is not the tool, but the intangible qualities the artist brings to the canvas. Modern Rigor

Modern Rigor is ultimately about focusing on distinctly human capacities so that students will wield powerful AI tools with purpose, originality, and impact.

is ultimately about focusing on distinctly human capacities so that students will wield powerful AI tools with purpose, originality, and impact.

We all learned through traditional rigor — challenge through content mastery. Students have traditionally been asked to absorb large amounts of information — remember the 2nd grade spelling tests? the college all-nighters? — then, eventually, to develop a broad understanding. Quite a bit of this must remain intact. One cannot effectively create without understanding, nor can one think critically without knowledge. You can't communicate without structure or act ethically without frameworks. Modern Rigor is

What to Expect... Very Soon



More tasks will be automated, particularly those that rely on routine analysis and execution.



The skills that make us effective humans — especially creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and judgment — will matter more than ever.



Adaptability and resilience — the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn — will be vital as old understandings fade and new pathways emerge.



about shifting the emphasis of educational outcomes from those that served the past to those that will best serve us in the future.

Modern Rigor also does not mean radical or core changes to the timeless elements of a Brentwood education that we know and value. Lifelong friendships, character, integrity, ethical judgment, teamwork, and resilience continue to anchor our work. These outcomes of the educational experience map onto any future and are at the core of our mission. Modern Rigor refocuses other educational outcomes, ensuring that systemically, the entire experience is relevant in a rapidly changing world.

This work reflects a simple but powerful idea that has long been part of Brentwood's ethos: Start Curious, Stay Curious, Go Anywhere.

Start Curious: Young children are naturally wired this way and ask hundreds of questions a day. The goal is not to replace this inquisitiveness with answers too quickly.

Stay Curious: Adolescence too often trains curiosity out of students through grades, pressure, and fear of mistakes. Modern Rigor protects this through discussion, projects, research, and choice.

Go Anywhere: Knowledge is dynamic, and technologies change; however, a curious person can learn anything. Curiosity is a key, future-proof skill that we must cultivate and celebrate.

Modern Rigor will help define what an exceptional education looks like. Its success depends on our entire community, past and present, working together to bring it to life. This work belongs to all of us. Together, we have an extraordinary opportunity not only to shape but also to lead the future of education.

This image was generated by AI with this prompt:

Illustrate the concept of artificial intelligence as a creative tool; a student paints at an easel, holding a palette composed of circuits, data nodes, and interface elements. From it, color unfolds into ideas — diagrams, inventions, and imagined forms — flowing onto the canvas. Human creativity leads; the technology follows.

What Will Our Kids Need to Know?

To prepare leaders for our future, these skills must become central, never peripheral, to the educational experience:

- **Creativity** — generating new ideas, reframing problems, and synthesizing across domains
- **Curiosity** — identifying what matters, not just responding to what is asked
- **Critical thinking** — evaluating information, detecting bias, and making sound decisions in uncertain conditions
- **Civil discourse** — reasoning with evidence, listening well, and disagreeing respectfully
- **Communication** — explaining ideas clearly, persuasively, and responsibly across audiences
- **Depth over coverage** — valuing sustained mastery over content breadth
- **Systems thinking** and recognizing interdependencies
- **Network intelligence** — opportunity, insight, and impact increasingly flow through people with whom we are connected
- **Metacognition** — learning, unlearning, and relearning in rapidly changing environments



LOWER SCHOOL

Curiosity explores.
Confidence grows.
Wonder begins.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Curiosity deepens.
Thinking strengthens.
Purpose emerges.

UPPER SCHOOL

Curiosity leads.
Impact inspires.
Potential realized.

START CURIOUS. STAY CURIOUS. GO ANYWHERE.

Modern Rigor in Practice

What does this concept look like for a Brentwood School student?

Lower School

In the early years, when learning is most naturally tied to joy, exploration, and discovery, Modern Rigor begins with curiosity, connection, and confidence. Students build strong foundational skills through hands-on, inquiry-based experiences that encourage exploration, collaboration, and early problem-solving. Many facets of Modern Rigor are already in place, and our youngest students will not detect a significant change. Teachers will still design environments where students are invited to ask questions, test ideas, and take risks, recognizing that mistakes and setbacks are natural

and essential parts of the learning process. Confidence will continue to grow not just from getting answers right but from thinking deeply, persisting through challenges, and fully engaging in the work of learning.

In a Modern Rigor-focused Lower School classroom, students might be asked: “Design and build a bridge using limited materials. Consider: ‘What makes a bridge strong enough to hold a truck?’”

With no step-by-step instructions, students experiment, test, and revise as their structures succeed or fail. The teacher guides through questioning, and students learn not only from their own

attempts but also from observing and reflecting on others' work. In the process, they build foundational skills, confidence, and a lasting understanding that failure is not an endpoint, but a pathway to deeper learning.

Middle School

A uniquely powerful and formative time, this is when curiosity can either deepen into sustained intellectual engagement or begin to narrow under pressure. Students become more self-aware, more socially attuned, and more capable of complex thought, while also more sensitive to risk, failure, and belonging. At this stage,

This image was generated by AI with this prompt:

I want you to generate an image. The motto of our school is "Start Curious, Stay Curious, Go Anywhere." The attachment details Modern Rigor unfolding in our Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools. I need an image that portrays students at these developmental levels, using the mindset of our school motto in the context of AI technology, and the developmental description described in the attachment. Please make it rectangular and horizontally oriented, and use the golden rectangle for the aspect ratio. The image should present the creative output of the minds of the students, which is assisted by AI amplification of their capabilities.

AI is not simply a new tool; it is a seismic shift in the educational landscape.

students move beyond simply asking questions to learning how to pursue them. They engage in longer arcs of inquiry that require sustained attention, thoughtful research, experimentation, and revision. This is when wonder begins to develop into intellectual stamina.

In a Middle School Modern Rigor classroom, you might see a history unit begin with the question, "What makes a revolution successful?" Students develop sub-questions, research using AI, debate interpretations, and revise their thinking. The rigor lies in sustained inquiry, not quick correctness or regurgitation.

At a time when students often become

more self-conscious, Modern Rigor creates an environment where intellectual risk-taking is both safe and expected. Students generate original ideas, test them, and refine their thinking, coming to understand creativity not just as expression, but as a disciplined process of problem-solving.

At the same time, critical thinking becomes more explicit and demanding. Students learn to evaluate sources, identify bias, compare perspectives, and construct evidence-based arguments. In a world shaped by social media and AI-generated content, this is a critical stage for learning — to question information rather than passively absorb it, and to see thinking itself as a skill they can continuously strengthen.

Upper School

As students progress, they begin to see the connection among effort, strategy, feedback, and outcome and to understand themselves as active participants in their own learning. In the Upper School, Modern Rigor comes fully to life. This is when students move from guided learning to increased independence, from building skills to applying them in complex, real-world contexts, and from participation to true ownership of their intellectual lives.

A powerful example of Modern Rigor in the Upper School classroom already lies in the Belldegrun Center for Innovation and Leadership (BCIL). This is where Brentwood moves from teaching about the future to building within it. Through the BCIL's advanced independent study program, students design and carry out their own projects, using AI tools to their fullest potential. They activate curiosity by asking their own questions, creativity by developing original solutions, and depth by working through complex challenges over time. They experience autonomy and discover purpose through meaningful ownership. They learn through failure, revision, and iteration, developing resilience and a deeper commitment to mastery.

At the same time, they strengthen metacognition by reflecting on how they learn best. Presenting and defending their work builds communication skills and the ability to engage in thoughtful, civil discourse. Navigating real-world constraints develops ethical judgment, responsibility, and adaptability. In the BCIL independent study program, real-world learning is not an add-on. It is the most thorough expression of Modern Rigor in action and central to Brentwood's commitment to defining what an exceptional education looks like today.



LISTEN



BY KELLEY LONERGAN '06

Pay close attention: you might find Eagles on your favorite podcasts.

Podcasts are everywhere these days — if you've got ears and a phone, odds are you're already hooked. From background talk on commutes, to late-night true crime rabbit holes, to the thing you swear you'll listen to for just 10 minutes and suddenly it's been an hour, podcasts have become a mainstay of the content-creating world.

Some Brentwood alumni and students have hopped on board, and they're using their voices to tell stories, share expertise, and build communities. These six podcasts span genres, but they share a common thread: using voice as a tool for connection, and proving that Eagles really do stay curious.

UP

LIVE FROM BED

JADE IOVINE '12

“Live from Bed,” hosted by Jade Iovine '12, is built around one core idea: what if, instead of trying to fix your life, you just talked honestly about how messy it is?

Each episode of “Live from Bed” feels like an unfiltered late-night conversation — part interview, part group chat — designed to make you feel like you’re at home, hanging with your best friend. While it addresses life’s trials and tribulations, the podcast has never been about offering advice or tidy solutions. It’s not a “10 Steps to Get Your Life Together” kind of space — it’s closer to a text from a friend that reads, “You spiraling? Same.” “Live from Bed” is about those iffy moments: the mistakes, the almosts, the embarrassing stories that turn out to be universal. The message is simple: you’re not alone.

Jade got into podcasting in part because it didn’t require heavy production — just a space to talk. As the podcast has expanded into video — search “Live from Bed” on YouTube or Substack — the ethos hasn’t changed. It now simply exists in two forms: one you



listen to, and one you watch (which, as Jade points out, means twice the edits and twice the work). Even as her schedule has grown busier, Jade remains deeply hands-on, managing everything from booking guests to editing episodes to producing social clips.

Jade’s guests are often peers (like reality star Lala Kent and comedian Joel Kim Booster), alongside the occasional expert. She said she chooses guests less for headlines and more out of genuine curiosity. Whether her guest is tied to a specific life experience, someone she admires and has been chasing for years, or simply a person she finds interesting, the throughline is always the same: conversations driven by relatability, not performance. The result? A podcast that is less formal interview and more personal voice note.

Jade credits her time at Brentwood, where she was a K–12 lifer, with helping to shape her voice. As head prefect, she grew comfortable speaking publicly, but she traces a pivotal moment back to her senior year, when she spearheaded It’s Our Turn: the Young Women’s Conference. She was given the chance to interview someone on stage for the first time — not just anyone, Lady Gaga! Something clicked, and a seed was planted.

What began five years ago as a way to document the uncertainty of her 20s has turned into a polished podcast, evolving along with Jade. The questions have shifted, the guests have changed, and Jade herself has grown up. (She’s now in her 30s and a new mom!) But the idea behind “Live from Bed” remains the same: life will be messy, and it’s okay not to have it figured out.



THE 50/50 PODCAST

WYATT SARKISIAN '19
AND LUKE STEINFELD '19

Wyatt Sarkisian '19 and Luke Steinfeld '19 of the "50/50 Podcast" have known each other forever — Lower School forever. Their first collaboration? A second-grade video project on *The Giver*. "Nobody made videos except for us," they laughed. So yes, a podcast over a decade later was less a surprise and more an inevitability.

After studying dramatic writing at NYU, Wyatt moved back to Los Angeles and reconnected with Luke, who was at USC studying film. The two fell right back into it — shooting sketches, writing, and, as Luke put it, "figuring out the best ways to collaborate." Luke had already started building the 50/50 Film Festival, a biannual

showcase for comedy and horror shorts. But as it grew, so did the question: what happens in between?

