



# THE SISKIYOU SCHOOL

FALL 2022 | NEWSLETTER

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COVER ART: Founding teacher, Ms. Bower helps with Class 6 handwork. Ms. Bower has been with the Siskiyou School since its beginnings and serves as both handwork teacher and the school's business manager. Dedicated and long-serving faculty make the school a special place.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Thank you, professional photographers Bryon DeVore and Kristan Kelly Williams. Other photographs by Lora Wilde and parents of the school.

ART: All artwork was created by Siskiyou School students and teachers.

## SISKIYOU SCHOOL MISSION

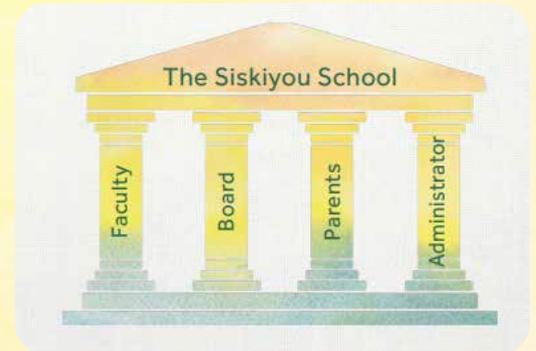
To cultivate the intellectual, imaginative, artistic, and individual gifts of each student within a community that honors childhood, practices compassion, values diversity, and inspires a passion for learning and service.

## SISKIYOU SCHOOL PURPOSE

To inspire academic excellence, artistic creativity, emotional intelligence and social responsibility through a rich Waldorf curriculum.

## THE FOUR PILLARS MODEL

The Four Pillars governance model, adopted by the Siskiyou School board and faculty in the fall of 2006, is based on collaborative leadership among the board, faculty, parents, and administration. Each pillar has its well-defined sphere of expertise and activity. Each has a part to play; all are needed to carry the work of the school.



- The faculty holds the pedagogical program.
- The board carries the school's finances and legal affairs.
- The parents are tasked with "creating a mantle of warmth" for the children and the school.
- The administrator heads the administrative team and acts as the school's point person, holding the whole and supporting the work of each group.

# LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



Dear Siskiyou School Community, Friends, Grandparents, Alum Students and Parents!

We began our 2022-23 school year with our traditional Opening Day Ceremony under our silver maple tree, on a clear, sunny and fresh early September morning. The day felt full of promise—and new wonder.

As the incoming first graders stepped away from their parents' sides when their new teacher called them up one by one, each new 6th grade buddy hurried up to welcome them with a flower and a gentle arm around their shoulder. We could feel the Circle renewing itself, the power of tradition anchoring our school through all the vicissitudes.

Being good buddies to one another is a theme for our year. As I shared with the children on Opening Day and with the parents at Parent Welcome Night, our hope is that after this long stretch of challenging times, our sense of community will be rebuilt anew this year. Our in-person festivals and all-school events will offer opportunities to be together, but community-building, weaving that “mantle of warmth”, really lies in the simplest everyday gestures and interactions: noticing one another, saying hello, inquiring about each other, listening, engaging one another always with kindness, compassion and respect. May we all put our intention to this so that every Siskiyou School child and parent feels surrounded by friends and supported in our individual and collective journeys.

In the weeks that have passed since Opening Day, the teachers have launched their curricula, the children have found their games and play at recess, fall trips have given our students opportunities to revel in the beauty of our state and to experience themselves as a class in fun and bonding ways. Our wonderful Michaelmas celebration marked the coming of fall. Now our thoughts are turning to Halloween and the November-December season of giving and outreach that we engage in as families and in the life of the school. Parents often have told us that the rhythms and rituals of the school year enhance their home lives as well, as their children live into the seasonal changes through our celebration of them. That's a nice thing. And, for the first time in three years, we were able to host Grandparents' Day!

Greatest of all the blessings this fall has been the palpable joy and engagement of the children across the grades in their school life - on the playground and in their classrooms. Waldorf education, the Siskiyou School program, and our campus are truly gifts to the students as our teachers and staff are privileged to witness every day. Thank you for choosing our school for your children.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will read about the glorious graduation of the Class of 2022, the comings and goings of beloved staff, new happenings at our Clay Street Garden, and....more. Enjoy!

