

AÚN APRENDO

BESANT HILL SCHOOL OF HAPPY VALLEY



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Message from the Head of School



While recently in council with students, I shared my goal for next year- To take nothing for granted. As I shared in my last Head's message, this year has necessitated that every traditional element of the school year has had to be rethought and reworked, but as we end this year, we are seeing the possibility that next our school year will look much different, and as a result, the activities that were absent, or greatly adapted, will make a welcome return next year. For me personally, I know that they will not, even in their more simplistic and small forms, be taken for granted.

We are so looking forward to the return of weekly town trips, our All School Fall camping trip to OceanMesa at El Capitan, All School Excursions hosted by our Math/Science and Humanities/Art Departments, our Ski Trip to Mammoth Mountain, and our all-school councils to name a few. Having now completed my 15th year working at the school, in addition to the four years I spent here as a student, I have experienced some of these events countless times and grieved their loss this last year. Their return is one that we all greatly look forward to and anticipate.

Additionally, we have many new things on the horizon. Brian McColgan will lead the school in a sustainability audit as we look toward doing the important daily work of supporting the environment of our campus and our impact on the greater world. Megan will lead our first Residential Life Committee where our weekend activities and life as a boarding community will be enhanced and enlivened. Claire will lead the charge as we focus on enhancing our AÚn Aprendo experience, which helps to enrich our curricular and co-curricular programs and encourage our students to keep learning in and out of the classroom.

I often say that the only constant here at Besant Hill is change, and that is because we are a unique community that is always involved in self-examination in the pursuit of our best self and constant learning. This next year, we will celebrate the steadfast nature of our longstanding traditions as we also keep our eye on the future. I look forward to enjoying every moment of our time together, knowing with a certain clarity that it is a privilege that should never be taken for granted. ♦

Portia Johnson
Head of School



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CO-PRESIDENTS, HARLEY M. '22 AND FRANCESCA F. '23

STUDENT VOICES:

Co-Presidents

AUTHORS: HARLEY M. '22 & FRANCESCA F. '23

Greetings! There is much to be excited about, and we are extremely thankful to have been elected as your Co-Presidents 2021-22.

We want to keep the legacy alive of making Besant a memorable school to look back on and be proud of as we all grow into young adults. Together as a community of Besant, we will continue to thrive as the students naturally implement an inclusive environment that encourages and supports one another.

As Co-Presidents, we are ambitious to do our very best to make this upcoming school year one to look back on and cherish. Our goals are to be there for anyone and everyone, encourage sustainability for our school and beyond, and to make our years at boarding school special. Besant Hill is our home away from home, and the feeling of everyone together is what makes it exactly that.

Huge thanks to Pat and Emmett for their incredible work this past difficult year. They have managed to make this past year extraordinary, and we are grateful for their feedback, support, and inspiration. We are motivated to keep striving for excellence.

We look to organize inclusive events and activities as well as provide the warmest welcome to new and returning students this fall. A priority we have is to make sure anyone in need is helped, understood, and comforted by their peers. We are looking to the future with our heads held high and full of hope as we prepare for this upcoming school year. Have an amazing and safe summer!

Aún Aprendo,

Harley and Francesca



Artist: Stella G. '22

In her photography project *Natura* Stella decided to go on a walk around her neighborhood and capture those familiar sights. Stella decided to walk to her favorite spot by her house, the beach. During those few hours she was there the sun was setting and leaving a beautiful imprint on the water.



NIYATI K. '23 CONTRIBUTED AN EXCELLENT TRUMPET PIECE TO AÚN APRENDO DAY

AÚN APRENDO DAY

AUTHOR: LEILA D. '23

On February 26 of the 2020-2021 school year, students participated in several activities for our first ever AÚn Aprendo Day. Besant Hill Faculty members created virtual activities for students to learn about their passions through art. Activities included Adventures in Adaptation, A Nature Experience, Spanish through Art, Let's Make a Music Video, The Language of Food, American Voice, History of Sports, and Political Commentary through Art. Students were sent a sign-up sheet where they were asked to choose three activities that piqued their interest in order to engage in new learning.

Below is an interview with Claire Lowndes, Director of Academics, who organized the event.

Interviewer: *You played a huge role in organizing AÚn Aprendo day, which is awesome because that must have taken a lot of energy and effort. What was it like during the process of organizing this event?*

Claire: I was in my creative planning

element. I had a vision of what we needed as a community to feel connected. I was inspired by the idea of a day where we made connections with our passions for learning inspired by our motto AÚn Aprendo. A huge part of it was that there was no grade attached to it. To me, planning that day was all about passion and potential if I could sum it up. We had an AÚn Aprendo committee and planned the day with a team of faculty. The driver was wanting the community, both students and teachers, to connect.

Interviewer: *How did the staff decide on the different activities that they would run this particular year?*

Claire: I paired them in cross-curricular teams, and they had some time to meet and find a passion they shared. It could have also been their passion outside of the classroom, and they could connect using their passions and their interests. Our faculty are very dedicated. There was a conversation as to whether we should hold the activity once we came back to campus. We decided that the students needed a change from

everyday virtual learning, and we would hold the activity before in-person learning returned. We felt that that community and cooperation is important for our learning and our grade.

Interviewer: *Do you know what inspired some of the teachers to run the activities that they did?*

Claire: It was driven by the visions to share our passions. Our faculty did a great job; it was inspiring for them. I will say that when we had lunch together as a faculty, everyone was so excited. It was exciting to know that students had signed up for something that engaged in their passions.