The answer became the "50/50 Podcast." "There's something so personal about podcasting," Wyatt said. "You feel like you know your favorite hosts more than your favorite actors." What started as a way to extend the festival quickly became its own thing — an audio-first, conversation-driven space that exists year-round.

At its core, the podcast is about access. "We wanted to bridge the gap between creative and industry — get filmmakers and business people in the same room," Luke explained. Film school made one thing clear: "You're not just learning how to make art — you're learning how to make art that sells." But that didn't always translate. "A lot of advice is inspiring, but not always useful... it's like, 'Okay, but how do I actually make my first short film?'"

So they built something that answers that. "It's very education-forward," Wyatt said. "We want people to actually learn something." Early episodes featured friends in the 50/50 orbit; now, it's anyone with that "50/50 spirit." And the podcast doubles as a real-time growth chart.

"Watch us grow and learn with us — that's part of the point," Wyatt said. They treat each episode like reps — what worked, what didn't, how to get better. "We learned how to learn at Brentwood," he added. "Start curious. Stay curious."

One standout moment? Landing Patrick Lee, co-founder of Rotten Tomatoes. Not just for the name, but for the story — pulling back the curtain on something that feels untouchable and making it human. It's exactly what the podcast aims to do: break down the industry and make it feel within reach.

UNDERSTANDING THE MISUNDERSTOOD

ERIKA TINSLEY '23



Erika at a Brentwood coffeehouse

Erika Tinsley's podcast, "Understanding the Misunderstood," is all about honesty, connection, and making people feel less alone. It's about making the invisible visible — naming experiences that often go unspoken and giving space to the people who live them.

The idea came during Erika's junior year at Brentwood. When asked, "What have you always wanted to do but are too scared to try?" she had an immediate answer: she had always wanted to start

a podcast. "Three days after that, I started one," she remembered. "I didn't know where else to put what I was going through — so I started talking." What began as a personal outlet has grown into a platform for connection, clarity, and compassion. "My voice is my strongest instrument," she said.

Early episodes focused on Erika's own experiences, unpacking mental health conditions and the realities behind them. "I talk about misconceptions — what

people don't understand about mental health," she explained. The podcast became a way to turn misunderstood experiences into something relatable. But Erika quickly realized the mission was bigger than her story.

Today, the show blends personal narrative with expert insight. Psychologists, advocates, and everyday guests share their experiences, each episode built around the same mission: giving space to voices that need it. What started with a small, school-based audience has grown through social media and word of mouth into a global listenership spanning multiple continents, mostly ages 18 to 40. "Mental health should feel accessible to everyone," Erika said.

And she does it all on a packed schedule. Full-time student in Boston, nearly 30 hours a week as a behavior technician, plus a research assistant role — Erika is busy, yet she still finds time to talk. From her bedroom, she writes, edits, schedules, and records, using the same microphone she started with in junior year. "The podcast has always been a priority because it matters to me," she said.

At its core, "Understanding the Misunderstood" is advocacy in action. "Everything I do is centered around being an advocate for others — helping people feel seen, understood, heard, and valued," Erika said. For her, the podcast is more than conversation — it's impact. It's not only education, but a chance for those who once felt alone to begin to feel seen.

TALES OF THE WISE FOOLS OF CHELM

MEL POWELL '81

Mel Powell '81 started a podcast because he had a box of stories in a closet that needed to be told — and told aloud.

“Tales of the Wise Fools of Chelm,” with 127 episodes, are short bursts of humor with a decidedly Jewish flavor (but open to anyone who wants a nosh). Mostly under

three minutes long, they are a nibble of joy, often ending with a groanworthy, ha-ha punchline.

The podcast is based on Mel’s book, *The Wise Fools of Chelm*, but long before that his father, Charles, an inveterate joke teller, was sharing stories of Chelm

at the end of synagogue services. He had co-founded a synagogue where celebrities in entertainment could gather outside of the spotlight, and Mel’s father’s stories were often presented by actors in the congregation. After his father died in 1991, Mel began writing his own stories of Chelm for a different synagogue. And, during the pandemic, while half the population was attempting homemade sourdough, he turned a box bursting with old printouts into a book.

But the book had one weakness. “These stories were written to be read aloud,” he said, “and the only way to do that in the modern era was a podcast.”

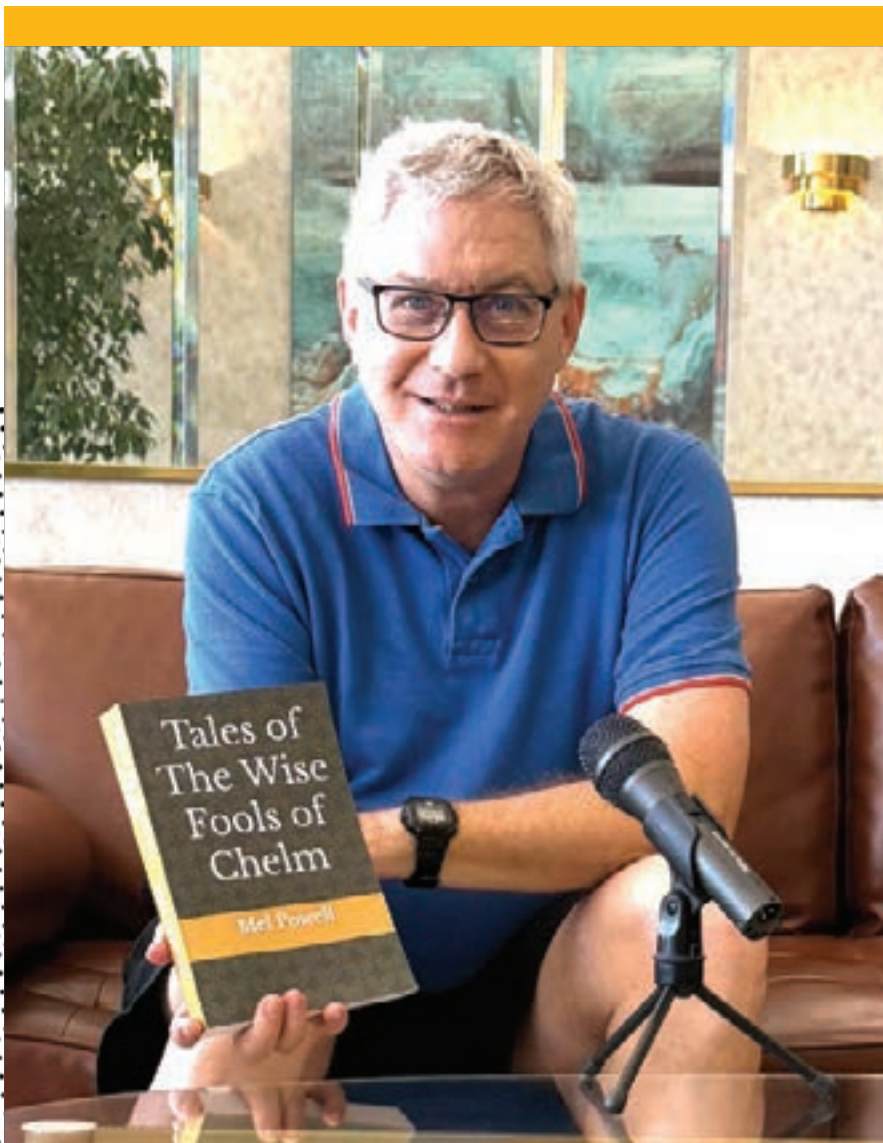
Mel’s favorite Chelm episodes feature partners, such as Brentwood parent Hal Linden reading on “Picky, Picky, Picky” (a mockery of overdiscernment) and actress and cantor Rena Strober on “FORE!” a hilarious morality tale about a rabbi who golfed on the sacred Yom Kippur holiday.

The Powells didn’t invent Chelm. Jewish writers including Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer have written about a similar village in Poland that has become almost fictional, thanks to characters who don’t let facts get in the way of a good story.

Check out “The Wise Fools of Chelm.” Besides “Picky, Picky, Picky” and “FORE,” Mel’s favorite episodes include “Business Sense,” “The Sole of Charity” (he says alumni of “a certain age” who watched “Drake and Josh” will love this one), and “The Woodcutter.”

“I didn’t want these stories to die in a box in my closet,” said Mel. “I felt that the stories deserved to survive.”

— Gail Friedman



CTRL IT

AERIN COHN '27

Aerin Cohn '27 writes and speaks frequently about cyberbullying, and the “CTRL it” podcast is an extension of her activism.

Motivated by a personal experience with online hate, Aerin has testified in the California legislature in support of two bills to help protect children. So far, Governor Newsom has signed one into law, requiring schools to address off-campus cyberbullying. And just this spring, Aerin asked members of the California State Assembly Judiciary Committee to support another bill, designed to restrict social

media access for children under 16 and protect them from addictive features and algorithms that can lead to cyberbullying, anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, and other issues.

Aerin's own experience was nightmarish, with the hate directed toward her reaching some 200,000 people on TikTok. She is determined to use her voice to speak for cyberbullying victims who may be reluctant to talk, and her podcast is one of her tools. Aerin thinks of her interviews as “evidence-based conversations,” and she gathers information from her guests with a casual, accessible tone, careful to listen more than to opine.

“CTRL it” touches on both policy and wellness, and she has hosted guests such as California Assembly member

Josh Lowenthal, who sponsored anti-cyberbullying bills; Sadie Sutton, the host of the mental health podcast “She Persisted”; Chris Tye-Walker, one of LA's sought-after celebrity trainers; Suze Yalof Schwartz, founder of Unplug Meditation (and mother of Brentwood alums Austin '19 and Tyler '22); and Zach Gottlieb, founder of Talk with Zach, a global wellness platform. Aerin said one of her most powerful conversations was with Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, a professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at UCLA, who shed light on the realities and fragilities of friendship.

You can find “CTRL it” on Spotify. Listening to it is a reminder of how someone can flip a negative experience into something powerfully positive.

— Gail Friedman



Aerin interviewing
Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson
from UCLA

SLOANE KNOWS

SLOANE WEINSTEIN '26

For Sloane Weinstein '26, the path to podcasting didn't begin in a studio—it started with a lifelong habit of asking questions. Combined with a deep-rooted love of sports, this habit eventually became “Sloane Knows,” a basketball-focused podcast she launched when she was just 12 years old (yes, 12!) during the COVID-19 pandemic. “I love to talk, I love to listen, and I love basketball,” she said. “In a way, my whole life has been a podcast.”

Sloane's approach to her podcast, which mixes NBA stats, chatting, and fun, has been casual but meticulous. Her episodes often start with a five-minute chat then go deeper into 30 to 60 minutes of full-on NBA conversation.

Preparation? Not exactly a grind. “On a daily basis, for fun, I'm watching games, reading threads, scrolling TikToks, keeping up with ESPN,” Sloane explained. “I joke that I have a photographic memory for basketball knowledge, just not for school.”

Building her podcast has required persistence. “If you don't shoot, you can't make it,” she said. Many requests to guests have gone unanswered, but the yeses have led to major opportunities, including with



well-known NBA players. One opportunity Sloane can't believe: forming a partnership with her favorite player, Draymond Green of the Golden State Warriors. “That was crazy,” she said. “It made everything feel real.”

