

CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL

Waldorf Education since 1980

Volume 44, Issue 1
Spring 2023





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

COMING EVENTS

MAY

26 Closing Day
Graduation
30-31 Faculty In-Service

JUNE

1 Faculty In-Service
TBA Board Retreat

The cover is an artistic study painted by
Miré Rosselle, Grade 8.

CALYX Volume 44, Issue 1
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Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School
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FEIN 39-1357578

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501(c)3 corporation supported through tuition,
gifts to the school, and fundraising events.

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on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, economic ability,
or sexual orientation.

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may request an electronic copy by emailing
robin@pleasantrydwaldorf.org.**

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Our annual PRWS Spring Concert took place
again this year at the Westby Area Performing
Arts Center on Friday, April 21. All students
in grades 4-8 performed under the guidance of
Melissa Madura and Stephanie Pedretti.



Our highest endeavor must be
to develop free human beings
who are able, of themselves, to
impart purpose and direction
to their lives.

— Rudolf Steiner



SCHOOL NEWS

WELCOME

This year we have twenty-one new families joining the school, six returning students, and four new siblings—for a total of forty-two new and returning students. Below is a list of our new parents, where they are from, the names and grades of their children, and the parents' occupations and interests. I have also included a list of parents of returning students and new siblings. Welcome, new families and students—we are happy you are here!

—Hannah Hastings, Enrollment and Outreach Coordinator

New Families

Rebecca “Bek” & Shane Backman – Westby, WI
Sasha – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Bek is a mental health counselor who enjoys being outside, learning new things, art, crafting, gardening, reading, and moving her body. Shane is a physician assistant and enjoys traveling, outdoor activities, music, and reading. Bek and Shane moved to the area after visiting family over the years. When asked about the area, they said, “We have fallen in love with the Driftless region and all that it has to offer for outdoor activities and sustainability. We also love being near our family, which is partly what brought us to PRWS.”

Betsy Spencer & Andrew “Andy” Boone – Calmar, IA
Milly – Violet Kindergarten
Paden – Grade 2
Betsy is an assistant in the PRWS kindergarten and a working astrologer. Her interests include medicinal herbs, food/nutrition, yoga, and hiking. Andy is an organic inspector and is interested in animal husbandry, growing food, and mountain biking. As a family they enjoy reading, biking, and living in sync with nature.

Jessica Gellings – Campbellsport, WI
Eliseo “Cheo” Hernandez – Campbellsport, WI
Ameyalli – Violet Kindergarten
Jessica is a hospice nurse, health coach, and writer. Her interests are wandering in the woods, herbalism, yoga, and climbing. Cheo’s main interest is dancing, and he offers individual and group Latin dance lessons. When asked about their move to Viroqua, Jessica said, “PRWS brought us to the area. I appreciate the Waldorf approach because of the play-based Early Childhood program, and the creativity and practical arts that are woven into learning through all the grades. Another huge draw for moving to this area is Youth Initiative High School as an option when Ameyalli gets older.”

Leah Hatfield-Warner – Viroqua, WI
Johnmark Hatfield – Viroqua, WI
Willow – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Johnmark is a part-time at-home dad who does tree removal, traditional woodworking, and songwriting and recording. Leah is a part-time at-home mama, baker, and ferment aficionado. The family shares an interest in dancing of all sorts, but especially community folk dances. They were drawn to the area because of “the amazing community and the beauty of the area.”

Julie Parrish – Stoddard, WI
Nick Inman – Westby, WI
Gwendolyn – Violet Kindergarten
Chrysabella “Bella” – Grade 4
Julie has an array of interests including art, music, nature (walks, hiking, and more), herbalism, reading, writing, and small carpentry projects. She is working part-time from home, getting her apothecary up and going while attending school. When Julie is with her children, they enjoy arts and crafts, music and dancing, nature exploration, and learning about plants and animals together. Nick works at Embroidery and More in Westby. He enjoys camping and four-wheel riding with the kids. Julie knew about PRWS from growing up outside of Viroqua. She unschooled her children for several years before transitioning them to PRWS.

