

# CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE  
WALDORF SCHOOL

Waldorf Education since 1980

Volume 43, Issue 1  
July 2021–June 2022





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

## COMING EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER

30 Michaelmas

### OCTOBER

14 Grandparents Day

31 P/T Conferences (no school)

### NOVEMBER

1 P/T Conferences (no school)

11 Martinmas

23-25 Thanksgiving Break

### DECEMBER

2-3 Holiday Faire

16 Festival of Light

19-30 Holiday Break

**CALYX** Volume 43, Issue 1  
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#### Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School

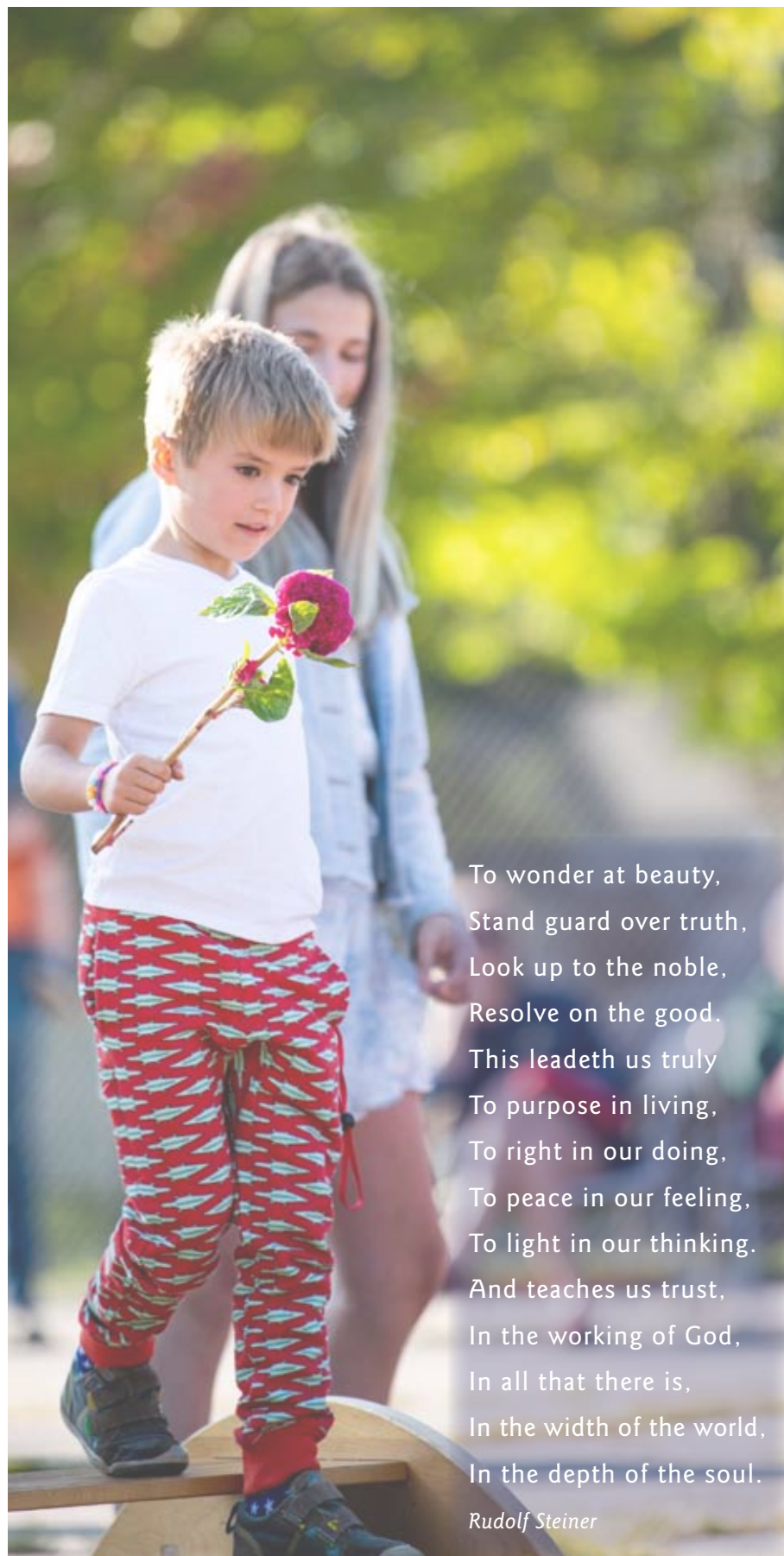
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To wonder at beauty,  
 Stand guard over truth,  
 Look up to the noble,  
 Resolve on the good.  
 This leadeth us truly  
 To purpose in living,  
 To right in our doing,  
 To peace in our feeling,  
 To light in our thinking.  
 And teaches us trust,  
 In the working of God,  
 In all that there is,  
 In the width of the world,  
 In the depth of the soul.

