

NEWS



NOTES

FALL 2009

A LETTER FROM KATY

PENINSULA TEACHERS are lifelong learners too!

In October 2009, thirty-nine Peninsula staff members were fortunate to attend the Progressive Education Network (PEN) conference held in Washington D.C. The trip was made possible, in part, by an extraordinary contribution raised at last year's school benefit auction. A total of \$11,500 was collected when fifty-nine community members raised their paddles to support our teachers in participating in this amazing opportunity. Upon reflecting on their time at the conference, here are what some of our staff members had to say:

"D.C. was an inspiring reminder of how education is at the root of democracy. An ethical, social infrastructure is grown out of the interdependence of community and individual participation." —Eliza Thomas, Clay teacher

"What a fabulous experience! The conference gave us opportunities to network with our peers across the country, to exchange ideas on working with kids, to reflect on the place of progressive education in a country where so few children have access to it, and, not least of all, to connect and relax with our fellow Peninsula teachers."

—Barbie Paulsen, Weaving teacher

"(It was) inspirational being in the presence of so many voices championing Progressive Education and the right for all children to have equal access to quality education. My favorite part was all the conversations with other Peninsula educators after each talk about what moved, inspired, changed, frustrated or enlightened us. I return re-committed to social justice, com-

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OUR TRIP TO FRAZIER LAKE FARMS

FLORRIE, TOM, AND ALISON FORREST ('70), baby Leia Tu and I (current parent of three students) set off to visit Peninsula alumnus Michael Halperin ('72) and his wife Merisa's organic farms in Hollister. It was an adventure. We left Peninsula School with a picnic lunch and had plenty to talk about on our drive down. After getting a little lost on the country highway, we approached the Halperin's house slowly down the washboarded dirt road.



Michael Halperin

Michael greeted us in front of his large passive-solar-equipped home. Merisa and their children, Naomi, Lydia and Paul, were packing their picnic of fresh produce to take to the beach. The Halperins homeschool their children and take advantage of the

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WE WELCOME KATE

KATE'S KINDERGARTEN IS IN FULL SWING. The children are playing and working under the guidance of their new teacher, Kate Vander Ploeg, with Camerina Lozano-Aceves and Frank Smithson in attendance.



Kate Vander Ploeg and Marian Bowers Newton

Kate graduated from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a focus on Child Development. She did her student teaching in Santa Clara Unified School District, then during the first half of the 2008-2009 school year, worked as a co-teacher in the Mountain View PACT program, a parent participation progressive school. From January to June, she co-taught in a kindergarten at the East Palo Alto Academy. Prior to her teaching assignments this spring, she worked for two years at Bing Nursery School as an Early Education Assistant teacher. For three years, Kate was a Tutor Coordinator/Literacy Tutor in the Closing the Gap Program at East Palo Alto Charter School. She has also

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ALUMNI NOTES



Emily Stone (2001)

I'm living in Boston after graduating Tufts in May. I work at Action for Boston Community Development (known as ABCD) in downtown Boston, where I run the healthy eating program for seniors. I love Boston, but I miss being closer to family and friends, so a move home to the Bay Area is definitely in my future.

Erik L. Thiesmeyer (1977)

San Luis Obispo, CA

I visit the school whenever I am in the Bay Area and would send my own kids there if I lived closer. It was a great experience and I know I benefited greatly from my time there.

Best wishes for another 80+ years.



Tonya Ward (1986)

I have Peninsula to thank for my creative career path. Being my own boss is fabulous. It's no coincidence that I'm designing curriculum and helping teachers in K-8 schools. Peninsula gave me this passion for how empowering education can be.



Cathy Willett (1964)

I WANTED TO LET PENINSULA FRIENDS AND FAMILY know about the award that I won. In December, my Flight Service Manager presented me with a plaque for being one of American Airlines' Outstanding Employees for 2008. A copy of the plaque is installed on American Airlines Boeing 767-300, aircraft #365 just inside the entry door. The plane primarily flies overseas, but every once in a while it flies within the U.S. Last month I got a chance to see the plaque on the plane when it came in from Paris and before it left for Milan. My understanding is the plaque will remain until the aircraft is retired. So if you happen to be flying on American Airlines, aircraft #365, look for the plaque with my name inside the entry door.