Lydia & Emlyn Jones – Viroqua, WI
Jemimah “Jemma” – Violet Kindergarten
Lydia is a homemaker with a 100 percent survival rate for offspring and 25 percent for plants, sourdough starters, and hobbies. She works part-time at Tree Loving Care and does odd jobs and birth work on the side. Emlyn is a tree climber, designer, builder, and improver of systems, and spends more than enough time exercising, exploring self-improvement, and managing Tree Loving Care, his tree service business. Together the family enjoys cooking, camping, building, and growing things.

Hanna Agar Karlstad & Brendan Karlstad – Viroqua, WI
Mila – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Hanna is a creative family and commercial photographer. She loves playing hockey and doing crafty things with her hands. Brendan is a fine woodworker/carpenter. He also plays hockey and loves kayaking and frisbee golf. Together the family loves traveling, hanging out by and in the water, going on family hikes, and snuggling together for movie nights. Brendan and Hanna met in third grade when Brendan joined her PRWS class. Both their moms were PRWS Waldorf teachers, so they have quite the PRWS legacy going on! Hanna said it feels “crazy” for them to have found their way back to Viroqua and now get to send their kids to PRWS.

Kelly Slentz & Christian Leal – Viroqua, WI
Hazel – Violet Kindergarten
Kelly works in marketing at Organic Valley and enjoys hiking. Christian works for Vernon Communications and likes basketball. Hazel has a very active one-year-old brother, Javier, who loves to do everything she does. As a family they enjoy playing outside, swimming, and building things. They moved from Chicago ten years ago for an adventure and to be closer to—and part of—the local farming community.

Jeanne Saver – Duluth, MN
Jonathan – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Jacob – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Jeanne is an assistant in the PRWS kindergarten. Her family enjoys biking, camping, paddling, and playing in the snow. When asked what drew them to the area, Jeanne said, “We moved to the area for PRWS because we love the Waldorf method. It has been a great move for our family!”

Elaine Schmid & Erik Pheifer – Duluth, MN
Laken – Parent-Child Program
Jasper – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Willow – Grade 3
Elaine is the Grade 4 teacher at PRWS. She loves to get outside in all seasons; hiking new trails and Nordic skiing are favorite outdoor activities. Elaine also enjoys knitting and singing. Erik is currently a stay-at-home dad with their littlest, and loves anything related to soccer, fishing, and exploring new places. The family enjoys engaging in outdoor adventures of all kinds together. They are excited to be in this new Waldorf community in the Driftless and appreciate living in a smaller community.

Anthea Wallin – Viroqua, WI
Arlo – Cherry Blossom Kindergarten
Isla – Grade 3
Anthea is a stay-at-home parent who previously worked as a jewelry maker and nanny. Her family enjoys exploring their local neighborhood together as well as broader travel adventures. Anthea says that PRWS caught her attention while searching for a small town to call home. She and her children were ready for a slower-paced life and a strong community.

Darci & Justin Daniels – Shelbyville, MO
Weston – Grade 1
Weston has three siblings: Sadie (6), Hazel (3), and Nellie (3 months). Darci is a mother, farmer, and on-line coach. Justin is a farmer and farm consultant. As a family they enjoy farming, gardening, being outdoors, hunting, and fishing.

Whitney Hansel & Seamus O’Brien – Orangeville, IL
Magnus – Grade 1
Murphy – Grade 1
Finnian – Grade 3
Whitney is a homesteader who enjoys gardening, crafting of all sorts, animals, cooking/baking, building, reading, and spending time with family. Seamus is a meter technician and enjoys building, reading/research, spending time with family, and inventing. When asked about their family, Whitney said, “We have been building our house in Richland Center together for the last eight months. That has been a really meaningful project that we can all help and

SCHOOL NEWS

contribute to in various capacities while enjoying each other's company. We also enjoy just generally being outdoors together, going on little adventures, and reading aloud before bedtime at night. We grew up in the Driftless and have always been drawn to the Viroqua area in particular. When we learned about PRWS, we decided to make a final move to the area. We appreciate the family-centered nature of Waldorf education, the celebration of childhood, and have so appreciated the warm welcome of this wonderful community."

