

# AÚN APRENDO

BESANT HILL SCHOOL OF HAPPY VALLEY



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## CONTACT US

For general inquiries, write to  
[contact@besanthill.org](mailto:contact@besanthill.org)

## CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Smith	Kathy Zolnowski
Portia Johnson	Sally Chung
Stanton Smith	Claire Lowndes
Megan Walton	Juana Juarez
Mary Spence	Dan Call
Doug Jessup	Anh- Dao Tran

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# Message from the Head of School

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As I have remarked many times this year, our theme for the school year “Pursue your Creative and Artistic passions” could not have been any better suited for a year that has taken place during a global pandemic. This is true on many fronts, and firstly in the quality of passion. Passion for our school has been an essential part of every member of our community this year. I saw nothing but dedication and tireless passion from the Reopening Committee this summer as they worked together to create a plan that could and did bring our community together safely. I saw this same passion emerging from the classroom as teachers dedicated their extensive time and expertise to reinvent themselves as virtual and then hybrid teachers throughout the first semester. I was also thrilled to see this passion in the student government as they worked together to create connections and to assure that their fellow classmates knew what it means to be a part of a community that is safe and respectful. Passion was certainly the fuel that has driven all of us to engage in the work this year brought, but it was creativity that helped us get to where we were going. The luxury of knowing what a typical, yearly event will look like is not one that we might have even realized that we had before. Assembly looks different, our daily schedule looks different, the Commendations Ceremony looks different, and even the way we share a meal in the commons looks different, and all of this is the result of our truly creative community’s ability to look at things through a new lens, be adaptable, and find a solution.



I am so proud of the work of this community. I have seen the dedication of the Admin team as they worked throughout the summer without more than a day or two off to begin the school year prepared. I have seen the dedication of the maintenance staff in moving every single classroom table around and finding space for all of the “extra” furniture in service of increasing the square footage in all common areas of the school to allow for greater distancing. I have seen the hours of work that the teachers have put into designing and redesigning their curriculum and finding the time to make sure that every student in their class, no matter where in the world they might be, had their undivided attention and support. I have watched Juana and her kitchen staff reinvent food service in the commons so that it is safe, provides options, and everyone leaves full and satisfied. I have seen the dedication of the parents as they have extended their gratitude and moral and financial support for our intentionally small school. And last but certainly not least, I have seen the dedication of the students. They have respected each other and every new temporary procedure or routine so that they may proudly protect their pack. What a truly incredible community this is, and though the first semester may have looked like no other, it held the joy and Aún Aprendo spirit that is the lifeblood of our community.

Throughout this time, while simply working through the logistics of a typical day took more effort than ever, we did not stop moving forward with our greater plan. The rebuilding of the lower campus after the devastation of the Thomas Fire is fully completed and funded. The new ceramics building is a gem of the campus, and the students enjoy its accommodations and resources regularly. Our goal of completing an endowment to fund financial aid is underway, and we anticipate seeing our lead gift soon. Both of these truly ambitious endeavors are essential components of our current strategic plan, and there is much more to come. Next semester, I will lead our first-ever Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee so that we may define and celebrate the work we already do in the area and continue to expand and improve in this fundamental component of our school’s ethos. The Curriculum Committee has exciting plans to adapt and keep our Aún Aprendo Experience moving forward during a fun and inspiring second semester. To be a part of this pack is truly a joy and to see what we are able to achieve even during times of hardship makes me more optimistic than ever for our very bright future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Portia".

Portia Johnson  
Head of School





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# STUDENT VOICES:

## Co-President Emmett J. '21

AUTHOR: EMMETT J. '21

In my first address to the student body, I promised that regardless of the challenges we faced, we would not falter, we would not break, and we would not bend. I am proud to say we have not failed the goals we set forth to achieve. While it is unfortunate that we are in the position we find ourselves today, I would be remiss to say that we did not create meaningful change this year. We instituted a new House System that will be carried on until future student governments choose to wield the power of democracy and alter it to their needs. As for the “state of the union” so to speak, Besant Hill has not once shown failure in its abilities to protect its students and keep us the main focus in these trying times. I often say to people considering coming to Besant that, “Well, you’ll just have to see it for yourself,” because people do not believe me when I tell them about all the things that we work towards and the environment that we have created at Besant.

We boldly entered a new era, a new era that will be strikingly different from the last; as a student body, we entered this new era with tact and grace. We shall continue to uphold this as the year comes to a close. My heart goes out to every student, faculty member, staff member, and parent. These days are hard, and they will not be getting easier any time soon. However, we have adapted, as we always do. We have faced all manner of challenges in recent years, and every time we come back stronger without fail. This is the spirit of Besant. Strength, Compassion, and Kindness.

Aún Aprendo,

Co-President Emmett Jenkins





**Artist:** Yuki G. '21

Yuki submitted this photo as part of her Digital Sketchbook. The assignment was to study framing for photography class. Her photo taken while distance learning from Beijing, China reflects her commitment to refining her artistic skill, as she accomplished far more with this photo than what was assigned.



FALL 2020 COYOTE AWARD WINNER AKARI I. '21

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: AKARI I. '21

AUTHOR: STANTON SMITH

During a four-year studentship at Besant Hill, a student will examine each tenet of the Portrait of a Graduate. Each year the principles of individualism, resiliency, environmentalism, global citizenship, critical thinking, and creativity are taught throughout the curriculum and programs of the school. The result of a four-year education designed with this foundation is a student like Akari I. '21. She is a well-rounded, intelligent, and humble senior from Tokyo, Japan that has been a steadfast member of the community for her entire high school career and is the recipient of the Fall 2020 Coyote Award. Akari's

curiosity and commitment to studying have led her to not only speak excellent English as a non-native language but also to playing guitar, enjoying chamber singing, running cross country, participating in student government, and joining the cooking club. Of special note, cooking is a passion listed in the first line of her ePortfolio.

Akari has dedicated herself to the school, her learning, and her friends since she arrived as a freshman. Besant Hill's community is built on diversity and individuality, two attributes that students bring with them to campus. Akari's gentle and confident personality makes the Japanese culture a



very alluring topic for students and faculty to learn from Akari. As a testament to her devotion to schoolwork, she remained 100% engaged in lessons, even with a challenging time zone difference while in Japan as a distant student for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

*"Students at Besant Hill make international connections and friendships every day with the very diverse student population of Besant Hill School. During our Virtual Learning period last year, Akari was still highly active with the curriculum despite the vast time difference with Japan. We are so proud of Akari and the amazing experience she has had at Besant Hill School."*

- Dave Cosby, Music Chair

From Akari:

Can you tell me about where you went to school before Besant Hill and your ideal plans for after graduation?

