

CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL

Waldorf Education since 1980

Volume 40, Issue 2
Spring 2019



Ada Lenarz, Grade 8

COMING EVENTS

APRIL

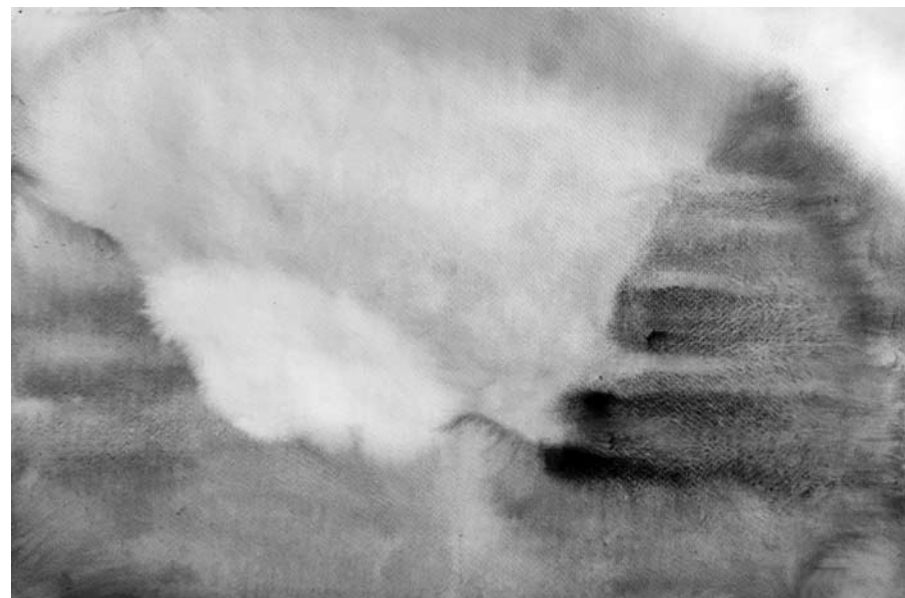
- 26 Technology, Society and Human Development by Gary Lamb
- 27 From Ego to Love by Gary Lamb

MAY

- 3 May Day Celebration
- 9 Pentathlon
- 24 Closing Day
- Eighth Grade Graduation
- 28-30 Faculty In-Service Days

JUNE

- 10 Summer Camps Begin



Spring Verse

When out of world-wide spaces
The sun speaks to the human mind,
And gladness from the depths of soul
Becomes, in seeing, one with light,
Then rising from the sheath of self,
Thoughts soar to distances of space
And dimly bind
The human being to the spirit's life.

Calendar of the Soul

Rudolf Steiner (translation by Ruth and Hans Pusch)

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SCHOOL NEWS

Growing for Good Compost Program Is Expanding

Participants in our year-long pilot curbside food waste collection project are receiving a share of the beautiful compost that was created out of their food scraps! This is the most direct way to thank all who supported our early efforts last year as Growing for Good Compost collected buckets full of food waste from a handful of households, the Kickapoo Café, and the Kickapoo Coffee roastery in Viroqua. Under the astute leadership of Stephanie Brown, Ed and Angie Lemar set up the composting process at the GFG facilities, and last fall Federico Escobar became the compost leader when Ed and Angie moved away. Their combined efforts demonstrated that it is worth taking the next step to expand the business to dramatically reduce the amount of organic waste that goes into the Vernon County landfill.

During this second phase we will increase the number of households and businesses that participate, widen community awareness of the problems of burying organic food scraps in landfills, and offer an opportunity to be part of the solution.

The main objectives are:

1. Engage the public at individual and organizational levels throughout the county through education, outreach, and marketing campaigns, which are key elements in building the compost culture that we envision for Vernon County.
2. Expand the logistical infrastructure that will allow us to divert larger amounts of organic waste from the landfill. We will start with Viroqua, La Farge, and Viola, and move the compost processing to Deep Rooted, a local farm in Westby.
3. Plan phase three to expand food waste collection in new areas and ideally create a composting facility where we can develop new products for sale.