Interviewer: *The activity that you co-ran with Megan was called “Political Commentary Through Art.” Can you explain what you and Megan were aiming to accomplish or the message you guys wanted to convey to students during that hour and 20 minutes?*

Claire: I love collaboration, and collaborating with Megan was pure joy! She is so passionate about young people and the ideas they bring to the world. We had a great planning session, and we shared what we were passionate about. The activity was inspired by the quote ‘an image speaks a thousand words.’ Megan is a historian, and it was interesting listening to her. The center of our session was to aim for a college-level class, and for students to understand what they are seeing, why they are seeing it, and to check their sources. It was interesting for us to pass the images onto the students and then see them choose their own images. It shows what they are going through. It was more of a facilitation of a conversation, and that was really what the day was about. Images are a conversation starter, and communication is really important.

Interviewer: *At the end of the activity, students were given the opportunity to*

find a photo that had a political message and share it with the group. Were there any photos that especially made you feel emotional?

Claire: It’s interesting because Megan and I spoke about it after. I would say that day was one of the best Fridays of this semester because everyone was engaged. There was an image that Caleb showed that was really emotional, and I felt a connection to it. There were so many great images. Evie showed an image that she had taken on a trip, I think of the capitol building, and that made it very personal. She showed a picture she had taken of the capitol building before the riots on January 6th, and next to it was a picture taken during the riots. This whole activity really shows that your personal experience means a lot to you, but beyond that, it was about the comparisons of her photo of the capitol building and a photo of the riots after the election. You all did really great, and that showed us how engaged you were.

Interviewer: *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

Claire: I am really looking forward to doing these activities again but in person! I am looking forward to the students facilitating and having connections with each other through learning. AÚn Aprendo Day was so heart-warming seeing students learning and engaging in these activities. I think that learning together in the community with both teachers and students is so important, and this community really is contagious. We pass our lessons and passions onto everyone else. Creativity is contagious, learning is contagious, the essence of this community is contagious, and I feel really passionate about keeping that alive. Something I see in the future is students co-planning and leading these activities! We can all learn new things together, and that’s really what this community is all about; AÚn Aprendo. ♦



Artist: Yuki G. '21

This photo is part of a series that tells a travel story that she took along the journey. The focus of these photos are the time on the way rather than the final destination. People often hurry to get from one place to another and forget the scenery on the way.



SUSTAINABLE FIRE ABATEMENT: GOATS

AUTHOR: ALEX SMITH

Through the school's work with various agencies, the Community Supported Grazing Program, and Cole Bush of Shepherdess Land and Livestock, we were able to invite 200 goats and sheep to our campus to help with sustainable fire abatement on the 24 acres in and around the Vernal Pool. We were excited to work with Cole and deepen our relationship with her organization which is based in upper Ojai. More is certainly to come in this area as we continue to steward the beautiful land which our school is blessed to call home. ♦



INTERNATIONAL WEEK

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON



Unlike many things this past school year, International Week 2021 gave us a chance to celebrate in a very normal way. Held shortly after our return to in-person learning over the week of March 22-26, each day provided opportunities to honor the school's historical and ongoing commitment to cultural diversity.

Each day began and ended with activities designed to bring the community together. Whole group activities included Latin Dance, Tai Chi, British Swordfighting, and our first live music performance of the year featuring the local Bluegrass and Americana band, Rose Valley Thorns. On March 25th, the entire community donned their new International Week 2021 t-shirts, designed

INTERNATIONAL WEEK KICKED OFF WITH
A MORNING OF LATIN DANCING



NATE K. '21 AND JORDYN D. '21 ENJOYING EVERY MINUTE OF INTERNATIONAL WEEK



by BHS Visual Arts instructor Sally Chung, and participated in our first annual all-campus International Week walk, followed by an array of international treats.

Additional festivities included Class Connection groups creating flags inspired by The Peace Flag Project, a nonprofit organization that encourages people from all countries, faiths, and identities to make flags that express their wishes for the world. We then strung our Peace Flags across the outside Commons Patio, where the wind dispersed their messages across the Happy Valley! Another highlight of the week was Thursday's student-taught foreign language classes. After first training with Nestor for several weeks, Akari I. '21, Caleb W. '23, Gabe B. '23, Harley M. '22, Jade D. '23, Shion F. '24, Tarek S. '22, and Yllan H. '22 displayed their teaching skills as they led classes in their native languages.

Since its inception, Besant Hill School of Happy Valley has provided a welcome home to a diverse and international student community. This yearly tribute to our past, present, and future responsibility to recognize and celebrate this commitment to our founders' vision is a tradition we will always hold close in our collective hearts. ♦

DEI COMMITTEE

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON

In the Spring semester of 2021, despite the many distractions provided by the pandemic, Besant Hill School initiated its first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. The committee was composed of 10 different faculty and administrators who volunteered, despite their busy schedules, to contribute to this important work. From the historic origins of our school, elements of DEI have been ingrained in the school's philosophy and daily life. The formal introduction of this committee has allowed an avenue to celebrate this focus, as well as to embrace our Aún Aprendo ethos and learn new ways to do even better work in this area. As part of this committee's work, the school now has a formalized DEI mission statement, has completed its first DEI curricular audit, has surveyed the entire school population concerning their personal and observed experience of DEI, has begun facilitating faculty professional development surrounding issues of DEI, and lastly, is in the process of writing and formalizing a working DEI policy. After completing the curriculum audit, a common narrative among the teachers was gratitude for the intentionality of the process. This correlated nicely to the results of the DEI survey, as an overwhelming majority of community members replied that they experience a supportive DEI community on a regular and consistent basis. The work of this committee is just beginning, and we look forward to introducing further curriculum to support DEI in and out of the classroom at Besant Hill School as we carry on the traditions set forth by our founders. ♦



BESANT HILL SCHOOL IS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING A STRONG
COMMUNITY CENTERED ON KINDNESS TO ALL





Artist: Max W. '24

This series of photos, *Water Photography*, showcases a variety of water in different ways. The water photos represent how versatile water is and how it is part of our daily lives. Even though something as simple as water can look similar it reacts differently to surfaces and light, creating anything from ripples to reflections.