Erin & Jan Erkelens – Fort Wayne, IN

Sayana – Grade 3
Atalante – Grade 6

Erin is the PRWS Eurythmy teacher and enjoys music, crocheting, sewing/mending, and nature walks. Jan's interests are carpentry, hiking, cycling, and family games. As a family they enjoy hiking, reading, swimming, ice skating, sledding, and cycling. Erin and Jan were drawn to the area for the PRWS community and pedestrian-friendly town.

Nicole "Nikki" & Joe Tyson – Bristol, WI

Evelynn – Grade 3

Joe works for Parata Systems, where he is an application administrator. Nikki is a housewife and farmer. The family shares an interest in board games and growing stuff. When asked what drew them to the area, they said, "This area is so beautiful, and the people are so great. It is a special place like no other!"

Donnamae "Mae" Greenland – Viroqua, WI

Justin Greenland – LaFarge, WI

Hazel – Grade 4

Mae's interests include health, art, holistic living, and music. Justin's interests include inventing, drag racing, hunting, and fitness.

Kirsten Layer & Terry O'Connor– Viroqua, WI

Flint – Grade 4

Kirsten is a baker at the Viroqua Food Co-op and a teacher at Youth Initiative High School. She enjoys cooking, community radio, and biking. Terry works at WDRT and enjoys fishing, biking, and the outdoors. Kirsten and Terry also have a four-year-old son, Hawk. Together their family enjoys reading, music, baseball, board games and gardening.

Bean & Matt Voz – Viroqua, WI

Moses – Grade 4

Millie – Grade 7

Bean is interested in reading, tinkering, and gardening. Matt's interests include knitting, mending, and wilderness. Their favorite family activities include camping, biking, traveling, and cooking. When asked about their family, Matt jokes, "We're not as classy as we look, and we don't look all that classy."

Sonja & John Finn – Viroqua, WI

Hermine – Grade 5

Sonja is an at-home mom who enjoys volunteering at their local church. John is retired from the military and has a special interest in history.

Sabina & Jaroslaw Myszka – Viroqua, WI

Naiya – Grade 5

Sabina is a holistic modality practitioner/teacher, motel manager, artist, and interior designer. Jaroslaw works in truck transportation and is a holistic modality practitioner/teacher who enjoys gardening. As a family they enjoy walking in the woods, camping, and biking. They were drawn to the area because of the beautiful landscape and connection to the land of the Driftless.

Returning Students

Kwynn & Brian Molini – Viroqua, WI

Arie – Grade 1

Sana – Grade 3

Kwynn and Brian enjoy camping, going for walks, reading, and cooking together as a family. When asked what brought them to PRWS, they said, "We appreciate the loving and nurturing environment of the school, that each child is seen as an individual, and the creative and artistic approach to academics. We are very grateful to be here!"

Sarah & Evan Dvorsak – Viroqua, WI

Loyal – Grade 2

Willa – Grade 4

Sarah and Evan enjoy spending time with their family doing outdoor activities like hiking, canoeing, and camping.

Susana & Chris Ruder-Vásconez

Oberon – Grade 2

Artemis – Grade 4

Chris is a psychotherapist who enjoys carpentry and sci-fi fantasy. Susana is an educator, and lover of nature and gardening. Artemis and Oberon have a younger sister, Nina-Sage, who is currently home-schooling. Some of the family's favorite activities include hiking, traveling, and playing board games. When asked about PRWS and the broader community, they said, "We're excited to return to old friends in Viroqua and make new ones too! We love the community, the potlucks, and all the kids' friends roaming around town. We spent this last school year at a Waldorf school in Mexico (Valle de Bravo), and appreciate the continuity in Waldorf rhythms, allowing the kids to easily switch back and forth."

New Siblings

Emily & Raven Stevenson – Westby, WI

Verbena – Violet Kindergarten

Basil – Grade 1

Pearl – Grade 4

Reuben – Grade 6

Emily enjoys cooking, cleaning, walking, gardening, and farming. Raven works for Ethos and enjoys bicycling, spending time at the gym, and saunas. Together the family likes camping, cooking, swimming, and hiking. In answer to what brought them to PRWS, they said, "We had been a homeschooling family for many years. Pleasant Ridge is a great option for our family as we introduce the kids to school."