One might wonder why we wanted to take on this project. A core aim of Waldorf education is to renew culture by educating students to be problem-solvers, clear thinkers, and capable individuals who can bring innovation and new energy to the world. We believe the role of teachers and parents is to model this behavior and commitment by providing guidance and opportunities to youth to move into a productive role in society.

A social enterprise such as Growing for Good offers a platform for entrepreneurial activities and learning. The compost program is an example of responding to a societal problem at a community scale, one that is approachable for elementary-age children to understand. There are economic, environmental, and social dimensions to the project that together provide a holistic approach to understanding a system. Such holism is congruent with Waldorf education's approach to teaching.

On the economic side, food waste is a resource that could be generating prosperity—creating revenue by producing compost and soil mixes—but because it is usually landfilled its regenerative qualities are wasted. Additionally, organic waste takes 20 to 30 years to degrade in landfills, compared to less than a year in compost windrows. Reducing the volume of food waste in the landfill expands the landfill's lifespan as well as reduces the amount of leachate sent to wastewater treatment plants. Composting this food waste could provide a big financial saving for the county. Furthermore, it is a sustainable business model that can scale up easily and create new jobs.

From an environmental standpoint the project will create broad awareness of environmental reasons to take the final step of the food cycle, which returns nutrients to the land, reduces methane gas, builds healthy soil to stem soil erosion, and cares for water quality. It will increase citizens' commitment to protect the very resources that bring people to this county.



Growing for Good is building a compost culture in Vernon County.

Last, this project enhances community and provides a social benefit. There is no better way to bond with your community than the feeling of doing something meaningful and good for the community and the environment. Vernon County is an inspiration to Wisconsin as a place of natural beauty, outdoor activities, sustainable agriculture, and innovation in business while keeping a strong community focus. Its food and food culture also draw people to the area. This project will show that Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is one of the leaders in working toward a shared future built on sustainable practices.

Join the compost program by visiting the website, growingforgood.org, or calling 608-637-8200. Please read about our other offerings, such as, micro greens.

—Mary Christenson

CALYX CURRICULUM

“Instead They Spoke of Beauty”

Writing *The Book of Ruth*

The class play: a highlight of the year, an unparalleled social experience for the class. From a teacher’s perspective, it’s a bountiful opportunity and responsibility in all that it entails.

Bringing to life an aspect of the curriculum is a lovely surface benefit of this task; we are lucky to be able to do this often in our recapitulations, artistic work, and our *doing* or *willing* portion of our Main Lessons. I particularly love the way the play block calls up the energy of the entire class and focuses it on a central (artistic) goal for a month’s time. From the first rhyming couplet uttered in rehearsal to the final bow, it’s “game on.” There is something about the play that calls on every child in the class to show up for one another.

Last year at a parent evening following that year’s class play, *St. Martin of Tours*, we tiptoed into a discussion of the topic of gender in class plays, specifically how girls may play male roles, but not limited to that topic. It was interesting because it is such a reflection of the times in which we live. The topic of gender has been cracked open in our culture in a way that it hadn’t been in my last class (PRWS class of 2015). I hear peripherally more parents asking each other for books with strong central female characters, and asking teachers how they address the topic of balancing male and female protagonists.

When casting a play, especially in the lower grades, we often cast pedagogically. The questions are less “Who can do this role” or “Who is suited to this role,” and more “Who needs to do this role?” and “Who would benefit from doing this role?” The character can bring something to the child just as much as the child can bring something to the character. It can be balancing and even therapeutic for a choleric child to play the beggar, or for the melancholic child to play the Roman commander. We look at the gesture of the role and make choices for our classes that we feel are best. Casting is a complex process and incorporates a whole host of variables such as social dynamics, past and future roles played, and the class make-up.

In a very real way, at least in the lower grades, gender is completely set aside. For example, in first grade, I cast a female prince and a male Wise Woman. The actors, the students, were portraying an archetype in a fairy tale, not a man or a woman. In second grade, I cast girls as Roman soldiers, a commander, and the leader of a band of thieves. I thought of these as archetypes, too, but already, by the age of 8, it became clear that they perceived they were playing a man and had made a judgment about that. One girl even said, “I don’t want to play a boy next year.”