DAVE COSBY AND PORTIA JOHNSON NAILED IT WITH THEIR VARIETY SHOW SUBMISSION

SPRING VARIETY SHOW

AUTHORS: GRACE Z. '24 & TAREK S. '22

Following the return of the boarders to campus, the Spring Variety Show 2021 broadcasted on Friday, March 12, giving us the opportunity to creatively showcase the performing arts in the midst of a worldwide pandemic! Thanks to the technological wizardry of Richard Elwood (Director of Technology) and the artistic direction of Dan Call (Art Department Chair) and Dave Cosby (Music Department Chair), we were able to tie in the online students with the students on campus. Hosts Tarek S. '22 and Grace Z. '24 had a great time introducing 11 acts including dancing, singing, skits, slam poetry, and instrumental music. Performers included Ava B. '21, Leila D. '22, Gabi G. '22, Tarek S. '22, Stetson T. '22, Josie WL. '22, Walker S. '24, Grace Z. '24, Dave Cosby, and Portia Johnson (Head of School). Dancer, Josie W.-L. '22 expressed,

"I feel good about my performance in the Spring Variety Show. Although I generally do not like seeing myself perform, I felt good about something I created and choreographed

with a bit of help from my dance coach that I meet with on the weekends. Altogether, it took about one or two months to complete, about 30 to 40 hours of choreographing a dance. I am quite proud of what our hard work produced, and I am glad I got to share it with my peers."

Singer, Stetson T. '22 noted, "It was an entertaining, enjoyable, and engaging event that was extremely fun to participate in." Additionally, two unique entries included a video entitled "Orange Toss" organized by Tarek S. '22 and edited by Brian Thornhill (Digital Arts Faculty) and a music video by Brian McColgan (Director of Sustainability) with his original song entitled, "Tend the Fire," edited by Sally Chung (Arts Faculty). Both included the participation of many students, faculty, and staff. It was an evening of memorable performances enjoyed by an audience from all over the world!

ON CAMPUS HERO: Cindy Gagnon

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON



CINDY GAGNON, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES AND CAMPUS HERO



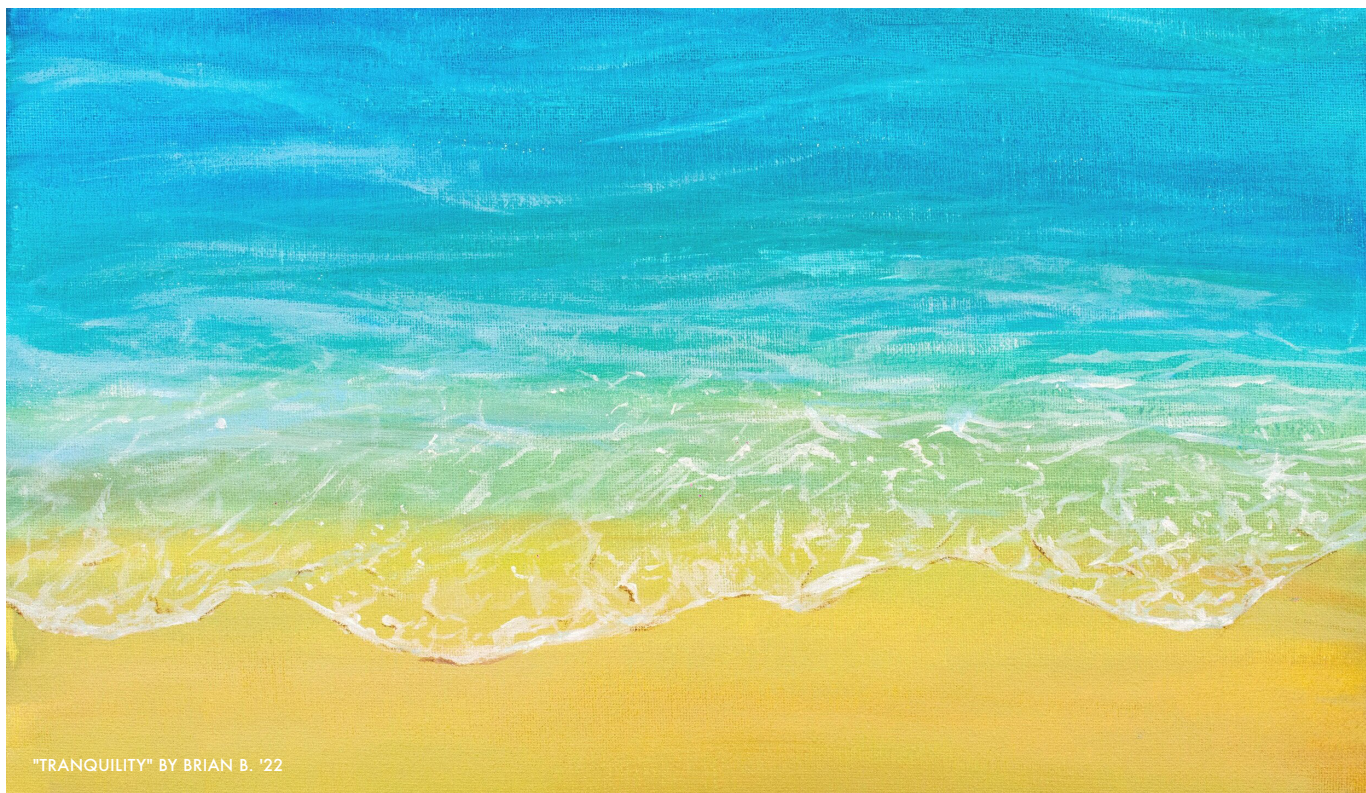
Disclaimer: The following article is highly biased and blatantly appreciative!