*I went to a private middle high school in Tokyo which focuses on being international. They have many sister schools all over the world, and students have access to visit those schools. When I visited Punahou school in Hawaii as an exchange student, that's the time when I decided to study in the United States. My plan after graduating from Besant Hill is that I want to study about the human body to become a Physical Therapist in America.*

What is the best part of a typical school day for you?

*Class doesn't start until 9 am. I am very much liking the schedule of this year because I have extra time between breakfast and the first class of the day.*

If there was one class that you could take again, what would it be? Why?

*Dan's Chamber Singers class. This is my second year in this class, but I regret not taking the class for the first two years because this is the most fun and inspiring class I have ever taken. Dan gave me the opportunity to accept my weakness and taught me how to make it better. I would never think of singing in front of people if I were to not take his class. I still get nervous on the stage, but more than that, I see myself enjoying singing.*

Do you have any tips for a new student at Besant?

*It sounds like some Math problems but show your work. No matter how bad you think you did something, as long as you show your effort in your work, somebody should find you to help you out. This is a warm community, and it gives you opportunities to fix your problems. ♦*



AKARI I. '21 AFTER JUST FINISHING A CROSS COUNTRY RACE





GARDEN CLUB, SPRING 2019

# CLUBS THAT FUEL STUDENT PASSION

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON

In a year that promised great differences in the academic setting, Besant Hill has channeled the AÚn Aprendo spirit to fuel the artistic, creative, and advocacy passions of our students. Auxiliary programming, as exemplified in the BHS Student Clubs Program, has taken on renewed importance as a conduit for student learning outside of the classroom setting.

Besant Hill clubs are a true reflection of student-centered interests. Recognizing the importance of such an opportunity, Student Government set an early goal to address club offerings for the year, solicit input from their peer community, create student leadership opportunities, and enlist faculty mentors for the 9 selected clubs of the 2020-2021 school year. Finally, all students were given the opportunity to choose participation in a club that most sparked their interest. This year's Student Club roster includes Art Club, Black Lives Matter Club, Book/Creative Writing Club, Fitness Club, Games Club, Music Club, Photo/Film Club, Tech Club, and Theater Club.

Student leaders have made every effort to include in-person, as well as virtual, student engagement in club planning and activities. While this presented some initial challenges, part of the success of the program is due to everyone working together to create fun, inclusive solutions! One of the basic tenets of all BHS clubs is that they support the Portrait of a Graduate. Students know that their participation in clubs is a great way to engage in their creative and artistic passions, embody the ideals of activism, and model global citizenship in collaborative and exciting ways. BHS clubs give students an opportunity to share their passions with each other, the school, and the greater community.

In November, many of our students' passions collided, as several clubs came together in support of the School's production of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. Members of the Art, Music, Photo, Tech, and Theater Clubs combined their talents to create an unprecedented virtual production. This combined effort was a true showcase of the best of what fuels our incredible community! ♦



# SUMMER READING

AUTHOR: MARY SPENCE

After a spring semester that was completed online due to the pandemic, students embarked on a well-earned summer break in 2020. As is our tradition at Besant Hill, the Humanities department asked our faculty for summer reading recommendations, and we offered the students their choices based on the theme for this school year. Our Portrait of a Graduate offers five tenets, and each year, we choose one to highlight; for 2020-2021, we are focused on engaging in creative and artistic passions. Each grade level is given choices between two texts, and additionally, Honors and AP students choose a second book from separate lists. This past summer, rising ninth and tenth graders chose between *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho and *Life of Pi*



ARTWORK BY FRANCESCA F. '23



ARTWORK BY JAAN A. '22

by Yann Martel; eleventh and twelfth graders could choose *The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily X.R. Pan or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. First-year ESL students were asked to read *Wonder* by RJ Palacio, and AP Language students read a translation of *The Alchemist* in Spanish or French. Honors English III students chose one of these additional texts: *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov, or *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson. Finally, AP English students collectively read *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving.

As always, our students completed assignments that correlated with their readings, and the work they produced was outstanding. Their assignment choices gave opportunities for written and artistic responses, and the resulting projects reflected a wide range of talents and intellectual interpretations from creative writing to paintings and drawings to short films. ♦





SALLY CHUNG THROWING FOR STUDENTS IN THE NEW CERAMICS STUDIO

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:

## Sally Chung

AUTHOR: STANTON SMITH

For 75 years, we have prioritized the Arts in the curriculum at Besant Hill School. Our heritage includes renowned artist Beatrice Wood living on campus, alumni with decorated careers in film, and fantastic teachers in our Arts department. To continue this tradition, in August, we welcomed a new faculty member to our Arts programs: Sally Chung.

Sally is a Los Angeles native with five years of teaching experience in larger educational institutions around LA county. She grew up in Koreatown, a neighborhood in central Los Angeles noted for its rich culture, and then moved to Northridge with her family while in grade school. She then graduated from

UCLA majoring in Fine Arts and Teaching. While Los Angeles is a short drive from Ojai, Sally says that living on campus sometimes feels like a vacation because of the differences between LA and the landscapes of the nearby Los Padres National Forest.

As a teacher, Sally quickly found appreciation for the uniqueness of Besant Hill compared to her past schools. Sally is currently teaching two Ceramics classes, two Studio Art classes, and an Art History class. She puts it quite simply that she has more resources to engage students in sparking their own form of creativity. With smaller classes, Sally spends more time with each student one-on-one, and her budget is



larger than it was at the schools in LA, so she also has more supplies and tools for students to explore. She enjoys that the school is structured to allow teachers to maximize their potential by encouraging them to infuse their passions in the classroom and curriculum.

Students in Sally's classes have more autonomy because of the support they receive from Sally as a teacher. And while Sally's personal artistic style reflects her interest in Korean culture, she encourages students to develop their own perspective and style that suits their interests. Her website, [www.sally-chung.com](http://www.sally-chung.com), exhibits her illustrations, paintings, and photography and serves as a great example for students to build their own artistic brand. Her own work has a contemporary style that students respect and value. When a student is challenged in the Atelier or Ceramics Studio, she is able to relate to them through her own experience as an artist.

Watching Sally work with a student is really a special scene, and it starts with her dedication to her own art. She remains creative at heart and works on her own projects alongside the students, which allows them to witness firsthand the passion she infuses into her creative process. Creative energy is contagious, in that focus and attention to details can be transferred within a group of collaborators. And while



each student may have their own projects, they are able to provide each other with feedback and insight that elevates the quality of work from the entire class. Sally accelerates the collaboration process by being part of the process herself. While she has a wide range of vocabulary and techniques, Sally chooses to humbly join her students with sensitivity to where they stand in their creative journey. ♦





# REGISTRATION: OPENING OF SCHOOL

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON



KEONI L. '22 JUST BEFORE ALLSCHOOL ASSEMBLY ON FORSYTH FIELD





After diligently working to present evidence of our extensive plans for a safe reopening of school to County and State Health officials, the School received the go-ahead for repopulating the campus. With great joy (and all proper protocols in place!) BHS faculty, staff, and administrators welcomed boarders and day students to campus for the first time this school year over the dates of October 19-21.