*Rudolf Steiner*

## From the Editor:

*The last school year was, as they say, really one for the books! Our shared goal remained in-person learning, while knowing we had to stay poised to change at a moment's notice due to the still-present pandemic. It consistently upended the most basic of logistics for running a school. Still, we persevered, kept our eyes on the prize as it were, and are so happy to share this long-awaited issue of the Calyx with you.*

*In this issue you'll find important school news, events, and highlights from July 2021 through June 2022. Many annual events were held outdoors for the first time; when local infection rates were high. Some events included students' parents, while offering recordings to the wider community. All committees took on the extra work involved in our re-accreditation as a full member of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), participation in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, new funding opportunities, management of COVID protocols, and non-stop personnel work around hiring—to name the big challenges.*

*In the next issue of the Calyx we will honor the new families and staff who have joined the school since July, 2022, as well as reintroduce alumni news.*

# SCHOOL NEWS

## New Families

**Cole Agar & Dina Yehia Mostafa**

Sina – Kindergarten

Amina – Grade 1

**Thomas & LeeAra Anglin**

Fern – Kindergarten

Byhnaiah – Grade 1

**Partick Bakkum & Bryn Schumacher**

Theo – Grade 1

**Mark Bancroft & Alyssa Fletcher**

Jaycee – Kindergarten

**Bruce Brochtrup & Tarah Freymiller**

Eleanor – Kindergarten

**Shihhan Chou**

Fionn O'Dwyer – Grade 2

Gerald "Yee" O'Dwyer – Grade 5

**Colin Dagnon & Courtney Dagnon**

Gustavus – Kindergarten

Maxwell – Kindergarten

Sullivan – Grade 2

**Cheyenne Hendrickson**

Raven – Kindergarten

Jaxxen – Grade 1

**Lucas Ribbens**

Leo – Kindergarten

**Kelsey Sauber Olds & Amy Arnold**

Pelle – Grade 8

**Aaron Schmidt & Carrie Treviranus**

Benicio – Kindergarten

Santiago – Kindergarten

**Stephanie Shivaya**

Sage Greendeer – Grade 5

**Caleb Slemmer & Paige Abt**

Tilia – Kindergarten

**Amanda Spencer**

Cylas Schaefer – Grade 2

Genalyse Schaefer – Grade 5

**Robert & Amy Stevens**

Emerson – Kindergarten

**Raven & Emily Stevenson**

Nettle – Grade 8

**Rose Wildhack**

Ezekiel Ellison – Kindergarten

## Returning Students

**Rio**, son of Kyle Bartelt & Mandy Herrick

Grade 1

**Colton**, son of Dan & Stephanie Brown

Grade 1

**Mazi**, daughter of Hannah Hastings &

Lynn Frank

Grade 2

**Persephone**, daughter of Shawn Lavoie &

AnnaJo Doerr

Grade 2

**Magnolia**, daughter of Alyson &

AJ Morgan

Grade 1

**Henry**, son of Michael &

Samantha Severson

Grade 6

**Aslan & Lilia**, children of Evelyn Sumer

Kindergarten & Grade 1

**Tillwyn**, daughter of Gavain U'Prichard

& Dayna McGuire

Grade 5

## New Siblings

**Perennial**, son of Kyle Bartelt &

Mandy Herrick

Kindergarten

**Mira**, daughter of Brendan &

Kate Froeschl

Kindergarten

**Sage**, daughter of Chris & Susana Ruder

Kindergarten

**Roman**, son of Chris & Michelle Thomas

Kindergarten

**Arlo**, son of Hannah Hastings &

Lynn Frank

Kindergarten

# SCHOOL NEWS

## FACULTY & ADMIN UPDATES

### Shihhan Chou, Grade I Class Teacher



It is wonderful to welcome Shihhan Chou to the Pleasant Ridge community as our first grade teacher. Shihhan and her two sons, Fionn (2nd) and Yee (5th), love nature and love to learn about different cultures and languages. Both boys are taking Chinese language lessons. Although she was born in Taiwan, Shihhan came to us most recently from Playa del Carmen, Mexico, where she had a business.

Shihhan has a bachelor's degree in business administration and an MBA in finance. She first learned of Waldorf when her children attended Chicago Waldorf School's Parent/Child program. She received her early childhood teaching certificate from Arcturus Waldorf Teacher Training in Chicago and began the coursework for class teaching. While living in Chicago she worked at Four Winds Waldorf School as lead teacher in the early childhood program. Her plan is to complete the final step of her grades training once she settles into class teaching.

Shihhan is a vibrant and caring class teacher who admires Waldorf education's view of child development and Pleasant Ridge's culture of organic food and inclusivity. She looks forward to meeting more members of the community. Shihhan loves to engage in cultural exchange and is a great listener, so stop by to find out for yourself!

*Bernadette Link, Grades teacher mentor*

### Susan Beck, Grade 2 Class Teacher

We warmly welcome Susan Beck as our second grade teacher! Susan was born in Iowa but lived in many other states while acquiring her education and while teaching, so a return to the Midwest feels to her quite refreshing. She is comfortable with the seasons and fell in love with Viroqua and the area on her first visit last spring.

Susan received her class teacher diploma at the Rudolf Steiner College in California while she also worked in Early Childhood. From there she and her family moved to Austin, Texas, where she took up a sixth grade class. After graduating that class she studied at the Tobias School of Art & Therapy in England, in a four-year modular training especially suited for adults who live at a distance and have personal or work commitments. When



her son graduated high school from the Austin Waldorf School, Susan returned to Waldorf class teaching in Arizona, and last year was a private teacher for a family.