We often refer to someone having been in the right place at the wrong time. However, it is much more infrequent when we know with certainty that someone was in just the right place at precisely the right time. For the Besant Hill School community, our someone is BHS Director of Health Services, Cindy Gagnon. Whether it was luck or divine intervention that brought Cindy to campus in the Summer of 2019, we will never know. What we do know is that she is our “Health Hero,” and we are incredibly grateful for her leadership during this unprecedented and challenging year of COVID-19.

Cindy’s background includes her work as a Registered Nurse and Licensed Family Nurse Practitioner, with many years of experience in Public Health services. This experience, coupled with her steady, professional demeanor, proved an unbeatable combination in our effort to design and implement a plan to protect our community against infection and re-open the school. Her professional skill-set may have been an exact match for the past year’s challenges, but what has genuinely elevated Cindy to hero status has been her kindness, compassion, and attention to our overall well-being - both physically and emotionally. She has been a rock for so many and the ultimate team player. Cindy has pitched in on every level and in every realm of the school.

Looking back, it is not only Cindy’s professional attributes that have stood out over the past year. Perhaps equally impactful have been her warmth, sense of humor, and infectious laugh. Cindy is completely serious when it comes to our safety, but she will be the first to look for humor in any situation or generously share her joy for life.

Shortly after our first meeting in July of 2019, Cindy emailed me to share, “I believe I would be a great asset to the wonderful team you have assembled, as well as to the students you serve.” Two years and one pandemic later, we couldn’t agree with you more, Cindy! ♦



"TRANQUILITY" BY BRIAN B. '22

SPRING ARTS

Saturday, April 10th was set aside to celebrate the arts in all its incantations at Besant Hill School. The conditions of the year provided an incredible opportunity to look at our traditional Spring Arts celebration in a new way, and the event featured two gallery exhibits, live music performances, an extraordinary community dinner, virtual streaming opportunities for community members who could not be with us in person, and a night of entertainment under the stars for residents of the community. It was a beautiful day and an excellent way to showcase the students' pursuit of their creative and artistic passions and the many opportunities that students have to explore this essential tenant of our school.

Visual Arts

Written by Claire Lowndes, Sally Chung & Leah Sellers

The 2021 Spring Art exhibition was a collective of passion projects with the intention for students to bring their unique ideas and perspectives to life, both virtually and in person. In the beginning stages of

planning, each student was posed with the question: 'What is the artwork you've always wanted to make?' and 'Why are you passionate about this?' Through these prompts, the students researched new techniques and mediums, pushed themselves out of their comfort zones, and most importantly, dreamt big. Students embraced their individual projects and were inspired by the power of visual communication allowing them to unlock meaningful pieces.

In the photography courses, the intention was to tell a story through a series of 10 images. It could be a personal story, informative, comical, or just a story with a unique perspective. They were asked to take the viewer on a journey through a camera lens.

The Film students were asked to write, direct, and star in 2 different films. They were asked to create one film about their personal experiences of quarantine during the Coronavirus pandemic, and their second film could be about any subject they were passionate about. The creativity and stories that came out of these films were intriguing, interesting, and thoughtful.

Instrumental Music

Written by Dave Cosby

Both excitement and nervousness were in abundance as the Instrumental Music students put the finishing touches on the stage and their music as they prepared for the first student live music concert of the year at Besant Hill School. For many, this was their first time playing on stage in front of people, while at the same time we had seniors who have been performing live since the fall of their freshman year. No matter how experienced the students were, all were a little nervous about finally putting on a concert live in front of their peers. The concert began with a combined class piece where all the instrumental music students performed a song from the Renaissance “La Morisque” by Tielman Susato. This allowed everyone to have an opportunity to play with musicians of different abilities and experience a large ensemble performance. The rest of the concert featured performances from each music class. The first class to play was Music Ensemble I who performed “Oye Como Va,” by Tito Puente, which featured advanced Afro-Latin rhythms and multiple students improvising on their instruments. Next, Music Ensemble II performed a well-known pop song by Bruno Mars called “Locked Out of Heaven.” This song featured advanced funk rhythms and a fairly intricate arrangement. The Guitar Ensemble was the next class to perform, and their performance demonstrated their hard work and practice this year as well as the musical diversity of the guitar. The Guitar Ensemble performed the pop-rock classic “Seven Nation Army” by the White Stripes, “G Blues” which was a traditional Chicago style blues song, and “Chorale #42” by J.S. Bach arranged for guitar ensemble. The final class to perform was the Music Ensemble III class featuring all seniors who performed an electrifying version of Led Zeppelin’s classic “Moby Dick.”

The students of the instrumental music department were thrilled and excited about their successful performance. All of the hard work and time on their instruments paid off as they successfully and confidently concluded the music portion of the Spring Arts Celebration.

Spring Musical

Written by Dan Call

The 2021 Spring Arts weekend included the Besant Hill School Spring Musical. The show was filmed using Green Screen technology and featured a wide variety of selections that included musical moments from 8 different Broadway musicals spanning the decades. Beginning in the 1950’s and moving all the way to the present day, the performance included works by such composers as Stephen Sondheim, Frank Loesser, Kander and Ebb, Alan Menken, Meredith Wilson, and Stephen Schwartz.

Kicking things off, we went back to 1962 and one of the very first musicals by Stephen Sondheim - A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. Along the way we featured solos, duets, trios, and full company numbers from such shows as Guys and Dolls, Into the Woods, Little Shop of Horrors, Chicago, and Company. The evening finished with “Everybody Rejoice,” a fun, upbeat number from The Wiz, and the curtain call featured individual portraits of the full company and was accompanied by a lovely chorale rendition of “For Good” from Wicked. All in all, it was a great show and really demonstrated our students’ ability to “engage in their artistic passions and be resilient!” ♦



MAKO K. '22, PAT O. '21, AND EMILY W. '22 IN THE DENTIST'S OFFICE DURING THE SPRING MUSICAL

SPRING ATHLETICS & FITNESS

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON

What do you do when a worldwide Pandemic makes it impossible for teams and athletes to compete with other schools' teams and athletes? In our case, we were grateful that the Besant Hill fitness program was designed to offer a depth of alternative physical activities for students to participate in!

