

# CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE  
WALDORF SCHOOL  
Waldorf Education since 1980  
Volume 36, Issue 1  
Fall 2014



*PRWS Violet Kindergarten*

  
**PLEASANT RIDGE**  
**WALDORF SCHOOL**  
 431 East Court Street, Viroqua

## COMING EVENTS

### NOVEMBER

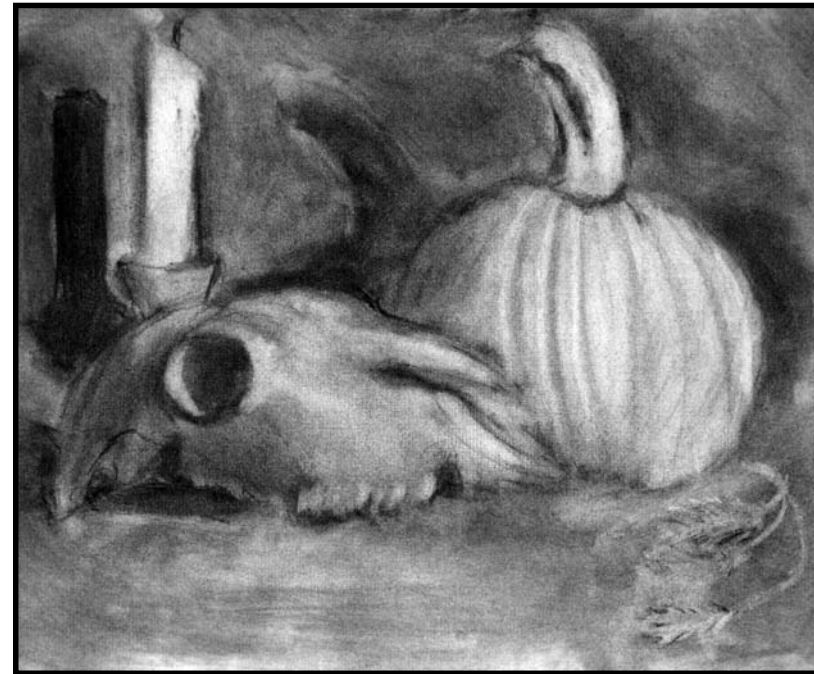
- 22** Adult Education Event  
Winter Parent-Child Storytelling/  
Craft Morning
- 25** Grade 8 Eurythmy Program
- 26-28** Thanksgiving Break

### DECEMBER

- 5** Noon Dismissal for Holiday Faire
- 5-6** Holiday Faire
- 8-9** Advent Spiral
- 19** Festival of Light (Noon Dismissal)
- 22** Holiday Break  
Alumni Reunion

### JANUARY

- 5** School Resumes



On this mountain I am mortal.  
 In this river my soul is free.  
 Under this tree I am grounded.  
 I am a naturalist man.

*David Paull*  
 (Class of 2005)

**CALYX** Volume 36, Issue 1  
 Fall 2014  
**Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School**  
 431 E. Court Street, Viroqua, WI 54665  
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 www.pleasantrydwaldorf.org  
 (608) 637-7828  
 FEIN 39-1357578

Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 corporation supported through tuition, gifts to the school, and fundraising events.

Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School does not discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, economic ability, or sexual orientation.

*In our efforts to reduce paper use, you may request an electronic copy by emailing [cynthia@pleasantrydwaldorf.org](mailto:cynthia@pleasantrydwaldorf.org).*

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[dairylandprint.com](http://dairylandprint.com)

# WELCOME

## NEW FAMILIES

### Forbes and Tina Adam, Westby Hudson Adam—Grade 3

Forbes and Tina join us from Westby where Forbes owns and operates Dairyland Shrimp, an indoor, organically-fed shrimp farm. Forbes's other interests include business, marketing, and traveling. Tina enjoys homemaking and being a mom.

### Brecken Allan, Viroqua Nina Allan—Grade 1

Brecken joins us from Delafield and is the daughter of Grade 5/6 teacher Jenny Allan. Brecken enjoys photography, energy/crystal/Reiki healing, adventures, researching, sports, and martial arts.

### Kathryn and Keith Ashley-Wright, La Farge Stella Ashley Wright – Violet Kindergarten

Kathryn and Keith are alumni of Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School. Kathryn is the owner of Ewetopia Fiber Shop in downtown Viroqua. She enjoys knitting, working with wool, and gardening. Keith works as a process analyst at Organic Valley and enjoys farming.