Balancing the podcast with school and varsity soccer isn't easy (contrary to popular belief, Sloane doesn't play basketball — “I'm 5'4!” she joked). “I've missed class for interviews,” she admitted. “Sometimes, I wish I didn't have to sleep.”

A recent graduate, Sloane is focused on growth, and not just her own. While her current listenership skews heavily teenage

boy, she hopes to change that. “I want to spread basketball through the perspective of a girl,” she said, aiming to bring more young women into the space. “I want more girls and women in sports media. That's a big goal.”

After 13 years at Brentwood, Sloane is moving on to Vanderbilt University. At Vandy, she plans to continue “Sloane Knows” with ambitions to reach far beyond the world of sports. “I want to be like an Ellen or an Oprah,” she said. “I want to interview presidents, interview rappers ... all the perspectives. I feel like I was put on this Earth to communicate.”

CLOSING THE WEALTH GAP, SAVING AMERICA

There's a solution to wealth distribution, proven in Australia, that you should know about.

By Ethan Ghatan '18

America's wealth gap is currently our nation's most prominent national security risk, if human history serves as any indication.

When the top 10 percent owns roughly half the wealth in the country and the bottom 50 percent owns about 2 percent, it should serve as a flashing warning sign. The implication is that millions of people are living inside the most productive capitalist system in the world while owning almost none of it. They work in it, spend in it, depend on it, and watch it create trillions of dollars of value, but they do not participate in the upside. Over time, that kind of imbalance graduates from an economic issue to a civic one.

A well designed country can absorb a lot: political disagreement, cultural tension, even periods of weak growth. What it cannot absorb forever is a broad loss of belief that the future has a place for ordinary people. When too many people feel that the economy is something happening around them rather than for them, the country gets angrier, less stable, and easier to fracture. People stop rooting for growth because growth does not feel like it's theirs. They stop trusting institutions because the outcomes seem preassigned. They stop seeing capitalism as a ladder and start seeing it as a gated community.

Sound familiar? History is very clear about what happens when a society allows ownership to become too concentrated for too long. Just ask Ray Dalio — founder of Bridgewater and author of *The Changing World Order* — what steps precede the demise of nearly every world superpower in human history. A nation with broad ownership is sturdier, calmer, and more

invested in its own future. A nation without it gets brittle.

The frustrating part is that America does not have a wealth creation problem. It has an ownership problem. We are very good at producing growth: our companies dominate the world, and our markets have compounded for generations. In the last 30 years, the Dow has gone up about tenfold and the S&P 500 about ninefold. The machine works, but the problem is that too many people are not in the machine. Compounding, “the eighth wonder of the world” according to Einstein, has been doing exactly what it always does: rewarding capital. If you own assets, time is your friend. If you do not, time gets expensive, and that gap becomes a chasm faster than most people realize.

It may feel uncomfortable, but it’s the truth, and unless there’s a real solution, it’s a problem that will continue to devolve until inevitably blowing up in our faces.

I stumbled into the solution seven years ago during a Brentwood internship at Ranger Global Advisors. At the time, I thought of it the way most students think of internships: a good opportunity to learn, a resume builder, and one more step toward the finance career I expected to have. Alex Von Furstenberg, the CIO of the fund and a Brentwood parent, had something else in mind.

In my second week, he called the office asking to speak to “the intern,” and I was handed the phone. He said he was deeply concerned about the wealth gap in America and wanted me to research the best wealth distribution systems in the world. It sounded like a short assignment, a couple days perhaps. I spent the next few hours digging and sent him a memo on Australia’s Superannuation system.

That memo changed the trajectory of my life. More importantly, it opened the door to the most meaningful remedy to the wealth gap for our country, a form of which became law through executive order in April of this year.

Australia had built something remarkable. Beginning in the early 1990s, the country created a national system called Superannuation that required employers to contribute part of a worker’s pay into a long-term savings account, similar to a 401(k). At the time, Australian Treasury Secretary and eventual Prime Minister Paul Keating was just trying to create wage inflation and offset actual inflation. However, what the simple policy ended up creating was one of the best broad-based, wealth creation mechanisms in the developed world.

Today, Australians have accumulated about AU\$4.5 trillion in Superannuation assets. The system has a greater than 90 percent engagement rate and an extraordinarily high satisfaction rate. Median household wealth in Australia has climbed to roughly AU\$632,200, compared with about \$121,700 in the United States.

Australia made ownership systematic. It stopped relying on perfect behavior from millions of individuals and built a structure that made saving and investing normal, automatic, and long term.

Wealth building is about systematic design, not just talent or effort or financial literacy. If a system is built so that ownership happens by default, more people become owners. If it is built so that ownership only happens for people who have surplus cash, spare attention, and enough confidence to act early and consistently on their own, then ownership will remain concentrated.

It’s just math, and Alex understood that immediately. He had the foresight to recognize both the danger of the problem and the scale of the opportunity. He also had the instincts to know that if this was going to matter, it had to leave the room quickly, and he exhibited the bravery (or perhaps ignorance) to believe he could make it happen. I, a 19-year-old he barely knew, sent him the memo, and instead of treating it like an interesting piece of research, he immediately responded:

“We have to do this in the United States,” and he meant every word literally.

Within a couple weeks, after a stretch of very late nights working with Alex and his brilliant wife Alison, managing partner of KIDS Capital, we had turned that initial work into reports that were being sent to people at the highest levels of public policy and finance. That was the moment this stopped feeling like an internship project and instead like the seed of something monumental.

The work continued into the school year. Then COVID hit, and Alex made the initiative his top priority. Instead of going back to school, I helped him spearhead a political campaign out of his home office. We still joke that I basically lived there for a couple years. That period was intense, surreal, and hugely formative.

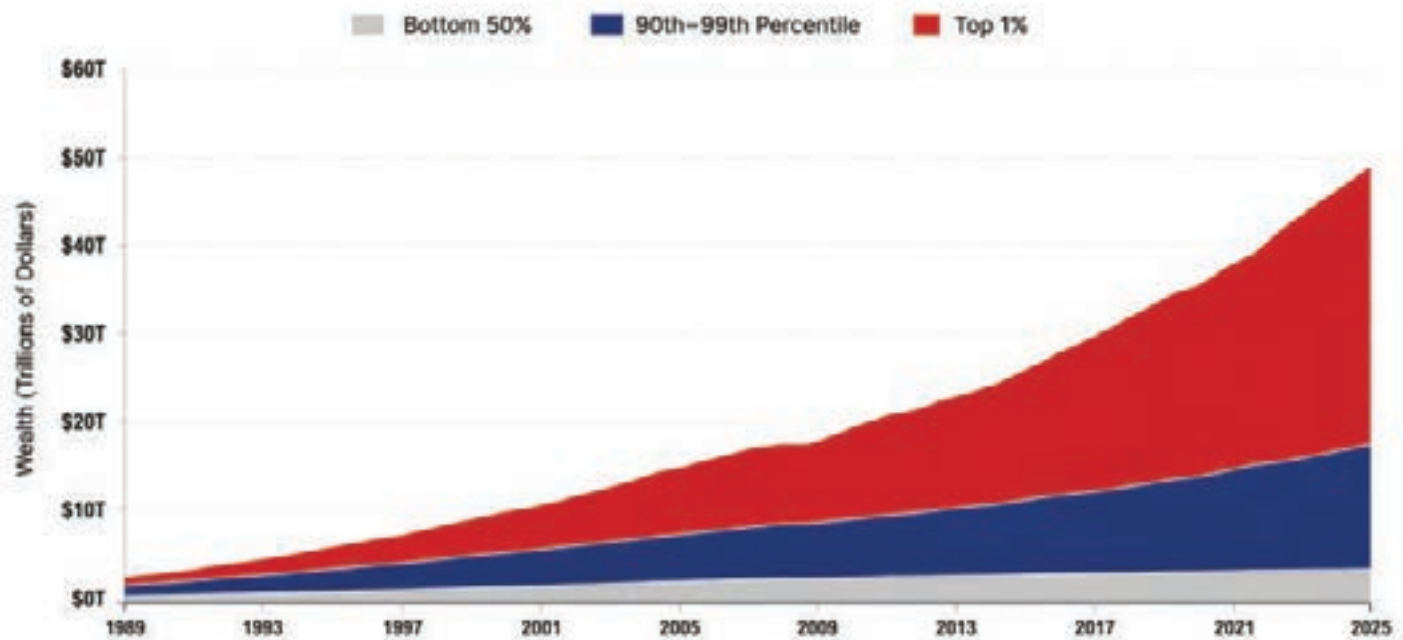
During this time, the coalition widened. Eventually the work brought together a star-studded team including Kevin Hassett, a conservative economist who chairs the Council of Economic Advisers, and Teresa Ghilarducci, one of the country’s best

Wealth-building is about systematic design, not just talent or effort or financial literacy. If a system is built so that ownership happens by default, more people become owners.

known progressive retirement scholars. When a New School professor and a Hoover-affiliated economist are writing on the same side of an idea, you have escaped the ordinary party mold.

The more we worked on it, the clearer something else became: America did not need to invent this from scratch, because it already had a domestic proof of concept.

The federal Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP, is one of the cleanest financial products in the U.S. It covers about 5.5 million federal workers and boasts about 200,000



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data

millionaires. It has very low fees, simple fund options, automatic enrollment, employer matching, and sensible defaults. In plain English, it works because it is built for actual human behavior. It does not assume that people in their 20s are going to wake up excited to optimize their long-term asset allocation. It meets people where they are, gets them in, keeps costs low, and lets time work.

The TSP's expense ratio is around 0.04 percent, a tiny fraction of what many people pay elsewhere. Participation jumped sharply when matching was added shortly after the program was introduced in 1987. It rose again with automatic enrollment in 2010. Among lower income workers, the change was especially dramatic. That matters because one of the laziest assumptions in American policy is that people who are not already saving must simply lack the discipline or not want to. In reality, most people respond to incentives, convenience, and structure. The TSP proves that when you make a good system easy to enter, all kinds of people enter it and proceed to benefit.

At that point, the path started to look obvious. Australia showed what broad-based automatic ownership could do at a national level. The TSP showed that the U.S. government already knew how to run

a simple, trusted, low-cost version of that model. Furthermore, it became an easy sell because every politician we talked to knew and loved the TSP, where the majority of their wealth was typically stored. We had our Trojan horse, and the next step was to democratize the mechanics to everyone else.

That is what first became known as TSP for All, then developed into the Retirement Savings for Americans Act, spent a brief stint as the American Dream Accounts, and most recently was adopted as TrumpIRA accounts in a standalone executive order. The name may have evolved, but the core idea is bipartisan and never changed: if millions of Americans are locked out of ownership because the system is too fragmented, too voluntary, and too easy to miss, build a system that brings them in.

This initiative is often described through the retirement lens, but retirement is only part of the story. The deeper point is wealth. This is about giving ordinary workers a reliable path into long-term asset ownership.

Under the executive order, workers who make less than \$35,000 and do not have access to an employer-sponsored plan would be eligible to enroll in portable, tax-advantaged investment accounts

with a match of up to \$1,000 per year. The accounts would move with people from job to job, which matters in a country where careers are no longer linear. The money would be invested in simple, diversified, low-cost funds modeled on the TSP.