Move-in times were staggered to ensure that the number of visitors on campus was kept to a minimum. PCR Testing for residential and day students and all BHS adults took place on 10/21, with virtual classes resuming on 10/22 for the designated 2 week quarantine period. Residential students were assigned to small group dorm “pods” throughout the quarantine process. Each pod shared meals together, participated in outside exercise and activity time, and enjoyed social opportunities.

November 2nd saw the advent of true hybrid learning on campus, as residential and day students returned to the classroom while many BHS students around the globe joined their peers through the School’s virtual platform. This was a day long coming but well worth the wait, as resilience and technological preparation combined to deliver excellence in education on all fronts. The true Aún Aprendo spirit of Besant Hill School has carried us through some difficult months, and it was truly rewarding to finally back together! ♦





Artist: Jin L. '24

"I painted sticky materials such as gum, dough, honey, with two very different styles—one with a realistic texture, one with a cartoonish unrealistic texture. I painted the unrealistic one neater with thick clean lines and painted the chunk with white to make a difference. However, I painted the background with unblended colors with the realistic one, roughly painted out the sticky materials with white."



# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVANCING FORWARD

AUTHOR: DOUG JESSUP

Despite our new normal of these COVID-19 times, members of the Class of 2021, in regards to their respective college admissions processes, have been exceeding all expectations thus far and have received record numbers of acceptances at such an early juncture as of this writing. To date, well over half of Besant Hill's senior class has already been tendered offers of admission from one or more colleges of their expressed interest. What's more, to make these favorable responses even more enticing, many of these acceptances have been accompanied by merit scholarship offers that are annually renewable for four years.

Technology has indeed been the solution to hosting college admissions representatives during this unusual time. This year, members of both of our junior and senior classes have been invited to attend virtual college information sessions with nearly as many college admissions deans as in more typical years, which have often resulted in follow-up one-on-one personal interviews. If anything, these new circumstances have provided our students with perhaps even greater personalized access to college admissions officers representing schools in which our students have developed a particular interest.

As indicated, our seniors have already enjoyed some rather extraordinary success with their college admission petitions. More specifically, twenty-three members of the senior class have received a total of fifty-seven offers of admission from a wide range of colleges of interest spanning fourteen different states as well as several institutions of higher learning in the United Kingdom and one in France as well. Among these favorable returns, several of our seniors have confirmed they've been admitted to their leading college interest and have thus committed their intention to enroll.

Looking ahead, while seniors prepare to submit their remaining petitions for this admissions cycle, yours truly is eager to get started engaging our 11th Graders in regular group and individual counseling sessions to introduce them to the broad landscape and various idiosyncrasies of the selective college admissions process. In our time together, I will work with them to devise personally-tailored lists of undergraduate considerations to begin researching straight away, and to which they will be encouraged to file official online inquiries to demonstrate their interest and identify themselves as serious prospective candidates. All the while, the stream of admissions returns for the Class of 2021 will continue to come in and be closely monitored as I engage in ongoing conversations with seniors and their parents about where each will be best advised to ultimately enroll, which they will need to confirm by the universal National Reply Date on May 1, 2021.

In closing, it is a genuine pleasure to work closely with Besant Hill students and their parents in the college counseling process as we identify and secure admission to a suitable array of future well-matched options. My sincere appreciation goes out to my Besant faculty colleagues, who play a pivotal role as teacher-mentors and supportive advocates who compose compelling references for our charges. There is arguably nothing more gratifying than witnessing our students grow and mature as they undertake their respective journeys of self-reflection and personal discovery and are successfully readied to be launched to their undergraduate destinations, poised to excel at the next level and to make our school justifiably proud.

Douglas W. Jessup  
Director of College Counseling

# OH, THE PLACES THEY'LL GO! COYOTE DESTINATIONS, 2016-2020

AUTHOR: DOUG JESSUP



BEFORE STUDENTS KNOW IT, THEY ARE GRADUATED AND HEADED TO COLLEGE





As an illustrative depiction of where our beloved Besant Hill graduates have matriculated over the past five years, it was proposed that there be established a visual portrayal of a map demonstrating just that, and it has recently been exhibited on a wall in the lobby of our main office in the admissions visitor area. We could not be more proud of our graduates and their eventual undergraduate enrollments, and this rendering aptly represents the college admissions achievements our recent graduates have justly earned.

All told, the total number of different stateside colleges and universities where our alumni have entered over the past five years is 74, spanning 20 different states and the District of Columbia, two dozen of which have registered multiple enrollments. Beyond our borders, recent graduates have chosen to attend 9 different international institutions of higher learning in the United Kingdom, Spain, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. Hats off to our recent Besant Hill alumni! ♦





PHOENIX DORMITORY ON A CLEAR DAY





# HOUSES OF BESANT

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON

In a year that has certainly required some out-of-the-box thinking, a new idea has emerged which has provided community connection and allowed a new opportunity to honor our founders. Knowing that off-campus excursions and athletic competitions would not be possible this semester, the student government brought to life The Houses of Besant. All students were randomly sorted into one of the four houses, which carry the names of our founders, Besant, Huxley, Zalk, and Rosalind. During the first meetings of the houses, the students put their creativity to work and wrote their house's chant or motto and designed their house logo. Each house researched and learned more about the founder which they represent and used this to inspire their creative work. This is just the beginning of the Houses of Besant, and the first students to be in each house will leave a legacy of a new Besant Hill School tradition. Each weekend, students have been earning points for their houses by participating in weekend activities including open mics and creating in the new ceramics studio. There is more to come next semester as the houses will participate in more community bonding activities such as sports games and mini Olympics. The house system is another example of the innovation that is occurring this year as we keep our community connected and engaged. ♦



# BACK IN TIME:

## 75th Anniversary & “Honoring The Women of Happy Valley Through Philanthropy”

AUTHOR: KATHY ZOTNOWSKI



DR. ANNIE BESANT

Seventy-five years ago, the 1946-47 school year marked the birth of Happy Valley, now Besant Hill, School.

The world was waking from war...

It was just a year after World War II had ended. While the United States had been brutally thrust from its isolation with the devastation of Pearl Harbor in 1941, four years of fighting by our country's young men with the support of untold numbers of women, as well as the many sacrifices made by those on the homefront, had given way to a burst of renewed energy. Victory gardens like the ones grown in the Happy Valley had given way to the G.I. Bill, subdivisions, and what would later become known as “the baby boom.” The U.S. was experiencing a renaissance.