### Adam and Darla Barrows, Viroqua Elliot Barrows—Grade 6

The Barrows family has recently moved here from eastern Ontario. Darla worked in Waldorf administration and parent/child education for five years before joining Pleasant Ridge as the enrollment coordinator. She enjoys singing and playing guitar, spending time outdoors, and photography. Adam is a professor on sabbatical and enjoys reading, writing, and watching films.

### Rachel Bassett and Jim Bovenmyer, Viroqua

**Evan Bovenmyer, Rosemary Kindergarten**  
Rachel is a family practice physician at the Gunderson Clinic and enjoys being outdoors, gardening, knitting, running, and reading. Jim is a mechanical engineer and enjoys cars, design, and technology. The Bassett-Bovenmyers recently moved here from Colorado.

### Cassandra Canniff and Marley Keith, Viroqua

**Faith Canniff—Grade 7**  
Cassandra is a student and enjoys archeology and natural healing. Marley is an alumnus from Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School's first graduating class.

### Steven and Robin Kottke, Viroqua Mari Kottke—Violet Kindergarten

The Kottke family has recently moved here from Chicago where they attended the Chicago Waldorf School. Robin works as a registered nurse, and her interests include women's health, watching films, and community building. Steven also works as a registered nurse and enjoys sports, reading, humor, and watching films. Together the family enjoys spending time outdoors working on projects. Steven is the brother of Janna Kottke, who along with her husband Joe Lenarz, have three children in the school — Amory, Ada, and Greta.

### Havvah Spicer, Viroqua Lucah Spicer—Rosemary Kindergarten Haven Spicer—Grade 1

The Spicer family has moved here from Madison where Havvah worked as a yoga teacher. Havvah's interests include yoga, dancing, reading, nature, gardening, skiing, and cooking.



### Julia and Adrian Ugo, Viroqua Penelope Ugo—Rosemary Kindergarten

Julia is an alumna from Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School and enjoys working as a stay-at-home mom and consultant. Her interests are cooking, gardening, sports/coaching, and group facilitation. Adrian is a carpenter and furniture maker and enjoys woodworking, hunting and gathering, and sports/coaching.

### Heather and Gary Wollangur, De Soto Taggart Wollangur—Grade 7

Heather is a baker who has begun her own local pie-making company. She also enjoys photography, gardening, and reading. Gary is a crane operator and enjoys hunting, fishing, and gardening.

## RETURNING STUDENTS

**Addelaide Lemar, daughter of  
Angie and Ed Lemar**  
 Grade 1

**Ruby Magnan-Elliott, daughter of  
Emily and Michael Magnan-Elliott**  
 Grade 5

## NEW SIBLINGS

**John Eddy, son of Cate and Mat Eddy**  
 Rosemary Kindergarten

**Asa Knutson, son of  
Amber and Neil Knutson**  
 Violet Kindergarten

**River Magnan-Elliott, son of  
Emily and Michael Magnan-Elliott**  
 Grade 2

**Zuri Meyer, daughter of  
Shawn and Eric Meyer**  
 Rosemary Kindergarten

**Mira Splinter, daughter of  
Diane and Gregory Splinter**  
 Rosemary Kindergarten

**Noelle Wade, daughter of  
Jennifer and Alex Wade**  
 Rosemary Kindergarten

# NEW FACULTY

## Joshua Ecklund, *Part-Time Eurythmy Teacher*

We are happy to welcome Joshua Ecklund as he begins teaching eurythmy in the second and seventh grades and the Violet Kindergarten. He is also working very closely with longtime eurythmy teacher Annette Conlon as a substitute teacher in her classes when she is away.

Joshua brings a depth of knowledge to his teaching through his trainings and work experience. He began his eurythmy studies in England at West Midlands Eurythmy School; after two years there he left to look for a larger school. During that time he was able to witness the eurythmy performed at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. He decided to enroll in the American Eurythmy School in northern California, where he found accomplished and dedicated teachers and students. Joshua felt this move was a life-changing event, and during the next six years his dedication to this work deepened. During his years in California, Joshua played a significant role in the operation of the school's biodynamic farm.

Joshua's first teaching experience was three years ago, teaching a twelve-week block at the Three Rivers Waldorf School in La Crosse. Upon graduating from his training, he took a eurythmy position at Highland Hall Waldorf School in California for nearly two years. The first year he taught about two-thirds time, and then full-time the second year. During that time his mentor was several hours' drive away, which was not ideal for him.

Joshua first connected with Annette when he did some eurythmy work here with a local adult group of mostly biodynamic farmers. When he began working at Highland Hall they continued to correspond. After working in California, Joshua returned to the Driftless area to farm, his other great passion.

Joshua's connection to Viroqua and Pleasant Ridge runs deep. His family moved to Viroqua when he was eleven years old, and three of his siblings attended PRWS and/or YIHS. He worked summers for several local farmers, learning about permaculture, vegetable growing, and woodlands management. Having grown up in a large family, he loves being with children and feels that teaching is a good fit for him.

