

Philomath Montessori School

June 2016

Retirement

Farewell

That ambivalence I always feel at the end of each school year? That feeling that shifts between the elation that comes with the promise of summer freedom to the sadness that comes with saying farewell to some of our dearest families. This year, multiply it by ten! Not only is it the year that closes the chapter on my role as director and co-teacher at Philomath Montessori, but this year also marks the departure of some of our most cherished families.



The family that I have had the longest relationship with by far is the **Retting-Braxton family**. Shannon and Ed enrolled Jenny just three years after I started our little school. Her younger brother, Aaron (Tia Capo), followed the year after and almost 25 years later, Jenny and Anthony brought Jai and then Yasmina into our community. How very special for me to end my career with them. These two family branches – the Rettigs and the Braxtons – are very dear to me and will always be. I am so grateful for their trust and confidence AND their commitment – that long daily drive to and from Summit deserves much admiration. Their many contributions as well

– from gardening and sewing projects, Jenny’s role as Art Parent to her beautiful Afro-Brazilian dancing demonstrations to Anthony’s awesome firefighter’s presentation. And I have such high regard for their chosen lifestyle. Because of that Jai and Yasmina regularly came to school with yet another story from their farm – one of my favorites: Mom wanted to keep the new piglets inside the house, but Dad said absolutely not! Anthony’s such a spoiler. How can you not love a family like that!

And then there is the **Johanson family**. Megan and Ryan have been in our super volunteer group almost every year they have been with us. They were regulars at work parties, and then often would come back to finish up what didn’t get done. Megan took on the labor-intensive art parent job for four straight years and always played key roles in our auction fundraiser – heading up the children’s program, hosting basket parties, and cooking up and pulling off the baking contest with Amber. She and Ryan were always there for setup, overseeing the children’s program, being runners, and cleanup. Ryan not only stored our extra lumber at their place, but took on others jobs like moving and putting down the gravel for a new strip in our school yard so the kids had a place to play soccer without mowing down their friends and for moving those payloads of dirt from pit to pit. He also took on the job of mowing and trimming our school yard in the summer – all three months for years! And this is

another family where grandparents have played important roles, too. We often saw Sue and Dennis at our door to pickup Anika and Kaden. Sue has gifted lots of art materials to our classroom and Friday art class and Dennis not only donated his incredible pottery to our auction every year, but has been coming into our Friday art class to share his passion for pottery teaching the children different pottery techniques and then firing and glazing their creations. We will miss the Johanson clan and the class will especially miss Kaden. He is a much sought-after working partner. They wait in line to do something with him!



And another super volunteer family will be leaving – **the Kenoyers!** Both Amber and Chris have contributed so much to our school. Like the Johansons, they were work party regulars, too. Not only at the beginning of the year, but during the year also! I remember watching Chris one Saturday cutting and moving sod out of our yard so we could install new garden beds -- hard, heavy work. Responsible for many of our woodworking projects his magnum opus was the wonderful wooden bridge that the children run, march, walk and sit on daily – it is much loved. Amber was our library parent for a couple of years picking out books like the pro she is. After that she took on being our volunteer coordinator (just sent me the final totals!) and organized our Montessori Services holiday order bringing in many wonderful, free materials into the classroom! Both Amber and Chris were always committed volunteers at our auction, too – soliciting donations, creating beautiful baskets, coming in for setup, overseeing the children’s program, staying for cleanup and writing thank you cards. This year,

Amber worked with Meagan to dish up the baking contest so we not only had desserts to serve our guests, but awesome ones, too! And Chris headed up the morning setup at the auction, was one of our runners and sent Amber to our basket parties with the best ever clam chowder! This is Sariah’s last year, too. I remember we finally had to say something to her about her wistful glances as she paced back and forth by our chair trawling for new lessons even though we teachers love that hungry look!

James will be leaving, too. We will really miss the **Runicman-Brinker family!** Rachel was our library parent for two years in a row. Not an easy job – we’re so picky here! But every couple of weeks she would scour the library shelves searching for just the right books for us to satisfy our fussy wants. Add to that their many roles at our auction fundraiser -- soliciting, donations (who could forget Beth’s gorgeous sweater!), basket parties, setup, being runners, cleanup and that daunting job at checkout! And we will pine for James, too, who went from a complete avoidance of a good morning greeting to a huge smile and a perky Hello!