Susan was searching for a private teacher position in the Midwest when she found Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School. She said that the series of interviews for the position made her feel very fortunate to have an opportunity to work with this class of children and parents, as well as her colleagues. She said she was looking for a place where all of her trainings could be combined, and where there are shared values and social structures. Outside of the classroom Susan continues to enjoy doing her art, especially painting. She very much enjoys drawing and bringing that love to her students.

Susan's depth of understanding of child development and the Waldorf curriculum was evident in her short introduction to the mathematics presentation of her first graders at Grandparents and Special Friends Day. I look forward to learning more about Susan's gifts!

*Mary Christenson, board member, alumni parent*

### Congratulations to Jordan Brudos, PRWS Administrator



In February, Jordan Brudos officially accepted the role of Administrator of PRWS. Jordan joined the PRWS administrative team in 2015 as the Enrollment Coordinator. A natural leader, she has assumed many duties and leadership roles in her seven-year tenure at PRWS. Most recently and perhaps most notably, during the two-plus years that we lacked an administrator, Jordan assumed many of these duties in addition to her job as Enrollment Coordinator.

During this time, Jordan led the process for PRWS to apply and become a designated Wisconsin Parental Choice School, for which she serves as the Choice Administrator. She has also led the reaccreditation process for PRWS in partnership with the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). Jordan has also served on the PRWS Board of Directors, Faculty Council, and Personnel Committee, and has been a truly invaluable member of the Return to School COVID Task Force.

In July 2021, Jordan completed a three-year Waldorf Administrative Leadership program entitled Leading With Spirit: The Art of Administration in Waldorf Schools. She is currently completing a Waldorf Foundations Course certification.

A true servant leader, we welcome Jordan into this new role with open arms and the most grateful of hearts. Congratulations, Jordan!

*Robin Kottke*

### Hannah Hastings, Enrollment Coordinator Ashlee Berberich, Office Manager



Please help us welcome Hannah Hastings to our Administrative Team! Hannah has recently stepped into the role of Enrollment & Outreach Coordinator. Hannah is a PRWS alumna and mother of two students in the school, Mazi (Grade 2) and Arlo (Kindergarten).

The following excerpts from her autobiographical sketch submitted with her application convey the full-circle experience that Hannah

brings as a former student, current parent, and now staff member at PRWS. This full background will serve her beautifully in this role, as will her warmth, creativity, and passion for Waldorf education.

#### Autobiographical Sketch

*Some of my earliest childhood memories are connected to Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School: the feel of bread dough between my sticky kindergartener fingers; the richness of assemblies in the Old Main Building; staring up at the vibrant colors of entwined ribbons on a Maypole. My mom (Moirra Hastings) taught kindergarten at PRWS for ten years. Both my parents served on the school board. My two brothers and I went through all the grades. But PRWS was more than just a school. It was where the roots of who I am began to grow. It was where I made deep life-long friendships. It was where I bonded with a teacher so strongly I'd catch myself calling her "mom," and still think of her as a bonus parent to this day.*

*I love having the chance to reexperience PRWS through the eyes of my children. I enjoy sharing the festivals with them, watching them sit with their classes at assemblies, and feeling butterflies for them as they prepare for their class plays. It is both satisfying and humbling to be a parent and learn how much work and intention goes into creating those beautiful, intensely memorable experiences, which felt so effortless from my child perspective.*

*I have been wondering in what way I can be of best service to the school. When I saw the role of Enrollment and Outreach Coordinator posted, I felt strongly that this was it. For a few years now I have been informally helping families relocate here. I love sharing my passion for this area with new people. I enjoy sharing resources, making connections, and helping people find their way in a new community. I believe my history with PRWS, paired with my experiences since then, and now moving back, have prepared me to assist new families as they enter both our school community and the community at large.*

*Consideration of the greater community is an important aspect of this work to me. Again, I feel part of what makes PRWS special is its authenticity inherently tied to its location in this sweet rural Wisconsin town. I'd love to see PRWS continue to build connections to its broader community and I believe I can help with that.*



We were happy to announce in April that Ashlee Berberich accepted the position of Office Manager. Before joining PRWS, Ashlee operated an in-home daycare in Viroqua. Prior to this she worked as a collection specialist for the American Red Cross and was a lead medical technician at a senior living facility. Ashlee grew up on a generational dairy farm in West Salem where she enjoyed many outdoor adventures. Currently, she lives in Viroqua with her husband and three children. Ashlee loves working with people and building new relationships, and she likes ending her day knowing she made a difference. Her vast experiences in child care, health care, and customer service will be a great addition to our admin team!

### New Faculty & Staff 2021-2022

More than any year in the life of the school we have welcomed many new colleagues. Among them were quite a few guest teachers who stepped in to help with staffing, round out the curricula, keep classes small and in-person. We are so grateful for their leadership!