Knowing that the likelihood of any interscholastic competition was dim, students were given a choice of an array of offerings that either introduced them to a new recreational pursuit or gave them a chance to practice and hone their skills for their future sport-specific team interest. Each day found BHS students on the courts, fields, or in the water, enjoying an opportunity to play and unwind from their time in classes or in front of screens.

From the team sport perspective, basketball players enrolled in the "Basketball Skills" class benefited from Francois' coaching expertise and the competition and encouragement of fellow BHS players. Soccer players practiced drills, enhanced their skills, and built a camaraderie that will serve them well in the coming year, and swimmers took this opportunity to stay sport-ready through in-water and dry land conditioning.

Students enrolled in Fitness classes chose to participate in a variety of lifelong physical activities, including Surfing, Racquet Sports (tennis, badminton, pickleball, and ping pong), Weight Training, Spring Musical & Dance, and the always popular Yoga class. On several of those sweltering spring Ojai Valley days, fitness quickly transitioned to pool relief for all!

Students who remained virtual throughout the Spring Semester also maintained a healthy lifestyle at home. Virtual BHS students were expected to dedicate time to their physical

well-being four days per week and complete an online fitness journal. The student recorded fitness journal activities varied from daily walks to plyometric training, biking, hot yoga, and equestrian training!

Next year, we anticipate that our Sports and Fitness seasons will return to their usual sequence and rhythm. Games and meets are already scheduled, officials assigned, and coaches are making plans. But we finished this year knowing that we didn't let that Global Pandemic keep us from, as Claire would exclaim, living our best lives! ♦



NATE K. '21 AND BRIAN McCOLGAN OUT FOR A CASUAL SURF



SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

AUTHOR: BRIAN MCCOLGAN

THOMAS S. '23 PRUNING CITRUS ON CAMPUS DURING PROJECT DAY

As we are set to embark on the 2021-2022 school year, we look to inspire another group of students to embody the ideals of environmental activism. At the annual Bioneers conference in 2020, student representatives from Besant Hill were lucky enough to meet privately with author, educator, and environmentalist, Bill McKibben. Towards the end of our meeting and discussion on climate change, one of our students asked Mr. McKibben, “this all seems so daunting, where do we start?” His suggestion was to go out into nature and learn to appreciate it. He emphasized that this is the most important thing one can do. Once one truly appreciates the natural world, one is more inclined to be inspired to save it. Here on campus at Besant Hill School, we are blessed with 520 acres of mostly undeveloped land that Annie Besant and her collaborators worked so hard to acquire over 75 years ago. It truly is a natural wonderland with 100’s of native plant and animal species, a vernal pool, and an up-close view of the Topa Topa mountains, where discovering and ultimately appreciating nature starts the moment we step outside of a class or dorm room.

When we think of what we can do to be better stewards of the Earth, the notion of environmental sustainability comes to mind. Environmental sustainability means responsibly interacting with the planet

to maintain natural resources and avoid jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Each year, we set goals for our Besant Hill Sustainability program where we look to improve upon our traditional initiatives, as well implementing new ones. The initiatives are inspired and come to fruition through discussions and actions involving students, faculty, administrators, and our facilities personnel. Much of this work is done within our bi-weekly Sustainability Committee meetings. In addition to continuing to fine-tune our composting, recycling, and environmental education programs, one of our main initiatives next year will be to embark on a comprehensive sustainability audit. During a sustainability audit businesses, schools, communities, and even private homes look at what resources enter the facility, how they are used, and how much of it, and in what form does it leave the facility. Some of the resources that come on campus are food, paper, cardboard, electricity, natural gas, water, gasoline, and diesel. A sustainability audit enables organizations and communities to reduce their carbon footprint by discovering ways to be more efficient with the resources that are used. Look for updates in future editions of our AÚn Aprendo Magazine, The Besant Hill School Website, as well as our weekly News From the Hill newsletter. ♦

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Greece
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For more information, contact Portia Johnson at PJohnson@BesantHill.org



GOOD FRIENDS DRESSED TO IMPRESS BEFORE PROM

PROM

AUTHORS: PAT O. '22 & MEGAN WALTON

Besant Hill School's 2021 Prom was a thrilling experience that required that we use our creativity and teamwork skills to plan, build, and pull off an entire community social event amid a global pandemic!

With the assistance of volunteers from other grades, the whole senior class worked to turn the Lee Sanders Aquatic facility and its surrounding area into our mini-version of Las Vegas. Students and faculty worked together to construct decorative props, string lights, hang backdrops and generally transform the space into our version of the glitzy extravagance of the city often referred to as "The Neon Capital of the world!" Because we did all of the Prom preparation ourselves, we could be incredibly proud of the results of our hard work, making the evening even more meaningful.



PROM 2021: VIVA LAS VEGAS

The most special tradition of a BHS Prom is that all students attend. It is genuinely a community event and, unlike most other schools, whether you are a freshman or a senior, do or don't have a date, or own a fancy dress or suit doesn't matter at all. The



FRIENDS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD EXCITED FOR PROM

only prerequisite is that you come ready for fun!

For the first time in over a year, and except for masks and plexiglass table dividers, we were able to enjoy a “normal” Prom night with all of our friends. The evening began with personally boxed hors d’oeuvres, thanks to the creative culinary skills of the BHS Dining Services team, followed by the individually plated main course. Ventura’s Cafe Zack catered our meal, prepared and plated onsite by their head chef and owner, and served by our very own faculty!

After dinner activities included games of chance, dancing under the stars to the music of DJ Ian, and a raffle for great door prizes.