Joshua especially wanted to work at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School as he continues to develop his own style while having Annette as a mentor. He values having someone to go to with questions, and particularly the dialogue and insights that come from her years of teaching and practicing therapeutic eurythmy. With Joshua taking up his classes here, Annette will be freed up to offer group therapeutic sessions for our students.

When I asked why he chose this field of study, Joshua replied that he had talent for movement as well as an interest in Anthroposophy,



which led to an exploration of eurythmy. He was amazed at its richness and realized that it was an avenue through which he could use his talents to provide the most service. He confided, "I might want to be a farmer, but I'm called to teach eurythmy."

We feel Joshua is a good fit for our school, and we hope he is able to follow his passions and share his gifts with our community.

—Mary Christenson, *Development Director*

## Natalie McIntire, *Teacher for Grade 7*

"Welcome to the end of the hallway" to Natalie McIntire, our new seventh grade teacher! Natalie has been a warm and gracious colleague these first few months, diving right into the challenging upper grades curriculum with a new class, a new room, and a new career as a Waldorf teacher. She brings an earnestness and clarity of thought to our weekly upper grades section that we all appreciate. And she already knew our school well: as PRWS alumni parents, she and her husband Jerry guided their son Colin through ten years of Waldorf education.

Natalie has been considering teaching since her college years. While pursuing other professions in the past few years, she felt particularly called to teach middle and high school. A Waldorf teacher at heart, she began by teaching math and physics at Youth Initiative High School in 2010. Natalie loved her experience at YIHS, and in 2013 she enrolled in the Norda Project Teaching program, a teacher certification program for people with bachelor's degrees in school subject areas. Natalie's teaching certification is for teaching math and physics in grades six through twelve. She was just finishing up her student teaching in La Crosse when this opportunity arose to teach at Pleasant Ridge.

While Natalie brings her specialties in math and science, she is also drawn to the artistic way of teaching at a Waldorf school, and she loves the opportunity to work artistically herself.

This past summer, to prepare for her new teaching role, Natalie attended two full weeks of training at Sunbridge Institute in Chestnut Ridge, New York. She is being mentored by Mark John, an experienced Waldorf teacher living in the area.

When she isn't prepping for class, Natalie loves a good game of ultimate frisbee, contra dancing, hiking, and helping create the Stone's Throw EcoVillage.

—Carrie Treviranus, *Class Teacher, Grade 8*



## Geri Shonka, *Handwork Teacher*

I am so delighted to introduce Geri Shonka, who joined us this fall as our handwork teacher. Geri moved here from Minneapolis in 2003 with her husband Drew and three children, Leo, Ivy and Sylvi. Since her arrival, she has enjoyed serving the PRWS community in many capacities, including substitute teaching, event planning, and designing promotional materials. Geri enjoys painting, knitting, sewing, weaving, gardening, baking or just about anything that involves creating with her hands, as well as canoeing, walks in the wilderness, and spending time with friends.

Geri has always enjoyed learning new things. Looking back, she realizes that even as a child her imaginative play was often centered around school. Being the oldest of four children offered her ample opportunities to play teacher, which she loved. When considering what to study in college, teaching grade school art was on the top of her list, but at that time art teachers were plentiful and unemployed. Geri's practical side led her to major in graphic design as it supported her interests in art, human psychology, and problem-solving.

When their first child was four, Geri and Drew discovered Waldorf education. The Waldorf pedagogy offering the head, hands, and heart approach spoke to them on a soul level. Geri enrolled in the Biography class with Linda Bergh at the Novalis Institute in Minneapolis. Again, she felt called to teach, but soon learned that she was pregnant with Sylvi. At that time, Drew felt similarly called to Waldorf education and was hired at PRWS as a class teacher. With the many hours that being a Waldorf teacher required of him, Geri chose to be at home and hold the family life. She used her spare time to build her freelance design business.

Now that their youngest is eleven years old, Geri has found herself once again called to teach and is discovering that handwork is the intersection where her extensive art and design background meets her ideals for children's education.

When I asked Geri what she was passionate about, she shared that she tries to teach her children how important face-to-face communication is with friends and family. As a graphic designer, she finds herself spending more and more time on her own computer, isolated from the world outside—the very thing that she wishes her children not to experience. Geri is thrilled to be in the classroom now, sharing her passion for working with the hands with the children of PRWS, who are developing their will as they create meaningful work.

We hope you will join us in extending a warm welcome to Geri.