Kindergarten Assistants – Lori Dehlin, Susana Ruder, Mahala Belling-Dunn, Kate Froeschl

Acrobatics & Grade 3/4 Assistant – Mary Oleson

Archery – Rice Spann

Creative Dance – Mandy Herrick

Creative Dance Accompanist – Susan Hoffman

Handwork Grades 2, 3 – Kate Froeschl

Movement Assistant – Brandie Myhre

Spanish Grade 1 – Erin Murdock

Spanish Grade 2 – Anna Jo Doerr

Hot Lunch – Julie Turino

Hot Lunch Assistant – Amanda Spencer

Business Coordinator – Angie Bernstein

Title Services through VAS – Stephanie Ivey



# SCHOOL NEWS

## SCHOOL TRADITIONS

*While the school community continued to make adjustments due to the pandemic, it is important to remember that we were holding to our commitment to have in-person learning as much as possible. Many community events were held outdoors to offer in-person gatherings, too. This was challenging, but we found a spark of something new with each one.*

### Opening Day

The ceremony was held outdoors. The Eighth Grade students greeted each First Grader and led them over the rainbow bridge to meet their teacher. That was followed by introducing all the other classes along with new students and staff.



### Michaelmas

October 1 was a chilly and blustery day for the annual festival, filled with celebration and good cheer nonetheless. We gathered outside to sing traditional songs and take in a performance of iron bars led by Stephanie Pedretti and 4th grade students.

### Grandparents & Special Friends Day

We had the largest Grandparents & Special Friends Day ever, in spite of the cold and outside setting. Thank you to all parent volunteers, teachers and staff who helped throughout this wonderful day. Thank you also to our alumni speaker, Cole Agar (2002). Highlights of the day included the student assembly, a tour of the school and Kindergarten, and Cole's heartfelt reflections at the reception. If you missed it, check it out at <https://pleasantridgewaldorf.org/grandparents-and-special-friends-day-2021/>.

### Martinmas

On Friday, November 12, families and children in Kindergarten through fourth grade gathered at Sidie Hollow Park for our annual Lantern Walk. This offers a peaceful time to reverently carry forth our light into the darkness that winter brings. With lanterns lit, the classes walked to their respective stopping places and took turns singing to each other across the lake five times. The final song "Oh How Lovely Is the Evening," was perfect as the weather and event was beautiful and heartily appreciated.

### Fall Concert

We were very pleased to offer the fall choral and instrumental music concert by grades five through eight. The concert was available for all to view via live stream in order to allow for adequate distancing in the gym for parents.

### Holiday Faire

Inspired by festivals and markets from around the globe this year's Holiday Faire was held outdoors! The playground was transformed into a sweet holiday village featuring ten sheds generously loaned to us by Westby Builders. Each 'cottage' was beautifully decorated with live greenery and twinkling lights and hosted Artisan Market vendors selling beautiful wares. Firepits and warming stations at the center of our village provided a cozy place to catch up with friends, enjoy warming beverages from Wonderstate Coffee, and take it all in. The one-day event began with a festive afternoon for the whole family and a World Market revelry for adults in the evening, and included food, crafts, stories, music, silent auction, community star lighting, and singing. It was quite an undertaking for our parent community and upper grades students, though one that was rich with rewards and oh-so-fun for all! We hope to incorporate elements of this outdoor holiday market going forward.

### Festival of Light

Our first indoor assembly for students (and for Eighth grade parents) was held on the last day of school before winter break. The soft light of the candles, the procession of children singing softly, and the beautiful student offerings sent us home with joy and deep appreciation for the values of truth and beauty which we hold dear.

### Eighth Grade Projects

The presentations were held in person over three evenings for the community at the school, and recorded for those who could not physically attend. Presentations were outstanding and inspiring as ever. They can be viewed at <https://pleasantridgewaldorf.org/8th-grade-projects-2022/>.

### Spring Concert

Our spring concert was held in April at the Westby Area Performing Arts Center! All were welcome to attend. A recording of the concert was made available for those who were unable to attend in person. Students in grades three through eight

performed, including those sixth through eighth grade students who had competed in the 2022 Solo Ensemble Festival a week earlier at Westby High School. It was a beautiful venue for the performance! Many parents, community music teachers, and performers supported the event to help it run smoothly and create a memorable event for all in attendance.

### May Day



### Pentathlon

Ms. Hotchkiss's Fifth Grade class parents, Ms. Lerie, Youth Initiative High School students, and community members held a beautiful event at Sugar Creek Bible Camp. The Sixth Grade class prepared a delicious Greek Fest. The outpouring of such community support holds and honors the students in ways that reflect the Pentathlon's principles of Truth and Beauty.



### New Board Members

In the last week of school we welcomed Vicki Ramsay, Mia Hassley, Michelle Thomas to the board, and appointed Mike Severs to a vacancy. We will miss the capable leadership of Joe Lenarz, Shelly Brenneman, and Alycann Taylor who left the Board after many years of service as their last child graduated from eighth grade.