In closing, I send out to you this Celtic blessing that I shared at our Opening Day gathering:

Blessings on our school  
Deep peace of the running wave to you  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you  
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aurilia McNamara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Aurilia McNamara

# FRIENDSHIPS, LEARNING, PLAY





# FALL TRIPS: COMING BACK TOGETHER



Hummingbird Class (8th Grade): Backpacking along the Oregon Coast!



Dragonfly Class (7th Grade): Camping on the Oregon Coast!



Forest Class (6th Grade): Exploring geology at Lassen National Park!



Blue Heron Class (5th Grade): Exploring botany at Jedediah Smith Redwoods!



Raven Class (4th Grade): Exploring local geography at Lithia Park!



Butterfly Class (3rd Grade): Apple picking at Leonard Orchard!

# 2022-2023 FACULTY & STAFF

## CLASS TEACHERS

Molly McKissick, Class 1  
Carole Whitridge, Class 2  
Jeremy Criswell, Class 3 (Butterfly Class)  
Javier Alvarez, Class 4 (Raven Class)  
Heidi Martin, Class 5 (Blue Heron Class)  
Christine Benson, Class 6 (Forest Class)  
Gregory Beech, Class 7 (Dragonfly Class)  
Jen Franczak, Class 8 (Hummingbird Class)

## STAFF

Aurilia McNamara, Administrator  
Cynthia Bower, Business Manager  
Phyllis Cooley, Office Manager  
Lora Wilde, Director of Fundraising  
Kristin Beers, Admissions & Admin. Manager  
Aaron Smith, Facilities & Maintenance  
Rafaela Gonzalez, Housekeeping

## SPECIALTY & SUBJECT TEACHERS

Christy Bartow, Class 1 Assistant  
Cordero Juncal, Class 2 Asst & Music Asst  
Magda Paz, Class 3 Asst, Art, & 1-4 Support  
Nina Gallwey, Ohana & Parent Enrichment  
Alison Hutchins, Ohana Program  
Dustin Monda, Math 5-8  
Jenny James, Math 5-8  
Robert Dilansa, Language Arts & Woodwork  
Cynthia Bower, Handwork  
Margie Glatte, Games  
Melissa Archer, Music  
Victoria Lawton-Diez, Spanish  
Jennifer Carroll, Mandarin Chinese  
Leann Tourzan, ACORN  
Eve Smyth, Drama



# WELCOME, NEW & RETURNING FACULTY!

## MOLLY MCKISSICK, CLASS 1 TEACHER



Every time Molly McKissick agrees to jump back into Siskiyou School class teaching, even if it's just for a year or two, we are very grateful. Ms. McKissick is a founding teacher with over 35 years of teaching experience. She has carried a couple of Siskiyou classes up through the middle school and loves every grade. Twice now in the last 3-4 years, Molly has rejoined the school specifically to "form a first grade", and that has been the best service! She has a gift for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic to the young ones while making it fun and joyful. The foundation they receive sets them up for success in all the grades to follow and inspires a lifetime love of learning.

## CAROLE WHITRIDGE, CLASS 2 TEACHER



Originally from Scotland, Carole holds a B.Ed. in Primary Education from the University of Dundee and a Waldorf Grades Certificate from the Michael Institute in Portland, Oregon. Prior to living in Ashland, Carole taught in her native Scotland and in Singapore. She comes to the Siskiyou School after five years at Madrone Trail, in Jacksonville. Carole discovered Waldorf education while searching for a magical school for her daughter, Matilda. Both of her children completed eight years at the Siskiyou School. Carole loves how the school and the Waldorf curriculum enabled her children to develop all of their capacities, to find places to shine, and to create lasting friendships.

## GREGORY BEECH, CLASS 7 TEACHER



Gregory Beech has been a class teacher for nearly two decades at schools in Minnesota, Colorado and Oregon. He received his Waldorf teacher certificate at Arcturus in Chicago, a B.A. in English and Theatre Arts from the University of Minnesota and an MFA in Acting from Rutgers University. The author of five plays for students, he also enjoys making music, creating visual art, and hiking the area golf courses. He has two grown children and simply loves life here in Ashland with his wife and two young sons. Gregory graduated the Honeybee Class in 2020 and is proud to take up the Dragonfly Class now.

## ALISON HUTCHINS, OHANA TEACHER



Alison earned her B.A. in Art with a minor in Spanish from Southern Oregon University. She went on to get her Masters of Arts in Teaching, with a focus in Elementary Education from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, graduating in 2009. Alison has always been passionate about people, art and books. As a teacher, she knows her primary purpose is to show children how capable and gifted they already are and to help them cultivate those gifts to give to the world. Alison loves spending time with her husband and seven-year-old daughter, Wren in Class 2.