Amidst this social rebirth, a prescient-thinking band of literati - Aldous Huxley, Krishnamurti, Alan Watts, Triangle Steel Magnate Louis Zalk, entrepreneur Robert

Logan, all led by social justice reformer and President of the American Theosophical Society - a woman extraordinaire - Dr. Annie Besant, re-envisioned what education could be. They chose Dr. Besant's former colleague and assistant, Rosalind Rajagopal to head this new endeavor.

Education emerges...

As a mother, teacher, counselor, advocate, planner, organizer, fundraiser, in short, a woman, Rosalind Rajagopal built Happy Valley/Besant Hill School student by student and family by family until her death in 1996.

Rosalind hand-picked the School Directors - Dr. Guido Ferrando, Dr. Otto William Mandl, Anne Hopkins Aitken, G. Ray Jordan, Franklin Lacey, and her heir apparent, Dennis Rice among others, to run the day-to-day operations and oversee the academic curriculum. Rosalind ruled from the rear recruiting, fundraising, and assuring that the students adhered to strict holistic practices including a vegetarian diet, daily physical activity, and time spent in the beauty of nature - a task made easier by the natural beauty of the Ojai Valley. Daily morning assemblies concluded with music, a philosophical reading (most often from Huxley's Perennial Philosophy), and twenty minutes of meditation. She understood that great leadership is service to others.

She saved lives...

Rosalind and the rest of the founders were 75 years ahead of the curve. They understood that to live sustainably required balance - a place to breathe, study, contemplate, work, play, sit in silence, and revel in both individual expression and commitment to community. They held all animals sacred. They understood the Power of Small and



purposely set the enrollment limit to one hundred students, allowing for unparalleled educational opportunities like 4-to-1 student-teacher ratios and flexibility and nimbleness, particularly when necessity required - think fires, pandemics, and online learning.

Rosalind could find the jewel in a family and polish the facets of a student until he/she/they could emerge from the Happy Valley to shine his/her/their own light in the “brave new world.”

Seventy-five years have passed...

The need for a Happy Valley/Besant Hill education is more important than ever. If the last year has taught us anything, we now know that the pace at which we were living was unsustainable. The world stopped, and we can once again see Los Angeles and India unpolluted - we see and feel the needs of Mother Earth. We see and feel the unique needs of our elderly and young people. We know we need fresh minds that think collaboratively. And we need to acknowledge the efficacy of the A ún Aprendo spirit to not only get us through dark times but allow us to thrive in these times.

It begins and ends with women...

Dr. Annie Besant, Rosalind Ragagopal, Beatrice Wood, and every mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and daughter past and present connected to the Happy Valley have laid the foundation for our future world. After seventy-five years, a woman - Portia Johnson - is back at the helm with another phenomenal “mother” Megan Walton as her Assistant Head of School. Our Foundation

Board includes accomplished women in business, philanthropy, and the arts and sciences in Martha Doornink, Summer Galante '07, Jan Caldwell-Thorpe '60, and Nina de Creeft-Ward '52. Our most recent Alumni Liaison and number one donor was a woman, the remarkable Marion Weil '60.

We are in the midst of a milestone - our 75th Anniversary - and with it, the public phase of a \$10 million dollar financial aid and scholarship endowment campaign:

### “Honoring the Women of Happy Valley Through Philanthropy”

Why financial aid and scholarship you might ask? For 75 years, the school has provided deserving young people with the necessary funds to receive a Happy Valley/Besant Hill education. They have gone on to change the world for the better in the sciences, business, education, the arts, and government, among many other professions. As our newest HVF Trustee, Alumni Liaison, and scholarship recipient, Terry Elguera '60 noted,

*“Since my graduation from Happy Valley School in 1960, hardly a day in my life goes by without remembering an occasion when I experienced a Happy Valley moment. The effect is always reaffirming a value, concept, or ethic that I learned there...There have been many times during my storied life to test those values learned. There has always been pain to endure and learn from whenever I stumbled, but my personal value of self that was recognized and developed by the teachers and friends that I had there, keeps me motivated to this day to encourage and contribute to the value of others, as A ún Aprendo...The School paid for my tuition, room, and board the second year. I gladly serve the school now that another deserving student might have the same opportunities.”*

Please join us in honoring the Women of Happy Valley by making your tax-deductible gift to support the next generation of students. Please include the name of the woman that you wish to honor. We will recognize donors and their honorees on a beautiful installation featuring the figure of a woman that will be unveiled during our 75th Anniversary Jubilee celebration. More information on the memorial and Jubilee events to follow. ♦





# VIRTUAL FAMILY WEEKEND

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON

Our first ever Virtual Family Weekend created an opportunity for parents to connect, meet the teachers, and learn more about curriculum and what happens in the classroom at Besant Hill School. Despite its new form, many of the elements of our traditional family weekend remained consistent. The day began with a parent meeting where important information was shared and our faculty and admin team had the opportunity to introduce themselves. Following this, parents participated in 15-minute mini-classes where they had the chance to follow their student's schedule. Mini-classes help to orient parents to the curriculum of the course, learn from the teacher, and ask questions. Following the mini-classes, each family had the opportunity to schedule one-on-one meetings with their student's advisor where they had time to discuss their child's overall progress and development at Besant Hill. Lastly, Doug Jessup, our Director of College Counseling, led a session about the college process at Besant Hill and shared his wealth of information and knowledge. Overall, it was a great experience for all that allowed the parents to better know the faculty that support their students both in and out of the classroom. ♦



HAPPY TO BE WITH FRIENDS ON CAMPUS







# CERAMICS STUDIO: BEATO LEGACY

AUTHOR: SALLY CHUNG

Beatrice Wood's legacy lives on through the addition of our brand new ceramics studio here in the Happy Valley. With a view of the Topa Topa mountains and the breeze blowing through the ceiling-high windows, our ceramics studio is one of the most tranquil places on campus. Just a short walk from the main campus, the studio provides a peaceful environment for students to dispel any stressors of the day and focus their efforts entirely on creating with clay. Students have already taken advantage of the beauty of the space by trekking down to work on the wheels and hang out in the space, even after school and on the weekends.

During her time in Ojai, Beatrice Wood was the ceramic art teacher at Besant Hill while also running her own studio on campus. Beatrice Wood was a prolific artist known for her involvement in the Dada movement and through her legacy as an experimental ceramicist late in her life. She drew inspiration from cultures and folk art from all over the world to inform her lifestyle as well as her own artwork.