# GRADUATION

## Class of 2021

In May, 2021 the PRWS community celebrated the graduation of our fourteen 8th grade students and their dedicated teacher, Amy Morse. A Covid-conscious (though grand nonetheless) celebration ensued, with an open-air ceremony under enormous white tents, followed by a reception and the traditional 8th grade dance party. Earlier in the month, the class embarked on their much-anticipated, week-long 8th Grade Trip to the north woods and shores of Lake Superior. Congratulations to PRWS Class of 2021, pictured below: *back row: Zachary Whitaker, Gibson Wade, August Bieser, Emrys Hudnall, Madeline Madura, middle row: Maya Fassbinder, Reid Brown, Wynne Roberts, Zaiah Manpspeaker, Iris Gorril, Amy Morse, front row: Sophia Thomas, Emma Brudos, Iris Belling-Dunn, Nanka Thimmesch.*



## Class of 2022

### The Seafaring Fellow, by Shelly Brenneman and Janna Kottke

#### Shelly

Janna and I and our families have been in Waldorf schools for a good long time. We have between us over 30 years of Waldorf parenting. I was also blessed to be the kindergarten assistant for many of these amazing 8th graders and I loved sharing days with them out in the forest in all the seasons.

One thing we've learned over this time—something Mr. Schmidt knows very well—is that nothing beats a good story. So we have one to tell you.

#### Janna

Once upon a time, there was a tall, bearded man who loved adventure, stories, and company. He was a seafaring fellow who had a gift for teaching.

One day, he encountered a group of children playing in the forest, who were looking for an exciting journey. These were small children who knew something about the outdoors and nature, and were ready to learn much more.

Usually this man was the captain of a tugboat, which is a helper boat, guiding and assisting larger vessels as they move on the water. But once or twice he had brought others on a longer journey, and he knew that these forest children were looking for the same kind of adventure. He knew what he wanted to show them, and how to help them learn more about the world, so they could eventually have their own adventures.

#### Shelly

In the beginning, an excited group of 11 girls and 2 boys boarded his ship. Under their captain's watchful eye, they sang songs, played games, painted, and danced. They laughed. They began learning how to get along. They listened to many stories, and these helped them to grow a little more each day. The children learned about letters and numbers. They met math gnomes. They learned to knit. Another sailor often came on board to start teaching a new language to them. A woman who knew other cultures showed them dances from far-away lands, and they had a lot of fun. Their captain gave them chores and taught them verses to say at the beginning of each day and graces to say with their meals.

#### Janna

Then, more children joined the group. Together they performed plays. They skated on the ice and built snowmen. They learned about something called Eurythmy. A kind piper came along to show them how to play the recorder, and how to listen to notes and to create music.

Some of the children's families shifted and grew. The tugboat captain fell in love with a beautiful fellow sailor, and they decided to raise a family. The forest children watched as the babies grew.

Soon the children were learning to do bigger things. They all made their own little houses, some of wood, some of straw, and some of clay or earth. Together they built a bell tower to enjoy for themselves and to guide future explorers as well. They learned to read. They gardened and learned about plants. They studied animals. They loved their adventures at sea with their dear captain.

#### Shelly

The children were now learning to make maps, to know the world around them even better. They listened to the stories of elders. Oftentimes they disembarked to run and play in the village, led by a strong and wise woman who spoke to them of truth and of beauty. And she showed them how to aim for those qualities in all that they do. They went with her to a special land where they joined other children to represent Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Olympia, Thebes, and Ithaca. They all threw the javelin and the discus, they sprinted and jumped and wrestled, and they knew that to do so was to honor those who guided them.

Some children needed to go on other paths that led them far and wide. They left the group, and new explorers joined. The growing children then traveled with the captain on a long journey where two large rivers meet, and hiked through the forest to find springs. They walked in the moonlight, sang their songs around the campfire, and in the morning said their verses outside as the sun rose. They returned to their ship for more learning and growing. They wove jump ropes and practiced their spelling. Another musician appeared and began teaching them to play stringed instruments, and more about harmony, and they listened to those sounds.

#### Janna

But then a challenge to their journey appeared, in the form of a storm on the horizon. This was a new kind of storm that the captain had not weathered before. They brought the ship to harbor and went home to shelter with their families. They were apart for a while. It was fun to always be home, at first, but they missed their fellow travelers. They learned about something called Zoom. The captain persevered. He taught them a new morning verse to strengthen them during this time.

Soon they found that they could build a version of their ship in the forest nearby, with golden sails, and be together there while the storm raged at sea. So back to the forest they went again! They drank tea, lit candles, and observed chemical reactions. They read and they wrote. In their new place in the woods, they told the story of Joan of Arc, with song and in costume, to the other children in the village.



# CALYX GRADUATION

## Shelly

At last they returned to their boat to set sail again. More students joined for this next part of the journey. They all became mentors and friends to young children, while continuing to grow their own friendships. The captain continued with their morning verses outside every day in all kinds of weather, to further prepare them for what lay ahead.

Now experienced storytellers in their own right, they welcomed the younger village children to an enchanted forest to tell the story of Snow White and the Dwarves. They presented the children and their teachers with songs and made them bread as they celebrated the inner light of the holidays. They learned as much as the captain could show them. The children, now tall and strong and talented themselves, gave the community the gift of a beautiful play about having and loving life in a small town. Their story was deeply felt in the hearts of all who were there to share in it.

## Janna

As their time together was drawing to a close, their love for one another and for their captain continued to grow. And they realized that as much as he had taught them, the amount that he loved them was even more. They set off for one more journey together, this time to see a wild new land of mountains and desert and to ponder the wideness of the world.

