



the PACIFIC PRIMARY SUN

WWW.PACIFICPRIMARY.ORG

WINTER 2005-2006



Peace of Mind...Priceless! *By Ben Elgin*

Just about every busy parent whose child is at 1500 Grove St. can recount a specific "thank-my-lucky-stars" moment. As a school that caters to working families, Pacific Primary's program is packed with amenities that support time-strapped parents and provide them a community of understanding and camaraderie.

I was struck with my own small moment just after my eldest daughter Isabel (Coyote '05) transferred to Pacific Primary. Because the previous school's meals were light on nutrition, my wife and I had been making her lunch almost every weeknight. But, upon learning that Betty's Kitchen prepared nutritious meals with mostly organic fare (which my daughter loved), we could relax. I couldn't believe the breathing room created by eliminating a 15-minute task from my nightly to-do list.

Pacific Primary's unrivaled range of offerings brings about this peace-of-mind among harried working parents. With a schedule that facilitates flexibility (open year round from 7:00 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.) and the rich presence of enthusiastic and loving teachers throughout the day, the school has become an integral part of hundreds of Bay Area working families over the past three decades.

In fact, at the time of Pacific Primary's inception in 1974, no other preschools in The City offered a full day program. According to Kris O'Donnell, one of the founders, the guiding concept was "the times are changing and women are going back to work, so let's make sure we offer hours that allow for that." Today, the number of families with one (single) or all (two or more) parents working full-time is 61 out of 80; most of the other parents work at least part-time.

For parents, this security is priceless. Full-time working parent Anne Selting says that knowing her children, Rose (Gray Whale) and Grace (RD '05) are in excellent hands has allowed

her to thrive at work. "There is no mother that can have a successful career if she feels that in doing so her children suffer," she says. "For this reason, there is a clear link between a woman's professional success and the quality of childcare that she can access...And every day I walk out that door, I thank my stars I'm lucky enough to have it."

One of the biggest draws for working parents is the welcoming environment around hectic schedules. There is no stigma around dropping your child off early or picking them up at 6 p.m. No fear or guilt that your child will be one of a few final stragglers, feeling lonesome for his parents or friends. Because it is a community of working parents, longer days are the norm.

This sense of belonging has been critical for parent Willa Seldon. "We really wanted our daughter, Sonia (Sandpiper), to be in an environment where other children had working parents, so that she would not feel that she was one of a few children left to spend time in extended care," she says. "Many of the parents are working parents, so your child and your family are in the mainstream, rather than being one of a few."

On top of all this are the music, dramatic play and expressive arts programs led by teachers Heidi Tzortzis and Elyse Jacobs. This plethora of activity can ease the after-school routines of busy parents. "The school provides so much that there really isn't need for additional enrichment activities outside of school," says parent Giselle Chow. "When I pick up my son, Koji (Coyote), we can go home and spend a nice evening together. We're not rushing off to another lesson, another venue, another place to provide something we feel we're not getting at school."

It's the peace-of-mind no doubt envisioned by the school's founders 31 years ago. To say the least, it has been a vision very well materialized.

SEE YOU THERE

Annual Auction
A Tree Grows on Grove St.
Saturday, March 4, 2006

**Herbst Pavilion,
Fort Mason Center**

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This newsletter is published annually by parents, teachers and friends of Pacific Primary.

Growing a Community: A Never-Finished Task

By Ben Elgin

At first glance, it's a typical Monday morning at Pacific Primary. Double-parked Hondas and Volvos line Grove St., hazard lights blinking in syncope. Parents bustle up and down the steps, kids in tow, the first phase of their daily routines nearly complete. But inside, a number of parents duck into the Music Room, pour a cup of coffee and mingle for a few minutes. Spontaneous chatter spans everything from the new play structure and Kindergarten applications to holiday vacations and the latest movies.