Cathy Willett at Peninsula School

GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY

THREE GENERATIONS came out in full force on November 24, 2009 to celebrate the 3rd tri-annual Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Florrie Forrest and Stacy Dryer marshaled the troops to give our visitors a close look at a school day in the lives of their grandchildren. A breakfast spread, which largely consisted of homemade baked goods donated by Peninsula parents, was declared to be of "Ritz Carlton" caliber by one visitor. In the morning, the newly refurbished auditorium was packed with enthusiastic and expectant elders, who were cheered by the sights and sounds around them.

The teachers were extremely generous in welcoming many adults into their classrooms to observe our students at work and play. The guests who stayed through the afternoon had the opportunity to have lunch with their grandchildren and/or visit the activity classrooms, including woodshop, weaving, science, and art. The event featured performances by the children's chorus, historical tours of the Big Building led by Peninsula's own seventh grade students, and a beautiful reflection by current grandparent (and former parent), Craig Allen. He summed up the spirit of the day well when he said, "In Peninsula School, we found a wonderful, open, caring place where our two daughters learned, played, and grew up to be the wonderful adults and parents they are today ... now we have three grandchildren at Peninsula and note the same miracle of happy children loving school and loving the act of learning."



Pat and Terry Parsons in the clay room with their grandson, Gus Waldspurger

MARION RETIRES

MARION BOWERS NEWTON retired last spring after eight years on the staff, but she didn't leave Peninsula School — yet. She has been working part-time this year to ease the transition to our new kindergarten teacher, Kate Vander Ploeg, thanks to Peninsula Partners for the Future and its Teacher Succession Fund.

Marion first worked at Peninsula in Summer School in 1999. She fell in love with the school, and at that time she was teaching kindergarten in New Mexico. In the spring of 2001, she was hired to replace Winston Stephens. For eight years, she offered a stimulating program and spread her joyous philosophy to the children, their parents and the staff.

Having taught for years in New Mexico, she was well-equipped to offer creative and thoughtful ideas to her Peninsula classes. Her teaching style embodied a high degree of knowledge of child development, warmth and great patience. An observing parent once men-

tioned that she'd like to take Marion home with her.

Bringing music into the classroom was a major feature of Marion's program. A good fiddler herself, she enlisted members of the Front Porch Band to play "Off to California" when a student's parents came in to tell their ancestral story of "how they came to California." The children anticipated these family stories, listening attentively and clapping vigorously with the rhythm of the familiar song. Marion invited parent musicians and the Band to the potlucks and celebratory occasions held at the classroom, a colorful and fitting way to add merriment to the events.

Marion's communication with the parents was far-reaching. In addition to their helping out on special occasions, parents received a regular weekly letter from Marion. It described the highlights of the week just passed and informed the parents of events to come. It might also include a gem of Marion's thinking:

"I learn how to live better each day by be-

ing part of this school."

"We know that the steady life-as-usual approach to our hours in the kindergarten is the best antidote there is to a world that is often too stimulating and busy."

We wholeheartedly wish Marion wonderful years in New Mexico and hope she visits us often.



Marion Bowers Newton

FARM *Continued from page 1*

ballet classes and other extracurriculars twenty minutes away in town.

The Halperin house is designed to collect and store solar energy. The walls on the south-facing side are thick and have black-coated glass "windows" to store the solar rays. Michael explained all of the details of the energy efficient design of the house: cement construction, window positioning, slate floors, awnings, etc. The end result has been successful: they can go through the entire winter firing up the woodstove infrequently, and they don't melt in the summer heat. The only inconvenience is that the awnings are lined with swallow nests that supply a garden full of guano and require quite a bit of window cleaning!