—Darla Barrows, *Enrollment Coordinator*



## Jenny Allan, *Long-Term Substitute, Grades 5/6*

As we enter the new school year, the fifth and sixth grade class is living amid some very big changes, beyond what the new curriculum is bringing our way. First and foremost is that one of our teachers, Ms. Ximena, has given birth to her baby, Yasmani Emiliano Puig-Engel! The class was eagerly anticipating the new arrival for the entire month of September, and now we await our first chance to visit (or be visited by) this new shining member of our community. Ms. Ximena is taking time now to be with her baby and intends to return to assist part-time in the fifth/sixth grade in January.

In the meanwhile, Jenny Allan has stepped forward to co-teach this class with me during the first three months of the school year. Ms. Jenny is already a familiar face in our community, having been the interim substitute for Christina Hotchkiss's class during her maternity leave last winter.

Ms. Jenny recently completed her Waldorf Teacher Training at the Great Lakes Institute in Milwaukee. Beyond this training, she brings a wealth of personal experience working with young people in varying capacities all over the world. Prior to coming to Viroqua, she worked for ten years with middle school and high school children in an inner-city youth program in Milwaukee. She has done mural projects while helping to build a community center in Allende, Mexico, as well as in La Libertad, Honduras. In the past fourteen years she has taken opportunities to work in orphanages in Namibia, Africa, and in Manila in the Philippines. Further, she worked with a team to help create child-care programs in Malawi, Africa.

During her Waldorf teacher training, Ms. Jenny worked in after-care programs and substituted in early childhood classrooms at Prairie Hill Waldorf School in Pewaukee, Wisconsin. She assisted and did practicum work (block teaching) in fourth, fifth, and seventh grades there as well.

Ms. Jenny has six grandchildren who are the love of her life. She enjoys reading, writing, hiking, sewing, cooking, gardening, knitting, boating, and learning of any kind (perfect for her vocation!). I have immensely enjoyed working with her thus far. She has a zeal for finding new ideas and exploring creative ways to bring our curriculum to the kids. Ms. Jenny also has a warmth that is welcoming and comforting to all in her care. It is an honor and a pleasure to have this time to work with and learn with this new colleague.

—Ron Schirmer, *Class Teacher, Grades 5/6*



# NEW STAFF

## Darla Barrows, *New Enrollment Coordinator*

We are pleased to have Darla Barrows join our team as the Enrollment Coordinator. Darla has recently moved to Viroqua from eastern Ontario with her husband Adam and son Elliot, who is in the sixth grade at Pleasant Ridge. Darla has been involved with Waldorf education for over ten years, since she first began applying Wilma Ellersiek's hand gesture games to her work with deaf children. For the past five years, she has enjoyed working in Waldorf administration and developing a Waldorf-inspired farm and forest program in partnership with Just Food, a pioneer in organic farm education in Canada. Darla believes that community partnerships are the way for nonprofit organizations to thrive in the twenty-first century and to achieve Steiner's vision of a philanthropic social harmony. Her work with the Just Food program in Ottawa created bridges between the Waldorf community and the movement for ethical and sustainable agriculture.



Darla feels that the greatest asset she brings to her work is her passion for the Waldorf philosophy, which she sees as the natural trajectory for parents who have endeavored to create a nourishing and joyful environment for their children in their first years of life. Her first encounters with Waldorf education taught her to see the mindfulness and meaning in homemaking, parenting, and work. Through that lens she feels that a Waldorf early childhood program can change our views of ourselves and of the world.

Darla is committed to continuing education and renewal. Most recently she attended an early childhood conference at Antioch University in New Hampshire on nature-based education, and an early childhood farm and forest training in northern Vermont. Her favorite class at the New Hampshire conference was on the importance of teaching with fire, and she learned how to cook in an outdoor classroom. In Vermont, she had the opportunity to harvest her own wheat, winnow the chaff, grind the grain into flour and then bake it into bread (and eat it!).

One thing most people don't know about Darla is that she and her husband were married seventeen years ago at midnight on a westbound Amtrak train. The wedding was held en route in the observation car beneath a full moon, and the conductor invited all passengers aboard to join them. For their vows they exchanged the last stanza of Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road." Darla believes that her nature-filled childhood in the heartland is the inspiration for her love of travel and adventure.

—Geri Shonka, *Handwork Teacher*

## Chris Leinberger, *Volunteer Library Coordinator*

When Janie Tippins vacated the librarian position this summer after many years of service, we had to imagine a new way to carry the operations and vision for the library. We are very grateful that Chris Leinberger has joined us as Library Coordinator. Chris has many great skills to bring to the new library system, which incorporates more new volunteers than in the past. As a retired middle school teacher, Chris has experience in managing a classroom, working with school administration, scheduling and coordinating, and holding the big picture—as well as excellent communication skills.