The brief morning respite is the latest addition to Pacific Primary's smorgasbord of community-building activities. The monthly get-togethers, informally dubbed *Primary Talk*, are designed to help build ties among parents and give people an outlet to discuss anything on their minds—school-related or otherwise. "We have so many interesting parents at Pacific Primary, but most of us only see the parents in the same class or on the same drop-off schedule," says parent and board member Maurice Minnis, who coordinates the events. "The idea is to get people talking with each other."

It's just another step toward a key school goal: to create a community of involved and connected parents. The underpinnings for the philosophy were hatched 31 years ago, when Pacific Primary was formed by a handful of parents seeking a better early education for their kids. Today, the parent community is nurtured with social events as well as frequent parent-education workshops.

But fostering the sense of community is no easy task—especially for a school geared towards working families. When left on autopilot, many schools trend towards having just a handful of very active parents, with many more on the sidelines. Achieving a sense of ownership and participation among all parents is difficult to attain, but the entire school clearly reaps significant benefits as a result. "Parents feel like this is really their school," according to Pacific Primary director Belann Giarretto. "It is a level playing field." One of the keys to Pacific Primary's community-building success is the requirement that a parent or guardian of each child volunteer in some capacity during the year. When the idea was put forth four years ago, there was

some resistance. After all, parents' free time is about as plentiful as parking spaces on Grove Street.

Yet everyone pitches in. In some cases the jobs are straight-forward, for instance, doing periodic repairs at the school or selling Pacific Primary T-shirts. Other times, the jobs can be Herculean, such as running the school's annual fundraising auction or building a new play structure. All of the volunteer jobs are up on a chart in the school's hallway. But more than harnessing the labor of parents, the objective is to instill in families that they have a stake in the place.

Friendships are often hatched during the many hours of effort, whether hunched over an electric saw or brainstorming for a school event. Joelle Chartier, parent of Lily (Gray Whale) said "I got to know other parents through my work with the auction committee. Humor helped us over the humps with deadlines and other challenges. We ended up going on a family camping trip over the summer." All of this is buttressed with the myriad family events that also serve as a backbone of the community-building process. Things get started each year with a school-wide picnic in September and culminate with the popular barbecue and dance party held at the school each June.

Along the way, expect plenty of other avenues for connecting with fellow parents. As a key to achieving Pacific Primary's mission, the efforts to create and foster the parent community is never finished.

*Join other Pacific
Primary parents for
coffee and bagels
at Primary Talk,
8:00 to 9:00 a.m.,
the first Monday
of every month.*

Opportunity to be Visionary *By Belann Giarretto*

July 2005 marked my 10th year as director. Over the decade, the core of Pacific Primary has remained the same, yet this is a school that never rests on its reputation. We have created a culture that sees change as positive and enriching. We have worked hard to be a model of what early childhood education can be when you have the key ingredients of a stellar staff, dedicated parents, heroic board, and financial stability. While other schools do not have the luxury of moving out of survival mode (unfilled openings, fiscal challenges), Pacific Primary has had the opportunity to be visionary.

One of the goals in our current five-year Strategic Plan is to articulate the ways in which Pacific Primary is a model school. Here is my perspective:

- Every decision that the school makes is always looked at through one filter—will the action be supportive of young children? With that as our compass, we are able to create a loving and dynamic environment that supports all areas of children's growth and development.
- Our teachers are early childhood professionals and their expertise takes the school

to new heights. We continue to build on their knowledge and experience through staff meetings and through staff development funds to attend national conferences. Our curriculum is innovative but always hands-on and engaging.

- Emotional intelligence is one of the hallmarks of a Pacific Primary graduate. Elementary and high schools report that our alums are great problem solvers and are not afraid of conflict because they are critical thinkers. Our graduates also welcome diversity.
- Although we do no publicity, we had over 300 applicants this year. Many of them say that it is alum families who insist that they apply. Unfortunately, less than 10% of our applicants can be accepted.

These are but a few of the myriad reasons that outline why we believe we are a model school. In short, we feel we are doing the most important work in changing the world for the better by working with young children and their families.