Armed with well-worn overalls, a cell phone, and a truck, Michael manages his 200 acres in two separate locations in Hollister. Thirty-five acres are covered with greenhouses. Michael has been farming for the past 30 years, the last 25 in Hollister. The challenges he faces are many. The soil on the property his house is on has gotten more saline over the years, a result of the water issues that affect all of California and the aquifer that waters his land.



Alisa and baby Leia Tu

He can no longer grow certain crops there--he is limited to crops such as winter squash that can tolerate the salt.

We got a glimpse of the complexity of participating in the produce production industry. In between cell phone calls with his crew or brokers, Michael told us about his business and his industry. Michael's work is not how to grow a tomato or a cucumber, but is a medley of decisions and strategy. He must decide what and when to plant for peak production between the Fresno and Mexican harvests. He must figure out what the market will want: Are organic heirlooms in vogue or is bi-colored patty pan squash? Are organic herbs

going to be their next cash crop? What is the strategy to use in negotiations with produce brokers on the East Coast to make sure they don't reject a shipment of produce? He takes advantage of an opportunity to trade lower quality compost for high quality compost.

During the tour of his packing and sorting facility, we met his foreman, Ascension, who is an indispensable part of the operations. He is so close a partner, Michael said if Ascension quits, Michael will also quit farming. In the facility, we were greeted by stacks of rosy red tomatoes, slick uniform-sized cucumbers and waxy glowing yellow bell peppers. In the larger cooler were more crates full of produce ready to go to market. Some of the crates were awaiting shipping to customers, some were eagerly awaiting potential sale, and some were going to overripen and be tossed in the recycling bin. Michael also showed us his latest pride and joy: a beautiful cucumber cleaner and sorter. We ate our lunch of sandwiches with fresh basil and tomatoes at the picnic table, and gathered our going away gifts of farm-fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs and bell peppers. We were grateful for the delicious food and for Michael's generosity in sharing his time and livelihood with us.

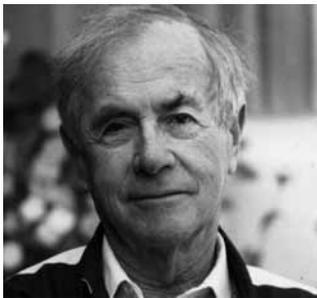
—Alisa Tu

IN MEMORIAM



SUE VARIAN

Sue Varian passed away on September 22, 2009. An important and beloved figure at Peninsula School who was devoted to children, Sue could instantly relate to them and make them feel special and important. Sue worked in many capacities over the years: as pottery teacher, classroom teacher, librarian and Board vice-president. She was the mother of three alumnae: Sydney ('80), Holly ('82), and Claire ('92), and the cherished grandmother of Holly's children: Hannah ('13) and Angus ('15). Sue will be greatly missed by all who relished her wisdom, wit, gentle advice and deep friendship.



WERNER WARMBRUNN

Werner Warmbrunn, Co-Director of Peninsula School with his wife, Joan, from 1949 to 1952, died on July 19, 2009. He had come to California from the Putney School in Vermont. While at Peninsula, Werner strengthened the responsibility of students for the care and maintenance of the school (he established Workjobs!) and found ways to create common experiences among students and teachers by encouraging class trips and even week-long camping

away from the school. He had learned early in life the thrill for young people of living simply together in as primitive a setting as possible.

According to a student of that era (Gottfried Paasche), Werner talked years later about the satisfaction he gained through working closely with parents. He felt he had found a strength of community at Peninsula that he never quite found again in later life. It was something he cherished.



FRED SONENBERG

Fred Sonenberg, Peninsula's sixth and seventh grade teacher in the late 60's, died May 14, 2009 at his home in Guerneville. He was active in progressive causes all his life and worked for many nonprofit organizations, among them the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center where he served as Executive Director. He is survived by his daughter, Amanda ('82), and his former wife, Lynne, who was an assistant teacher to Marion Conley.