Chris moved to Viroqua in 2009 to be closer to her two daughters and three granddaughters, who attend Pleasant Ridge. Some of you may recall that in 2010 Chris was the volunteer secretary on Friday mornings. She went on to work on the school scrapbook for a year, offered to do tutoring, and continued to want to do more to be helpful. When this need arose over the summer, Chris thought it sounded perfect. It also fits in with her other part-time job, working out of her home as a transcriber of interviews and focus group lectures.

Chris has had ample time to deepen her understanding of the Waldorf philosophy and Pleasant Ridge. She says that, in contrast to her past teaching experience, it is just astounding that the students here can be so much more nurtured. She feels that parent involvement is key for the children's wholesome experience, and eliminating grades and standardized testing makes for less stress in the children. She appreciates that her grandchildren are enjoying school so much and that they care deeply about their teachers and their families.

Chris also feels that there are amazing teachers at the school whose work is a labor of love. We are fortunate that Chris is willing to join us and bring her labor of love through work in the library. We also appreciate all the other dozen regular volunteers who assist with class library visits and with administrative tasks such as cataloguing, repairing, and circulation.

—Mary Christenson, *Development Director*



# SCHOOL NEWS

## Welcome Back Picnic

On Friday, September 5, Pleasant Ridge families gathered on the playground for the annual Welcome Back picnic. As usual, the potluck offerings were delicious. Families and faculty had a good time visiting and reconnecting.



## Grandparents Day

We had the largest Grandparents & Special Friends Day ever, with nearly one hundred guests. Thank you to all of the parent volunteers, teachers and staff who helped throughout this wonderful day. Thank you also to our alumni speaker, Megan Felt. Highlights of the day included Megan's heartfelt reflections at the reception and a tour of the school greenspace, garden and greenhouse with Cynthia Olmstead, development coordinator, and Arwyn Wildingway, school garden coordinator.



## Michaelmas Nature Weaving



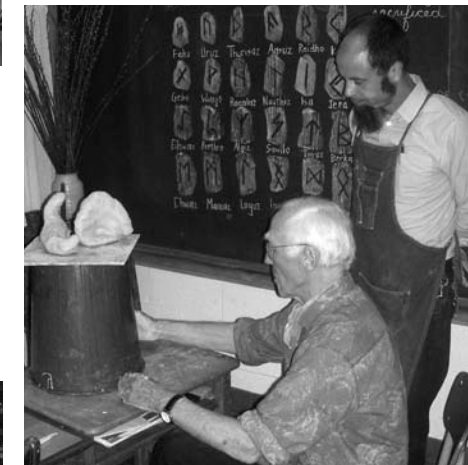
October 3 was a chilly and blustery day for the annual Michaelmas Festival, but nonetheless the day was filled with celebration and good spirit!

## Vernon County Fair

The frosty autumn air created the perfect canvas for spending time with family and friends, enjoying the special treat of piping hot donuts, breathing in the sweet smell of hay in the animal barns, and climbing into dizzying carnival rides with adventurous dads. A very warm thank-you to both Cathy Brummer and Maureen Karlstad for making the PRWS education booth setup so enjoyable.

## Leo Klein Visit

Once again, master teacher and artist Leo Klein graced us with his beautiful energy and insights into Waldorf education. He offered after-school workshops in painting, drawing, chalkboard drawing and clay modeling. All classes were filled with enthusiastic faculty, staff, parents and community members.



## Saturday Morning Seasonal Storytelling and Craft Morning

On Saturday morning, September 20, while people were still snug in their beds, Parent-Child Class teacher Miss Martha bundled up in her warm coat and set out into the crisp autumn morning with a basket of red apples, spicy cinnamon, and a wooden drying rack. Parent-Child Class families soon joined Miss Martha in the Violet Kindergarten, eager to slice the juicy apples on small wooden cutting boards, roll them in the cinnamon, and hang them to dry. The fragrance of the apples carried the essence of the cool autumn days that lay ahead. When everything had been washed and put away, Miss Martha shared a puppet story about the Apple Blossom Fairy. The lighting of a beeswax candle felt significant as the hours of daylight continue to decrease, drawing families into their homes earlier and earlier each evening.