Pacific Primary Board President Molly Dwyer and Director Belann Giarretto

An Eye Toward the Future *By Molly Dwyer*

Ideally, a school's Board of Directors hovers in the space between notoriety and uselessness. "Look what they've done now" or "What **do** they do, anyway?"—two phrases any self-respecting Board President shudders to hear.

In practical terms, the Pacific Primary Board's collective responsibility is to honor the past, monitor and adjust for the present, and work for the future—where did we come from, where are we now, where do we want to be next year, five years from now, 20 years from now. These are the questions we repeat to ourselves, mantra-like, meeting to meeting, year after year. It can be an awkward role—one foot in the past, one in the present, and an eye toward the future; balancing.

This year we are completing work on our current five-year strategic plan. In reflecting on this work, and gearing up to plan for the next five years—I think that while we are by

no means perfect, we are in excellent shape as a respected and highly sought after early childhood education program, a vibrant and diverse community, an employer and as a business. As we move forward, our challenge will be to maintain and improve accessibility and affordability, efficiently marshal our assets and determine whether and how to share them—through the development of a second site, teacher training initiatives or other forms of community outreach.

In short, we hope to be neither notorious nor invisible. We reflect. We listen. We consider. We experiment. We succeed. We fail. We try again. Deliberately and patiently guiding the community it serves, this Board must continually challenge itself and the institution to grow and to improve. By design, our work as a Board is never done.

Pacific Primary's current strategic plan goals:

1. Offer an exceptional, developmentally appropriate early childhood education program to San Francisco Families;
2. Attract and retain a high caliber, well trained, and diverse staff of early childhood professionals;
3. Ensure that Pacific Primary remains a diverse, accessible and affordable preschool with an inclusive, participatory and connected community
4. Make improvements to the physical site that create an environment that reflects Pacific Primary's educational philosophy and program;
5. Expand internal and external fundraising efforts to fill the operating gap each year and ensure Pacific Primary's financial security into the future;
6. Strengthen Pacific Primary's financial policies, procedures and planning;
7. Articulate the ways in which Pacific Primary is a model school and determine how to spread our success.

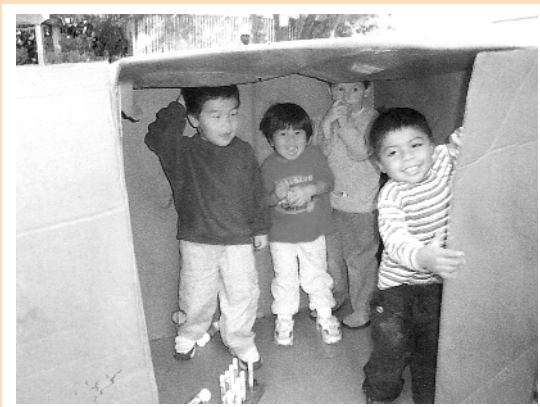
What A Difference An Ordinary Moment Makes!

By Diana Wolf

Ever wonder what your child does during the day? Mine will often tell me “nothing” or “I don’t remember” when asked. So how can parents find out what their child is learning?

Each of the four classrooms prepares a Daily Journal page in order to make the children’s learning visible, most often describing an ordinary moment in the daily routine, and then explaining what the children are learning as a result of what is happening. By focusing on one moment a day, day after day, each “brushstroke” combines with the others to present a rich picture of what and how Pacific Primary contributes to a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. *continued on next page*

Fun in the Box!



11/10/05

The teachers presented the children with two large boxes. Quickly the children set to work decorating the boxes with art materials. Over the course of the morning the boxes became many different things...houses, trains, and tractors with trailers.

These boxes provided the opportunity for the children to use their imaginations. Imaginary play is an important skill for developing children’s social competence.