STAFFING UPDATES

Elaine Schmid, Grade 4

Elaine Schmid comes to us from Duluth, Minnesota, where she was a founding member of the Spirit of the Lake Community School. During her tenure there, she was part of the teaching faculty, taking on two separate classes over 10 years. She also tackled administrative tasks, taught Movement classes, took on committee work, and mentored new teachers. She comes with a wealth of knowledge and an enthusiasm and passion for all things out-of-doors.

Elaine obtained her master's degree in education from the University of Minnesota–Duluth, and her Waldorf Teaching Certificate from Great Lakes Waldorf Institute in Milwaukee. She moved to Viroqua with her husband, Erik, and three children Willow, Jasper, and Laken.

Aaron Schmidt, Grade 1

Our dear veteran teacher, Aaron Schmidt, returned to PRWS as our Grade 1 teacher. This will be Aaron's fourth time taking a class (and his third time at PRWS)!

During his tenure at PRWS, Aaron has demonstrated a deep commitment both to the children in his charge and to the school community as a whole. His talent, wisdom, and fantastic sense of humor have touched the hearts of students, teachers, and parents alike. We are thrilled that he will continue his journey with us.

Erin Erkelens, Eurythmy

Originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana, Erin Erkelens has traveled throughout the nation and across oceans, gathering knowledge and experience along the way. With Eurythmy training from the UK's Peredur Centre for the Arts, as well as New York's Eurythmy Spring Valley, Erin brings a breadth of experience. Erin's love of Eurythmy and enthusiasm for building a Eurythmy program are palpable, sure to serve her well in this new role.

Her husband, Jan, and their two children, Atalante and Sayana have joined our community as well.

Kate Froeschl, Handwork

Kate Froeschl moved to Viroqua and joined the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School in the fall of 2018 with her husband Brendan and children Owen, Levi, and Mira. They came from the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh where Kate was an assistant in the early childhood and handwork programs. Kate began assisting Ms. Geri in the PRWS handwork program last year and this school year Kate is teaching grades one through five. Her experience and dedication to Waldorf teaching brought strength while Geri is on a sabbatical year. Kate's interests include handwork, baking/cooking, yardwork and reading.

Shawn Neary, Spanish

Shawn Neary took up teaching Spanish in Grades 1 and 2 this year. Widely known for his musical talent, Shawn joined the Pleasant Ridge community three years ago with his wife Ashley Neary and son Ivan Messier. He has brought joy and enthusiasm to his Spanish classes.

Amanda Spencer, Custodian

Amanda Spencer, mother of Genalyse and Cylas Schaefer, served as the assistant chef for our hot lunch program last year. She came with a wealth of experience, dedication, and good energy! This year Amanda has shifted focus and is now the school's custodian. We are most grateful for her careful attention to the premises.

Marc LeMaire, Maintenance

Marc LeMaire has stepped back from the role of custodian that he served in since 2011 and is now focusing on maintenance projects. Marc is a gentle, consistent presence in our school—ready for emergencies, spending long hours getting the school together for opening day, and offering general support to everyone. His sense of humor is probably what helps him remain calm in all kinds of situations. Thank you, Marc!

Sofya Hundt, Business Coordinator

We warmly welcome Sofya Hundt back to the position of business coordinator after a pause of four years. During this time the position and the school have grown as the school adopted the Parental Choice Program, so it is wonderful that Sofya has previous experience to bring to the job. Sofya is the mother of Cyrus, Evelyn, and Natalia.

Kindergarten Assistants

Betsy Spencer-Boone and Jeanne Saver

Hot Lunch Assistant

Megan Serleth

Title Specialist

Nanette Oldenburg

ALUMNI

Confluence Farm–Nelson, British Columbia by Emily Woody (Class of 2007)

This is what community-supported agriculture looks like.

As many of you know, Nathan and I had to move farms last year. The original property where we were farming had most of the infrastructure that we needed, so we had been able to start our farm business with minimal upfront investment. However, after two years the owners of the property decided to sell. When one of our customers heard this, he offered us a field to farm and a place to live. This was truly a miraculous turn of events, because opportunities like this are nearly impossible to come by here in the Kootenays.