In continuation of Wood's love and never-ending tenacity for the arts, we aim to draw inspiration for our own art journeys in the studio. With much excitement, the students have been able to hit the ground running in their endeavors with clay. We've been learning to throw on the wheel and



TAREK S. '22 LEARNING CERAMICS TECHNIQUE FROM SALLY CHUNG

embracing all the quirks and challenges that come with it. Starting with the basics, throwing on the wheel has been an entire body exercise that requires a delicate dance while shaping the clay. As with learning any new skill, it has taken the students a great deal of trial and error, as well as patience, but we are starting to see the fruits of their labor. The most exciting thing about throwing is that even though the central mechanics of the wheel want to embrace symmetry, students have been able to insert their creative side by often manipulating their shapes after throwing. The result is an array of vessels in all different shapes and orientations all waiting to be vitrified in their first firing.





As we hone in on the work we want to produce with our newfound skills, the irregularities and experimentation all feel very much in line with the way Beatrice Wood approached art. The students have been tremendously brave in embracing a new world of clay through pushing and growing through their discomforts and sometimes even failures. However, at the end of that path, they are on their way to mastering clay and carving out an avenue of creating that is truly their own. Not unlike Beatrice Wood discovered on this land not too many years ago. ♦



BEN L. '21 DELICATE AND PATIENT ON A CERAMICS WHEEL





Artist: Akari I. '21

"This piece gave me the confidence that I had never had, and I am really proud of myself for completing this massive piece."



# COMMONS COOKBOOK: HARVEST VEGETABLES

AUTHOR: JUANA JUAREZ



- 1 Teaspoon Roasted Ground Ginger
- 1 Teaspoon Sicilian Sea Salt
- 1 Teaspoon Fresh Thyme Leaves
- 1 Teaspoon Ground Cumin
- 1/4 Teaspoon Coarse Grind Black Pepper
- 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 2 Tablespoons Orange Juice
- 8 Cups Assorted Root Vegetables (including organic carrots, organic butter-nut squash, red potatoes, parsnip, red onions)

1. Cut vegetables into 1-inch cubes
2. Mix roasted ginger, sea salt, thyme, cumin and pepper in small bowl.
3. Toss vegetables with oil and orange juice in large bowl.
4. Sprinkle seasoning mixture over vegetables, toss to coat well.
5. Spread vegetables in single layer on foil lined baking pan.
6. Roast in a preheated 450 oven 30 to 35 minutes or until vegetables are tender and golden brown.



# IN MEMORIAM

AUTHOR: KATHY ZOTNOWSKI

2020 has been a year of loss for everyone, yet it is still hard to believe that in a matter of weeks, our community lost alumnus Tom Pollock '60, alumna and Alumni Liaison Marion "Ruth" Weil '60, and beloved former faculty member, Sandy Wayman. Their untimely deaths shook us to our very cores.

## Tom Pollock '60

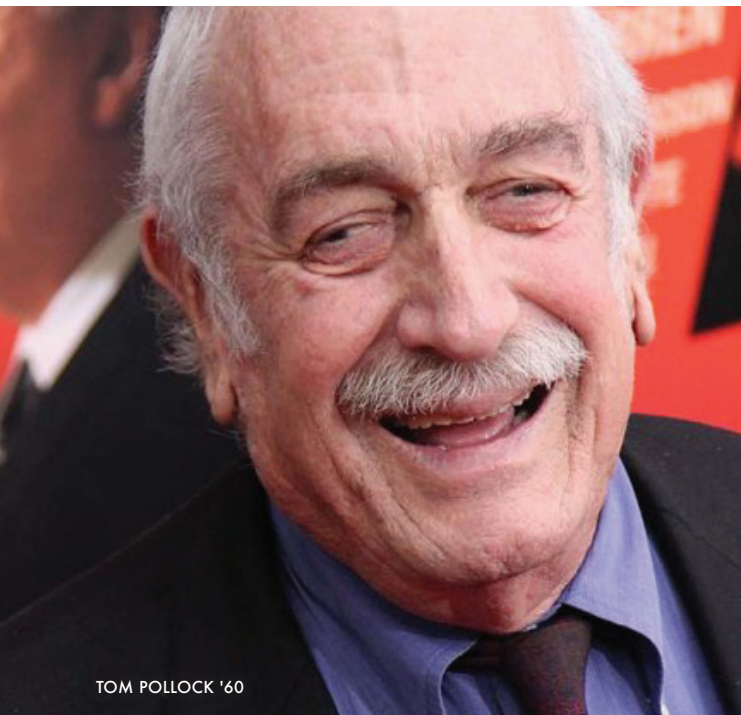
Tom was the grandson of founder Louis Zalk and attended the school from the sixth grade through graduation. He went on to Columbia University, Stanford Law and reached the pinnacle of success in the Hollywood entertainment industry. Tom was an icon. As a studio head, he released films and gave opportunities to directors that no one would, among them Spike Lee. In speaking with the students and faculty as part of the Distinguished Speaker Series, Tom said that most of his ethics and interests stemmed from what he'd learned at Happy Valley.



HAPPY VALLEY SCHOOL CLASS OF 1960: TOM POLLOCK BACK ROW, THIRD FROM RIGHT; MARION WEIL SEATED MIDDLE ROW SECOND FROM RIGHT

## Marion Weil '60

Marion Weil was unparalleled in her generosity and love of Happy Valley. She spent the last ten years of her life in service to the students and alumni. Marion was the number one contributor, both in giving countless hours of her time as the Alumni Liaison and her financial resources which numbered over a million dollars. She worked tirelessly to reconnect alumni and connect students to larger opportunities. She became a champion of Annie Besant's vision for our community and gave talks to the students through our Distinguished Speaker Series events (public speaking being something she was terrified of and called it her Aún Aprendo moment). Most recently, she was involved on the ad-hoc committee to form the Alumni & Friends Council (AFC) with a goal of raising a 10 million dollar endowment for student



TOM POLLOCK '60





scholarship - the initiative to be a part of the "Honoring the Women of Happy Valley Through Philanthropy" Campaign (read more in this issue).

## Sandy Wayman

As CEO, Alex Smith, noted, beloved faculty member Sandy Wayman "had been a constant source of support for our students at Happy Valley/Besant Hill School for decades. Truly a kind and beautiful soul that made a difference in our lives." Along with her wife and BHS faculty member, Tina Leslie, Sandy spent almost 30 years on staff, teaching, tutoring, and assisting students in countless ways. Sandy will be remembered for her smile and love of sports -- especially women's basketball. ♦



MARION WEIL '60



SANDY WAYMAN



# VISUAL ARTS UPDATE

AUTHOR: SALLY CHUNG

As many of us know too well, the year has started off with many surprises and curve balls. Beginning the new year virtually is already an adjustment, but being able to bond through art making has felt like a secret highlight in our state of quarantine. Once we welcomed back most of our students to in-person learning, it was a whirlwind semester of hybrid learning through international time zones, computer screens, and masked interactions. If there has been one reassuring commonality in all of this, it is that no matter where you are, or what you have, you still have the ability to create!