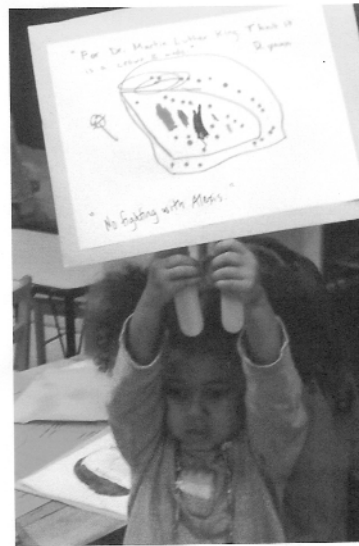
SANDPIPER STAFF

Mahroushka Papazian, *Lead*
Cherie McGee
Roxie Jones
Eric Wilson

GRAY WHALES

WED., JAN. 11, 2006

PEACE SIGNS



The Gray Whales are making peace signs to hold up during our peace parade.

Each child will be able to draw a picture and write a story about what Dr. Martin Luther King wants us to do.

Ryann writes: "For Dr. Martin Luther King that it is a crown I made. No fighting with Alexis." (older sister)

Here at Pacific Primary, the children are given the opportunity to make Dr. Martin Luther King's message visible and more meaningful in their lives.

GRAY WHALE STAFF

Lynette Jones, *Lead*
Jocelyn Halili
Darby Hillyard
Neil Aaron, *Afternoon*

Pacific Primary is a special place for many reasons. One aspect that excites me personally is the professionalism of the staff and their keen awareness of the needs and abilities of the children as they advance from one class to the next. At each age level, teachers draw out core values such as the importance of listening to others and using words to solve problems and resolve conflicts, welcoming diversity and recognizing similarity, the importance of process rather than product and providing for dynamic hands-on learning guided by teacher observations of children's interests. All of these are woven into age appropriate activities in literacy and writing, numeracy, physical activity, fine motor development, science, art and music.

Let the Daily Journal pages (posted weekly and then compiled in a binder in each classroom) be your guide to what these daily activities mean for each child. As Sara Rain Morgan said, "Time is not measured by a watch, it is measured by moments..." We know that children grow over time, and focusing on these moments helps us appreciate the ways in which children grow.



Coyote Cocoons

The Coyotes have a ball swinging and wrapping themselves in these hammocks fashioned from a length of Lycra. The fabric stretches and clings and feels silky.



These Lycra swings offer children a sensory experience of compression, swinging and bouncing. These experiences stimulate the nervous system and vestibular system which helps children to regulate and focus during more structured activities like writing and drawing.

January 9, 2006

*Rainbow Dolphin Class
January 23, 2006*
*Story Day
The Play's the Thing!*

Tobias wrote a story about a dream - Captain Hook captured two kids, but the kids had a sign that said, "Peace"! This group of Rainbow Dolphins is acting out the story while Sean (offstage) is reading it aloud.



Making a story come to life adds a whole new dimension to the pre-reading experience of having one's words written down. The author/director experiences "power" in a very constructive way, while the actors gain a sense of satisfaction from being on stage.

RAINBOW DOLPHIN STAFF

Samantha Grey, *Lead*
Sean O'Conner
Laura Galvin

COYOTE STAFF

Brian Silveira, *Lead/Senior Lead Teacher/
Diversity Coordinator*
Tony Torres
Jinan Mahmoud

PACIFIC PRIMARY STAFF

2005-2006

Director
Belann Giarretto

Business Manager
Jeanette Dubesa

Program Facilitator
Laura Galvin

Sunroom Coordinator
Cameron Shaw

Mentor Teacher
Helen Powell

Afternoon Program
Spring Berlandt, *Supervisor*
Terri Weist Martinez, *Coordinator*
Kathy Chan, *Coyote & Rainbow Dolphin*

Expressive Arts Specialist
Elyse Jacobs

Music and Movement Specialist
Heidi Tzortzis

Support Teacher
Amber Weeks

Chef
Betty McMillian

Why We Do What We Do *By Brian Silveira*

You must be the change you want to see in the world—Mahatma Gandhi

When I first came to Pacific Primary ten years ago, I thought I would stay a year, go back to the SFUSD and then finish out my career. Stepping into the school, I immediately felt the magic of Pacific Primary. The sense of community was palpable and the parents'

respect for teachers was awesome. Pacific Primary has helped me to grow as a teacher and as a person. Its commitment to children and their families has allowed me the freedom to explore my own teaching strategies and what I considered to be best practices. I have found a home at Pacific Primary.