One father’s comment from that second grade parent meeting last year continued rattling around in my brain: “Maybe we need to rewrite history.” At first I was very reserved about that notion. Having respect for known and unknown esoteric underpinnings in the myths, legends, and fairy tales of ancient cultures, I am not a fan of twisting tales to suit modern tastes. But then

it occurred to me that it isn’t a matter of *rewriting* history but a *retelling*, a call to include more of the story, to tell it through the voice that may have been quiet. This realization came alongside a personal experience of being mother to two children under age 2, and for the first time in my life I understood a different reason than we may have been told about why women may have been quiet in the pages of written history.

This year, I wanted to balance last year’s play, which was heavy with male characters, with one that was more centrally female. I wanted to use the story curriculum of the Hebrew scriptures that is part of third grade and has spoken so deeply to this class. Some options for central characters were Rebekkah, Meriam, and Queen Vashti. But when a friend mentioned, “Well, there is the Book of Ruth,” it was immediately clear that that was the one. I remembered Ruth’s powerful words to her mother-in-law, Naomi: “*Whither thou goest, I will go. Whither thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people will be my people, thy God will be my God.*”

I began to look at the story of Ruth, with complete respect for the fact that human consciousness was clearly different at that time, and not wanting to compromise on the facts and customs and laws of those days. But could I also imagine and portray the soul experience of the individuals in the story? Could I imagine that girls played games like they do now? Or that a young woman would have asked her mother for her blessing to marry?

RUTH:

*Oh mother, so bittersweet is this time
But your heart does know the truth.
With your blessing I would go
And become a wife, I, Ruth.*

RUTH’S MOTHER:

*He is a son of Israel.
His people are not ours.
But his God has let him love you.
Against love should I stand guard?*

Looking at Ruth, I saw her strength and focused on that. She was loyal and faithful, yes, but with those choices she took her fate into her own hands. She made a difficult choice to move away from her own people.

RUTH:

*Do not urge me away, dear Naomi.
Turn my back I will not do.
If you return to my husband’s homeland,
I will follow you.*



Then there was the character of Boaz. He actually struck me as a Jean Valjean–type character from Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. Valjean had become a man of wealth, and he cared for his employee Fantine not because he wanted anything from her but because she was in need and he had the means to help.

BOAZ:

*You are welcome here, Ruth.
Drink from my well. Eat of the bread at the daily meal.
Stay in this field, I will keep you safe
And allow your heart to heal.*

I also had the impression, reading the lines of the Torah, that Boaz truly loved Ruth. What would that have looked like? Even though she knelt at his feet in a seemingly submissive way at Naomi’s urging, what if there were actually tenderness between them, and a feeling of their destinies coming together?



RUTH:

*You treat me so kindly. I am offering, here
My hand to a redeeming kinsman.*

BOAZ:

*It would be an honor to fulfill the law,
But let that not be the reason.*

The play that resulted was told by the third graders with utmost reverence, grace, and joy. The feminine voice was clearly present to me as playwright and director, but interestingly it wasn’t commented on by any audience members. Instead, they spoke of beauty and elegance, of color and music and dance. May the feminine and masculine continue to find their balance in our work.

—Carrie Treviranus, Third grade class teacher

CURRICULUM

Eighth Grade Independent Projects: What's All the Fuss About?

The eighth grade students' projects are a culmination of not only this year, our last year together, but of all eight years together, following the Pleasant Ridge tradition.

Nine months ago, at the end of seventh grade, I asked my students to contemplate, investigate, and consider options carefully, and then choose an area of interest to go into more deeply than in any previous projects. It could be more research-based or action-based, but their chosen subject should touch their feelings—it should be something they were passionate enough about to spend a lot of time on and something that stretched their capacities and deepened their understanding.

They were then to find a professional mentor in the community who would guide them through their exploration. This was an important skill to develop: to reach out to an adult, make the appointments to meet, and be on time for sessions. They would also write a research paper, including a history section on some aspect of the project as a foundation for their activities. And, as a culmination, they would come before the community and share the results of their work.