Since the semester started off on the virtual platform, we began our first days of school getting to know each other through games of art icebreakers and being strategic with the ways we can produce art. At one point, it even meant wielding the shocking structural capabilities of toilet paper to aid in our 3D building. We then dove into exploring our personal interests and using them as a major source of inspiration for an 8-page zine filled with original art. A zine is a sort of rite of passage, a booklet or business card, if you will, of artwork burgeoning artists will create

to trade, sell, and discover other artists. The end results were a wild array of topics ranging from optical illusions to a trip down memory lane of watercolor drawings of childhood comfort foods. As we welcomed students back to campus, we embarked on an animation project where the focus was on harnessing the power of mise-en-scene or composing a scene. Through curating every detail that goes into a scene from the background, to the characters, props, color scheme, and placement, we learned that composition is everything! For our last major project for the year, we took a note from the street art movement. Working on large-scale paintings, we are working on branding our own artistic styles to communicate recognizable visual messages.

All in all, we will be continuing to embrace the creative and freeing outlet art making provides whether we are back in quarantine, in the classroom, or at home with free time. With our focus on building the confidence and voice of our young artists, we look forward to spending the rest of the year experimenting and enjoying the process. ♦

STUDENTS MAKE GOOD USE OF THE OUTDOOR ART SPACES AROUND CAMPUS









PETE ASARO, DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT





# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VERSATILE TEACHERS

AUTHOR: CLAIRE LOWNDES

Our teachers' love for their curriculum and ability to unlock learning has shined this semester and has allowed them to embrace the challenge of teaching in a pandemic as an opportunity for growth. As you can imagine, this semester has been like no other, and the faculty have been proactive and intentional in addressing the needs of our students and have taken the time to go above and beyond in creating truly meaningful learning experiences.

The main focus for our professional development this year has been hybrid teaching and learning, facilitated through the use of new technology. Technology has been both a challenge and our best asset, and we are so very grateful for the dedication of Richard Ellwood. He has helped to keep this community connected and to allow Besant Hill to keep moving forward and striving for excellence in our educational goals.

Through a prepared and committed approach, this community has much to be proud of. This semester has shined a light on what truly makes this community so very special, students and faculty that not only care about learning but are invested in each other's passions and interests beyond academics.

Here at Besant Hill School, the pursuit of personal growth and the spirit of *Aún Aprendo* continues to thrive. The faculty have embraced many professional development opportunities this semester, shining as adaptable and supportive leaders of both the virtual and blended classroom. ♦





Art by: Cassandra S. '22

# PERFORMING ARTS UPDATE

AUTHOR: DAN CALL

## FALL PLAY

The Performing Arts Department virtually presented the Orson Welles/Mercury Theater radio play War of the Worlds on November 6th and 7th. This production allowed many students to participate and remain socially distanced and/or completely online. There were 18 student performers representing all grade levels, and with the production taking on a new form of presentation, it became a cross-curricular experience and included additional students in the instrumental, studio art, and digital art classes! Moreso, the students in the Acting class worked to restructure the script a bit to accommodate more performers. The actual dialogue was not changed, but they created new characters that enhanced the performance. Visual and digital art students created images for scenes, and instrumental students helped create the soundtrack and sound effects. It was a great opportunity to have so many members of the community involved and was an all-around success! Bravo to everyone involved! Lastly, a big “Thank you” to Richard Ellwood for all of his help in producing the event.

## VARIETY SHOW

Hot on the heels of the fall play, the fall Variety Show was presented on Friday, December 4th. Again, it was a virtual experience, and while short in length, it was big on talent! The show was hosted by Pat O. '21 and Tarek S. '22. Leading off the show was a performance by the Chamber Singers/Performing Arts classes singing “Ding a Ding a Ding,” a fun, seasonal contemporary choral piece. Other acts included a wonderful animation project presented by the Studio Art classes, a fun Mambo dance featuring Tarek S. '22 and Keoni L. '22, and a wonderful vocal solo of “On My Own” from Les Miserables performed by Grace Z. '24. The show finished with another performance by the Chamber Singers/Performing Arts classes singing “An Ode to Pizza” in the style of an old fashioned madrigal. All in all, a fun, if brief, demonstration of the talents that are all around us here! Bravo to everyone that contributed! ♦





**Artist:** Ben L. '21

"An aspect of art that has always fascinated me is the relationship between the piece and it's viewers. Being someone that loves contrast, and heavy, messy black integrated in pieces, I wanted to utilize that in this piece. There are far too many aspects of myself or any person to be communicated through a face or a perception of someone, which is why I wanted to playfully block some of my perceptions of myself from the viewers gaze."



# FALL SPORTS AND FITNESS

AUTHOR: ANH-DAO TRAN



STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF ON-CAMPUS SPORT AND FITNESS OPTIONS

Despite the cancellation of interscholastic competitions this fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sports and fitness at Besant Hill School are alive and well on the picturesque 520 acres of Happy Valley land.

Offering Virtual Fitness at the start of the school year, we found many successes in offering the following: Dance, Yoga, Basketball Skills, Weight Training, and Running. Virtual Fitness took place on Tuesday and Thursday each week. Having it twice a week allowed student-athletes to have more time to decompress and adjust to the challenges that come with virtual learning.

Once back on campus, we were able to expand our offerings to include: Boys volleyball, girls volleyball, and cross country and to increase the frequency of meetings from two to four times a week. Boys volleyball was moved from the Spring to the Fall per the California Interscholastic Federation, and we had a good number of boys sign up, which is really encouraging despite the change of seasons! As we continue to navigate the

seasons of training and competition, the priority is to continue to “Protect our Pack.”

After-school practices do look a little different, but students are still training to the best of their ability. Students and coaches are required to wear masks while practicing and social distancing rules apply, therefore the coaches are focused on skill development, team bonding, fitness, and conditioning. The beauty of being in Southern California is that the weather permits us to be outdoors year-round, and being on 520 acres of land, we are taking full advantage of the fresh air and space around us.