For eleven years, Director Belann Giarretto has pioneered many changes that have contributed to the 30 year development of a model

school. We are a model school in the sense that we are actually doing, in our own way, the things that most independent schools are still hoping to achieve. They come to Pacific Primary for guidance and mentoring in regards to diversity, curriculum, community service and parent involvement.

In recent months, Pacific Primary has demonstrated its commitment to sharing the teaching strategies and practices developed over the years. In February 2005, the school organized a 30th anniversary symposium entitled, *Raising Socially Responsible Children in a Diverse World*. Our keynote speaker, Louise Derman-Sparks, (whose workbook, *The Anti-Bias Curriculum*, is a touchstone in the early childhood world), set the stage for the day. She and parent Hedy Chang and teacher Cherie McGee offered a workshop about raising children with anti-racist perspectives. Parent Beth Rubinstein and I conducted a workshop about confronting homophobia in schools. Other workshops ranged from environmental issues to involving children in community service. Belann ended the symposium with

a talk entitled, *Moving from Values to Practice*. The event attracted 200 participants from all around the city.

Pacific Primary staff continues to share the practices that have earned the school its stellar reputation. Teachers Spring Berlandt and Neil Aaron are participating in the LGBT Early Childhood Education Initiative's trainings, going into schools and helping teachers broaden their definition of diversity to include LGBT families. Music and Movement Specialist, Heidi Tzortzis spreads the Orff-Schulwerk music education method through workshops and conference sessions. Expressive Arts Specialist, Elyse Jacobs, coordinates *Kids Turn*, an educational program for families divorcing or separating.

Our practices have City-wide significance as the Preschool-For-All task force has asked Pacific Primary to elaborate on our best practices in curriculum and parent involvement. Last March, I co-facilitated a workshop in Sacramento at the California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC) entitled *Breaking Barriers; creating welcoming environments for LGBT Families*. In December, Belann and I, along with Fonda Davidson of Cross-Cultural Center, presented a similar workshop in Washington, DC, at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference. It was impossible to bring a panel of LGBT parents with us, so we created a video entitled *Real Families*. Working from morning to night, parent Jim Pohl produced a beautiful film featuring LGBT parents talking candidly about their families. The workshop was well attended and we were asked by many participants for copies of the video to show in their universities and schools throughout the country.

Pacific Primary is ever-changing with the goal always the same: what is best for children. This simple commitment is reflected in all that we do and is what draws staff, families and other programs to our school.



Pacific Primary's Chef Betty McMillian with board member and parent Tracy Burris and Sandpiper teacher Roxie Jones. Betty will be signing copies of "Betty's Cookbook" at the auction

A New Place to Connect with Nature

By Giselle Chow

You may have noticed that the west end of the playground has been a veritable construction zone the past couple of months. Thanks to the generosity of the William E. Weiss and the Miriam and Peter Haas Funds, the children of Pacific Primary will soon have a beautiful new nature and water play area to use and enjoy.

The addition of more outside exploration and discovery areas has been an ongoing desire for the school. "We really want the children to develop a sense of wonder regarding nature and our outside areas," Director Belann Giarretto explains. "We started with our garden, and now with the new area, we've added another way for children to connect to the natural world. We think of our outdoor space as another classroom, not simply a place for kids to blow off steam."

In the spring of 2005, Jim Pohl, parent of Devin (Gray Whale) and John Maniscalco, parent of Finn (Sandpiper) and head of the Site Committee, worked with the staff to design and develop areas that allow the children a variety of new experiences, among which include:

- An overhead misting hose near the big tree that will invite children to run through a cool fog on hot days

- Plaster casts of dinosaur footprints from Dinosaur National Monument will allow children to literally walk in the footprints of real dinosaurs.
- A texture walk installation made of stones and coins collected by Pacific Primary families will give children a different kind of sensory experience through their feet.
- A tree house will be joined to a lower storage platform by a rope bridge, giving children opportunities to increase their coordination and confidence while traversing the gap.
- Tree stumps will be used to make climbing paths and sitting areas.
- Extensive planting will create forest-like areas of vegetation that children can use for other kinds of fantasy play.