That sounds technical, but the mechanics will exponentially impact the outcomes over a worker's lifecycle. The result is simple: It will take millions of people who are currently outside the capital markets and give them a real way in.

It will take millions of people who are currently outside the capital markets and give them a real way in.

That is not a small group. About 63 million workers in the United States still do not have access to an employer-sponsored savings plan. Roughly 41 million would qualify for the federal match. That means tens of millions of people who are currently shut out of the most basic wealth-building infrastructure in the country could start building assets in their own names.

Once you understand that, the implications get big very fast. Over a 40-

year period, a worker near the bottom tenth of the earnings distribution could end up with around \$108,000 in savings, according to a study done by the RAND corporation. The same study estimates that a worker around the median could accumulate roughly \$501,000. The detail that matters most is that less than 10 percent of the account value comes from government matching dollars. Most of it comes from investment gains. That is the beauty of the model. Public policy creates the entry point, but compounding does most of the work.

If it worked at scale, and there's every indication that it would, the effects on everyday life would be hard to overstate. It would mean more households with actual financial cushions. More families who can absorb a setback without spiraling. More young adults with a reason to think long-term. More people arriving at middle age and old age with something to show for decades of work. It would eliminate the sense, which is now common, that no matter how hard someone works, they are stuck running on a treadmill while the economy compounds for somebody else.

It would also have a real effect on the country's broader mood. One of the things that gets lost in policy discussions is that ownership changes psychology. When people own part of the system, they see the system differently. They become less alienated from growth because growth touches them. They become less inclined to see success as a private event for other people. Ownership creates patience and dignity. It creates a sense that the future might actually have room for you. If enough people feel that shift at once, it changes the national temperament.

The policy would also help address some of the ugliest structural gaps in American life. The racial wealth gap remains one of the clearest examples. African Americans make up about 14 percent of the population and hold only about 4 percent of the country's wealth. A broad-based ownership system would not erase

history, but it would change trajectories. Earlier modeling suggested that a national TSP-style system could create more than \$2 trillion in wealth for African American and Hispanic communities over a long compounding cycle.

There is also a serious fiscal argument for the program. If more Americans build real assets over time, the government will spend less dealing with the consequences of poverty. A RAND corp analysis shows that savings from reduced reliance on programs like Medicaid and Social Security can eventually exceed the cost of the program. The savings are actually projected to run into the trillions in one life cycle.

Don't let the name fool you. One of the strongest validators of the whole effort has been how bipartisan it has remained. We started it during the first Trump administration and were able to continue pushing through Biden's term because the case for it held up. Serious people on both sides kept arriving at the same place: this is necessary. While most ideas today get filtered immediately through tribal instincts, ours kept surviving because the underlying logic is hard to argue with: The system works very well for people who participate. America just has not done enough to make participation broad enough.

Looking back, what still strikes me is how improbable the path was. A Brentwood internship turned into a memo. The memo turned into a much larger initiative because Alex saw the vision and was unreasonable enough to believe that he and his summer intern could effect policy change on a national scale.

Plenty of people can recognize a good idea once it is obvious. Few can spot one early, put real weight and resources behind it, continue building when it gets hard, and consistently bring the right people into the room until the thing becomes real. Alex is the reason this moved from a thesis to an executive order.

He provided time and endless resources with no direct personal benefit and hasn't let up, knowing there's still work to be done to maximize the program's efficiency and execute on our mission. The vision is to make the accounts auto enrolled to improve participation, as the TSP and Superannuation do, and to raise the eligibility criteria so more workers can take part — to expand access well beyond the current \$35,000 threshold. These are critical components to the success of the plan and its impact, which we anticipate will be widely accepted once people start to see the accounts in action. I know Alex will not rest until his vision is fulfilled.


Launching this project and watching it grow has been one of the privileges of my life. However, I care so much about it because I believe it's necessary for our country to continue to thrive and because it's practical to implement.

The wealth gap in America is not going to close unless we proactively address it. It will shrink when we build structures that place capital in ordinary people's hands and leave it there long enough to grow. Australia proved that broad-based ownership systems can work. The TSP proved that America already knows how to run one well. TrumpIRA accounts are the chance to apply that logic to the population.

If we are serious about restoring faith in the American Dream, we should stop treating ownership as something that just happens for the lucky, the early, or the already well positioned. We must build it into the design.



Ethan Ghatan '18 and Talita Von Furstenberg '17 at the White House pitching these savings accounts to the administration



*In Mr. Knight's class,
you were an artist, even
if you didn't know it.*

ETCHED IN OUR HEARTS: MICHAEL KNIGHT

Last August we shared the sad news that our beloved art teacher Mike Knight — the first teacher to serve 50 years at Brentwood School — had passed away.

Mr. Knight joined Brentwood School shortly after its founding and devoted his life to his students, who describe his approach as transformational and his classroom as a refuge. He had enormous respect for the creative process, which he nurtured in every single student. In

Mr. Knight's class, you were an artist, even if you didn't know it.

To honor Mr. Knight as the anniversary of his death approaches, we asked alumni to share photos of artwork they created in his classes. We only have room for a few on these pages; to see all that were submitted, please visit bwscampus.com/mrknight.

If you'd like to add your own work to that gallery, please email communications@bwscampus.com.



☺ This is a drawing I made in Mike's drawing class in '92 or '93, a still life that he set up in class. When he showed me what we would be drawing, I was not thrilled. Lots of rope and lots of pencil. But this exercise helped me "draw what I see." I took Stained Glass, Drawing, and AP Art with Mr. Knight. He was the best and he will be greatly missed.
— Dana Barenfeld '94

☺ I still have every piece I made in Mr. Knight's classes. Three — roses, a whale, and the sun — were from patterns in a book, but two others I designed in Advanced Stained Glass.

I really enjoyed those classes (even though we had no protective glasses or gloves back then and were always covered in cuts and scratches!), and I'm so happy that my daughter, Justine, was also able to take a class with him. In the past few years, his classroom was a regular stop when I did Upper School Admissions tours, and he was always so happy to take time out of his day to talk to prospective students about art. He was one in a million.

— Amanda Brooks '93

☺ I remember Michael fondly and enjoyed spending time in his class. My mother, currently 100 years old, also knew Michael. They both were members of an art co-op in Santa Monica called The Artists' Studio Gallery.
— Robin Anderson '84

☺ In art class with Mr. Knight and Ms. Zilinkas, we did every type of creative process — watercolors, acrylic painting (I made my first 'canvas' painting with psychedelic colors of Jimi Hendrix in flames), stained glass, airbrush painting, and clay. Mr. Knight was very attuned to any student who showed any curiosity about artmaking, and with his humor and kindness, would gently get you to look at things like Andy Warhol pop art or John Heartfield, hence the collage works I made nearly 50 years ago.

I took up photography in AP Art in my senior year, which led to my study in sculpture and photography at UCSD and eventually filmmaking, which I've done now for the past 40 years of my life, as well as teaching film directing. Rest in peace Mr. Knight. And thank you for cracking open the door to see the possibilities and beauty in creativity.

— Roddy Bogawa '80





☞ This is a rubber stamp print I created in class in 1997. I've had a fruitful career as an illustrator, animator, and director. Without a doubt, Mr. Knight was the single most influential teacher I ever had in my entire educational experience. The art room was always a refreshing refuge from the drama of high school and a safe place for my artistic expression. Mr. Knight only encouraged, nurtured, and expanded my interests, whether the medium be drawing, painting, stained glass, or printmaking. Recently I got back into traditional stained glass window production, and I can't underplay the wonderful and familiar sensation of working with glass, a fond reminder of the meditative, calm atmosphere that I loved so much during my time in the Upper School art room at Brentwood.

— Chris Roth '98



☞ I took three years of stained glass with Mr. Knight, and he was one of my favorite teachers at Brentwood. I loved his class and still have many of the pieces I created 15 years ago!

← Additionally, during my senior year I created a big window that was installed overlooking the senior quad as a tribute to the class of 2012. I haven't been on campus in years but I've been told it is still there! [It is!]

I never once (and still don't) consider myself artistic but always felt at home in Mr. Knight's classroom. He was an incredible teacher and I was so sad to hear of his passing. I wish the best to his family.

— Virginia James Palmer '12



☞ Mr. Knight was an incredible man with a calm, ever-welcoming demeanor. The class atmosphere he created followed suit, Mr. Knight sharing his passion and wisdom, while showing non-artists like myself that we too can create beautiful art. A pillar of the Brentwood community, he taught my dad Shawn Bookin '83 as well — we will both remember Mr. Knight warmly and are lucky to have known him. My pieces from Mr. Knight's class are proudly on display on the East Coast while I'm in L.A.

← — Chase Bookin '18

☞ A piece of stained glass from Mr. Knight's class that I saved is at my parents' house. He was a great teacher!

← — Rosemary Hansen '10





“Mr. Knight was an incredible man with a calm, ever-welcoming demeanor. The class atmosphere he created followed suit, Mr. Knight sharing his passion and wisdom, while showing non-artists like myself that we too can create beautiful art.”

☞ Back in 2004, I had the privilege of being one of Mike Knight’s students of stained glass. He was tough but reasonable, and created an atmosphere that simply motivated me to just be better — to keep trying until whatever given project was finished. After doing a few beginner pieces, I was given the freedom to create or recreate something of my own choice. At the time (and still to this day), one of my favorite albums was Radiohead’s “Hail to The Thief.” The album art made for an almost too perfect template for a stained glass project, being gridlike in its representation of a map of a city.

In fact Mr. Knight wasn’t happy with my choice, claiming it to be too simple. I stuck with it, inviting friends to paint various words during lunch break. And when it was finished, I gave it to my sister since she was the one who gave me the same album for my birthday the previous year. This is an image of the stained glass piece I gave my sister, who treasures it to this day.

— Drew Goldblatt ’06

☞ Mr. Knight was an amazing, caring, supportive, and engaged teacher and human being. He created a magical, fun, relaxed, and safe space in the art studio. I will be forever grateful to have known him and had him in my life.

— Larry Abelson ’85

☞ Mr. Knight was kind, warm, and an incredibly talented teacher. He taught me to trust my vision and express it.

— Janelle Pransky Friedman ’80

☞ Mr. Knight was very dear to me. He helped me at Brentwood as both my devoted art teacher and as my academic advisor. Over the years since then, our friendship grew. He was steadfast in his support of me as both an artist and an art teacher. I miss him so very much. This is a photo of me with an ink drawing I made (of the main office building) while I was a student at Brentwood. This drawing was printed on cards by the school, and sold in a set.

— Kirsten Yamaguchi ’99





“Thanks so much for your efforts to honor Mr Knight. He was a significant part of my Brentwood experience.”
—Danielle Taylor '07

☺ Here are three pieces of pottery that I still love. Mrs. Z probably had more influence over these, but Mr. Knight was definitely there watching over my skills!
 — Randy Balik '91

☺ I took four semesters of stained glass. My final project in Advanced Stained Glass took all semester and several weeks over the summer to finish. My dad still has it hanging in his house.
 — Adam Creasy '95

☺ I took art classes with Mr. Knight from 1981 to 1983. One year I took two art classes in one day. He always remembered this stained glass window I did.
 — David Victor '83





☞ Mr. Knight was such a fabulous art teacher and person. He really went outside the box to teach us such a wonderful skill, along with abstract painting.