STUDENTS HAVING A BLAST IN THE PHOTO BOOTH



The evening concluded with most of us braving the unseasonably low temperature to enjoy a festive night swim among the floating lights and mini fountains adorning the BHS pool.

Prom 2021 may have been like no other we have experienced, but most of us shared the belief that it had to be one of the best! Many of us felt that after the year we had experienced, it was just what we needed, and several were heard to agree with a student who happily exclaimed, “this was one of the best nights of my life!” ♦



YLLAN H. '21 OVERLOOKS PAT O. '21 PLAYING POKER



BEN L. '21 LOOKING SHARP

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Julianna Lamb

AUTHOR: STANTON SMITH

HAYATO A. '21:

Julianna is my teacher, swimming coach, and advisor. She is the one who knows and understands me the most. Having such a person in boarding school is very important to feel secure and comfortable in such a closed environment. She always treats students with love, but sometimes people misunderstand her just like kids don't realize hidden love behind strict words. I can declare that she is a great teacher and mother of two wonderful kids. I'm proud of being her student.



JULIANNA LAMB



JULIANNA FREQUENTLY EXTENDS HER LESSON PLANS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

MARIE H. '21:

She's been a wonderful advisor and history teacher throughout my four years here, and while she does set the bar high in her classes, she nonetheless is more than willing to help students that need it. She's a constant source of both amusement and guidance in advisory, despite all of my grumblings about having to do portfolios. I've really enjoyed being her advisee over the past three years, and I can't thank her enough for all of her help.

For students like Marie H. '21 and Hayato A. '21, two outstanding seniors that have spent a considerable amount of their last four years with her, Julianna Lamb is a role model. She



has a personality that invites students to seek her mentorship, whether it be in or out of the classroom. And when it comes to creating opportunities for students to enrich their learning experience, she is a creative problem solver that knows how to motivate students to reach their full potential. Her innovative lesson plans excite students to engage in a history curriculum that would be boring in most high school classrooms.

While Julianna no longer lives on campus in Eos with the boys, she spends so much time in the dorms and at school events, that it would be easy to think she still lives at the school. It's baffling to think that she is a mother of two (under the age of 4!) and married to an

active service Naval Officer. Regardless of whether her husband, Ben, is deployed, her students receive her unwavering commitment and dedication to being an excellent mentor and teacher.

The Lee Sanders Aquatic center is a gem on our campus, and Julianna does an outstanding job of making it easily available to students by leading both the aquatics and swim team programs. In the pool, just like in the classroom, Julianna sets the bar high for her students and then supports them 100% of the way as they achieve success. Her work ethic inspires our community to individually strive for our best. ♦



Artist: Mako K. '22

Mako took a series of photo of called *Changing Townscape*. She took photos of things that are never changed since she was a child and photos of things that are new using the techniques that she has learned to express her art work. All of these photos were taken in her home town, Chiba, Japan.



MEGAN WALTON AWARDED TARA T. '23 A BOOK DURING COMMENDATIONS

SPRING COMMENDATIONS

AUTHOR: CLAIRE LOWNDES

The 2021 Spring Commendations Ceremony was an extra special celebration this year as in-person celebrations were rare to come by this year, and it was also the first time that the ceremony was a lunchtime affair. On a beautifully sunny but not too hot Spring day, we gathered on the lawn outside the commons for a wonderful lunch and hosted a hybrid celebration of our students and their achievements for the second semester. The kitchen went above and beyond with a spectacular spread of kabobs, fresh vegetables, and even root beer floats for dessert. It was truly an exciting and unusual semester for our students, and their adaptability, drive, and commitment to their

learning have been outstanding. Within this joyful celebration, students were supportive and inspired by each other's success. A big congratulations to Tristan, for earning this year's Coyote Award for going above and beyond in his service and dedication to the school! ♦

COLLEGE BOUND MATRICULATIONS

AUTHOR: DOUG JESSUP



Besant Hill's Class of 2021 exceeded all expectations in the college process during this past admissions cycle, collectively receiving 125 offers of admission from 88 different colleges and universities in twenty-three states and four foreign countries. Five of our twenty-six graduates will matriculate at institutions of higher learning in Europe, three in England, and one each in Scotland and Switzerland, while the remaining will matriculate at nineteen different stateside schools in AZ, CA, IL, MA, MN, NC, NY, OH, OR, and RI. Besant Hill seniors applying to multiple colleges averaged over six acceptances per student, and the entire class altogether was awarded over three million dollars in merit scholarship funding over the next four years. Needless to say, there was more than ample college choice and grant assistance earned by the

esteemed members of this year's graduating class, and the hardest part for many basking in so many attractive offers was simply trying to decide where to finally enroll.

As a parting gift to our rising seniors and their underclass comrades, I asked members of the graduating class to share with us their impressions of this past year's college process and most especially if there was any advice they wished to impart to those currently in the midst of it all.

A recurring theme was for rising seniors not to leave things on the back-burner for too long and to make sure they have conducted extensive college research during the summer before the 12th grade. "Start the application process early because it is a ton of work when school resumes," one graduate advised, and from another, "really get to know all of the colleges you're



applying to and make sure to let them know you're interested in them." And this, "if you thoroughly explore all of your possible options, you can then more effectively articulate why you wish to attend each school, which will make the process less grueling and stressful."

And then members of the Class of 2021 had some counsel about the actual application process. "Don't put things off until the last minute...be sure to make significant headway on the drafting of your applications during the summer before senior year." "The writing supplements specific to each college are particularly important, and should present you in the best possible light, so you have to put more effort into them." "More than anything, I would say don't procrastinate...unnecessarily delaying the inevitable will likely have a detrimental impact on your

application."