# A FOND FAREWELL

In June we said goodbye to three founding teachers: Kelly Tisdel, Ghigs Razi, and Michael McGlone. All joined during the pod years and helped create a bridge to the school today. On the occasion of their departures, the school honored all the founding teachers with a plaque describing their contribution. In June, at our goodbye assembly for departing teachers, the plaque was presented and teachers and students spoke to the three teachers who were leaving.



## KELLY TISDEL

Kelly Tisdel was hired in 2004 to carry a pod, and with the exception of a couple of brief interruptions, served as class teacher until last June. She carried several classes through the middle school and left a deep imprint on all the children she taught, the parents she guided, and the school she helped form. At our goodbye assembly, Ms. Gallwey spoke of Kelly's gift for helping students discover "the secret": that every person is born with a special gift in their heart and that that gift is looking to make its way into the world. Ms. Gallwey said that Ms. Tisdel's gift was her ability to see each student, listen to them, and honor their personhood. Indeed, her students stood tall, strong in her holding and honoring. Ms. Tisdel's inspired teaching

fueled her students' love of learning and elicited their desire to show up in the best way they knew. Her lessons were infused with her passion for the stories, her humor and warmth, and her ability to have students feel safe in their participation. Ms. Tisdel is currently taking a leap of faith in exploring new ways to follow her passion for supporting youth. She has created a new venture, *SoulFire Passage*, that allows her to mentor and support youth and families not just from our valley but from around the world. We are grateful that she will also continue to serve the school by holding trust circles with classes. For all she has given, we are deeply grateful.



**Left:** Now hanging in Pine Hall the "Founding Teachers" plaque honors the teachers who pledged their time and talents to the fledgling Siskiyou School in the pod years. "Their leap of faith, grit, vision, dedication and creative energy is our bedrock."

**Right:** Mr. McGlone touched the children with his warmth, good cheer, and quiet strength in woodworking classes, gardening classes and as recess teacher.





## GHIGS RAZI

Ghigs Razi was also hired in 2004 to pick up a pod. She was fresh out of college, with no prior teaching experience, but she rocked her interview with the faculty, and from Day 1, also rocked it in the classroom! Over her 17 years at the school, she carried several classes through the middle-school years and her last, from 1st to 8th. Of her 28 students in her Class of 2022, 24 had started in first grade. Ms. Razi, a natural leader, was a guiding force in the forming of the school’s programs during her tenure. At the goodbye assembly, Ms. Bower spoke of Ms. Razi as a stellar human being who came when the school was not really formed, when you had to be “brave, adventurous, independent and not afraid to step into the

unknown. Ms. Razi did all these with astonishing grace.” She said that over the years, Ms. Razi’s growing knowledge and experience served all the students, faculty, and staff so well that the faculty came to lean on Ms. Razi’s clarity of thinking in charting a course forward in times of difficult decisions. Ms. Bower said that while it would have been easy to let Ms. Razi do all the hard work, there was always this invitation from her for all to rise as well and strive to be better and bring our school to higher standards. “Just by being herself, Ms. Razi inspired all her colleagues to rise to greater heights.” In closing, Ms. Bower said that the school in Maine “doesn’t even know how lucky they are to have [her] joining!” For all she has given the Siskiyou School, we are truly grateful.



## MICHAEL MCGLONE

Michael McGlone joined the school in 2005. Ms. Razi invited him to interview at our school when they met at a job fair at the Rudolf Steiner College; she thought he would make a great fit for our school. As fate would have it, years later, she and Mr. McGlone married and became parents of Juniper and Grace. At the goodbye assembly, students shared anecdotes about Mr. McGlone, and spoke of how much they appreciated how he interacted with them and played with them at recesses. Mr. Alvarez said that when he first visited the school he could tell it was

a great school but was looking for a sign to know if it was where he was meant to be. It was in meeting and chatting with Mr. McGlone about shared high school sports experiences in Philly that he knew. He thanked Mr. McGlone for being that sign for him and for many others as well, and then presented him with the plaque on behalf of the school.



# FROM THE BOARD

## MISTI MATTHEWS, BOARD PRESIDENT



Dear Siskiyou School Community,

What a gift it is to be together again as a school community after these past few years. I want to thank our four pillars: the faculty, administration, school families, and our board, for your perseverance during the uncertain times. I hope you also feel the joy of togetherness.