— Dena Selix '83

☞ Mr. Knight was one of my favorite teachers. I so enjoyed making stained glass pieces, as well as pottery, during my junior and senior years at Brentwood. Mrs. Z and Mr. Knight were a lovely team. This stained glass piece was a replica of my sister's beloved dog. She framed and hung it in her front entrance. It hangs there to this day.

— Kris Hoffman Evans '81

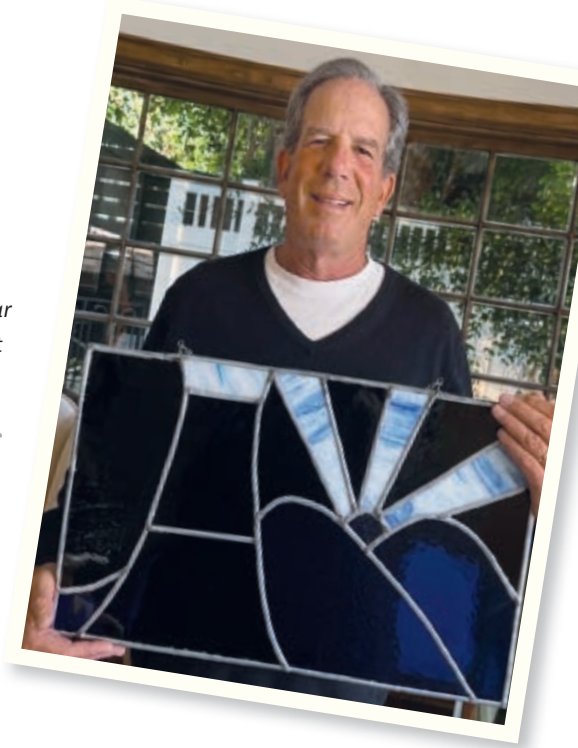


☞ This shows my stained glass flower, done in Mr. Knight's class in 1985, propped up next to a stained glass beach scene done by my daughter, Jacqueline Eckmann '20, in 2018. Our home burned to the ground in the Palisades fire on January 7, 2025, so I am most grateful that I posted about it and that I have this most treasured photo. Since our artwork was lost in the fire, how special is it that my daughter and I had a shared classroom experience 33 years apart with the same amazing teacher? May he rest in peace.

— Jill Rosenthal Eckmann '85

☞ Mike Knight was the first teacher I really connected with at BWS. We shared a passion for music; he taught me racquetball and the value of taking the time to do your best in art and everything else. We stayed in contact after graduation all the way through my two children entering Brentwood. I attended some of his art shows and visited him on campus. He loved to hear how my life was going and tell me what he was up to. I miss him.

— Tim Dietenhofer '79





☞ *Mike Knight saved me — like so many other Brentwood students. At the start of 10th grade, I was ready to walk away from Brentwood because I was concerned that the academic rigor was far beyond what I felt I could handle. The college counselor at the time, Robert Owen, suggested that we change my class schedule to include art as one of my academic classes. For the next three years, I thrived, flourished, and succeeded beyond all of my wildest dreams. Because of art, I even had the time during my senior year to serve as the editor-in-chief of the yearbook, as well as to create several stained-glass windows that hung both in my home on Kenter Avenue, as well as at Brentwood. Thank you, Mike Knight, for instilling in me the confidence to reach for the stars!*
— Debbie Stogel '81

“I don’t consider myself artistic, but stained glass gave me a chance to feel creative.”

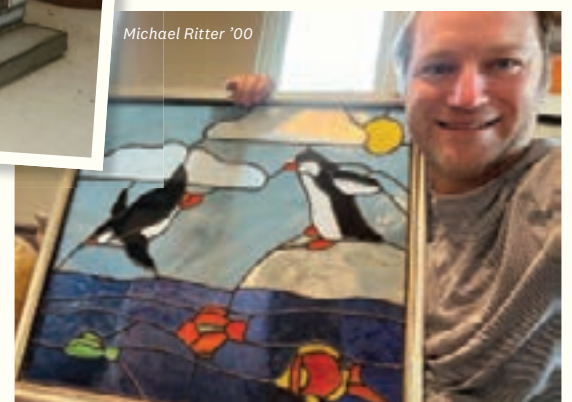


Jason Bernstein '94



☞ *I was so sad to hear about Mr. Knight’s passing. I loved taking stained glass for several years with Mr. Knight. I don’t consider myself artistic, but stained glass gave me a chance to feel creative. I absolutely loved the class, and I loved having something different in my schedule besides academics and sports. I made this 3D house from leftover glass pieces from a prior project. I remember being really excited at the time that Mr. Knight encouraged me to try something 3D. It somehow survived a cross country move and is currently in my kid’s bedroom!*
— Julia Bartolf Milne '00

Michael Ritter '00





Remembering Cilla Temple

Former “First Lady” of Brentwood School Cilla Temple passed away on September 17, 2025 at age 89.

When Hunter Temple became Head of School in 1982, Cilla became an equal partner by his side. Cilla co-hosted nearly every school function, cheered from the sidelines at every game possible, and even ran the school bookstore when needed.

In 1989, Cilla found the role she was born to do: she became Brentwood’s first full-time Director of Community Service

and established the community service program at Brentwood. Within one year, Brentwood students were volunteering across the city at over 20 organizations, and the program won a National Certificate of Merit.

Cilla was one of the school’s brightest and most compassionate leaders. Her boundless energy inspired countless students to serve others, at school and throughout their lives. Her legacy will live on forever in the Brentwood School community.



IN LOVING MEMORY

We honor the lives of our alumni who passed away too soon.



KATHERINE LANE CROUSE '81



MITCH GUNZLER '81



NOAH BARDACH '93



ANNE ZOLLA '96



RODEO ROYALE!

The Parents Association continues to outdo itself, year after year, bringing creativity and serious fun to its primary annual fundraiser.

Rodeo Royale, held again at Sony Studios, was a boot-stompin' extravaganza complete with line dancing, a mechanical bull (record: 36 seconds!), a live horse, a cowboy hat-making "bar," great food and drink, and abundant love for Brentwood School.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Volunteers make the magic happen. This year we bid farewell, with huge gratitude, to Ashley Cassir, who has been West Campus Parents Association chair for two years. We warmly welcome Tal Taylor, who will assume the role. And we can't offer sufficient thanks to our longstanding PA leader, East Campus chair Allison Schwartz. Behind them is an army of volunteers, all dedicated to supporting Brentwood School. Thank you!



Allison Schwartz, Anita Tandon, Tony Chu, Shireen Lee, and Ashley Cassir

Opposite page (clockwise from top): Kickin' it up at the Rodeo, at Sony Studios; Patrick Callaghan, Jared Weinman, Jenny Weinman, and Eileen Park; Amanda Brooks '93, Sulrin Kim, Ayu Kayamori, Sachi Ford, Mike Rosie, Pia Rosen, and Hiroko Cottrell; the make-your-own cowboy hat bar, complete with bling

THANK YOU TO OUR UNDERWRITERS

GOLDEN LASSO

Danyelle Freeman & Josh Resnick

RHINESTONE ROUNDUP

Anonymous, Shireen Lee

GILDED SADDLE

Obaida & Scott Watt

BRONCO BLING

Katie & Steve Avery, Kavitha & Sunny Bhatia, The Dahan Family, Leah & Jason Karlov, Hillary & Lance '94 Milken, Sabina & David '94 Nathanson, Eden & Steven Romick, Shannon Mabrey Rotenberg & Michael Rotenberg, Nicole & Spencer Silna, Douglas & Margaret Spencer, Sali & Thomas Swalla, Leah & Steven Yari

RODEO STAR

Logan Afifi & Family, Sheryl & Tom Amster, Anish & Pooja Aswani, The Axelrod Family, Brinah & Roy Bank, The Chanduwadia Family, Brynn & Ryan Efune, The Fermelia Family, Liz & Patrick Gilligan, Allison & Rusty Hill, Kate & Tim Ivers, Kelly & Justin Griffin, Dana Garman Jacobsen & Jimmy Jacobsen, Stacey '95 & David Lubliner, Brooke Milstein, Betsy Katz Sandler & Scott '92 Sandler, Elana & Eli Schuldt, Alexis & Adam Stein, Hila & Jeremy Wenokur

MIDNIGHT RIDER

The Barron Family, Arda & Craig Berberian, Nancy & Baldwin Chin, Seth & Laura Gerson, Andy '94 and Jennifer Howard, Brian & Laura Joseph, Alim & Sara Kassam, Deanna & Eric Kripke, Jenny '03 Lee & Randy Moser, Lindsay & Steven Lilien, Jodi & Bradley '97 Meadow, Rebecca & Matthew '98 Rich, Laurie & Adam Selkowitz, Anita Tandon & Sujit Chakravarthi

TRAILBLAZER

Anonymous, Kimm & Nathan '95 Agam, The Bliss Family, Ashley & Jon Cassir, Devon & Sean Corrigan, Laura & Randy Dudley, Samantha '01 & Alex Fisher, Clark & Megan Freeman, Shakira Gagnier '97, Ryan & Josh Gutierrez, Hal & Jennifer Hershfield, Ellie & Simon Javaheri, Brian & Heather Lazarus, The Mack Family, Carlyn Henry & Mickey Mandelbaum, Roya & Farhad Melamed, The Mintzer Family, Walter, Yvonne & Wally Mosley, Olga & Kayvan Noroozi, Dana & Brian Nussbaum, The Salem Family, Rob & Ashley Liu '97 Ristau, Allison '97 & Matt Schwartz, Brooke & George Spanos, The Souza Family, The Swatt Family, Tal & Matt Taylor, Julie & Rusty Weiss, Lauren '01 & Robert Windom, Jackie & Adam '93 Winnick, Winston Pies, Sandy Yep & John Orlando