The athletics program also offers an opportunity for those who are not able to be on campus with us to take part in building their fitness and overall health and wellness. These online learners can take part in fitness classes at the beginner, intermediate, or advanced level on their own and log their activity in an online fitness journal created specifically for them. ♦





KEONI L. '22 OUT ON THE TRAILS OF CAMPUS



VOLLEYBALL ON FORSYTH FIELD IN GLORIOUS FALL WEATHER



LOUIS S. '21 PRACTICING HIS MOVES IN THE PAINT





MARY SPENCE WITH A 2020 BHS TURKEY TROT T-SHIRT

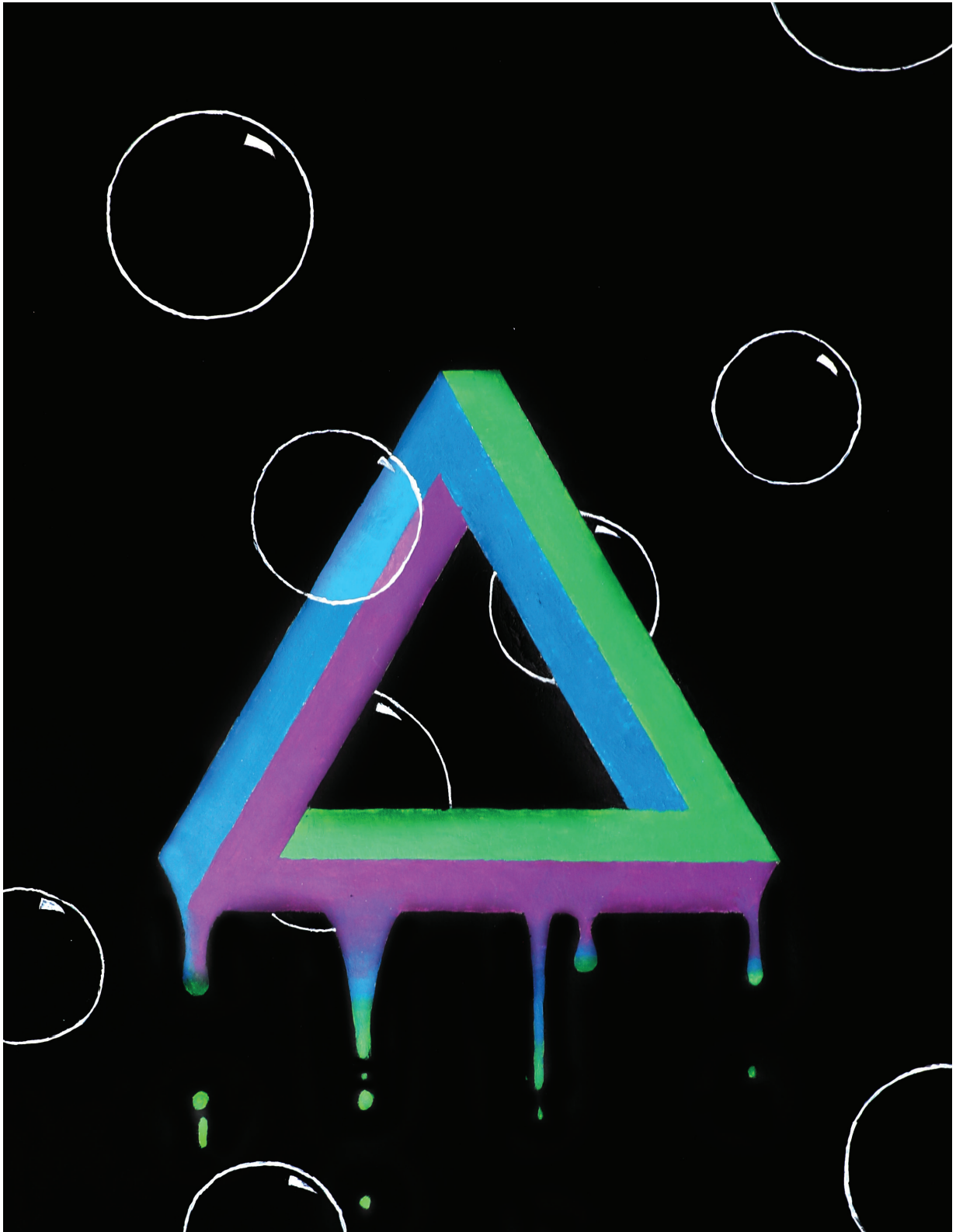
# THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON

One of the true highlights of this very different year was our Thanksgiving Celebration. In my fifteen-year history at the school or any other time that I know of, we have never had students on campus during Thanksgiving week. It was hard to tell exactly what this would be like, but we knew that the focus of the day was to bring the community together as the extended family that we are. We began the day with a Turkey Trot hosted by Alex and Mary Spence. The whole community completed a 5K around campus on an incredibly beautiful Thursday morning. At the finishing line, everyone received their own Besant Hill School Turkey Trot T-Shirt. Afterward, they headed to the commons for a delicious brunch to refuel after their efforts. During the afternoon, many students spent time creating in the

ceramics studio, some for their very first time working with clay. While others enjoy watching football on the big screen in the theater. All the while, Megan, Kim, and I, with our team of volunteers, busily worked away in the commons preparing a traditional feast of mouthwatering turkey, Megan's custom stuffing, Cindy's delicious candied yams, and all the fixings one could ask for. At 4:30, the students and on-campus faculty members donned their finest outfits and joined us in the commons. We began the meal with a focus on gratitude for one another and the incredible opportunity we had to enjoy the day together in a time when community celebration is a true luxury. It can certainly be said that no one left hungry, in their bellies and hearts alike. ♦





Artist: Jonah H. '23

"I came up with this idea, because I wanted to try to do an illusion type painting. My main idea had brick in the background, but I ended up doing something completely different. Throughout the process of making this painting, it had been very frustrating from me changing my mind with a lot of stuff, and then that resulting in more work which I didn't want to do, but I did, and I think it turned out well."