When I first visited the Siskiyou School at Winter Faire, I knew we had discovered something special. Two years later, my son Milo started grade one and we have seen him thriving and growing in this beautiful community ever since. Now in grade four, we are witnessing his curiosity and love for learning unfold, and we attribute much of this to the Waldorf curriculum and Siskiyou School.

The role of the Board of Directors is to support the financial health of the Siskiyou School, while helping to ensure we continue to offer our wonderful curriculum to a diverse population of students and families. We have been fortunate to have the solid foundation established by the board members that served before me. As we emerge from the pandemic, our board has had the opportunity once again to focus on committee work and forward-looking development for the health and well-being of the school. It has been rewarding and challenging to dive back into looking toward the future in partnership with the school administration.

Through all of my interactions with the school, I am continually reminded of the depth, value, and beauty of this education. Again, I want to express my sincere gratitude for all of your contributions that make this possible.

- Misti Matthews

### THE 2022-23 SCHOOL BOARD

Misti Matthews - President  
Alicia Welder - Vice President  
Kristin Rholfing - Treasurer  
Katie Larsen - Secretary

Kate Levin  
Kevin Lee  
Devin Huseby



Alicia Welder



Kevin Lee, Devin Huseby, Kristin Rholfing



Kate Levin (and Asher Levin)

# WELCOME, NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



**ALICIA WELDER**

Alicia is a practicing emergency medicine physician at

Asante and the mother of Ella Welder in Class 3. Her youngest daughter, Avery, is in Class 1.

She believes that Waldorf education offers a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning and provides a rich and warm environment for children to grow in their knowledge as well as their spirit. First grade for Ella has marked the start of a wonderful journey for their family as part of the school.



**KATIE LARSEN**

Katie is a Bay Area native. She moved to Ashland in

2019 with her husband, Larry, and two boys, Liam, in Class 4, and Luke, in Class 1. Katie and her family love to hike, run, and explore the trails in Ashland.

Katie has been a mother, teacher, and advocate for children with extra needs for many years. When she found the Siskiyou School she recognized what a gift it is to all children and jumped in to volunteer. She is excited and grateful to be on the board.



**KEVIN LEE**

Born in the Sierras and raised in Riverside, California,

Kevin moved to Southern Oregon at the age of twelve. For the last 25 years he has taught para-gliding.

Kevin has an appreciation for the Waldorf approach and is incredibly grateful for how the Siskiyou School has seen his son, Enakai, in Class 8, and supported him in his development. He aspires to bring his love of clear communication, inclusion, and heart to his experience.



**KATE LEVIN**

Kate is the mother of Ben in Class 8, Oliver in Class 5,

and Asher in Class 1. She is co-owner of Pop-Pop's Children's Furniture Company (making children's furniture with her dad) and a science teacher at St. Mary's School in Medford.

Kate fell in love with Waldorf education when her eldest child started at a local kindergarten. The curriculum so meets children where they are, feeding and nurturing the whole child and growing with them. In her spare time, Kate enjoys trail running, hiking and playing soccer.



**KRISTIN RHOLFING**

Kristin was born in Ashland and raised in Medford.

She attended the Univeristy of Oregon, and completed a Bachelor in Business with an emphasis in Accounting at Southern Oregon University. After eight years in public accounting, she moved into private industry for Dutch Bros Coffee, where she runs the FP&A team.

Kristin absolutely loves what she does and the people she is so fortunate to work with on a daily basis. Her daughter, Chamberlyn, is in Class 4.



**DEVIN HUSEBY**

Devin is a criminal defense attorney working for

the Federal Public Defender. He and his wife Shana found Waldorf education recently and are drawn to the philosophy that children learn with their entire bodies. They are proud parents of Quinn, in Class 2, and his younger brother Owen, at Creekside Cottage.

Devin loves trail running, biking, reading, and playing outdoors with the kiddos and dog.

# A RENEWED GARDEN SPACE

Two springs ago, our Clay Street Garden was infused with new life when parents and teacher responded to our call to action in the spring of 2021. Leann Tourzan, who was then assisting with our ACORN program, had a vision of what was needed, and under her direction, a team of volunteers built a beautiful deer-resistant fence and new planting beds over several work sessions. These improvements gave the garden a sense of permanence and...belonging! THANK YOU, TEAM! Ms. Tourzan, now our fulltime ACORN teacher, has big plans for this 2022-2023 year, both for the Clay Street Garden and Glendale. In addition to adding a bunny hutch and a greenhouse to the Clay Street garden, she is creating a pollinator garden with grades 1-4 next to the Glendale herb garden, with a specific focus on the native Mason bee. This pollinator project is being funded by a grant from the Ashland Food Coop. Ms. Tourzan will also be working closely with Magdalena Winter, mom of Josephine in Class 7, to enhance our school's composting program. All of the ACORN students will participate in the process. More to come on these wonderful developments!