AUCTION DONORS

Whitney & John Abramo, Brianna & Dan Abrams, Jaren Boczan '04 & Kirk Fox, Alex Caruso '08, Steve & Katie Avery, Kira '03 & Jordan '03 Bahat, Tyler & Courtney Barth, Nick & Sara Bell, Kelly and Ben '94 Belldegrun, Bari Milken Bernstein '99 & Fred Bernstein, Julie & Greg Bettinelli, Jill & Cary Biren, Elishia & David Bolour, Alexis & Tim Byk, The Callaghan Family, Mike & Aphrodite Camello, Dina & Noel Cohen, Stacie & Aaron Cohen, Adam '89 & Marina Cohn, Kris & Ann Cueva, David Silverman, Arpita & Neel Devani, Jalina Dixon, Alexis & Ryan Draizin, Ryan & Brynn Efune, Michael Farhat, Michael & Behnoosh Farzam, Erica & Leland Felsenthal, Raquel & DJ Gay, Jon '04 & Marissa '05 Geller, Nima & Talia Gharavi, Suzy '93 & Steve Gilson, Justin Gimelstob, Jessica & Josh Goldin, Jessica Graboff '03 & Josh Glick, Kelly & Justin Griffin, The Grigsby/Maguire Family, The Grosfeld Family, The Haefele Family, Yasmin & Phil Harvey, The Hauspurg Family, The Hayden Family, Jennifer & Hal Hershfield, The Holland Family, Kate & Tim Ivers, Jackson Kalb '09, Dori & Jordan Katz, Dana & Scott '95 Kaufman, Kelly & Ryan '01 Kaufman, Sheila & Daniel Kharrazi, Randie & Alan Kleinman, Tawny & David Krintzman, Kimberly Lee & Samuel Hou, Brooke & Ken Lande, The Landy Family, Ashley & Saman Lashkari, Stephanie & Zack Levinson, The Levy Family, Andrea & Josh Lieberman, Erik Lindstrom & Gina DeWitt, Mingsun Liu & Nina Hong, Andrea Lublin, Marc Rudisill, Sherli & Mishel Mikail, Alexandra & Solomon Mordechai, Adrienne & Ari Nathan, Natasha Nathan & Danny DiBiase, David '94 & Sabina Nathanson, Dr. Sheila Nazarian & Fardad Mobin, Erik & Mimi Neandross, Chloe & Alex Nerush, Aja & Segun Oduolowu, Eric & Kendall Ovitz, Molly & Andrew Patience, Beatrice Raigozza, The Rodsky Family, The Sather Family, Allison '97 & Matt Schwartz, Daniel & Anna Shak, Danielle Sherman '01, The Shlimovich Family, Claudine & Steve Shokouhi, Bella Shpelfogel, Michelle & David Soomekh, Brooke & George Spanos, Melinda & Art Spigel, Estee Stanley & Brian Furst '95, Allison & Rich Statter, Alexis & Adam Stein, Katy & Stephane Strouk, Molly & Scott Stuber, Michelle '97 & Jeremy Weiner, Jon & Dana Weisman, Casey Wu & Chris Chen, Leah & Steven Yari, Sandy Yep & Jon Orlando, Elena & Drew Zager, Adrienne & Robert Zarnegin



Destinee Flonnoy '21, Emily Ellis '94, and Flor Cruz

HELLO FROM THE ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT OFFICE

As another successful school year comes to a close, we extend our warmest greetings to the alumni community. The ongoing dedication and meaningful involvement of our graduates continue to be some of our alma mater's greatest strengths.

This year marks a significant change in our leadership. Not only do we have a new Head of School, Dr. Timothy Cottrell, but we are also delighted to welcome Shakira Gagnier '97 as our Alumni Association President. Shakira brings remarkable leadership and a passionate vision to this role. She and the entire Alumni Association Executive Committee have been instrumental in launching exciting new initiatives.

One significant new program in April called "Brentwood in Hollywood" brought together nearly 200 alumni who work across the entertainment industry. This professional networking event was designed to foster connections and support within a key industry of our alumni body, reflecting the dynamic careers our graduates pursue.

Flor and I are also thrilled to welcome a talented young alum back to Brentwood, Destinee Flonnoy '21, as our Alumni Engagement Associate. Destinee's perspective as a recent college graduate is already proving invaluable as we develop new ways to connect with our younger classes and expand our programming.

Finally, this June, shortly before this magazine reaches your mailbox, we are hosting our school's first-ever 50-year class reunion. This landmark occasion will celebrate the classes of 1975, 1976, and 1977, along with original faculty, honoring the foundation they laid for our school community. We can't wait to share with you how we reflected on a half-century of history and celebrated their enduring legacy.

Thank you for everything you do to support our school. We hope to hear from you soon!

— EMILY MANNING ELLIS '94,
DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Emily Manning Ellis '94
Director of Alumni Engagement

Flor M. Cruz
Assistant Director of Alumni Engagement

Destinee Flonnoy '21
Alumni Engagement Associate

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2025-26

Shakira Gagnier '97
President

Jeffrey Ehrenpreis '95
Past President

Nathan Ament '04
Chair, Professional Connections Committee

Kevin Bral '11
Co-Chair, Community Service Committee

Michael Goldfarb '03
Co-Chair, Community Service Committee

Diana Orozco Smalley '12
Co-Chair, Alumni Diversity Committee

Danielle Taylor '07
Co-Chair, Alumni Diversity Committee

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 | Creative Artists Agency

Brentwood in Hollywood



1. Casey Apel '12, Jillian Apel '14, Jordan Davis '14, and Amanda Schenkmán '20

2. Jeffrey Ehrenpreis '95, Dean Bahat '99, Raamla Mohamed Hunter '99, Noah Rosenthal '00, Meg Swertlow '00, and Devin Sidell '98

3. From the Entertainment Event Committee: Emily Ellis '94, Monica Medellin '11, Cara Dellaverson '96, David Nathanson '94, Sara Glaser '93, Melissa Dishell '92, Aaron Bay-Schuck '99, Raamla Mohamed Hunter '99, Shakira Gagnier '97, Mark Tuohy '98, Alaman Diadhieu '19, Nate Ament '04, Dean Bahat '99, Michelle Weiner '97, Jordan Lonner '09, Leslie Schotz '10, Hillary Jacobson '11, Manny Adler '11, Lorraine Nicholson '08, and Justin Behnam '09

4. Brett Pierce '09, Jordan Lonner '09, Justin Behnam '09, and Michael Sones '09

5. Over 150 alumni in the entertainment industry gathered for a night of connection.

Alumni at Homecoming



1. The Alumni Association welcomed back families to the BBQ before the big game.



2. Teddy Riley '05, Billy Kaplan '04, and Mimi Paley '06 with son Arthur

3. Emerita Judith O'Hanlon with granddaughter Isla

4. Alumni families enjoyed the bounce houses at the Homecoming BBQ.

5. Otu Henshaw '00 and Matthew O'Hanlon '00

Friday, October 24, 2025 | Head of School Home

Celebrating the North Quad Society, Club 1972, and Parents of Alumni Golden Eagles



- 1. Nicholas Sheinberg '12, Jon Sheinberg, Stephanie Sheinberg, Dr. Timothy Cottrell, and Susan Sheinberg
- 2. Allyson Ostrowski '96, Mike Ostrowski, and David Nathanson '94
- 3. Alumni and parents of alumni mingled in the backyard of the Head of School home.
- 4. Greg Chiate '88, Jeffrey Kohn '86, and Daniel Wolfberg '86
- 5. Steve Gilison, Suzy Gilison '93, Ron Tzadik '96, Scott Borenstein '96, and Krisena Borenstein



Care Packages for the Class of 2025



Parents of the Class of 2025 stopped by Brentwood School in mid-October to make care packages for recent graduates. The volunteers stuffed bags with snacks, Eagle gear, and personal notes to alumni as they were beginning their first year of college.

Community Service on the LA River



1. Alumni gathered for a meaningful day of service with Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR): Destinee Flonnoy '21, Shakira Gagnier '97 with niece Mireya, Emily Ellis '94, Kevin Bral '11, Isabelle Bral '14, Flor M. Cruz, and Mike Goldfarb '03.

2. Mike Goldfarb '03 watering a newly planted tree with Kenneth Williams '84 and Taylor E. '30

Thursday, November 6, 2025 | The Gathering Spot

Cocktails and Conversations



1. Guest speaker Javon Frazier '96, media entrepreneur

2. Nigel Lifsey '02, Alumni Association President
Shakira Gagnier '97, Emily Ellis '94, Hiroko Cottrell, and Dr. Timothy Cottrell

3. Nathan Smalley, Diversity Co-Chair Diana (Orozco) Smalley '12, and Sarita Barnes '13

4. Paris Coleman Smalls '12 and Tani Brown '06

5. Ron Tzadik '96, Erika Frazier '96, and Veronica Green '03

6. Diversity Committee Co-Chair Danielle Taylor '07, Bryce Caster '10, and Austin Hutcherson '09



Summer Cocktail Party



1. Payam Amini, Candice Daneshvar '02, Jordan Safan '02, Jeff Ehrenpreis '95, and Josh Stephens '93

2. Nathan Smalley, Diana (Orozco) Smalley '12, David Svec, Gary Rosen '91, and Pia Rosen

3. Greg Worswick '02, Scott Worswick '99, Ryan James '99, Pam Shaffer, Cozette Soke '00, Caitlin Pilla '00, Kirsten Housel, and Danny Moloshok '00

4. Daniel Gerber '14, Joely Gerber Glaswand '11, and Olivia Penfold Pearson '08

5. Andy Schlink '09, Justin Behnam '09, Amber Handman '91, and Adam Weinstein '12

Monday, January 5, 2026 | Upper School

Young Alumni Luncheon



1. Robert White '25, Coach Ryan "Moose" Bailey, and Bradley Selma '25
2. Ryan Smolkin '25, Caitlin Byk '26, Rose Mooney '25, Hannah Liberman '25, and Kayden Y. '28
3. We welcomed the classes of 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 back to campus for the 35th annual Young Alumni Luncheon.
4. Daphne Lopez '25, Noah Painter '25, Reed Levine '26, and Harry Weinberg '25
5. Ethan Moon '26, David Svec, Will Varnum '24, Beckett O'Brien '24, and Joon Kim



EMERITI

Keep up with faculty and staff who served 15 years or more at Brentwood.

DENNIS CASTAÑARES and his wife Jana are living at the foot of Mount Hood, in Parkdale, Oregon (pop. 300), feeling very lucky to be doing so! Jana tends her magnificent garden that's become a beloved neighborhood mini-park. Under his stage name Alonzo Garbanzo, Dennis is a well-known performing musician in the local scene, and continues to write, record, and post YouTube videos of his music. In mid-April 2026, Dennis performed seven original songs before a 50-piece orchestra and 70-voice choir as collaborator on a modern "Requiem" project with the local concertmaster. "All three of us being musically inclined, whenever **SAGE '10** (formerly Siena) visits from North Carolina, we perform as a trio!"

SARAH WALLACE continues to live, with her husband of 66 years, in a vibrant retirement community in Orange County. Weaving in and beyond countless medical appointments, they continue their quiet life of reading and enjoying many friends there. She thinks of Brentwood School frequently and is always glad to hear its news.

EDY PICKENS LEVIN has expanded her work with children and families by stepping into the field of behavioral therapy. She became a Board Certified Autism Technician (BCAT) and now works with children on the autism spectrum at Cortica.

She recently began graduate studies in Applied Behavior Analysis at Arizona State University, working toward becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Alongside this work, Edy continues developing her arts initiative, EdyMade, creating commissioned paintings and murals for homes throughout the Los Angeles area. She also periodically returns to Brentwood's Lower School to add new 5th grade classes to the Wall of Books mural — painting student names on the book spines while expanding the installation with additional books, shelves, and commemorative elements that mark each class's passage to Middle School. Her evolving path as an artist and educator was recently featured in VoyageLA (voyagela.com). Edy remains grateful for her years teaching at Brentwood and for the many ways that experience continues to shape her work today.

NICOLE BALI, grateful to have made it to octogenarian age, waves hello to the Brentwood community from Mexico, where she continues to enjoy the mild climate and a simple, slow, quiet life by the serene shores of Lake Chapala. She had a chance for more explorations of the wondrous Yucatan Peninsula, its breathtaking landscapes, and historical sites this year. This past summer, she was able to travel back to her native city of Paris; seeing the restored Notre Dame cathedral was quite an emotional experience! Also quite emotional was a return to the Alpine country where she spent much of her childhood, revisiting familiar landmarks and reminiscing with old friends. So many memories, in addition to those of the Brentwood years! She is so

grateful for all of them, and grateful for more opportunities ahead to continue to travel and learn.