And then finally, some graduates provided some overarching guidance, such as "be flexible, open to change, and trust your instincts," and "take full advantage of the support that is readily available to you from your counselor and teachers at Besant, and don't let anything stop you from finding the best fit for you!" And ultimately, once you've enrolled at a particular college, "do not put off anything with a deadline. It is extremely beneficial when you are choosing housing and registering for classes."

That would be some sound advice from members of an extraordinarily promising cohort of graduates! All hail, hearty congrats and warmest wishes to the Class of 2021! ♦



HAYATO A. '21 PRESENTING HIS DREAM OF STARTING A JAPANESE RESTAURANT AND MAKING THE AUDIENCE VERY HUNGRY



SENIOR CAPSTONE

AUTHOR: MEGAN WALTON

Our academic world experienced rapid changes this year, and we were compelled to adapt to multiple “new normals.” The Besant Hill School Senior Capstone was no exception, changing from an on-site internship project to a research opportunity that allowed students the time to dig deep into an existing passion or area of future interest. With this segue from a physical to a virtual experience, students spent their last days as a BHS senior applying their research, analytical, and critical thinking skills to their culminating projects.

During the Capstone timeframe, seniors were tasked with writing a research paper of approximately ten pages in length. Further requirements included using in-text citations, drawing from a minimum of five sources, and works cited in either MLA or APA format. Additionally, all seniors prepared and delivered a 20-30 minute presentation on their research findings to their peers and faculty.

While all of the Senior Capstone Projects

were impressive, the following stood out as outstanding examples of what our newest graduates genuinely care about and how they envision their future:

Louis S. '21

Louis’ Capstone Project focused on his passion for studying and practicing Mindfulness and Meditation. In the conclusion to his very thoughtful research paper and accompanying presentation, we were left to reflect on his words; “Our minds are at peace when focused on the present moment. When people are experiencing chronic pain, stress, depression, anxiety, and any emotion that one might want to avoid, the present moment doesn’t necessarily get rid of them. Instead, the present moment allows a sort of tranquility with those emotions. It is almost as if one becomes a tree, connected with the ground while a storm pushes against it, trying to disrupt its life, but the tree doesn’t care. The tree knows they are not all of the horrible things that

the storm does to it. Emotions aren't what our minds are. The feelings that come along with them are not who people are. They are simply a part of our souls, and it is up to the individual to see these emotions as aspects of us, but they are not who we humans are. It is imperative to simply observe them."

Siena M. '21

Siena's Senior Capstone Project was very personal, as her future plans include supporting the next generation of farming her family's Cuixmala Biodynamic garden on Mexico's Pacific coast. With this in mind, Siena chose to research Cuixmala's Biodynamic farming philosophies. Siena shared, "As I walk around, I notice that these fruits and vegetables differ in the way they look, grow, and taste compared to conventional produce sold in an organic grocery store. The landscape in this garden coexists with native animals and plants; there is no separation, all the organisms live harmoniously and are interconnected in multiple ways. The butterflies feed on the Mexican sunflowers, the rabbits play with the garden dogs, the birds nest in the mango trees, and the coatimundi walks around the greenhouses." This beautifully descriptive introduction led us to an overview of the benefits of Biodynamic farming.

Siena went on to explain that "Biodynamic farming was developed in 1924 by Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian scientist, philosopher, naturalist, and author, with the goal to farm and cultivate food connecting spiritual beliefs with scientific research. According to his biography, he was the creator and leader of a worldwide spiritual movement that would teach individuals about considering their connection to nature and the cosmos rather than relying on intellect alone. He embraced both science and mysticism in his life, spreading his ideas throughout the world." Having shared the philosophy and practice of Biodynamic farming her audience was left to contemplate Siena's concluding message, "What I discovered, by growing up at Cuixmala, and by researching

the practices used on the farm, is that the cycles of the earth, the cycles of biodynamic farming are more than just a philosophy for one farm. Biodynamic farming is what can help humanity survive and thrive."

Mackenzie Z.-W. '21

Kenzie's Senior Capstone was the upshot of her future vision to "be a part of the change that needs to be made to end the ignorance surrounding children's mental health, specifically the mental health needs of Black children." Toward that end, her research delved into the need first to understand the psychological development of children before one can understand "how biases and experiences contribute to the mental health issues of Black youth." Kenzie's paper and presentation introduced us to her research into the work of many influential specialists in the field of child psychological development in both the 20th century and beyond, data from multiple studies and theories, and contributions centered on the specific factors influencing the psychological development of Black children.

Drawing also from her research into the findings of the Children's Defense Fund 2010, Kenzie noted, "The mental health needs of many Black and minority children have gone unmet for decades. There is a disproportionate amount of Black youth who are affected by poverty and live in low-income households. This is due to centuries of discrimination and racism that have prevented many Black Americans from building generational wealth." Further, she concluded, "If a child has a history of being exposed to violence, bullying, or socioeconomic problems, they are at high risk of having mental health issues. It is necessary to recognize that Black children have a disproportionately higher chance of being exposed to these risk factors."

Every member of the Class of 2021 should be proud of their Senior Capstone efforts. Their culminating academic projects evidenced significant examples of the tenets of the BHS Portrait of a Graduate. They are all commended for their resilience and the example they have left for future Capstone projects. ♦