## THE CLAY STREET GARDEN FROM LEANN TOURZAN

Now more than ever children need connections to the earth and to the rhythms of the year. The revitalized Clay Street Garden serves as a venue for those experiences. It is intended to offer a magical, sensory landscape where children through the grades can cycle in and out, exploring processes of life and reveling in the surprises of nature's bounty. It is to be a living classroom, supporting the curriculum teachers bring and deepening the children's relationship to the earth.



This outdoor classroom provides students with refuge, renewal, and inspiration. Children grow food and engage in scientific exploration, purposeful activity and observations. They investigate the mysteries of climate, weather, soil, microorganisms and root patterns and delight in the miracle of bees and the many pollinators the garden attracts. Concepts enlivened by experience foster appreciation, wonder, reverence and play. The Clay Street garden is also a platform for parents to build community in new ways. They are invited to help in the tending of it, and children see how teamwork and effort can create specific outcomes. Our hope is that learning to grow food and developing a relationship with the school's gardens through the seasons will help students develop a more grounded sense of self and connection to place and foster in the children an imagination of a sustainable future for all! The ACORN program combines outdoor work with classroom storytelling, journaling, singing, drawing, and crafting on nature-related themes.



**"THE TOTALITY OF TRUTH IS PRESENT IN EVERY SOUL AS A SEED AND CAN BE BROUGHT TO BLOSSOM IF THE SOUL DEVOTES ITSELF TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAT SEED." -RUDOLF STEINER**

# DOLPHIN CLASS 8TH GRADE PROJECTS

The 8th Grade Project is an independent study that extends over several months, inviting students to go outside of the curriculum, to pursue something of personal interest, and to work in depth around a subject of their own choosing. It extends their own sense of what they are capable of achieving. Projects can include internships or apprenticeships, or acquiring a new skill. The 8th Grade Project includes regular meetings with an expert mentor, work on their own between their mentor meetings, and a presentation by the student to the school community in Pine Hall. We are proud of the Dolphin Class' achievements and celebrate their work here.



**ALICE CARNAHAN**

Martial Arts

Mentor: John Merripen

Ever since my sister took martial arts, I've wanted to try it. It's an amazing workout for both body and brain.



**BEN BASS**

Building a Bike

Mentor: Rich Beaudoin

I have always been interested in bikes and building things. The best part was seeing my finished bike and riding it to school.



**CICILY LEHMANN**

Computer Animation

Mentor: Brian Rodgers

I became interested in animation after watching animated movies and wondering how they were made. I was intrigued by how real everything could look.



**CLARITY CARDER**

American Sign Language

Mentor: Kelle Lovett

I have been fascinated by this unspoken language for four years, but I have been aware of ASL since my parents signed to me as a baby.



**ELI SEIGEL**

Photography

Mentor: Aaron Moffatt

I wanted to do photography because I've always enjoyed taking pictures of friends and family, and they've always said they're really good.



**ESCHER PAZ**

Tree Climbing

Mentor: Sam Limon

I chose tree climbing because my uncle gave me a lesson on how to climb a tree using arborist equipment and it was fun.



### **EVI SLOAN**

Art

Mentor: Claire Burbridge

I enjoy drawing and painting and wanted to improve my skills. It was a privilege to work with Claire and spend time in her studio.



### **GIGI BROWN**

Ceramics

Mentor: Stephanie Freedman

I chose ceramics because I have always found it satisfying to watch a blob of clay transform into new and different shapes.



### **GWENDOLYN BARTOW**

Firefighting

Mentor: Captain Ashley Manning

I've been interested in firefighting ever since my neighbor's barn burned down and the Alameda Fires. Firefighters are powerful humans who can save a life or an entire town.



### **HUDSON HORVATH**

Elevated Dining

Mentor: Josh Dorcak

I've always loved cooking and this was the perfect opportunity to take my passion to the next level. I got to see how a restaurant works, from an inside perspective.