## Planning for Growth in the Early Childhood Program



Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is growing! This spring, to meet the needs of our expanding early childhood community, we began a conversation about how we can best expand to serve our growing families. In September, following an inspired beginning to our thirty-fifth anniversary school year, we invited the community to an open meeting to continue this conversation, examining the various options for expansion. The meeting was well attended and a number of themes emerged from that open forum, including:

- 1) Further exploration of Helle Heckman's mixed-age program for 1- to 6-year-olds at Nokken in Denmark.
- 2) Exploration of the Lifeways model of homelike, mixed-age child care with a special focus on practical skills and the domestic arts.
- 3) Exploration of the Sophia's Hearth model that draws on the work of Magda Gerber and Emmi Pikler in its Waldorf approach to care during the first three years of life.

After reviewing all information gathered, we met with our early childhood faculty in October for an in-depth study of the conscious caregiving work being done by Helle Heckman. Members of the faculty who have worked closely with Helle both at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School and in Denmark were asked to share their experiences of Nokken and Helle's approach to child care.

We will continue studying the various approaches through the month of October and then reconvene with the community in order to explore steps towards expanding programming for our youngest children.

—Darla Barrows, Enrollment Coordinator

## Discovering the Joy of Work

A few years ago, a hummingbird that made daily rounds in our garden flew past a slender bloom and directly into the picture window, bouncing off the glass and falling several feet into the bowing leaves of a hosta. Some time passed with no sign of him, and so we peeled back the many layers of leaves until he was freed and flew away. After that close call we decided to replace the sparsely bloomed hosta with a more robust banquet of flowering sage and bee balm. To our surprise, as the hummingbird made his daily rounds, he continued to dine at the phantom hosta, flying to the exact spot where it had bloomed, hovering for a moment or two before dipping over to the new flowering herb beds.

As I meditated on the quiet devotion of the little bird, it reminded me of my first Waldorf Parent-Child class years ago. Like the bird to his daily flowers, we learned to approach the daily tasks of the home in such a way that they become rhythmical activities that we did naturally and instinctively. Even the most mundane of household tasks could become a source of joy. The secret was threefold: a consistent daily and weekly rhythm, a beautiful toolkit, and a mindful presence.

We learned that we should work with tools we love: from the bowl you fill with warm water, to the herbal soap, to the cloth you hold, and finally to the line where you hang your cloth to dry. For our class, that meant absolutely no red plastic pails hiding beneath the kitchen sink, but beautiful white enamel bowls, peppermint and lavender Dr. Bronner's liquid castile soap, and a hand-crocheted yellow cotton washcloth that we made together in our handwork circle.

With warm sudsy water, a room could be transformed with these simple and treasured items. It created a Babette's Feast for dishwashing and counter scrubbing. And in this manner, the children were drawn into our work and soothed by it, for who can resist a warm bowl on a soft towel, filled with the gentle aroma of the garden? From the happy feelings that accompanied this, one could transition easily into taking the washcloths outdoors to dry or baking bread on the freshly cleaned kitchen counter. This was the daily rhythm, and the weekly rhythm was born out of these repeated activities.

The third tool, being present and mindful, developed surreptitiously as we continued to build on this work to create a beautiful space for our families. Many years after that first Parent-Child class, it continues to inform the way I parent, teach, and maintain healthy rhythms in our home.

In December we are offering a Parent-Child class that is focused entirely on the unique rhythms of the holiday season (see notice on this page for more information.) We all want to create a meaningful experience of the holidays for our children, which can sometimes prove difficult. Martha Buche will be sharing with families simple and beautiful crafts and stories, as well as providing ideas for how to help your children reverently experience this season of preparation.

—Darla Barrows, Enrollment Coordinator

Join us Saturday, November 22 at 9 AM  
for a  
**Hoilday Parent-Child Story & Craft morning**  
*Event is free and open to parents & children birth-4*

**Register early for the Winter Term  
Parent Child Programs  
Mondays & Fridays from 9-11 AM**

**Three week  
Parent Child Program  
Holiday Term**  
**Tuesdays in December, 9:00-11:00 AM**  
starting on December 2

*on the golden  
star path walking*

to register or  
for more information  
contact Darla Barrows  
Enrollment Coordinator  
608-637-7828

## All-School Meeting

Faculty, staff, parents and board members had a wonderful meeting on Monday evening, September 15, with plenty of energetic and thoughtful contributions by members of our school community. Following a reflection on our past thirty-five years and an overview of our current state of affairs, we launched into an exploration toward an emerging future.

Small groups worked together to define the terms we so often use, such as accessible, sustainable, transparent, and family engagement. Each participant also shared answers to "Why Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School?" is the choice for their children.

The Long-Range Planning (LRP) Committee will continue to work with the fruits of our considerations and engage with our entire community in developing our plans and goals for the future.

We wish to thank board members Alycann Taylor for leading the meeting, Mary Christenson for her overview of our school's history, Tripp Hughes for his presentation of our school's financial development, and Stephanie Brown for heading up the LRP activities. Many thanks to the members of the Parent Association who provided popcorn for our light snack!