DONNIE TODD is happily living in Rancho Mirage where she co-leads the Ophelia Project at Rancho Mirage High School. Donnie reports: "Between concerts, plays, sports activities, tennis tournaments, film festivals, art festivals, fashion week, and modernism week, there is always something to do here in the desert, even when it's hot." She recently modeled in a lunch/fashion show at her local clubhouse. Donnie visits LA regularly and misses her family, friends, and Brentwood alumni. "I think about Brentwood School often and am thrilled when former students contact me. I remember you all with great memories!"

BONNIE LAVIN-HUGHES has been a lecturer for performing arts and dance teacher at CSUCI (California State University Channel Islands) for several years now. As part of her work in Port Hueneme (a Navy town), Bonnie leads an adaptive dance program designed for people living with Parkinson's disease and other mobility challenges. Through CSUCI's Health Science Department, the Dance Studies Program, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), Bonnie has helped countless veterans and other students. She really enjoyed seeing some of the BDC alumni as part of the alumni dance company performance in May of 2025.

HANK KORANSKY is happily retired in San Jose, close to family, playing a lot of bridge, and still shooting baskets a few times a week.



1. The Castañares family performed together in April 2026.

2. Edy Pickens Levin in her Thousand Oaks studio (photo originally featured in VoyageLA)

3. Nicole Bali

4. Donnie Todd modeled in a local fashion show in Rancho Mirage.

1970s

1975

PAUL HURST and **STEVE OLIVER** have been conspiring with **ROGER FEATHERSTON '76** to throw an epic celebration for Brentwood's FIRST 50-Year reunion. The classes of 1975, 1976, and 1977 reunited in June of 2026 and were thrilled to toast to Brentwood School's original graduates and faculty. The school would like to give extra thanks to the Featherston family for hosting this very special gathering.

1977

JODY ROYEE lives on the Monterey Peninsula. She loves mixing business, creativity, and a lot of magic. Through her company, Magic Mind Marketing, she helps small business owners get clear on their message, stand out online, and grow with more confidence using digital marketing, AI tools, and graphic design that brings their brand to life. In June of 2026, Jody and her partner Karen are off to Chateau St. Pierre de Serjac in the South of France for her niece's wedding. They are looking forward to celebrating with family, enjoying the beauty of the French countryside, and making memories in a setting that looks straight out of a storybook.

1979

KATINA ZINNER continues to have great success with her company Artify Life. All merchandise is her original design, for home goods and apparel (Artifylifestyle.com) on IG @Artify Life. 10% of all sales go to support AWF (African Wildlife Foundation.) She is also selling her large format oil paintings to collectors and interior designers worldwide (Katina@katinazinner.com) @katinazinner.



1. Paul Hurst '75 and Steve Oliver '75 at Brentwood's first Commencement in 1975

2. Karen & Jody Royee '77 at the Professional Woman of the Year Gala in Monterey

1980s

1980

NINA SUGAMORI released a family memoir entitled *The Granddaughter, The Grave, and the Trunk on Amazon*. The book traces a maternal lineage across three generations, shaped by exile and control. Moving from Memphis to Los Angeles, from Tokyo to the American Midwest, this memoir excavates what families preserve and what they conceal.

1981

MANNING C. MANN and Vicki Mann are doing quite well, living the dream at the base of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains in Southwest Colorado. Manning continues to work remotely for an L.A.-based, large multinational corporation as Senior Contracts Manager for the company's Department of War, USG customers. His son, Manning J. Mann, is a recent Summa Cum Laude graduate (GPA 4.0) and FAA commercial pilot flying ISR data collection for a USG contractor. He is planning his next move to attend the USAF Flight Officer's Training School with a plan to fly military aircraft in defense of our country.

KEITH LUBELL has lived in New York since college. He still continued to do some stained glass, a love that he got from Michael Knight. By day he is working as a software engineer for Meta.

WILLIAM HIESTAND married Lianne Mair on October 4, 2025. They went to USC and graduated at the same time. They have many mutual friends between them and met at a USC football game. The wedding was at Palos Verdes Gold Club, and they live in Hermosa Beach.

1982

SCOTT MCKAY and his wife Katharine (Hechtlinger) will be celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary. Married at LACC in 1996, they have a son, Evan Thomas, who graduated from the University of Miami and a daughter, Heather Grace, who is in her second year at NYU.

1983

TONY PAUKER lives in La Jolla with Kristee Pauker. They just celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. Their three sons, ages 30, 26 and 23, are doing well and live nearby them. Tony works for Brookfield Residential, part of Brookfield Asset management.



Alumni! We love to hear from you. If you have any news or announcements to share, email alumni@bwscampus.com.



Scott McKay '82 and Katharine celebrating 30 years!

1990s

1991

DAVID DIAMOND is still practicing criminal defense and coaches mock trial for both high school and middle school teams. He occasionally lectures at law schools about trial advocacy and enters his 30th year of coaching youth sports. He speaks to **JON ECKHOUSE** weekly and enjoys making fun of Wisconsin to **LANCE REISS**. Go Spartans!

SARAH DRAPER BURNETT is now working with Christie Realty Group serving buyers and sellers across both Los Angeles and Ventura counties!

1992

From leading assembly as the first female head prefect at Brentwood to the TEDx stage, **MELISSA DISHELL** was recently a featured speaker at TEDx Pacific Avenue in Venice Beach, California. Her talk “Ditch the Dating Apps: Do This 1 Thing Every Day To Find Love” focuses on her realization that after building a thriving career in the entertainment industry, she had prioritized everyone but herself. A journal project she created where she put love on her to do list, led her to find love without relying on algorithms. Melissa has had her company for nearly 30 years, specializing in experiential marketing and creative production for clients like Pharrell Williams, Christian Louboutin, Searchlight Pictures, and fellow Brentwood alum **ADAM LEVINE '97**. She and her husband Conor will celebrate their 7 year wedding anniversary this year.

1993

CHRIS BROOKS and **AMANDA SUNG BROOKS** enjoyed their final school year as BWS parents. Their daughter **JUSTINE BROOKS '26** is heading to Occidental College in the

fall and son **TOMMY BROOKS '23** will be starting his senior year at USC.

DR. SHAUNA HOWARTH SPRINGER released a new book in March entitled *Fall Out – Ten Common Beliefs That Kill Our Bravest and the Truths That Can Save Them*. “Doc” Springer has spent decades working alongside our nation’s warriors, veterans, and first responders. In this powerful book, she challenges some of the most damaging beliefs surrounding trauma, mental health, and resilience—and replaces them with truths that can save lives. This best-selling book in military medicine can be purchased on Amazon.

1994

JOHN STALBERG released the sequel to his Muzzle franchise, “City of Wolves” in November of 2025.

ROBERT RICHMAN is working with American Jewish University to produce and host a podcast called “The Jewish Tomorrow,” a show covering trends, theories, and ideas and how they apply to the Jewish future.

In February of 2026, **NATALIE NOVOM, JENNIFER LUGASH TYLER, KATRINA HORACEK JUDA, and EMILY MANNING ELLIS ROGAL** and **JON ROGAL '93** at their home in Summerlin, Nevada. Kicking off a year of milestone birthdays, these classmates headed to Dolby Live in Las Vegas for an unforgettable Chris Stapleton concert. This gathering was just the beginning of many celebrations to come!

1996

In January 2026, **DANIEL LEE POSTAER** met with upper school students as part of an Alumni Artists panel organized by classmate and Brentwood faculty member **KALA SAVAGE**. Daniel now works as an artist/photographer. Thirteen of his pieces from Boomtown, a series

made in San Francisco, have entered the permanent collections of six museums around the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, High Museum of Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; and the Crocker Art Museum. Daniel recently released his first monograph called *Mother's Land*, which reflects his personal journey to understand his Chinese heritage, featuring photographs made across urban China from 2014 to 2019. Daniel lives and works in Santa Monica with his partner, Mallory, and two young daughters, Lilah and Margot. He also teaches the practice of breathwork at the Unplug Meditation studio. Daniel has recently been greatly enjoying the WhatsApp group formed amongst several members of the Class of 1996 in anticipation of their 30-year reunion.

ELISSA PHILLIPS has been in Singapore almost three years now and has really embraced ex-pat life. She spends a lot of time on the tennis court (a sport she hasn't played since Senior year at Brentwood) and made her first visit to the Australian Open in January. She and her family have been enjoying and exploring a new part of the world on their many school holiday breaks. Elissa recently sold her restaurant accounting business, *Mise En Place Restaurant Services*, which she started 14 years ago and is excited to take some time off after almost 20 years in the restaurant accounting space. If you find yourself in South East Asia, Elissa would be happy to show you around Singapore or share any travel tips.

KATHERINE KUCHENBECKER leads a diverse team of more than forty researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems in Stuttgart, Germany. Their recent paper in “Science” about the unusual properties of elephant whiskers

sparked press attention worldwide. She is grateful for the rigorous and well-rounded education she received at Brentwood, from math, chemistry, and English to Spanish, art, and volleyball.

1998

CHRIS ROTH and his broadcast design company, The Other House, continue to produce logos and graphics for major television productions including the likes of The Voice, America's Got Talent, Star Search, The Emmys, Bad Thoughts, as well as upcoming shows including The Golden Ticket and American Gladiators reboot.

DEVIN SIDELL and her film "Love, Danielle" were recently featured in People magazine.



1. From the Classes of '93, '23, and '26: The Brooks family

2. Shauna Howarth Springer '93 released a new book in military medicine on Amazon.

3. Melissa Dishell '92 on the TEDx Stage

4. Aaron Eckhart and John Stalberg, Jr. '94 promoting their film sequel

5. The cover of Robert Richman '94's podcast

6. From the Class of '94: Natalie Novom, Jennifer Lugash Tyler, Stephanie Greene Rogal, Katrina Horacek Juda, and Emily Manning Ellis dressed up to see Chris Stapleton in Vegas.

7. Photo by Daniel Lee Postaeer '96: Shanghai, #10, 2014 / 2017, 34 x 51 inches, archival pigment print

8. Devin Sidell '98 in People magazine

9. Designs produced by The Other House, by Chris Roth '98



2000s

2000

SEAN MARCO is now a senior partner in the largest physician-run pulmonary and critical care group in the Southwest, practicing pulmonary and ICU medicine in the Phoenix and Scottsdale areas. He was honored to be voted by fellow physicians to the Phoenix Top Doc list for the third year in a row. While the ICU keeps him busy, his most demanding role is still trying to keep up with his two kids, ages seven and four, who run a far tighter operation at home than any hospital ever could.