In an age where many children have become disconnected from nature, the new play area provides an accessible venue for our children to connect with aspects of the natural world on a daily basis. As a school in an urban setting, providing such a magical place can also help instill in our children a sense of stewardship for the environment, built upon a more intimate knowledge and experiences with the natural world.



Financial Highlights

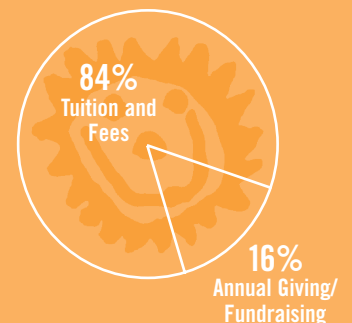
- In fiscal year 2005-6, Pacific Primary anticipates total revenues of \$1,320,836. Tuition and fee account for 84% (or \$1,109,259) of that total.
- The 2005 annual auction raised \$121,038.
- Staff payroll costs comprises 88% of the \$1,298,672 in projected operating expenses for 2005-6.
- In 2005-2006, Pacific Primary has 25 staff members.
- The endowment fund now has nearly \$804,245. Endowment interest pay a portion of our tuition assistance fund each year.

- 15% of students (12 families) receive tuition assistance this year, totaling \$74,430.

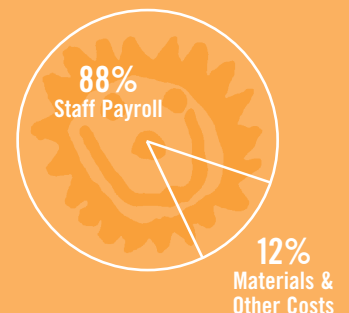
Help us reach our endowment goal!

The generosity of Pacific Primary's parents, friends and alumni makes it possible for the school to remain visionary. We are truly fortunate to have such loyal support! Our "Shine Brightly" 30th Anniversary endowment campaign goal is within reach: \$1 million by the end of 2007. Please help us make Pacific Primary affordable for all families by making a donation to our endowment fund.

Source of Funds



Use of Funds



Alumni Class Parents

Our official Pacific Primary Alumni Class Parents include classes as far back as 1995. We'd like to reach back further and involve more of you. If you would like to be a class parent or you know of any families that have been "lost", please let us know.

The Alumni Class Parents are listed below:

1995

(RD) Louis Blumberg, Ellen Friedman, 566-9107
(RD) Lindy McKnight, Erin Cunningham, 821-4844
(Coyote) Debbie Hamolsky, 550-1950
(Coyote) Charlotte Brown, 346-4152

1996

(RD) Rene Biba, 665-0890
(Coyote) Linda Nakell, 665-6451

1997

(RD) Scott Cowan, 333-1695
(RD) Jon & Tomoko Flynn, 921-4956
(Coyote) Peg Strub, Archie Nash, 566-1287
(Coyote) Stephanie De Maria, Jeanette Brown, 650-728-5828

1998

(RD) Ross Moody, Dina Goldman, 587-3457
(Coyote) Susan Colson, Maureen Anderson, 282-1791
(Coyote) Lynn Ferrante, Jonathan Wong, 826-8829

1999

(RD) Laura Jacobson, 682-0400
(RD) Janet Mohle Boetani, Mark Manasse, 585-4263
(Coyote) Naomi Jay, 282-4728
(Coyote) David Lahar, Julie Westcott, 567-3236

2000

(RD) Karin Immgergluck, Michael Mueller, 564-6904
(Coyote) Ann Regenstein 664-7447
(Coyote) Bob Scott, Rick Lewis, 431-2165