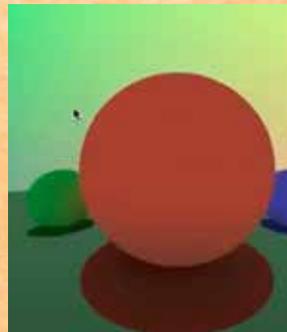


### **IVO WESTERGAARD-VOS**

Law Enforcement

Mentor: Deputy A.P.D. Chief Art LeCours

I've had a long-standing fascination with the possibility of becoming a police officer. They are truly keepers of the city, and I would love to do this job someday.



### **JAMES BEERS**

Ray Tracing

Mentor: Tom Rogers

I've always had a fascination with computers, probably because of how you can do everything from basic math to complex calculus.



### **JULIETTE GUNN**

Baking

Mentor: Victoria Lawton-Diez

Baking has been an important part of my life and a way to connect with my mom. The highlight of this project was when my cookbook came in the mail.



### **KAYA MARSH**

Woodwork: Building a River Table

Mentor: Jay Treiger

Woodworking class with Mr. McGlone has always been one of my favorites. A highlight was seeing how an ordinary piece of wood could turn into a work of art.



### **KAYLA HAWKINS**

Emergency Medical Technician

Mentor: Kelly Burns

I knew I wanted to do something in the medical field. People in my family have been dedicated to helping people through medicine and inspired me to do the same.



### **KIERAN SWEENEY**

Metal Smithing

Mentor: Dana Bussell

I had a super fun time doing this project and learned so much from working with Dana and taking her class at RCC. I enjoyed the 3D possibilities of casting the metal.



**KIVA DILANSA**  
Interior Design  
Mentor: Athena Lorenz

Ever since I was little, I have enjoyed rearranging things in my bedroom. Because of quarantine, I must have re-arranged my bedroom at least four times.



**LENA CRAWFORD**  
Coding  
Mentor: Danny McKeever

I've always been interested in coding and find it fascinating to see a bunch of random letters and symbols create a masterpiece.



**MAYLI MAGDA**  
Clay Sculpture  
Mentor: Jeremy Criswell

My whole life I have loved doing art. I decided to connect my love of working with clay with a social justice issue.



**OLIVER MARTIN**  
Architecture  
Mentor: Matt Small

I love designing and building things. Even when I was very young, I liked to design the outside and inside of houses.



**QUILLIAN TOURZAN**  
Pastries  
Mentor: Wes Reimer

Who can resist a freshly made doughnut? I love baked goods and pastries and wanted to learn to make them myself.



**RAQUEL ADAMS**  
Sewing Clothing  
Mentor: Kelle Lovett

This project was inspired by my curiosity about how clothing was made and my concern for the environmental impacts of fast fashion.



**RONIN SMITH**  
Building a Skateboard  
Mentor: Mike Penn

I've been skateboarding for many years and thought it would be fun to ride a skateboard that I made.



**ROSETTA BONEY**  
Acrylic Nail Art  
Mentor: Cezanne Durre

I chose this project because I wanted to learn how to create beautiful pieces of art on someone's nails.



**SAGE THATCHER**  
Hip Hop Dance and  
Choreography  
Mentor: Aisha Wand

I have always loved dance and thought it would be fun to take it to the next level. Hip Hop is the kind of dance music I enjoy listening to.



**SERAFIMA AGAPOVA**  
Building a Guitar  
Mentor: Pavel Agapov

I thought this would be a great opportunity to get back into playing the guitar. Making a guitar was intimidating but also inspiring because it has so many steps.



### SISI FITCH

Make-up  
Mentor: Pam Danielle

It's good to practice make-up on many different faces because each face is a different canvas. There is so much more to make-up than I imagined.



### WYNTER MARKS-LADD

Computer Coding  
Mentor: Noah Sohl

My interest in computer programming began when I realized how much you could do with a few lines of code.

## CONGRATULATIONS, DOLPHIN CLASS!



BACK ROW: Ronin Smith, Rosetta Boney, Kiva Dilansa, Raquel Adams, James Beers, Wynter Marks-Ladd, Cicily Lehmann, Quillian Tourzan, Evi Sloan, Serafima Agapova

MIDDLE ROW: Ivo Westergaard Vos, Sisi Fitch, Gigi Brown, Kayla Hawkins, Lena Crawford, Ben Bass, Juliette Gunn, Ms. Razi, Gwen Bartow, Hudson Horvath, Clarity Carder, Mayli Magda, Alice Carnahan, Sage Thatcher, Kaya Marsh

FRONT ROW: Escher Paz, Oliver Martin, Eli Siegel, Kieran Sweeney

# GRADUATION SPEECH TO THE CLASS OF 2022

**GHIGS RAZI, JUNE 9, 2022**

Dolphin Class, you are about to graduate. Oh my goodness, we've been on such a journey together, and oh, how I treasure each of you! Thank you for being my students.