All along, the tugboat captain had been preparing them for the time when they would set sail on their own. They would be ready for this, because they were secure in the love of their families and their teacher, and in their newfound strength and abilities, and they had seen enough of the world to know that they wanted to see more.

## Shelly

Now dear ones, this is not the end of the story, nor of the adventures.

Your experiences and connections with the forests, rivers, and each other have nurtured and strengthened you. We are so grateful to your devoted kindergarten teachers, all your wonderful subject teachers, and especially Mr. Schmidt for being your loving teacher, guide, and captain for eight amazing years. We are so proud of you, all you have accomplished, but most importantly, who you are. You are inspiring and caring helpers of humanity and the earth. Whatever your next adventures, you are always a part of this land, each other, this community. We are all blessed to be part of your journeys.

## Janna

So many of your adventures are just beginning! We look forward to your stories!

Next, one important crew member, the first mate, will tell you about her experience and their recent grand adventure together. Here is our class parent for all eight years, Alycann Taylor.



## Class of 2022

### Remember the Everyday Moments, by Alycann Taylor, *Class Parent*



I have had the honor of being the class parent of this group for the past eight years. The class parent has two main roles. One is to connect the dots and be the bridge between the needs of the school and the responsibilities of the parents to meet those needs. It quickly becomes evident that, for PRWS to be successful, it relies heavily on the parent body. So I appreciate all the 8th grade parents

who respectfully, maybe sometimes begrudgingly, accepted all the asks I have made to you over the past eight years.

Another main purpose of the class parent is to support and work closely with the class teacher, Aaron Schmidt—basically, to assist in the implementation of Aaron’s needs and intentions for the class. I learned early on that no matter what the project was, Aaron’s vision was specific to ensure that he and we were creating the experience he wanted for these students. His purpose for his students was always intentional and not by accident. Sometimes, the extraction of Aaron’s vision was the most challenging part of this process. But once revealed, the task at hand was made easy by the time and talents of the parents. Eighth grade parents, I cannot thank you all enough.

As class parent, I have had an insider look at this relationship between this teacher and these students. The connection has been profound, one full of joy and laughter, honesty, care, and compassion. Yes, like in most long-term relationships, there were moments of distress, discomfort, and conflict, but the love has always been evident, and the commitment to mend and move forward always prevailed.

Their bond is deep and unbreakable.

I was privileged to be asked to chaperone the 8th graders on their class trip. It was a unique window into their class dynamics and kinship. It became clear once again that Aaron created a very intentional experience for his students.

He stretched them, and challenged them, and honored them in all the right ways:

from awakening to the awe-inspiring majestic mountains;

to the wide-open spaces of the Canyonlands, that allowed the freedom to explore, and wander, and imagine;

to the Canyon of the Ancients, where hallowed ground provided the solace needed for reflective work;

to the challenge of a pre-dawn hike to Delicate Arch, where we

witnessed individuals push themselves, but more importantly we watched a group of young adults support each other in the most beautiful ways;

to Mill Creek, where I got to observe a teacher standing at the base of a waterfall, bearing witness, waiting patiently, as each of you students, one by one, mustered up the courage (that he knew you had) to jump off that cliff into some very cold waters. Then we learned together that the best-laid plans can run amok, and you all met that with grace and compassion, and we made the best of the unexpected.

I felt your laughter and your love for each other.

A song I like has a lyric that says, “To be loved, we need to be known.” This teacher knows these students in ways we parents never could. While Aaron has expectations for the class and holds them as a whole, he meets them and sees them as the individuals that they are. I am, we are, forever grateful.

So, in closing, class of 2022, I leave you with this...

In your play, *Our Town*, we all were reminded that a life lived is really made up of the everyday occurrences. So, when reflecting on your time here at Pleasant Ridge, the big moments will naturally shine through: Pentathlon, plays, festivals, special assemblies, graduation. Those will come through without effort.

My challenge for you is this: When you look back at your time here, I want you to remember the everyday moments . . .

The morning and afternoon handshakes with Mr. Schmidt.

The friendships you formed.

The music you created that filled the halls and our hearts.

Your handwork projects.

The time with Profe Kate.

The games you played in Movement.

Remember the chaos and the calm you created together in the classroom.

Remember this community that held you.

Remember those sweet moments . . .

Because I promise you, it was in the ordinary that the extraordinary occurred.

Cora Rose Lewicki (2002) and José Luis Vélchez visited the Driftless Area in their home on wheels – the bus they outfitted to tour with their project, Art We There Yet? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hc55evy5QPM>) Cora shared afterwards:

In Fall of 2021, I had the enormous pleasure of returning home in a very special way. I grew up in the Driftless and attended PRWS for the very formative years of Kindergarten through 5th grade. Even though I attended a different school after that, my classmates from Mr. Rice's class were still my brothers and sisters. The bond one forms with your classmates at PRWS is bone deep.

Since moving away from the Driftless at 17, my path has twisted and wound around the world. An unpredictable path, but one I wouldn't trade for anything. Perhaps my current exploits are the most hare-brained yet. Alaska to Argentina with my love, in a bus-turned-art/recording studio, making art inspired by the Americas and giving back in communities along the way.