In just one year, the **Weil family** found a welcome place in our community. We were continually dazzled by Jake and Esme’s farming vision and Esme’s embroidery art. Gratefully, she used her sewing wizardry to help us with many classroom and Friday art class projects and took on the demanding job of Art Parent. She and Jake carefully tended our food tables during our auction and donated wonderful items from their apiary. And where will we be without Zirk’s lengthy, impressive soliloquies on just about anything you’d want to know on nature and science?

We will be so sad to see **Harper Mabeck** leave – I told her parents how she would often astonish us with such empathetic and kind words to fellow classmates – expressing sorrow over another’s recent family loss (not in front of us or anyone else), how much she missed them, compliments or gentle reminders (Don’t you think you should get your tens out first?). **Jaxson Miller** is moving on to first grade.

too. He'll bowl them over with his sense of humor and save them all with his superhuman powers!

As I leave my post as head of school and co-teacher, I know how very fortunate I've been to have this special relationship with you and your brilliant and beautiful children. The school and my experiences have all far exceeded what I had envisioned when I started and I know it wasn't me. Somehow this school was the perfect magnet for gathering an ideal community of families and staff. Thank you for entrusting your children to us and for becoming a part of our lives. I hope that it will be a never-ending relationship.

I want to begin the long list of thank you with **Allan**, my husband. Without his help and support I would have never succeeded in establishing the school. He was behind me 100 percent from the start appreciating even my over-the-top enthusiasm as I came home every weekend from the training in awe over our latest set of lectures on Montessori. He built the furniture, the first gardens, the first play structures and never stopped. He was even my classroom assistant for awhile. To this day, he still sees the school as a big priority in our lives. (But I have to concede he is ready to pass the baton onto Jonathan!)

Next in line is **Doni** who joined me in 1999. I only had a few strands of sanity left when she rescued me. I finally realized that administrating and teaching full time was proving too much. I couldn't do either very well. Doni brought her experience and the collective experience of the many teachers at Corvallis Montessori and mentored me – of course, because it was Doni, it turned out to be more fun than work. How I will miss my daily dose of humor and stories at lunchtime! Thanks to the skills she garnered in community theater, she has always graciously stepped up to be the one to take on speaking roles for me – something I am SO grateful for! And does it so eloquently – the now annual fly-away ceremony, the auction intro, and my retirement party to name just a few.

Actually, **Leslie** has been with me even longer! Her daughters were both students and while they attended school, Leslie took care of tuition collection. Then in 2000 when we were looking for a new classroom assistant, she immediately came to mind. I still learn from her every day – her gentleness and her calm center no matter what is going on inspires me to lift myself up to a better place. And she takes care of so much so well.



Jessica has been around almost as long as Doni and Leslie, too. Both of her children were students and this year Aurora will be graduating! I know, hard to believe she has daughter that age. Jessica has prepared for her role as head of school and co-teacher for many years. First, as a vigorous parent volunteer, a community volunteer to help our school acquire a new site, to board member to substitute teacher and administrative assistant. I know it's been hard for her to wait to get into the classroom. After the training, you are busting at the seams to put what you know to work. But she has patiently bided her time and I know she will shepherd the children and the school to the next level with an awe-inspiring vision. I am so happy to pass the torch on to this wonderful lady.

I get to work with **Jennifer** next year!! I got a little taste of what it will be like this past two Fridays and I'm very excited. I've always marveled at the art that comes out of that class and now I'll be able to see how she does it. How can she put all those wonderful tools and materials and paints, etc. into

their hands and it's not overdone? It comes out looking intentional and incredible!

Maria and **Blanca**, her daughter, and then **Perla**, next in line, have been coming in to take care of our classrooms for many years – before even Doni. During all those years, they never once called in sick -- even after Maria gave birth – twice! Her husband came in? I don't even know. She never called to say she couldn't make it. Before she came along, a succession of folks came in to maintain our classroom, but after a few months the quality always fell off and it took lots of reminders to keep things as they should be. But not so with Maria and so she has stayed and I hope it will be for many, many more years.

I am very, very grateful for this outstanding group I work with – they are my dear friends. I always look forward to coming to work – because of them, because of you and because of your children. That's why I can't completely leave yet! You're stuck with me for a little longer.