This has been an independent study—they needed to do it on their own time. Why have them do such a thing? Yes, in part to develop a skill or a deeper understanding of a field or topic of interest they would not have had the opportunity to develop otherwise.

But the projects were given to meet another need of these young people. As students enter adolescence, they need to learn from adults who are specialists and have a mastery of the subject they are teaching. This reflects the students' developing capacities to think, reason, be critical, and judge. They are developing deeper relationships and interests in the world.

But why make such a big deal out of these projects? They all have busy schedules—they had to find time on weekends, after school, and even over holidays to meet with mentors and do their research and carry out the active part of the project. Was it to impress us? I was impressed, and the resulting presentations were certainly impressive, but that was not the reason. This long-term project required them to develop time-management skills and fight the tendency to procrastinate that can set in at this age.

There is a fine line in life between what we do because it is our obligation or duty and what we do freely out of ourselves. My hope was that their mentors and their own interests would inspire their efforts.

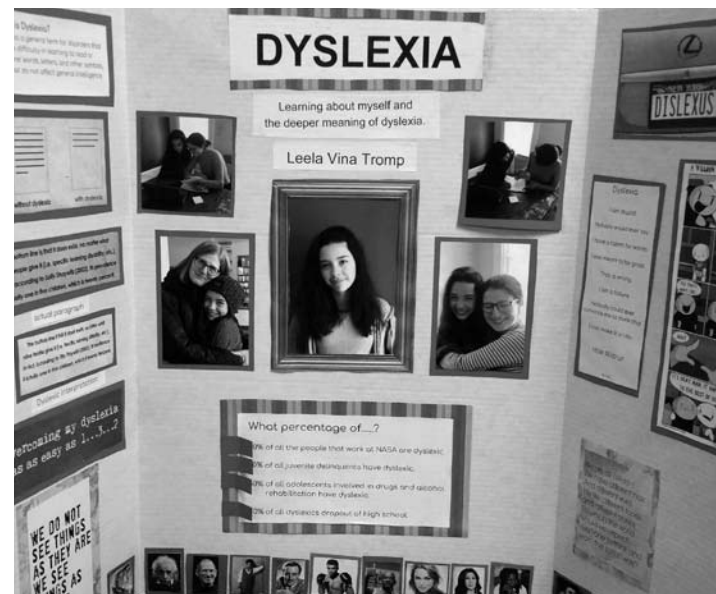
There is something only possible through acts of freedom. When we go beyond our own comfort zone, challenge our abilities, stretch our capacities, —move into the unknown, and do something risky with the possibility of failure, —we are exercising a new part of ourselves. In doing this we become more than we already were. We develop the ability to do and create in the world.

As a new door in life opens before them, before this major change—this last stage before these children are adults on their own—our hope for them is that they develop the right capacities, judgment, and attitude to take the next step along life's path with confidence.

So we listened to each student present the fruits of their hard work but also their experience in the process—how they met obstacles and what they did to overcome them—for *there* was the possibility of transformation.

I am very proud of their accomplishments and the passion they have shown for their chosen projects.

—Bernadette Link, Eighth grade class teacher



Les Miserables as an Eighth Grade Play

Victor Hugo's sweeping novel covers social revolution and personal evolution, the struggle of love and hate within the human heart and the economic divide of rich and poor. What would possess a teacher to foist this heavy epic on a class of gangly teenagers?

When I was first introduced to Waldorf education, a phrase I heard more than once particularly struck me: "This is not a college prep schooling; this is a life prep curriculum." At the time I was not at all sure what that meant.

In my teacher training, one of my teachers, Ann Pratt, spoke of her experience as a Waldorf eighth grader: "For the final assembly we had to do Oliver Wendell Holmes's *The Chambered Nautilus* in eurythmy. We all thought it was the stupidest poem and wondered why we were being forced to do it." She went on to relate how, many years later, she came across the poem again. Suddenly its meaning resonated profoundly across the years, nourishing and strengthening her to meet her then current challenges.

Goethe reminds us "If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming."

As educators, of course, we will not be speaking to fourteen-year-olds like the fifty-year-olds they will become. But to withhold the grand visions and ideals, the sweeping emotional pictures of love and hope, despair and fortitude, courage and loss, because they "can't understand them" is a true disservice.