The next major obstacle we faced was financial. We now had to build our farm from scratch, which requires an investment in new infrastructure. Our plan was to take out a large loan for all new equipment that would make us more efficient, and therefore more profitable. There was one issue though: because we're a new business that doesn't own any collateral, the bank denied our loan application.

This caused us to completely revamp our game plan. Instead of borrowing a ton of money, we'll approach it the opposite way—spending as little as possible. Getting denied for a loan made us realize that if we ever hope to buy land of our own one day, we can't be carrying around a mountain of debt. The only issue with our new plan was that we still needed a walk-in cooler. And because we couldn't afford one, we were yet again in a difficult spot.

During our search for a new property to farm on, another of our customers had contacted us, saying that if we needed a loan to help in our transition they would be willing to lend us a hand. When we reached out to see if that offer was still on the table, they said yes. They offered us a zero-interest loan, which we used to buy our cooler.

Farmers have to navigate huge barriers when trying to start a small-scale farm, especially in seeking affordable access to land and capital. But our community is proving that if we come together to support the types of changes we all wish to see, these obstacles can be overcome.

Our farm would not exist without this community, and we want to make sure all of you know how thankful we are for all the support you've given us!

Emily Woody (class of 2007) and Nathan Wild have been farming since 2017. You can read about their journey on their website, <https://confluencefarms.ca/>.



Happy Spring from the PRWS Development Office

Here we are once again in the merry month of May, and all the signs point to springtime at PRWS, both indoors and out! We're halfway through class play season, in which all students in grades 1 through 8 spend a good deal of time and focused energy immersed in the stories, learning lines, and bringing their characters to life for the entire school community to enjoy. The 5th grade Pentathlon and May Day celebration will take place this week, May 4-5, and before we know it the 8th grade students will board a cheerful green bus and set out on their long-anticipated, week-long pre-graduation class trip. On the heels of that will come our end-of-year assembly, with carefully planned tributes from each of the younger classes; an end-of-year school picnic; and finally our 8th-grade graduation ceremony and celebration. Phew!

Seasonal festivals and traditions like these are integral to and a favorite part of Waldorf education. They mark the changing seasons and together create a most lovely rhythm to our year. These also serve as a kind of collective remembering and celebration of what we as a school and community hold dear.

The final weeks of each school year are always exciting and full and fast. I and many others often wish aloud for the ability to slow time just a bit. It seems as though all the learning and growing since the start of the school year culminates and bursts forth from the children all at once, as is especially evident in their class plays.

In March, I attended a meeting that allowed me to "zoom out" a bit and return with a renewed appreciation for our school and my work. Representatives from ten Waldorf schools in the mid-states region gathered for the Schools Fund Sharing Group, an initiative of the Mid-States Shared Gifting Program of RSF Social Finance. Participation in this group is deeply inspiring and provides an opportunity to learn about and deepen our understanding of associative economics (perhaps more commonly thought of as mutual aid). Together we reflected on the original impulse for and essence of Waldorf education and the recurring

theme to reimagine finances in Waldorf schools and, by extension, systems in our communities and our world that perpetuate a scarcity and individualist mindset.

The impulse for social renewal that Waldorf education was founded upon calls on us to consider a more collectivist approach, one that centers creativity and care for all. This idea is not new, of course. It is the practice of many indigenous cultures and is reflected in the philosophy of *ubuntu*, a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity," sometimes translated as "I am because we are" or "humanity towards others." In these times, this impulse feels more prescient and urgent than ever.

Together we considered how these principles are living in our schools, communities, and the world, and ways in which we can bring more attention to them and work with them in more explicit and intentional ways. Here at Pleasant Ridge, these principles are woven into nearly every aspect of our school. Mary Christenson has often said, "It's not just nice, but necessary to participate in community." Indeed, it is nice, necessary, and by *design*. The way our school is structured centers on the needs of children and prioritizes accessibility for all families committed to Waldorf education for their child(ren), regardless of their socioeconomic situation. Forty-three years after its inception, PRWS remains one of the most accessible independent Waldorf schools in the nation, and our families reflect the socioeconomic diversity of our region. We understand that the financial resources we bring, the volunteer hours we give, and the fundraising we do are not simply transactional exchanges for our *own* child(ren)'s education, but an investment in the school's existence, mission, vision, and health for years to come.