END OF YEAR RIGHTS OF PASSAGE

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON



CLASS OF 2021



Graduates of the class of 2021 have had a year like no other, and they end the year with much joy in their hearts as they were able to celebrate in person four of the most important Rite of Passage events that Besant Hill School students can experience. We believe that it is important to prepare students for what is ahead and allow them the tools and processing time necessary to imagine their future selves and who they would like to be. This journey formally begins for the seniors with the traditional 100 Night's ceremony. The purpose of this event is to mark for the students the time when they have a mere 100 Nights remaining of tenure as Besant Hill students and for them to shift their focus to their role as alumni. This year, due to our delayed return after Winter break, we celebrated our first ever 55 Nights ceremony. We hosted the event at our beautiful new Ceramics Building, and Summer Galante '97 was our guest speaker. The next important Rite of Passage that occurs is our Senior Retreat. During this time, seniors participate in nightly councils and use the time to enjoy each other's company and process the upcoming important event of graduation. After their return from the senior retreat, the seniors are allowed the opportunity to formally pass on the leadership of the school to the juniors in the Passing of the Torch ceremony which occurs on Senior Hill with the personalized tiles of former graduates displayed underfoot. Lastly, the seniors were able to experience an in-person graduation ceremony, which we now know is truly a privilege. The ceremony took place on the soccer field rather than its typical place on the commons lawn in order to offer more room for physical distancing, and the epic view of the surrounding mountains was certainly an added bonus. As per tradition, each student was able to give their own graduation speech and reflect on the important lessons they have learned and the connections they have made. It was a beautiful end to a most unusual year, which left our hearts full with tender memories of the incredible class of 2021. ♦

ALUMNI GIVING BACK

AUTHOR: PORTIA JOHNSON

Once a Coyote always a Coyote. At Besant Hill of Happy Valley, we covet the opportunities for alumni engagement and support. Three of our alumni deserve recognition for going above and beyond in this area and are now serving as the newest Trustees of the Happy Valley Foundation. Summer Galante '97 invests time around her busy schedule to participate in board activities and to lead the Alumni and Friends Council (AFC) as its President. Derek Woods '20, joined the Board in January and contributes his wealth of knowledge to the ever-important Finance Committee. Terry Elguera's enthusiasm for the school and board practices are present in his work on the AFC as the Vice President and in his work on the Finance Committee. It is a pleasure to have such dedication extend to all operational areas of the school and to have these three join the four other alumni who already serve on the Board of Trustees. ♦



SUMMER GALANTE '97 (RIGHT) WITH HER FIANCÉ, JORDYN, AND PORTIA JOHNSON AT THE 2021 COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY



ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

AUTHOR: STANTON SMITH

It is no surprise that our alumni are out accomplishing incredible achievements. They are members of a small pack of graduates that have been inspired to continue a life of learning. Coyote alumni are dispersed around the globe and venture into all sorts of professional directions and are often recognized for their excellence. Our alumni and their outstanding list of accomplishments is evidence that the education provided by our small school is unique and exemplary.

Current Besant Hill teacher, Francois Tchoyi '12, came to Besant from his home country of Cameroon. At the time, Francois was recruited to play basketball (although his favorite sport was soccer), but with support from his parents, he was equally invested in his academics performance. As a student at Besant Hill, he maintained a strong focus on athletics while being supported in the classroom to achieve the same success. He was recruited to play basketball at Cal Poly Pomona, and shined as an excellent athlete and History major. Recently, Francois was recognized by his alma mater for his outstanding character which includes his return to teach at Besant Hill and humanitarian work back in Cameroon. Read the article here: <https://broncomag.cpp.edu/article/a-heart-for-home/>

Michael Hopkins '16 built a reputation for his filmmaking skills as a Besant Hill student and was even honored by the Ojai Film Festival. For the Besant Hill Faculty, it was obvious that he would go on to great things;



FRANCOIS TCHOYI '12 IN COLLEGE ON THE BASKETBALL COURT

his ability to develop a story and add creativity distinguished him as a filmmaker. Michael remained committed to his passion and has flourished since his departure from Besant Hill. Most recently, Michael was showcased on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon for his short film titled "Dear Dad." His film was aired on live television as the winner of The Tonight Show Film Fest. We all wish Michael the very best and look to see his career continue to takeoff.

Bill Kaplan '56 is a strong supporter of Besant Hill and has served as a Trustee of the Happy Valley Foundation (oversees Besant Hill School). Additionally, he provided the opportunity for his son, Jesse Kaplan '01, to attend his alma mater. Bill has built an elaborate career as a cinema sound engineer. He has worked on over 80 feature films and received nominations for seven Academy Awards. Many of the films on his resumé are household favorites: Back to the Future, Top Gun, Forrest Gump. In the Fall of 2020, Bill was the recipient of the Career Achievement Award from the Cinema Audio Society. Congratulations Bill, your career provides excellent motivation for our community. ♦



ALUMNI AND FRIENDS COUNCIL

MISSION STATEMENT

The common purpose of the Alumni and Friends Council (AFC) is alumni outreach with the goal of cultivating relationships that engage with the School, the current student body, and each other. We aim to promote the lifelong sustainability of the School by creating and growing an endowment for our diverse student body through scholarships and financial aid. We aspire to be a unified and cohesive voice for alumni on behalf of the school.

Since the spring of 2019, a small but dedicated group of Happy Valley and Besant Hill alumni have been working to organize an alumni association, and we are happy to announce that we have reached our goal and have established the Alumni and Friends Council (AFC). At the January 2021 meeting of the Happy Valley Foundation (HVF), the Board of Directors voted to make the AFC an official committee of the Board. Two new members of the HVF Board, Summer Galante ('07) and Terry Elguera ('60), are currently serving as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, and Kylie Berry ('19) is serving as the Communications Officer.

The AFC Committee has been working on short- and long-term goals as part of a strategic planning process. One short-term goal of including an Alumni link on the BHS website has already been achieved. Another goal is to develop a mentorship program so that alumni can more easily connect and share both professional expertise and networks. Long term, the AFC is planning to organize an event in Spring 2022 that will bring alumni to the campus in Ojai. To get connected with the AFC and other alumni, please visit <http://alumni.besanthill.org>! ♦



Artist: Josie W.-L. '24

Song of Change is an acrylic painted hand made out of plastic. Three different colors of shiny paint were used to create the ombré effect shown on the hand. It is influenced by body art and even though it is not technically a body part, it is a makeshift one.

To view more student art, please visit:
<https://www.besanthillvisualarts.com/>