The students can be brought to these visions and ideals, however, in an appropriate way. I can't think of any better way than to have them "play" them out in the great works of drama and literature. As five-year-olds play mother, father and store clerk with perfect intonation, so now the fourteen-year-old becomes a chalice of emotional depth and subtlety—not understanding in any cerebral way but experiencing it deeply within the soul.

For now the revolutionary themes of Hugo's great novel speak strongly to the students as they prepare to move upward to high school. In playing out the whole story, though, the more intimate themes of personal change and redemption can rest inside until the tides of life call them forth. What better way to educate for life?

—Joan Daelande, Play director



ALUMNI

Pleasant Ridge Students Return as Parents

There are many ways to measure the success of an educational institution. One could be to count how many students graduate from a school and then, as adults, send their own children to it. Considering the expense and sacrifices needed for a private school in a small town, this is no small feat. Yet this is what Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is experiencing. There are now a number of PRWS moms and dads who walk their children down the hallways each morning, but were once children themselves, in the same school.

Hannah Webber is one such graduate and parent. She and her husband Frank, their daughter Mazi, and son Arlo live in Viroqua, where Mazi is in the Violet Kindergarten at Pleasant Ridge. Arlo, a toddler, will likely follow suit. But if you had asked her when she was a teenager, Hannah never envisioned returning to Viroqua and her old school. “I couldn’t wait to get out of here,” she said, “and I was never coming back.” But the impact of her upbringing held sway. “There’s something special about Pleasant Ridge’s approach,” said Webber. “The school was created by people who lived in the area. The founding teachers were farmers. They brought authenticity and life experience.”

In the in-between she’s lived in Denver, Colorado; Washington, D.C.; and more recently the San Francisco Bay Area. Now she sees Viroqua as a great place for her family. “As a parent, I need to choose the community where I raise my children. At some point they’re going to stop looking to me. Who will they look to? I trust the parents and faculty in the community. I can’t do everything, so that takes a lot of pressure off me.”

Keith and Kathryn Ashley-Wright, AnnaJo Doerr, and Julia Ugo also share the experience of growing from student to school parent. But it is Ugo’s brother, Jacob Hundt, who might just be the former student who is most immersed in Pleasant Ridge. While Jacob teaches at neighboring Youth Initiative High School, his wife Sofya is the Pleasant Ridge Finance Coordinator. Their children, Natalia, Evelyn, Cyrus, and Josie, are in the Cherry Blossom Kindergarten, first grade, fourth grade, and seventh grade, respectively. For Hundt, PRWS is the bedrock institution of the larger Viroqua community. He is appreciative of the school as a foundation, and he works to build on that legacy.

“Pleasant Ridge during my years as a student was in the pioneering stage of development, with lots of improvisation, audacity, thrift, and creativity. I attended in grades 4, 5, and 7, always in combined classes including the oldest students in the school. My home classroom was in a different building each of those years. Two of those years were with Michael Wright, one of the most inspiring individuals I have ever met. It seemed like he was a master of everything, a colorful, passionate personality full of life, joy, and energy.”

In addition to a well-rounded elementary education, Wright supplied Hundt with a model of teaching to strive toward. “I think that Waldorf education is something the world needs now more

than ever, and it is a real privilege to be able to have it for my own kids, especially in the uniquely grounded and community-centered way we have it here in Viroqua. I feel a responsibility to help continue that legacy in any way I can.”

The growth of Pleasant Ridge may be likened to that of an oak tree, seen so often in the artwork of the students. Teachers like Philothea Bezin and Michael Wright worked with a small, very involved parent body to set the first roots. Barbara Peterson, the founding librarian, had a grandmotherly presence that set a tone of kindness and respect for decades. Growing thoughtfully, as the school moved from one house to another, and eventually to the small city elementary school building that is now home, the first children became the first graduates. They completed high school and moved on to experience the wider world and become more deeply themselves. Some have married, some have had children, and some look back to what they had. There are now ten “alumni children” in the school, with at least four more probable enrollments in the next several years.



Hannah Webber with her daughter Mazi.