# ALUMNI VISITS AND UPDATES

AUTHOR: KATHY ZOTNOWSKI

STUDENTS ON AN AFTERNOON WALK OF THE CAMPUS TRAILS

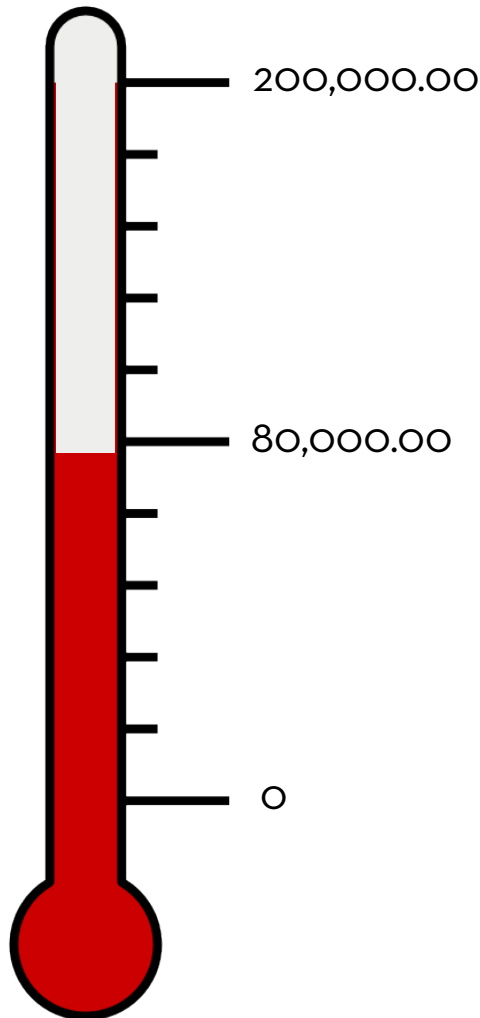
Despite the Coronavirus, Alumnus Helmut Krull '88 braved air travel from Colorado to California. Along with stopping in to see former classmate Jennifer Marenstein Johnson '87, he headed to Ojai to deliver a very special gift to Director of Development and Alumni Relations Kathy Zotnowski -- 12 carousels with 50-70 slides each for the rebuilding of the archives lost during the Thomas Fire. They spent some socially distanced time together reminiscing about Helmut's entire family's years at Happy Valley. His father, Dr. Edward Krull was the science and German teacher; his mother

Margaret was the school chef; and his older brother Klaus was a classmate, graduating in 1986. Currently, Helmut is a surgical nurse living with his wife and 3 sons (ages 7 to 15) in Centennial, CO. Helmut fondly remembers both his Spanish class and the head of the music program (and Ojai music legend), Seabury Gould. Helmut hired Seabury to play at his wedding along with former music faculty member Eddie Guffman. We thank Helmut for his service on the front lines during the pandemic, and both Helmut and Dr. Krull for the gift to the archives. ♦



# ANNUAL FUND UPDATE

AUTHOR: KATHY ZOTNOWSKI



*“There is something infinitely healing  
in the repeated refrains of nature  
– the assurance that dawn comes after  
night,  
and spring after winter.”*

-Rachel Carson

I opened my annual fund letter with this same quote back in 2018, our first year after the devastation of the Thomas Fire. It feels so apropos to the current moment in which we find ourselves that I had to use it again. The beauty of the Happy Valley is that no matter the fires, floods, earthquakes, or pandemics, the cycle of growth and rebirth is always alive and well here.

The land endures. In order to allow our school to endure, the Annual Fund Campaign “Providing to Protect Our Pack” provides needed resources throughout the year. In a normal year, we would be on track to meet our goal. However, this is not a normal year, and the impact of the pandemic has actually doubled the amount of funds we need to raise. We are thankful to all of the donors who have stepped up to support us thus far: our faculty, staff, Happy Valley Foundation Trustees, alumni, current families, and friends. You are deeply appreciated. If you have not had an opportunity to make a gift, please consider contributing. It is needed now more than ever to continue to keep our community safe from Covid-19. If you have already donated, please consider compounding your generosity by giving again. “There is something infinitely healing” in the repetition!

In gratitude,  
Kathy Zotnowski  
**Director of Development &  
Alumni Relations**

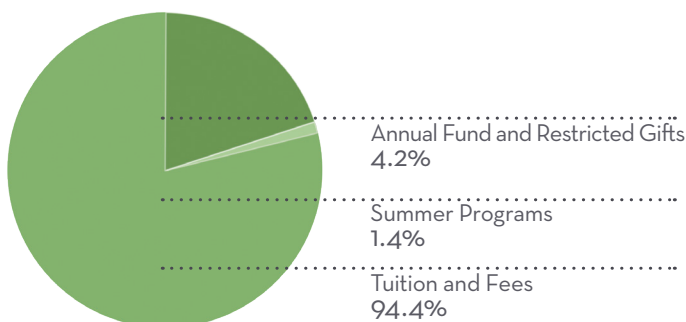


# 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

During a year that has been at times difficult and always unprecedented, the support of our donors has been both morally uplifting and essential in maintaining our operations. It is with gratitude that we warmly thank you for your contributions in the past year. Gifts through the end of the fiscal year will support us on our goal of \$200,000 for our Annual Fund. Whether you have contributed to the Annual Fund, which is essential each and every year, or our Pandemic Relief Fund, which was an unanticipated call for support, you have made a meaningful and lasting impact on our community.

## REVENUE

ANNUAL FUND  
\$232,839.00



## EXPENSES

44.5%  
INSTRUCTION &  
OPERATIONS

48%  
SALARIES  
& WAGES

7.5%  
FINANCIAL  
AID

**We are proud to present this Honor Roll of Donors in grateful recognition of your contributions to Besant Hill School of Happy Valley during the past fiscal year.**

**This report reflects gifts contributed between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019, and includes all gifts made to the Annual Fund, all capital drives and restricted gifts during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.**

**Thank you so much for supporting our school. Your gifts truly have an impact!**

### Heritage Club

John S. Brown, Jr.  
Marion Miller Martin  
Mary Myers  
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Kate Hughes Rinzler  
Lee Sanders  
Marion Weil

### Anacapa Level

\$20,000 and above

John S. Brown Jr.,  
In honor of the Class of '67

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\$10,000—\$19,999

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## Founders Circle

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\$1,000—\$2,499

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EunMee Shim  
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Larry Thorpe  
Delong Wang & Wenjing He

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Terra Farguiel  
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Brian McColgan  
Betsy Stix  
Nina & Bob Ward  
In Memory of Alice Carr de  
Creeft, my mother

## BHS Friends Circle

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Richard Ellwood  
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Cynthia Gagnon  
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In Memory of Alice Carr de  
Creeft, my mother

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Amazon Smile  
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## In-Kind Donations

John & Linda Hardham  
Richard Heller  
Patty & Steve McGillivray  
Ewan McGregor

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**Your contributions make an impact in building the financial strength of our school to ensure continuing excellence in our programs and activities.**

**Please consider a tax deductible gift to one of our giving programs.**

**To learn more about various giving options, contact:**

**KATHY ZOTNOWSKI**  
Director of Development  
(805) 646-4343 Ext. 131  
[kzotnowski@besanthill.org](mailto:kzotnowski@besanthill.org)  
[www.besanthill.org](http://www.besanthill.org)

*\*In compiling this report, every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate and complete. If an error has occurred, or you would like your name listed differently in the future, please contact Kathy Zotnowski, Director of Development ([kzotnowski@besanthill.org](mailto:kzotnowski@besanthill.org)).*

*Besant Hill School of Happy Valley is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*





**Artist:** Brian B. '22

"This is my Mascot for the Streets. It includes two acrylic painting that are combined to create one landscape. I decided to merge the two to form a vivid change in scenery, ranging from the mountains of Oahu to the Cherry blossoms of Japan."