NILE NASH is thriving in SF with her husband of 9 years, Noah, and her two kiddos, Leo (8) and Shea (6), who go to the same public school. She is teaching a ton of perinatal classes at Natural Resources in the Mission and continues to support families as a “fourth trimester” postpartum Certified Nurse Midwife. She recently joined the PTA board at her kids’ school, dances a ton and stays creative as a metalsmith (mostly high karat gold and silver) #STUDIONilenash. Last year in June Nile danced in her first Pride Parade. Her oldest brother **JACKSON NASH ’97** and his lovely wife, Melissa, welcomed their fourth child, Miri, in May of last year and are living their off-grid hippie dreams on the East Side of Kauai. **WILLIE NASH ’98** is living his best life in Laguna Beach with his wonderful wife Shannon, and their twin boys, James and Dylan (12 in July).

2002

CATHERINE MORRIS currently lives in Winder, Georgia with her two daughters and works as a Director at an International Non-profit. This year she decided she was tired of seeing this country being run into the ground, so she is running to represent District 119 in the Georgia House! It’s time

for us moms to get in there and redirect the political narrative! If you would like to support or donate, you can check out her website: morrisonforgeorgia.com!

2003

CLAIRE TULIS (RISSMAN-SHERR) and **JACLYN RYAN (MALER)** both teach elementary school, and recently Claire was able to come observe at Jaclyn’s school.

2004

IAN ROSS lives in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, with his wife, Virginia, and their three young children, who fill their home with energy, curiosity, and plenty of memorable moments. He continues to run SomeraRoad, a real estate investment and development firm he founded based in New York and Nashville, which marks its 10th anniversary this year. Recently, the firm acquired the historic Hotel Bossert in Brooklyn Heights while the firm will restore and revitalize into luxury for sale residences, a project especially meaningful to Ian as it’s just blocks from his home. SomeraRoad has also recently entered the aviation infrastructure business with the launch and expansion of SR Aviation Infrastructure (SRAI), a growing platform focused on real estate across the private aviation industry. Outside of work, Ian and his family enjoy spending time in upstate NY, where Ian and SomeraRoad have been involved in restoring the Stissing House—one of the country’s oldest inns—now home to a James Beard-nominated restaurant.

In 2025, **SHARADA MADDOX** co-founded The Crenshaw Mile — South LA’s annual USA Track & Field sanctioned and certified 1-mile road race on Crenshaw Blvd. through the heart of the historic Crenshaw District. What started as a dream between two runners became a full-on celebration of community well-being. This past April, The Crenshaw Mile returned for its 2nd annual race on Crenshaw Blvd., bringing together

walkers, joggers, and runners of all ages and abilities for a day of movement, culture, and community. Sharada’s love for running, the city of LA, and her community has truly come to life in the form of The Crenshaw Mile — and this is only the beginning. For more information about TCM, visit <https://www.thecrenshawmile.com>

PORSHA GILES and her husband Dante welcomed their daughter, Oaklyn. They’ve spent much of the year adjusting to life as new parents and watching Oaklyn grow and reach new milestones.

2005

In May of last year, **SEAN O’BRIEN** melted faces at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington D.C. while playing alongside the National’s Matt Berninger. Sean wrote much of his newly released album in partnership with Berninger. Meanwhile, **SAM KUSSIN-SHOPTAW** left his family for the evening to dance along to the shredding and wonder about what would’ve been if he had the talent, tenacity, and gumption to remain a bandmate with Sean beyond their project they did together while at Brentwood freshman year. Post concert, Sean was kind enough to invite Sam backstage to catch up on how his music career and life has progressed since they played subpar Weezer and Incubus covers in garages across the valley.

TANYA TSIKANOVSKY is running for West Hollywood City Council 2026.

TEDDY RILEY and his wife Betsy were thrilled to join the Brentwood School community this past fall as kindergarten parents of their daughter Rosie, BWS Class of 2038! Recently, Teddy co-wrote the animated film, GOAT, released by Sony Pictures Animation in February 2026. Co-produced by Steph Curry, the film has received stellar reviews and has earned over \$160 million dollars at the box office globally.



1. Porsha Giles '04, her husband Dante, and their daughter Oaklyn

2. Catherine Morris '02 and her two daughters

3. Sean Marco '00 and his wife Rajni, with children Roen and Sophie

4. Nile Nash '00 in her San Francisco Pride fit

5. Tanya Tsikanovsky '05

6. Sean O'Brien '05 and Sam Kussin-Shoptaw '05

7. From the Class of 2003: Claire Tulis (Rissman-Sherr) '03, right, visits Jaclyn Ryan (Maler)'s '03 first grade classroom at Polytechnic School.

8. Sharada Maddox '04 and her parents, Renee Smith-Maddox and Anthony Maddox, at the inaugural Crenshaw Mile



2006

DANNY STEINER and his wife Morgane will celebrate the first birthday of their third child, Éden, in July of 2026. Eden joins his siblings Jude and Milo, who turned 4 in May!

ELVIS HA recently helped lead Paradox, a recruiting AI start-up, through its acquisition by Workday and has since started a new role at ServiceNow leading AI product for Employee Workflows.

EMILY LEVINE and Brentwood alumni from the class of 2006 friendships are still going strong in Cabo 20 years after graduating.

2007

JAMIE KWAN now works as the Assistant Curator in Drawings, Prints and Graphic Design at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York.

BRIAN HWANG married Jake Grusd at Knockdown Center in NYC in February 2026. They live in Manhattan in the West Village.

2008

Loo-Sha, founded by USC MSW alumna **JHAMASA LEWIS-ADAMS**, recently led high-impact beauty activations with the University of Southern California and Snapchat. At USC, Loo-Sha's "Beauty ATM" and campus pop-up created an inclusive space for students and community members to discover indie and multicultural beauty brands while exploring beauty as a tool for belonging and wellness. Partnering with Snapchat during Black History Month, Loo-Sha launched its first influencer PR kit and celebrated emerging creators and beauty entrepreneurs, further elevating underrepresented voices across the beauty ecosystem.

BEN OLIVA is enjoying his life as a father of two young boys, James (3) and Mark (1). He and his wife Sarah live in Charlotte where he owns and operates his private practice in Sport Psychology. He also completed his doctorate in psychology earlier this year.

ANDREW RILEY married Theodora Kanner Riley on August 31, 2025 in Big Sky, Montana. His brother **TEDDY RILEY '05** was Best Man, and fellow classmates **DAN BELLDEGRUN, TAYLOR LEVIN, IAN SHAW, CODY BOULWARE, JACK CORTESE, MATT COE, PATRICK NORTON, and REESE MILNER** served as groomsmen.

1. Andrew Riley '08 with his bride Theodora Kanner Riley

2. Jhamasa Lewis Adams '08 at Snapchat Speed Networking Session

3. Danny Steiner '06 and his growing family

4. Ben Oliva '08 and his two sons, James and Mark

5. Brian Hwang '07 and Jake Grusd getting married in NYC

6. Class of '06 Carlye Wayne, Nicole Graboff, Sophie Marx, Emily Levine, Stevie Levy, Bo Meepos, and Alex Lippman still going strong 20 years later in Cabo!



2010s

2013

At the recent Celebration of Life for classmate **GRANT INDOCHINE NGUYEN**, the nonprofit Scootover.org was established in his honor. Grant passed away tragically in 2022 and his family is providing help for others. Scoot Over is a nonprofit resource that empowers families to support loved ones through mental health hurdles. When families are educated and supported, they become better equipped for their journey together in the complicated processes in the mental health system. For more information or to donate, please visit scootover.org.

GAVIN D PAK is extending their graduate school tenure by adding an MBA at Yale School of Management on top of the MFA they're pursuing at Yale's David Geffen School of Drama. They'll graduate as a creaky (and very in-debt) 33 year old.

NIKKI TABIBIAN taught Introduction to Entertainment Law at WashU Law School.

2015

After 6 years of graduate school, **GJ SEVILLANO** earned his Ph.D. in American Studies from The George Washington University. He currently serves as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Asian American Studies at Northeastern University where he continues to research

1. Nikki Tabibian '13 professor profile for Intro to Law Entertainment at WashU Law

2. The nonprofit mental health support organization scootover.org has been established in honor of Grant Nguyen '13.

3. Reza Shamji '20 classically taking a selfie on the Harvard graduation stage

and teach on Asian American history, Filipino American foodways, and gender studies.

2020

REZA SHAMJI graduated from Harvard with a A.B. in Computer Science with a minor in Economics. He is working as a Biomedical Informatics Artificial Intelligence Research Associate at the Zitnik Lab at Harvard Medical School and is preparing to apply for a PhD in AI this fall. He was elected as a Class Marshal for the Harvard Class of 2025, similar to a Brentwood prefect, and will plan future reunions and connections for the class! Reza is running around Boston, lifting in the gym, playing poker with friends, and meal prepping on Sundays!





EFRÉN HERNÁNDEZ '07

Lessons from a Top Chef

Efrén Hernández '07 is a three-time James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Chef in New York State. He is the executive chef at Casa Susanna in the Camptown Hotel in Leeds, NY and at Pez in the Rivertown Lodge in Hudson, NY.

- **I definitely had a plan for my life:** I'm going to NYU film school. I'm going to make a short film. I'm going to get it into a festival. I'm going to be a famous movie director. I did make a short film and it did go to Sundance, but Hollywood didn't open its doors. I learned that you don't always end up doing what you think you'll do. I also learned that talent isn't enough. You have to work really hard.
- **As a sous chef at Faro in Brooklyn,** I really saw firsthand what it takes to succeed. I would watch the chef, Kevin Adey, come in early. I would watch him work all day. I would watch him go home last. And I would watch him get a Michelin star. I said, "OK, you have to really want to do this."
He wasn't a yeller, he wasn't demeaning people, he wanted people to have fun at work. I had worked in the other types of kitchens, where it's a little joyless. I learned that I don't want to own that kind of restaurant.
- **I've learned that the most important thing is to hire the right people.** If someone walks in and they're incredible, I try to hire them. I can teach them all kinds of things, but I can't teach them to be a good person.
- **If you're in a high responsibility job, there is no balance;** it's more of a juggling situation. Sometimes I drop the ball at home and sometimes at work.
- **At Casa Susanna I learned** that if you're trying to grind 400 pounds of masa a week, you're going to need a pretty big machine. We learned that pretty quickly.
- **At Brentwood, I came from a pretty different socioeconomic background.** I didn't know how to fit in. I wish I had been as comfortable the whole time as I was my senior year. But I eventually learned that I did fit in — that no one really thinks about you as much as you think about you. That's really powerful because now I can be comfortable in any room.



An Inspiring New Glass Studio in Mr. Knight's Memory

Many of you shared your love for Mr. Knight just how he would have wanted you to: through art. His legacy jumps off pages 42-48 in every drawing, sculpture, and stained glass piece.

There are other ways to show how much you value Mr. Knight's impact as a teacher. To perpetuate his legacy, we are transforming his classroom into a fully realized glass studio — with glass blowing, flame work, fusing, and slumping, in addition to stained glass work.

As the article on “Modern Rigor” explains, creativity is now more important than ever, and it has become an explicit area of emphasis. We are developing vibrant new spaces specifically to encourage student creativity, such as this new glass studio.

What better way to honor Mr. Knight's memory than by contributing to this space for creative expression?

To learn about foundational philanthropic opportunities, please contact Director of Giving Alyssa Brakey at abrakey@bwscampus.com.

Brentwood School
100 South Barrington Place
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
Permit No. 31217

***Congratulations to
the Class of 2026!***