Kindergarten teacher Marinella Pro, Julian Lavoie, and Anna Jo Doerr.

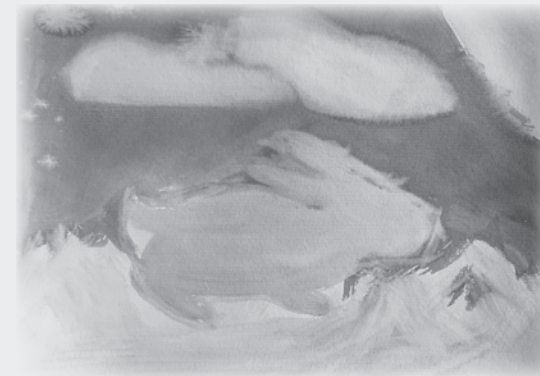
The Pleasant Ridge education was and is unique. It is child-focused, not a product of the latest trend or the outgrowth of a single study. Teachers still bring that authenticity and life experience. Parents still dedicate countless hours volunteering to support school functions. They learn about Waldorf education, and attend meeting after meeting in the hope of creating something of lasting value for their children. And the children still fill the classrooms and hallways with joyful sounds. They listen intently to stories that meet them in an age-appropriate way. They lean over their desks to create a thing of beauty, and later they grow up. Some of them are back, and their children are going to Pleasant Ridge.

Photographs and article by Drew Shonka, former class teacher of the Class of 2012 and father of three PRWS graduates, Leo, Ivy, and Sylvi. He is also the husband of Geri Shonka, PRWS’s handwork teacher.



Jacob Hundt with his son Cyrus.

ALUMNI



Births:

Johnny (2002) & Alea Gambrell, a girl, Amara Rae, 11/17/18

Georgia (Doerr, 2001) & John Moriarty, a boy, Cormac Moriarty, 12/24/18

Sofie Arnold (2000) & Rahbar ‘RV’ Virk, a girl, Miriam Irene Virk, 1/10/19

Caitlin (Koons, 2001) & Nathan Campbell, a girl, Estelle Maureen, 12/20/18

Jake (2002) & Nicky Mandel, a boy, Oliver Glenn, 3/10/19

Greetings from the Development Department

Just outside my window this morning, the kindergarten was gathered ’round the big maple tree in front of the Landmark Center, delighted to discover the weekend’s yield of sap from this tree that they pass every day. Then, just outside the Jefferson Street school entrance, I spied crocus and daffodils in bloom. Spring has really, truly sprung!

We’ve just wrapped up this year’s raffle, which culminated in a Family Fun Night and Raffle Celebration here at the school. The gorgeous weather lent itself beautifully to outdoor games and homemade pizza (50 of them!) wood-fired in the mud oven built by Drew Shonka’s class many years ago. The turnout was spectacular and included families, alumni, and friends from the greater Viroqua area. Live music made it all the more festive, as did the dancing that ensued. It was a perfect evening to celebrate the season and all that our annual raffle makes possible. Bountiful thanks to all who participated in the raffle through ticket sales, donation of prizes, event planning, and attendance.

And congratulations to this year’s raffle winners!

Grand Prize:
Brand-new 2018 Chevy Spark from Sleepy Hollow Chevrolet
Bonnie & Stosh Wandke (ticket sold by Lisa Anderson)

Second Prize:
Two GIANT-brand bikes from Bluedog Cycles
McKenzie Adelman (ticket sold by Jonel Kiesau)

Third Prize:
Kayak from Rutabaga Paddlesports
Mattise Enjalbert (ticket sold by Gail Doesken)



Grand prize winners Bonnie and Stosh Wandke.

In other news, we have recently launched a podcast! *Pleasant Ridge Today*, the official podcast of PRWS, is another channel through which folks may stay abreast of school news and listen to an occasional interview with faculty, alumni, etc. Three recent episodes that may be of particular interest include an interview with Loma Huh, Sumi Huh, and Jordan Brudos, coordinators of the annual Korean Student Visitor Program; an interview with parent Mike Moon interviewing the podcast co-hosts in a “show about the show”; and most recently, a conversation with Fede Escobar, project manager at Growing For Good, regarding its compost program. Check out *Pleasant Ridge Today* on your favorite podcast player or directly from our website at www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org.