Dolphins.

My "work" with dolphins started in my early twenties. I was living in Colorado and was deep in the journey of finding myself, and...I was working with an amazing therapist. I remember feeling her genuine care for me, and watching her searching for ways to help me shift my patterns. One day she said to me, "Do you know that dolphins are conscious breathers?"

I remember thinking, "What are you talking about, and how can this possibly pertain to me?" ...The things I was facing seemed so huge. It seemed absurd to talk about breathing.

Then she launched into this whole thing about how dolphins are mammals and how they have to breathe in order to survive. But, since they live under the water, they have to consciously decide to come up to the surface to take a breath. She explained that this meant that dolphins have to PLAN their LIVES around BREATH, making them Conscious Breathers.

And that's how it started for me about dolphins. Those words really stuck with me, and I started "holding the question" about what it meant to be a Conscious Breather.

By the time I became your first grade teacher, I had been working with the idea of breath for about 12 years. And when I decided to teach your class, I knew that breath was going to be a very important part of our time together. By this time, I had grown to love dolphins. Their qualities are outstanding and...all the way back in first grade, I saw many wonderful dolphin qualities in each of you. You were playful and thoughtful, kind, funny, and smart. You were incredibly capable and compassionate; I had no doubt you were the Dolphin Class.

And that day in 2nd grade right after spring break when a whole group of you came back with a story about an unexpected experience you'd had with a dolphin on the beach in Brookings, and I had just happened to plan a lesson about dolphins for that very day without knowing anything about your dolphin adventure, I knew it was time to make the announcement and officially name our class!

Over the 8 years I've been your teacher, much of the Dolphin Medicine — breath, play, community, learning, ingenuity, creativity — has been in my heart and mind as I have planned each block, each day, each lesson. As we have navigated the seasons of these years together, these qualities have been by guideposts.

And over these last weeks, as I have been thinking of what I might want to say to you on this night, I've kept coming back to the medicine that the dolphins bring to us...

So on this graduation night I say to you— BREATHE.

BREATHE. Literally and simply, breathe. Remember to breathe when things are hard. Remember to breathe when things are awesome. Breathe when you are scared. Breathe when you feel stuck or everything feels impossible.

Breathe. Become Conscious Breathers.

If you forget everything you know, if you are in the darkest of dark, just breathe. For a few minutes, just breathe, and you will know what to do next. Listen to the knowing, however small, that arises after you remember to breathe and be willing to follow it. It works like magic; somehow breath has the capacity to light our path.

When I started to remember to take conscious breaths, especially in my hardest moments, at first it was just about that: breathing and getting through to the other side. But slowly, something unexpected started to happen: I started to change, and the way I saw the world started to change, too. I started to let go of a whole lot of ideas I had about how hard life was supposed to feel and about how hard I was supposed to push in order to get things done.

And so, Dolphin Class, as you move on in your lives, I invite you to notice when you are in “push mode.” Notice when you feel something needs to be a certain way or when you are using your energy to force something to happen, whether it be about a grade, a test, a social situation, a sport. When you are “efforting”, I encourage you to stop, take a breath, and ask, “What is actually going on? Why am I in this state? Do I need to feel this way?”

I have noticed that when I am able to stop in those hardest-push moments, something can move. I have noticed that something WANTS to move. I have noticed that the hard, impossible feeling of that moment can open and change – really quickly, actually, if I am able to let it. I’ve noticed that breath is the doorway to that change.

When we remember to BREATHE instead of pushing harder, the resistance we are creating through all of our pushing falls away, and we move from being in a place of effort to being in a place of flow.

And when we take action from that place of flow, we are inspired. Our actions feel easy and fun. We know just what to do next.

Sometimes we realize the thing we were “forcing” doesn’t even matter.

Sometimes we see that there is a much better way to approach the situation.

Sometimes the thing that seemed so huge, falls away, just because we took a breath and laid our resistance down.