—Marianne Fieber, Administrative Chair

## Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School History

In looking back over our school's thirty-five years of existence, people can go to our website to learn more about the early years and the individuals who envisioned and created our school:

<http://pleasantrydewaldorf.org/meet/about/>. Several people are interviewed in the three short videos on this web

page; however, many more people were involved over the years in creating what we have today. The purpose of these videos, which were made in 2005, is to tell a story of those early years and how families moved to this area for the school. This is not meant to be a complete history. We are grateful to Richard Bock, now an alumni parent, for filming and editing the videos.

We especially appreciate the many teachers and families from the first two decades who still live in the area and continue to support PRWS long after their own children left Pleasant Ridge. We look forward to hearing some of your favorite memories, too, as we make storytelling opportunities available at our events and via our website throughout the year. The current families want to hear these stories, which provide some insight into our school's founding and early development, so I hope everyone will utilize the avenues we create for sharing them.

—Mary Christenson, Development Director



## ALUMNI Births

**Maia McDonald Smith (class of 2000) and Travis Smith**  
*Ingrid Madeline Smith, born April 29, 2014*

**Aurora (Brinsfield) Boyd (class of 2001) and Kelly Boyd**  
*Astrid Dahlia Boyd, born May 22, 2014*

**Ximena Puig and Noah Engel**  
**(both from the PRWS class of 1997)**  
*Yasmani Emiliano Puig-Engel, born September 30, 2014*



**Jacob Hundt (PRWS 1992) and Sofya Hundt**  
*Natalia Elaine Hundt, born October 15, 2014*

## Weddings

Deena and Cole Agar (class of 2002) and were married in Egypt in January 2014. This summer they had a wedding celebration here at the home of Cole's parents, Ben and Julee Agar. In May, Cole graduated from UW-Madison Law School. The couple is living in Cairo.

Nyssa Koons (class of 2001) and Patrick Tanner were married on August 29, 2014, near Portland, Oregon, at the site of an annual outdoor bluegrass festival. The couple lives in Seattle, Washington.



Aurora Boyd, Maia McDonald Smith, and Hannah Hastings with their babies!

## Alumni

### Inspired?

We are looking to alumni to provide an expanded view of what Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School's contribution has been to our community and the broader world. Please share a memory of your time at PRWS that inspired you or that you find yourself remembering over and over, and tell us what you have been doing recently. We may use these reflections and updates in an upcoming Calyx or on our website. Send them to [mary@pleasantrydwaldorf.org](mailto:mary@pleasantrydwaldorf.org) or [maureenkarlstad@gmail.com](mailto:maureenkarlstad@gmail.com). or visit the 35th Anniversary page on the school's website to fill in a questionnaire.

### PRWS Online

Here are a few online places to find out more about Pleasant Ridge

#### Webpage

Our newly designed webpage can be found at [www.pleasantrydwaldorf.org](http://www.pleasantrydwaldorf.org). It's a long name, but it's easy to remember!

#### Facebook

You can find us on our main page "Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School" and also at "Pleasant Ridge Alumni."

#### eNews

You can send you email address to [cynthia@pleasantrydwaldorf.org](mailto:cynthia@pleasantrydwaldorf.org) and she will put you on the list for email notices of current Pleasant Ridge events.

## Solar Power by Henry Wideman

PRWS class of 2000

*(Editor's note: This article is taken from the Pine Knob Farm website. You can find out more about Pine Knob Organic Farm and Henry's solar installation at <http://pineknoborganicfarm.com>)*

Pine Knob Organic Farm is powered by the sun! Bonnie Wideman (my mom, and former PRWS class teacher) hired me to install an off-grid photovoltaic (PV) system, and I thought others might enjoy a description of the components and the installation process.

The system consists of twelve Helios Solar 250w panels, eight 6v Rolls-Surette 400ah batteries, a Generac Eco-gen generator, a power center with two Magnum 30Amp inverters, an Outback charge controller, and a generator auto-start module.



The process started by taking a hard look at the farm's energy usage, and using watt meters (available at your local library) to get firm numbers on exactly where the energy was going. The biggest culprit was an old electric water heater, which alone would have used most of the final energy budget. My advice for others beginning this process: base your decisions on actual numbers, not assumptions. Without numbers to work with, you're likely to focus on highly visible loads and ignore the silent hulks running quietly in the background. Despite being an easy fix, the problem probably isn't your light bulbs.