2001

(RD) Audrey Koh, Gaeta Bell, 647-8908
(RD) Maria Rogers-Pascual, Josh Karliner, 751-1943
(Coyote) Megan Englander, Gilbert Robinson, 431-7437
(Coyote) Tom Hatton, Supriya Shivakumar, 666-3396

2002

(RD) Helen Rosen, 665-8373
(RD) Brian Powers, Katie Riggs, 585-7551
(Coyote) Judith Bell, Jim Greenberg, 510-595-1823

2003

(RD) Debbie Lee, 753-2107
(RD) Hedy Chang, 242-9345
(Coyote) Tim & Lori Sheridan, 255-7119

Alumni Notes

By John Aquino

Chad Williams (81) received his Ph.D. in History from Princeton University in 2004. He is an Assistant Professor of History at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

Kelli Williams (84) received her B.A. in Fashion from California College of the Arts in 2003 and is a fashion designer in San Francisco.

Larkin Sealy (86) graduated from Vassar College in 2004 and spent a year as a scuba instructor in Kauai. She is now working for the youth media literacy program at Spy Hop Productions in Salt Lake City.

Nicole Townsend (90) is thriving as a junior at Harvard University.

Alex D'Agostino (93) is a senior at Head Royce High School in Oakland and is applying to colleges for next year.

Justin Hughes (93) is a senior at International High School of French American International School. He was named MVP in baseball in 2005 and twice in soccer (2004 and 2005). He will graduate with the bilingual International Baccalaureate in 2006.

Andrew Hess (94) is a senior at University High School.

Ari Cowan (95) is playing the violin as a sophomore at School of the Arts in San Francisco.

Emma Abinanti-Sena (97) is about to graduate from Katherine Delmar Burke School. She is a fabulous soccer player.

Jules Cowan (97) is at Presidio Middle School and is applying to high schools.

Alumni Spotlight: Cameron Shaw

Thomas Wolfe said that you can't go home again, but don't tell that to Cameron Shaw (88).

Cameron returned "home" to Pacific Primary several times—as a summer assistant during high school, as a substitute during college, and is now making children, parents and prospective families feel at home as the Sunroom Coordinator.

"I love working at Pacific Primary," said Cameron. "It's very gratifying to work at a place where everybody is happy to see you." She enjoys interacting with parents, the teachers, and of course, the children.

Cameron has warm memories of her school days at Pacific Primary, particularly the

HELP US FIND LOST ALUMNI!

Contact Pacific Primary at 415.346.0906, alumni@pacificprimary.org, or write us at 1500 Grove Street, San Francisco, CA 94117.

Rebecca Schantz (98) is loving middle school at the Nueva School.

Sophie Dalal (99) was accepted by the OAKE (Organization of American Kodaly Educators) Youth Choir in North Carolina. She will have the opportunity to train and sing with children from all over the country. Her family is convinced that her early music training with Heidi was the beginning of a lifelong love and appreciation of music.

Abby Schantz (00) is happy in fourth grade at the Hamlin School.

Michela and Sarah Wehl (00, 04) are both thriving at Live Oak School and still showing wonderful evidence of their Pacific Primary experiences.

Stella Kaufman (03) is a happy and thriving second grader at Presidio Hill School.

Wendy Woods Turnbull Luers wrote to us regarding the 30th Anniversary newsletter to share additional information on the school's founding. Wendy was in the real estate business at the time and she located the current site which was a former mental health clinic. She also helped with everything from painting to interviewing teachers. Both of her children, Ramsay and Connor Turnbull, were students at Pacific Primary. Wendy left the Bay Area in the fall of 1979 when she married Bill Luers, then US Ambassador to Venezuela, and now lives in New York.



summer bus trips, "digging big holes" in the yard, and Betty's macaroni and cheese.

While the school has changed physically for the better (there was no garden or treehouse when she was a student), Cameron says that the curriculum, goals and nurturing atmosphere remain the same as she fondly remembers.

"Working at Pacific Primary is like walking into a big hug every day," said Cameron.

Or coming home.