Pauline

Our Board

My very deep gratitude goes out to all our board members – past and present. They unselfishly give their time, energy, skills and wisdom to keep our school on the right track. I want to give a special shout-out to **Ed Durrenberger**, our board president. I've lost track of how many years he has served, but he has done so with true dedication spending countless hours creating policies, running meetings, going to other meetings and events related to school and helping me find the best way forward in any difficult situation. And the stunning creations that he donates to our auction every year – wow! Many thanks also to **Joan Extrom** who has been on our board since the beginning in 2001 and has served as our steadfast liaison with the church. A sad farewell to **Lorri Hendon** who leaves our board this year as her youngest son concludes his first year at the U of O. His roommate being his best friend – a friendship that started at PhMS! Whenever I needed counseling on some fragile situation I could always turn to Lorri for gentle guidance. Many and deep thank yous to **Paul Hochfeld**, who brings his humor and smarts to every meeting, to **Ruby Moon**, who brings her many years as a community leader to our grateful table and campaigns relentlessly on behalf of those who need our help the most, to **Sha Sifford**, who has donated her not only her well-honed skills as a writer to bring in valuable grants, but somehow also offers the most empathetic and generous view on any given situation, to **Janel Lawrence and Dodie Wilson**, who both have never stopped being PhMS super supporters and my dear, dear friend, **Kathleen Lloyd**, who has guided me longer than anyone. We go back farther than the beginning of the school. I have much to appreciate in all these individuals and I hope to keep our friendships going far into the future.

Again, a special thank you to **Bekki Levien**, a long ago PhMS parent – her youngest son just graduated from the University of Arizona – she still continues to help us with graphic design for brochures, handbooks, flyers, posters and whatever else we happen to need! And she turns it around on a dime!

Super Volunteers

Every year we are blessed by some exceedingly generous families and not surprisingly these families have been here before, in fact, almost every year they have been with us! These families have all donated more than 50 hours and a couple of them 100's! Please join in applauding **Joy and Tim Ueng, Jasmin and Rigel Woodside, Amber and Chris Kenoyer, Dave and Amy Bassett-Williams, Meagan and Ryan Johanson, and Amy and Brenden Ward**. It obviously takes much more than the required 20 hours by each family to create the school we have. We are deeply grateful for your enormous generosity and commitment to our school.

Year-Round Volunteers

A very big thank you to all our year-round volunteers – **Jenny Braxton and Esme Weil** as Art Parents kept a steady flow of playful shapes and materials on the classroom shelves, **Rachel Brinker**, our assiduous library parent kept us supplied with fresh and appealing books, **Amber Kenoyer**, as volunteer coordinator faithfully tracked hours throughout the year, **Maya Emshwiller and Zhaohui Wu**, our devoted Outdoor Maintenance parents, are why our glorious gardens look the way they do, **Lin Li**, as our talented Newsletter Designer, always managed to put together a lovely newsletter in no time flat, **Amber Kenoyer**, our Montessori Services coordinator, assembled another big order this year well in time for the holidays and **Dave and Amy Bassett-Williams**, our faithful chronicler was ever present at our events with camera in hand, and **Karin Feldman**, our Meeting Secretary, was always able to send out minutes shortly after every meeting and even peppered with a little humor so it was fun to read. And really I need to add in **Jasmin Woodside and Joy Ueng** for the huge year-round job of auction coordinators! And **Liesl Ralston and Skye Nielson** for their work on the Children's Program. You've all done so much!! Thank you again!!

Additional Thank Yous

Classroom Projects/Maintenance

- Maintained tasting bottles: **Karin Bolender**
- Classroom cleaning: **Audrey and James Deatherage, Leanne Miller**
- 1st and 2nd level sewing cards: **Jamie Meyer**

Outdoor Projects

- 4 Large outdoor display tables: **Brenden Ward**

Repairs

- Plumbing needs: **James Deatherage**
- Replace header outside: **Allan Rack**

Donations

- Australian artifacts to display: **Karin Bolendar**
- Australian cookies (don't tell the kids – it's for the last week!): **Karin Bolendar**
- Firefighter and safety presentation: **Anthony Braxton**
- Donations to scholarship fund: **MacClary family, Li-Lu family, Runciman-Brinker family, Ueng family, Emshwiller-Wu family, Stoll-Asmatey family, Mabeck family and Tavano-Ralston family.**

Fundraising

- Dine-out at Eats and Treats: **Liesl Ralston**