An Update on the Financial Health of the School

We felt so fortunate to begin this school year with a balanced budget, thanks to ever-growing enrollment and the generosity of individuals like you. We have not yet reached our Annual Giving goal that we budgeted for, however, and we need support to bridge the \$15,000 gap by the end of our fiscal year on June 30. **To that end, I invite you to join me and make a gift to PRWS. Every gift makes an impact and gets us closer to our goal, whether it's a donation of \$5 or \$5000.** Simply complete and return the enclosed remittance envelope, or donate securely online at www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/giving/donate.

Together we can do so much!

In partnership,
Robin Kottke, Development Director



Listen directly from our website at www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/podcast or via your favorite podcast player!

DONORS

Many thanks to all who have supported the work of our school
July 1, 2022 – April 24, 2023.

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In Honor of

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Mary Webber
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Karen Aldenderfer

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SCRIP

Kwik Trip
Nelson Agri-Center
Parrish Music & Gifts
Quality of Life Chiropractic
Ridge to Rivers Animal Wellness Center
River of Ahz Chiropractic
Rockweiler Appliance & TV
Schlicht Auto Repair
Viroqua Public Market

PRWS 2023 Raffle Tend. Move. Breathe.

Congratulations Winners!

Grand Prize
Lake Superior Vacation
Fran Rehman
Second Prize
Custom E-bike Package
Missy Hughes
Third Prize
Gardening & Foraging Package
Orion Coleman

Special thanks to Eileen Karpfinger & Aaron Roselle, Bluedog Cycles, and Seedlink for sponsoring fantastic prizes. And to the Viroqua Food Coop and Wonderstate Cafe for partnering with us to promote the raffle and all it makes possible.

Thank you, too, to dedicated PRWS families for your participation, and to friends and family near and far who purchased tickets to support this amazing school and inspired education.



In Memory of Dave Hackett-2/8/23

I had the honor of working with Dave Hackett for 18 years at PRWS. He was the perfect accompanist in my Movement classes.

Dave could meet our students at all ages and skill levels with respect and true interest. He was always ready to shift focus with me and, at times, even abandon my lesson plan for what I realized in that moment was truly needed in movement by the students that day.

When I discovered that he periodically performed with his wife, Ellen, in a folkdance troupe, I begged him to assist me in teaching a few dances from his repertoire. He shyly rose from the piano and proceeded to demonstrate to the class a Bavarian Schuhplattler waltz. The two of us then taught simple partner waltz steps with a raucous hand-clapping/foot-slapping pattern that had us all panting! From that day forward, Dave and I taught the Schuhplattler to grades 4 and older.

This quiet, deeply passionate man was devoted to his music, his Quaker roots, and his work for social justice. He and Ellen lived simply in their rural Gays Mills home. Many winters he invited small groups of friends to visit his home for a house piano concert, sing-along, and social time.

Dave delighted our students with his efficiency and commitment to living simply on this planet. One day I noticed that the 7th graders were all looking toward Dave at the piano. He had not yet noticed their awareness of his actions. Dave was warming his container of lunch food by setting it on top of his piano lamp. He saw us all watching him. He smiled.

—Julee Caspers Agar

We also acknowledge the following:
Eric Snowdeal, 7/7/21, father of Odin (2019)

John Danforth, 7/11/22, father of alumni, Lucy, Ethan, and Mike



PRWS faculty and staff— Front row (left to right): Kate Froeschl, Kate Bergan, Ronald Schirmer, Shihhan Chou, Melissa Madura, Carrie Treviranus, Lerie Alstad Van Ells, Shannon Landis, Jordan Brudos, Elaine Schmid. Back row: Mandy Palen, Susan Beck, Hannah Hastings, Ashlee Berberich, Aaron Schmidt, Marc LeMaire, Marinella Pro, Erin Erkelens, Lauren Hunt, Robin Kottke, Stephanie Pedretti, Martha Buche, Christina Hotchkiss.

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