On to the fun stuff! The panels are mounted on a rack built largely of 4x4 posts. I designed the rack to utilize uncut lengths of lumber (generally slightly longer than the nominal length), which saved some time. But I still spent many hours in the sun digging post holes, many of them five feet deep. Since I'm unfamiliar with the math required to calculate the capacity, I erred on the side of caution and overbuilt it to withstand winds it might encounter in the next thirty to fifty years. More than anything else, I wanted the panels and wires out of reach of curious goats.

The panels are wired into four groups of three panels. Each panel is around thirty-six volts, so the three wired in each series combine to put out about 108 volts in full sun. This is an important threshold, because dry skin will conduct electricity above forty-eight volts. Though not dangerous at this point, everything beyond the panels is high enough voltage to shock. While I am a firm believer that amateurs like me can and should install systems like this, it's important to acknowledge the dangers involved.

Inside a small nearby building, the wires from the panels enter the power center. Fortunately this came largely prewired, and all the components have extensive documentation. The power center is heavily automated, controlling the rate of charge for the batteries, starting the generator when needed, and displaying data on usage.

For the batteries I built an insulated box in the old milk cistern, which has done a fantastic job of keeping the batteries warm in the winter and cool in the summer. The battery bank is forty-eight volts (8x6v batteries in series). A vent in the side and lid control air flow, and release any hydrogen vented from the batteries.

The inverters in the power center produce AC power, same as you'd find in a home connected to the grid. The only difference is the satisfaction of using solar-powered appliances, and a new awareness of the value we so often take for granted.

I enjoyed the installation process immensely, and encourage others to take on the challenge of energy independence. Thanks to generations of true solar pioneers, there is a vast collective knowledge on the topic just a Google search away. More than memorizing formulas, I think it helps to focus on avoiding common pitfalls that other amateurs encounter, and to challenge your own assumptions before making decisions.

# DEVELOPMENT

As we begin this thirty-fifth anniversary year of the founding of Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, we are looking over past photos and issues of the Calyx, and hearing stories from those who took up the work of those early years. We are also hearing from former students who are out in the world with this educational foundation under them. We are profoundly grateful for the continuity of care, attention, and stewardship by the teachers and parents, friends and donors throughout these decades who contributed in all ways to bring us to this point in time.

Stewardship through Annual Giving is our primary campaign for funds that assure the well-being of the curricular programs. We are proud to offer a full range of subjects: Music, Handwork, Eurythmy, Games and Spatial Dynamics, and Spanish for all the grades. During the pioneer phase of the school (the first fifteen years) many people donated their time to bring these subjects. Now with a full eight grades, we need class teachers and subject teachers to carry the classes in a professional, full-time, and dedicated manner.

Thank you for your past gifts, and we hope you join us again in this thirty-fifth anniversary year to dedicate yourself to the Waldorf ideals through your giving. Look for your letter soon! Thank you.

We are looking to the future this year by engaging in strategic planning to address our current needs so that we'll be going strong for the next thirty-five years and beyond. We will also be asking for alumni, former staff and families to tell their stories, either directly during this year's events (Grandparents & Special Friends Day, Holiday Faire, Alumni Reunion) or via our website on a special thirty-fifth anniversary page. If you are Facebook friends with Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School or with Pleasant Ridge Alumni, we will be sharing photos, memories, stories and news on Facebook too. There is so much to celebrate!

Over the summer we received a very special and unique gift from Three Rivers Waldorf School:

In August representatives of the Three Rivers Waldorf School in La Crosse, Tim Kakuska (center) and Bennet Myers (right), presented PRWS representatives Jennifer Wade (left) and Marianne Fieber (not pictured) with their school's final disbursement check. Three Rivers closed after the 2012–2013 school year. Their school's by-laws specified that, upon dissolution, any remaining funds must be given to another nonprofit. Being committed to Waldorf education, the Three Rivers board wanted to support PRWS in its mission. They also generously shared some of their "lessons learned" in hopes that we can learn from their experience. We appreciated this thoughtful and heartfelt exchange.



—Mary Christenson, Development Director  
[mary@pleasantrydwaldorf.org](mailto:mary@pleasantrydwaldorf.org), (608) 637-8504



## DONORS

Many thanks to those who have supported our school July 1 – October 8, 2014

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Dodie Whitaker  
Tapestry Yoga  
Viroqua Public Market  
Viroqua Village Market

# 35TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS—SAVE THE DATES

## Annual Alumni Reunion

Monday, December 22, 6–9 p.m.

*All former teachers, parents, and students are welcome!*

## 35th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, April 25

*Please join us and meet up with your friends.  
Hear what's happening at the School today!*

### **Watch for updates on Facebook:**

Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School

Pleasant Ridge Alumni



Visit us online at  
[pleasantridgewaldorf.org](http://pleasantridgewaldorf.org)