I have come to see this place of flow as the ultimate Dolphin Medicine. When we are in this place, we are playful and free. We are creative and full of energy and possibility, just like the dolphins. And when we move from this place, it is literally powerful beyond measure. When we move from our own personal place of flow, we can move MOUNTAINS with nearly no effort at all.

That is the Dolphin Medicine I want to offer you as you step into this new time in your lives. I encourage you to breathe and follow that place of flow as often as you can.

Question when things are hard, when you are pushing rather than flowing, and try to listen to the wisdom that comes when you remember to breathe.

It’s the power of the Dolphin, and you all have it in you. Everyone does.

If these words seem like crazy talk, just like the “conscious breather” thing once seemed crazy to me, I invite you to at least consider what I am saying, revisit the idea over time, and see how your relationship to breath changes as you grow. And I would love to hear what you have to say about this in about twenty years or so!

And now, Dolphin Class, it is time to graduate.

# IN MEMORIAM

## JOAN BALLENGER (1930-2021)

A beloved member of our Siskiyou School community, Joan Ballenger passed peacefully on Saturday, March 13th, at the age of 91. Over several decades, Joan brought her love of reading to the various Waldorf schools in Ashland. She began as a reading helper in 1991, when her grandson, Griffin Loop, was a second grader.



Over the years, she read with many, many children, surrounding them with her uniquely warm and loving presence. Adults and children gravitated to her bright smile and laughter, and she loved us all in return. She was a life-long gardener, meditator, lover of Waldorf education, volunteer at Access, and a beloved and inspiring friend to many. We are so grateful for all she gave to our school community. We love you, Joan!

## VICKY WIENCEK (1972-2021)

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Vicky Wiencek, Sophia Wiencek's (Acorn, Class of 2015) stepmother. Due perhaps to an undetected heart defect, she died on November 4, 2021. She was 49 years old. Sophia describes her stepmom as someone who always loved her unconditionally as her own, and who taught her that patience, selflessness, and humor could improve any situation. She laughed often and brought joy and ease to every conversation. Vicky took life on with optimism and excitement and fully embraced every moment. Vicky had a beautiful spirit that will live on forever in everyone she touched.



With Liora and Mr. Carrots!



As Penelope in the Odyssey.



Spinning wool!

# MATILDA WHITRIDGE (2004-2021)

On July 29, 2021, at the age of 17, Matilida Whitridge passed away. Matilda spent eight years at the Siskiyou School as part of the Blackberry Class of 2018. She thrived on the Waldorf curriculum, and she loved her friends and teachers. She was a leader in her class, an integral part. Out of our current 25 teachers, 18 taught Matilda, remember her, think of her, and miss her.



After she graduated from 8th grade and went on to St. Mary's School, Matilda often returned to volunteer at school events, including at our auction in the spring of 2020 and also at her brother Archie's graduation

(Honeybee, Class of 2020). She was always glad to be back on campus and within the school community, and we were always so happy to see her.



BLACKBERRY CLASS, FIRST GRADE  
Matilda front row, second from the left.

When Matilda got more and more ill, Ms. McKissick called the Blackberry Class together in our 1st grade classroom to hold a candle vigil. All 23 of her classmates immediately showed up when they heard it was for Matilda. They were eager to be in the same space and reconnect, because only in being together could they feel comforted and helped in holding the bigness of Matilda's illness. A Waldorf class is like a living organism and having Matilda unwell affected every student to their core - and the whole of them.



BLACKBERRY CLASS, EIGHTH GRADE  
Matilda back row center.

As high school students on much bigger campuses, Matilda's Blackberry classmates were no longer together as a class every day, but the bonds among them, forged over all the years and shared experiences at the Siskiyou School, were immutable, an anchoring force. The students sat together and talked about Matilda, sharing memories and laughter and sending her their most loving thoughts of healing and peace. That moment helped them all, and we hope and trust Matilda was lifted too, knowing their love for her. She is and always will be in each of their hearts, and lives on through them for sure, inspiring them to treasure each precious day.

**WE MUST ERADICATE FROM  
THE SOUL ANY FEAR WE  
HAVE ABOUT THE FUTURE,  
THINKING ONLY THAT  
WHATEVER IT MAY BE WILL  
BE BROUGHT TO US BY THE  
WISDOM-FILLED GUIDANCE  
OF THE UNIVERSE.**

**-RUDOLF STEINER**



Nuthatch painted by Matilda on the Blackberry Class 2018 auction project.

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“Receive the children with reverence, educate them with love,  
and send them forth in freedom.”

Rudolf Steiner

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