One of our activities is to visit schools and share our story (and the bus!) with students. We hope that we leave behind a little seed of inspiration, food for thought. Not necessarily to live exactly as we do, or pursue the same path we are pursuing. But rather to think outside the box, and pursue one's dreams fearlessly.

Our visit to PRWS was short and sweet, and oh so special to me. I sang a few songs for the students, answered LOTS of deep questions, and then had the pleasure of hearing a chorus of "Oohs! Ahs! Wows!" as they toured our mobile art space.

Just as I remember visits from Nick Hockings and puppet shows by the Lombards, as very formative artistic experiences of my childhood at PRWS...I hope that maybe José Luis and I left behind our own mark, however small, with the next generation.



## In Memory of Diane Mamroe



*Diane Mamroe crossed the threshold of death on Wednesday, September 15, at 8:30 p.m., in the presence of her husband Kurt. Diane was our beloved eurythmy teacher and administrator from 1995 to 2013.*

Diane grew up in Joliet, Illinois, and received her Waldorf teacher training at the Waldorf Institute in Detroit. That is where she learned about eurythmy, which became her true life passion. This took her to London, England, to study eurythmy under Marguerite Lundgren. After receiving her diploma, she went on to train in curative eurythmy before leaving England and returning to the Waldorf Institute in Detroit, where she taught eurythmy and became their administrator.

A dear friend of Diane recalled that in the 1980s in Detroit, Diane worked with him and his wife in eurythmy, even traveling sometimes to Chicago to work and perform with eurythmists there. While at the Waldorf Institute, Diane met her future husband, Kurt Mamroe, who was in teacher training there. When the Waldorf Institute became Sunbridge Institute, the couple moved to Spring Valley, New York, where they worked for several more years with the Institute and at the Fellowship Community.

We were fortunate that they eventually sought out a rural life and moved to Viroqua, drawn by the Waldorf community here. Diane was hired as the bookkeeper at Pleasant Ridge. Working with Julee Caspers Agar, the school's movement teacher at that time, Diane began to develop the first full eurythmy program for the grades. She was also able to work therapeutically with children in need, in consultation with Dr. Mark Kamsler, who visited the school twice a year.

The following quotes from parents and colleagues indicate the positive impact Diane had:

*Diane was the PRWS administrator for most of the time I taught there. Her leadership was supportive, strong, quiet, very much a servant to others, in the best sense. Sometimes when I think of how to do something or say something, I think of her.*

*One of my favorite people from my years involved with the school. So genuinely kind and well intentioned. She'll be missed.*

*We spent only a brief time working together but her kindness and her wise and generous support created an everlasting impression.*

Postscript: Pleasant Ridge is blessed to have been home to many eurythmists, beginning with Marianne Schneider and Mary Ruud, who traveled from a distance to teach in blocks and advise Julee Caspers Agar. Since Diane arrived, Sarah Kamin, Carole Hanlein, Annette Conlon Bammer, Davina Ecklund, and Joshua Ecklund have given us a firm grounding in eurythmy. For a short introduction to eurythmy in the grades see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcCvcy0zAlM>.

Mary Christenson

### We also acknowledge the following:

Robert Cwierniak, father of Will Cwierniak (1984), 8/27/21

Dale Schandelmaier, father of Eric Schandelmaier (2001), 1/19/22

Erik Shepard (2008), former student, 1/20/22

## Wisconsin Parental Choice Program

*Interview with Dan Brown, parent, board member, and Finance Committee member*

*In an exciting new development, Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is now a Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) school, that offered spots in Kindergarten through Grade 6 for the 2021–2022 school year. This means that 22 students (half in K-4) were eligible to enroll through this program. The Choice program is not the same as a charter school program, which PRWS explored some 20 years ago. Under the WPCP our school retains its independence and must reapply annually to participate. Mary Christenson sat down with Dan Brown to get the backstory.*

**Dan, when did the discussions begin, and who was involved in the study and recommendation that Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School apply to become a Choice school?**

For the past three to four years, parents and board members have asked if Pleasant Ridge could become a Choice school. In response, in January 2020 the Finance Committee formed a subcommittee to explore the possibility and to develop a report for the Finance Committee and board. It required months of diving deep into the state requirements to determine whether it would be feasible and positive for PRWS.

**What motivated the participants to engage in the long study to determine if this program would be positive for PRWS?**

The Finance Committee had been studying the tuition adjustment program in terms of what was occurring over time and how it was serving the school's ability to increase financial sustainability and health. We were discovering that it was likely to slowly push out a segment of the families that applied for tuition adjustment as the school raised tuition to keep up with our financial sustainability. This meant that we would upset the socio-economic balance and culture that we are committed to maintain in our school population. We were curious about the ability of the Choice program to meet our needs.

**Who was involved in the decision process?**

There was a representative group composed of faculty, parents, board, and Finance Committee members. The subcommittee generated regular reports for the board and faculty as they studied the various aspects of the program that determined eligibility. We worked from January to October 2020.

**Were there fundamental questions or concerns that you posed at the beginning?**

We asked: Would it be feasible? Could we retain pedagogical autonomy? What about mandated testing? Was there anything that we wouldn't be able to accept? The inquiry went on for six months, and the faculty was very involved in discussions and consensus building, until finally we felt there was no reason not to apply and there were very good reasons to do it.