JOHN DAWSON

John Dawson, class of 1959, died on July 21, 2009. John, known as Marmaduke, co-founded New Riders of the Purple Sage in 1969, which became one of the Grateful Dead's regular opening acts. John, along with Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter, wrote the song "Friend of the Devil." (*Ed. note: One day in the 70's, New Riders of the Purple Sage, with members of the Dead in attendance, played at Peninsula after school on the handball court.*)



Frank Smithson gets a sound check



The Peninsula School
Spring Fair

is coming

Sunday, May 2, 2010

Save the date!





The class of 2005

DID YOU KNOW?

The Peninsula School graduates of 2005 are now students at the following colleges:

In California:

Cañada, CSU Monterey Bay, Foothill, Pitzer (Claremont), SFSU, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC San Diego, UC Santa Cruz, USC, and USF.

In other states:

Carleton College in Minnesota, Clark University in Massachusetts, Portland State University in Oregon, Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, and University of Arizona.

KATY *Continued from page 1*

munities and country.” —Kathleen Flynn, Assistant teacher

“It was wonderful to share what we are doing at Peninsula and why; to connect with others who have the same commitments and to learn about ways in which they are addressing issues of social justice and responsive curriculum.” —Gail Buschini, Head teacher

“One of the statements from Marion Wright Edelman’s talk that keeps going through my mind is: ‘In this country, we do not have a money problem, we have a values problem.’ This, in so many ways, is at the heart of Progressive Education, and certainly at the heart of Peninsula. We talk about our values and beliefs in all our decision making processes and in just about all that we do.” —Mary Lou Lacina, Admissions Director

We are forever changed. Thank you to the entire community for supporting our growth, learning, and opportunity to have an incredible experience together.

Katy



PEN Conference Panel (from l. to r.) Jerry Hearn, Linda Darling-Hammond, Francisco Guajardo, Deborah Meier, Marisa West, Tom Little

KATE *Continued from page 1*

worked as a camp counselor, tutor and a youth leader. Kate loves working with children and is dedicated to progressive education.

We are fortunate that the PPF funds for teacher succession enable Kate and her predecessor, Marion Bowers Newton, to talk and work together. Many of Marion’s priorities seem right to Kate. She appreciates the flexibility and openness in the child’s day; the respect and value given to children’s ideas

and interests; the space in the curriculum for discovery. She cited woodworking as a good example of how Peninsula values what each child brings to an activity that involves skills large and small.

Kate stated that the traditions embraced by Peninsula are “wonderful.” One kindergarten tradition she is keeping is “the news of the day” each morning. Other traditions will emerge as natural outcomes of “thoughtful processes.”

We welcome you, Kate, and wish you happy days and years at Peninsula School!



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THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

RECENTLY, AN ALUMNA from the 1950's came to visit Peninsula School. As she spoke about her experience of walking through the doors of the Big Building after being away for so many years, she said, "It felt like coming home." We regularly receive calls, letters, and e-mails from our alumni and former

parents speaking to the profound impact that Peninsula had on their lives and/or the lives of their children. For many of our students and their families, Peninsula is the place they call home. It is the place where they grew up. It is the place where they came to learn about themselves—their interests, their talents, and their passions—in ways that helped to define who they are and who they want to be for the rest of the world.

In many cases, a Peninsula education is the gift of a lifetime. For those who would like to honor their time at Peninsula through

a financial gift to the school, Peninsula accepts both memorial and honor gifts to their Annual Giving Campaign. This year, the school also is expanding its Planned Giving program, so that individuals who are interested in setting up a charitable trust on behalf of Peninsula School or naming Peninsula School as a beneficiary of their will or estate are able to do so.

If you are interested in making a lifetime gift to Peninsula School to honor the gift of a lifetime, please contact the school's Development Director, Stacy Dryer.

If you would like additional copies of News Notes sent to family members or friends, please send us their names and addresses and we'll be happy to add them to our mailing list. If for any reason you would like to be removed from our mailing list, let us know and we'll discontinue our mailings to you. Please contact Florrie at florrie@peninsulaschool.org for more information about any of the articles.

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