OPEN THEIR WORLD CAMPAIGN

Recognizing the Profound Impact of a Castilleja Education

LONG-TIME SUPPORTERS AND ADVOCATES **SARAH AND GREG SANDS P'16 '19 '24** SHARE HOW THEY DISCOVERED THE VALUE OF CASTILLEJA BY LIVING IT THROUGH THEIR FAMILY



"I knew of Castilleja, but always assumed our kids would attend the Palo Alto public schools," Sarah says. "However, when our eldest daughter Natalie wanted to apply and initiated the process herself, everything changed." The family's campus visit was transformative. Sarah vividly remembers being greeted by a self-assured 6th grader, remarking, "I was blown away by her confidence; my mind was changed immediately."

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS "Throughout our daughters' years at Castilleja," Greg says, "the school helped raise them to an entirely new level of thinking and self-discovery." The faculty empowered their children to thrive, develop initiative, and cultivate their innate strengths. "By the time they were juniors, they were doing work most people don't encounter until college. Castilleja exceeded even my highest expectations!" he exclaims.

"While at Castilleja, Natalie tore her ACL. Though we considered it a setback at the time, that experience actually inspired her to pursue a career in medicine," Sarah shares. "She realized the power of the profession to treat a person, even cure them, and found a higher calling. Castilleja provided the foundation and she took the initiative and had the determination to go to med school."

SUPPORTING THE FUTURE The Sands' first campaign gift of $500,000 was motivated by a desire to ensure that future generations benefit from facilities that match the quality of education. Sarah emphasizes, "We didn't have to be sold on the need because we were living it." They were also motivated by enrollment growth; in Greg's words, "It's an amazing education, and more girls deserve it." Sarah continues, "Castilleja has somehow managed to run a world-class institution with what it has—just imagine what it will do with a new campus. And just as others before us made possible what our daughters experienced, now it was our turn." Two years later, they doubled their contribution to $1 million.

As a recipient of financial aid at St. Francis School in Mountain View, Sarah recalls working in the school office to help cover tuition. "My journey was made possible by the generosity of others, and now, I find myself in a position to give back. 'I'm doing this for young Sarah,' I often say. I know how transformative financial support can be, and am grateful to help others navigate their educational paths, just as those before helped me."

FOSTERING GROWTH AND CURIOSITY Greg adds, "I started out in Minneapolis public schools, though it was the transition to a college preparatory school that changed everything. The smaller environment made a world of difference. I was surrounded by students who genuinely wanted to learn. Teachers took the time to draw out our potential, creating an atmosphere that fostered growth and curiosity. This experience solidified my belief in the importance of accessible, high-quality education for all."

For the Sands family, Castilleja represents more than an education; it embodies a commitment to empowering young women. They admire the transformation they observed in their daughters, attributing it to the nurturing environment that encourages students to become their best selves.



Exterior view of the new Makerspace Hub

"Castilleja is important to our family because it helped shape our daughters into resilient, confident individuals," Sarah says. "We see the enduring effects of their education every day."

FINDING JOY Sarah's service to the school began as an Annual Fund solicitor, and she had a pivotal role in achieving 99% participation at the time. "I found immense joy in fostering a sense of belonging, working to create a community where everyone feels invested and connected," she says. Greg adds with a smile, "When the kids were younger, Sarah said to me something like 'I'm so excited to work in and around the kids' education, and I'll do everything but ask for money.'" Sarah laughs and explains the shift: "Working with **Sue Kim**[HA] on the Annual Fund, I learned that doing the uncomfortable was easier when I believed wholeheartedly in the cause. Before Castilleja, I may have asked someone for $1,000, but then, when I was on the Advancement Committee then the Capital Campaign Committee, and learned more about the campus modernization and what it will do for the school, I started adding zeros." Sarah's volunteerism extends beyond Castilleja to the political realm—she is dedicated to lifting up women candidates and closing the gender gap in elected representation and in political contributions.

"Sarah is a woman who can move mountains," Greg says with admiration. "Everyone else started getting to see Sarah as I see her, and it's wonderful to know there is such appreciation of her hard work on behalf of the school." Sarah's seven-year tenure as a trustee coincided with the COVID pandemic, and she served as Vice Chair for three years to then-Board Chair **Mary Speiser P'20 '22**. "Working closely with Mary was exhilarating," Sarah shares, describing the power of collaboration and shared vision in advancing Castilleja's mission. One of the most gratifying moments, she recalls, was how the school rallied together during the initial days of the pandemic. The well-coordinated response meant that families with fewer resources were fully supported during a very challenging time: from internet connectivity and laptops to groceries, the school provided for all its students.

INSPIRING PHILANTHROPY Mary praises Sarah and her unwavering commitment, saying, "Sarah has been an invaluable member of the Advancement Committee since 2009 and continues to serve on the Capital Campaign Steering Committee, making her one of the longest-serving and most-involved former trustees. She is responsible for instilling a strong philanthropic culture in our school community as evidenced by the growth in donations during her tenure, and is a constant source of thought-partnership for the leadership team. Her actions demonstrate just how deeply she cares about Castilleja and everything it stands for: women learning and women leading."

"Our hope for the next generation is that they will embrace the challenges and opportunities that come their way, just as our daughters have," Greg reflects. "With the right support, they achieve incredible things." With this hindsight in mind, Sarah and Greg hope current parents also recognize the immense value of the Castilleja experience, as they are living it. "This school has a profound impact on all of our daughters' futures."