**What did you find that prompted your recommendation to apply to the Choice program?**

First, and most importantly, we found that we could retain our

autonomy as an independent school, determine our own curriculum, and revisit participation in the program each year. This was paramount in order to move forward.

The draft budgets we developed showed that it would likely increase the financial stability and longevity of the school if there was robust enrollment. COVID really helped reveal the long-term and short-term financial benefits to the school. We had made the decision to pursue the "deep dive" of research into the program before COVID-19 was on our radar, and would have pursued the research regardless. With the economic effects of the pandemic on families, we believe this option will be all the more welcome. Furthermore, any perceived barriers were able to be overcome or accepted.

**What are some of the changes that the school needed to adopt in order to be eligible?**

- Extended instructional hours meant we needed to add a few extra days to the school year and lengthen each school day from 8:10-2:45 to 8:00-3:15.
- Increased rigor in bookkeeping, budgeting process, and additional administrative and policy changes to satisfy program requirements. This allows us to streamline processes and adopt best practices in how we conduct school business.
- Qualifications of staff: All PRWS teachers and administrators are required to hold a Bachelor's Degree.
- Standardized testing will be offered at the school in certain grades; it will not be required, however, and parents determine whether to opt in or out, providing a choice to all families.

**Does this change the application process?**

No, not our school's process. However, families interested in enrolling via the Choice program may apply via the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI) each February-April for the following school year. They must meet financial, residency, and age/prior schooling requirements to qualify. Once accepted into WCPC, families may then elect to use their enrollment voucher to apply at WPCP schools such as PRWS. So, in short, it involves two applications, but our enrollment process (including school and classroom visits, interviews with teachers, etc) remains the same.

**PRWS has always attracted families from out of state. What does this program mean for those families that might be eligible?**

There is a residency component to be eligible for the Choice program; they need to be aware of the guidelines for eligibility. We are getting more calls now from out-of-state families who are interested in finding out about the Choice program.

Readers may visit our FAQ page to read further details: <https://pleasantridgewaldorf.org/enrollment/school-choice-faq/>





## Greetings from the PRWS Development Office

What a whirlwind of a year this past one was! We were delighted for the opportunity to gather again as a community for favorite events and festivals and worked closely to reimagine them anew. It was our inaugural year as a participant in the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, and we began the process of re-accrediting as a full member-school in AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America). The latter process included an intensive, school-wide self-study over several months and a visit from the AWSNA accrediting team. Add to this the usual day-to-day life at PRWS and ever-changing COVID protocols, all carried out with a shoestring staff on a shoestring budget, and you have a busy year!

It was seldom easy to navigate, and lessons in flexibility, deep listening, and centering shared goals abounded. Yet somehow, each of these additional (and not small) undertakings converged in a most timely, serendipitous way. Not only did they inform each other in significant ways, but they also allowed deep insights, a mirror of sorts that can only be described as kaleidoscopic and clarifying. We emerged so grateful for this school and community, with renewed vigor and commitment to our shared mission and vision.

As our Class of 2022 navigated the last weeks of their PRWS journey, the end-of-school-year excitement felt more palpable than ever. They had been the first group of first graders I witnessed crossing the rainbow bridge after my family's move to Viroqua in 2014. Bearing witness to their individual and collective journeys through the grades has been one of the greatest gifts and a real testament to the value of this beautiful education. Of the many remarkable skills PRWS graduates possess, two that have often stood out for me are their sense of justice and their fantastic ability to create community. This year, and this class in particular, brought to mind for me, again and again, the following quote from Mother Teresa:

*"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."*

Indeed we do belong to one another. This truth is at the heart of Waldorf education and one that is cultivated here at PRWS. I am so excited for this Class of 2022, the adventures that await them, and the world that will receive them. Each of them has experienced what meaningful community looks like, and they understand its value and what it requires of each of us. Really, what else is there?

**An Update on the Financial Health of the School:** We are grateful to begin this year on solid financial footing, thanks to healthy enrollment, federal and local grants, and the generosity of folks like you. Our funding model, based on principles of associative economics, prioritizes accessibility and centers the needs of children and families first. A significant portion of our annual revenue (historically around 20 percent) is raised via fundraising events and initiatives. PRWS is among the nation's most accessible independent Waldorf schools, offering affordable tuition and generous tuition assistance programs for families with demonstrated need.

**An Invitation:** This fall, we kick off our 2022–2023 Annual Giving Campaign. Donations to Annual Giving support the school's mission in every way and help bridge the deficit between tuition revenue and the actual cost of educating a student at PRWS. Since nearly half of all PRWS students require tuition assistance, the full PRWS experience and complement of curriculum would not be possible without the generosity of parents, alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, and friends like you. Every donation is vital. Small gifts go a long way at PRWS, and large gifts can be truly transformational.

Thank you for recognizing the value of Waldorf education, and for helping PRWS start strong right out of the gates of this new school year.

In partnership,  
*Robin Kottke, Development Director*



Listen directly from our website at  
[www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/podcast](http://www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/podcast)  
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Many thanks to all who have supported the work of our school January 21, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

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