Perhaps you would be willing to share a bit of PRWS history or your favorite Pleasant Ridge memories with us! As we gear up for our 40th anniversary and the worldwide centennial anniversary of Waldorf education, we will be collecting stories about PRWS. These conversations will be added to a StoryCorps project called Waldorf Chronicles, an initiative of the worldwide Waldorf100 project. We’d love to hear your stories!

When I last wrote, we had just launched a “100% Participation in 100 Days” Annual Fund Campaign. I am so proud to report that by the end of our 100 days in December, we reached 100% participation in our annual fund from our board, staff, and faculty, and 96% participation from our current parent body. Wow! We still have a way to go to reach our fundraising goals, and I invite all whose lives have been enriched by the school (alumni families and students, extended family and friends, former faculty and staff) to match what the innermost circle of our current school community has achieved. *No amount is insignificant*; as we have seen, together we can do so much! Thank you for making your gift today by returning the enclosed remittance envelope or online at www.pleasantridge-waldorf.org/donate.

Soon my first year in this role will come to a close, and summer will be upon us. This first year has been a whirlwind, a wild and joyful ride! I am especially grateful for Mary Christenson, who has been an invaluable resource and mentor throughout this transition year. Mary has been available at every turn, full of love, patience, wise counsel, and humor, all the while giving me plenty of space to step into and make this role my own. I am filled to overflowing with gratitude and thank you all for welcoming me with open arms.

In partnership,

Robin Kottke
Development Director

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Many thanks to those who have supported our school October 1, 2018 – March 25, 2019

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Denise & TJ Semanchin
Mark Shepard
Geri & Drew Shonka
Sleepy Hollow Chevrolet
Steve Stumpf
Viroqua Food Co-op

SCRIP
All Creatures Animal Care
Bill Brooke Realty
Burkes Tire & Auto Repair
Delap Tire & Service Center
Driftless Books & Music
Driftless Café
Kristina Gullion —
violin lessons
Kwik Trip
Nelson Agricenter
Parrish Music
Quality of Life Chiropractic
Quillin's Quality Foods
River of Ahz Chiropractic

Rivers to Ridges Animal
Wellness Center
(formerly Rising Sun)
Rockweiler Appliance & TV
Schlicht Auto Repair
Matt Shortridge —
carpentry and music lessons
Simplicity Parenting Institute
Tapestry Yoga
Viroqua Public Market
Dodie Whitaker —
voice lessons

**Special Thanks to 2018
Holiday Faire Coordinators**

Hanna Agar
Kathryn Ashley-Wright
Lars Bergan
Amber Biver
Shelly Brenneman
Dan Brown
Jordan & Mark Brudos
Julee Caspers Agar
Mary Christenson
Jillian Davis
Monica DeClerq
Chris Dunn
Beck Hawklove
Amy Hazell
Kate Holmes
Sofya Hundt
Julia Hundt Ugo
Jim Kangas
Anna Kimm
Robin Kottke
Marc LeMaire
Joe Lenarz
Margret Lenarz
Eric Levermann
Justina Manspeaker
Emma & Caleb Nicholes
Vicki Ramsay
Eva Schulte
TJ & Denise Semanchin
Jen Wade
Dodie Whitaker

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Call Bill first when you are looking at real estate, whether you are buying or selling. Mention the school and we will earn a donation. To look at properties visit:

www.BillBrookeRealty.com



PRWS 2019 Summer Camp Program

June 10 - 14

Drawing From Life (ages 8-12)

June 24 - 28

Archery (ages 10-14)

June 17 - 21

Moving Together (ages 1-3)

Creative Movement (ages 3-6)

Circus Variety Week (ages 7-15)

July 8 - 12 & 15 - 19

Off Broadway! (ages 11-14)

July 15 - 19

Technical Theatre (ages 11-14)

June 24, 26, 28

Wild Things (ages 5-7)



**PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL**

Please visit www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/programs/summer-camp

or call 608-637-7828 for more information or a registration form.

5% discount on registrations received before May 24, 2019

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