

# Phoenix

The Biannual Magazine of Sequoyah School

WINTER 2018/2019

INSIDE

On Learning:  
Social Justice in the Sequoyah Classroom  
& Humanities at the High School

Student Reflection:  
8,312 Miles & Counting

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Annual Report

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## Message from the Board President

# A True and Genuine Community of Learners



It's an exciting time at Sequoyah — we are preparing to purchase our cherished K-8 campus, our high school will graduate its first Senior class this spring, and, in case you haven't heard, we're turning 60!

The board of trustees is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that Sequoyah has the resources and organizational capacity to fulfill its mission and to ensure a future for the next generation of students. I am incredibly proud and inspired by the work we have accomplished in support of Sequoyah. Through thoughtful planning and strategic direction, we've grown our campus, student body and staff to a level that has allowed for program expansion while keeping the school on a path toward long-term sustainability.

At the same time, we continue to maintain and honor our rich history and tradition going all the way back to

1958 — ensuring that the intellectual, physical, and emotional well-being of each student is known and cared for. Today, the school remains faithful to its original ideals, where our students thrive in a diverse community, appreciated for their individuality and supported by a progressive approach to learning.

Turning 60 is a big accomplishment! It's a time to be thankful for our original founders whose spirit, drive, and passion can still be felt today. Those early pioneers were guided by a commitment to learning through the authentic exchange of ideas, perspectives, and shared experiences. Sixty years later, Sequoyah remains a special place where learning is honored and celebrated each day — a true and genuine community of learners.

It is also my pleasure to introduce and welcome our newest board member, DuVon Davis. With nearly two decades



of financial services experience, DuVon is currently a Senior Vice President/Senior Relationship Manager at Wells Fargo. He has served on the school's diversity committee for many years and is presently the chair of the socioeconomic diversity subcommittee. A native of Chicago, he and his wife, Karen, have been proud Sequoyah parents for the past six years.

On behalf of the board of trustees, thank you to all current and past families, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends for your dedication and investment in Sequoyah. Because of your support, we have an auspicious and exciting future ahead of us!

Michael Barak  
Board President

## Message from the Head of School



# “Let's found a school!”



In 1958, a group of educators and parents from the Pasadena area took a giant leap of faith to start a new kind of school. Sixty years ago, that first classroom was a mixed-age group of eight students and one lead teacher. Today, Sequoyah is a community of more than 350 students and 50 faculty spanning kindergarten through high school.

While we've grown a lot since those first years, Sequoyah has remained faithful to its original ideals of providing an experiential and innovative curriculum grounded in pedagogy that is student-centered and humanistic in its approach. Sequoyah is a unique place to learn,

“The Sequoyah School looks upon education as a leading out process, not a pouring in. It seeks to provide an environment in which each child will be encouraged to stretch himself to his fullest capacities for thought, feeling, and action.”

*Sequoyah School, Statement of Values, 1958*

where one's individual growth and contribution to the larger community is given the highest regard.



I am often struck by the combination of idealism and pragmatism in our students and teachers. In this latest issue of the *Phoenix*, you will read about our youngest learners in the Bamboo Forest tackling the local issue of homelessness, and students in the Junior High applying math to connect the bigger idea of financial security to the practical need for a living wage. You'll also have the opportunity to take a deeper dive into our high school humanities program where students not only read about history, they engage in and recreate it to make it palpable and meaningful to their lives today.

In each of these examples, you'll see firsthand how a Sequoyah K-12 education encourages civic engagement. Our students actively participate in the world around them — in the classroom, on campus, and in the larger community. As we embark on our 60th year, the school remains committed to providing our students with the hope to believe in their idealism and the pragmatic tools to turn their deepest passions into something real and tangible.

Josh Brody  
Head of School

# From Kindergarten to High School Social Justice & Activism in the Sequoyah Classroom

Sequoyah is related to community, utilizing regional history, geography, and economy as a means of developing social awareness.

—David Ferris, “Philosophy and Goals of the Sequoyah school,” 1959

In a document created the year after Sequoyah was founded, David Ferris, a Professor of Education at Occidental College, and one of a number of influential voices involved in developing the philosophy for the school as we know it today, puts it as succinctly as possible: *Sequoyah is related to community.*

From those first years onward, the nurturing and education of individual students has occurred within an academic context that emphasizes the knowledge, skills, and ethical awareness necessary to both understand and participate in pressing issues within and beyond our immediate

environment. Although the current generation of Sequoyah students is growing up in a vastly different historical context compared to the late 1950s, the same commitment to community is evident in the classrooms of today.

Emily Singer, Director of Curriculum and Student Support, shares the belief that a commitment to social justice is at the core of a pedagogical mission devoted to challenging the mind, nurturing the heart, and celebrating human dignity for everyone. “Even in our youngest classrooms, the connection to community emerges from the application of those ideas,” Emily

explains, “moving from the ‘what?’ to the ‘so what?’ to the ‘now what?’”

In the Bamboo Forest, a mixed-age classroom of kindergartners and first graders, the study of homes has led naturally to the problem of homelessness and the question: what can we do? To answer the question, the school’s youngest students spoke with people engaged with this issue, including Terry Tornek, the mayor of Pasadena. During a visit to their classroom, Mayor Tornek was asked to explain what he has done to improve the lives of homeless community members. The students also used the



**What should the minimum wage be?**

How did you arrive at this number?

What should the federal minimum wage be for 2018?

Should the minimum wage be raised?

How could you use your model to support your answer?

**What should the minimum wage be for the following year?**

The minimum wage has not changed since 2009, it is stuck at \$7.25. In 2008 the minimum wage was raised by seventy cents, and again by seventy cents in 2009. Fast forward to 2018, it has been nine years and the minimum wage hasn't moved. Assuming that it increased steadily over the past nine years, to find what the minimum wage should be, all you have to do is multiply .7 x 9 and add the solution to 7.25. In 2018 the minimum wage should be \$13.55.

money earned from a hot lunch to take a field trip to Target to buy clothing to donate to Families in Transition, a local homeless student assistance program.

For junior high math specialist Catherine Tung, integrating social activism into the curriculum connects students to the question of how to help working families in Los Angeles achieve financial dignity. Inspired by Kristen Goggin, a six-grade teacher in San Francisco who challenged her students to model the principles of microfinance in their own community, Catherine took on a similar project at Sequoyah. The students began by developing math-based problems that included determining the current cost of living. They calculated that it would require a living wage of at least \$25

per hour, more than double the current minimum wage of \$11 per hour, to be financially secure in Los Angeles.

In Catherine’s pre-algebra class, students learned how to calculate percentage and interest rates, including compound interest, in order to understand the logic behind home mortgages. Students also analyzed federal data on wages between 1938 and 2009, and formulated linear and quadratic equations in order to model predictions for future years.

In *Over There*, a classroom of 5th and 6th graders, former lead teacher Cynthia Lee guided the understanding of emerging social issues for her students through the lens of community activism. In 2017, students took apart the language

contained in the executive order behind a travel ban barring immigrants and refugees from predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States. In collaboration with math specialist Chad Robertson, they also analyzed the numerical data contained within the travel ban.

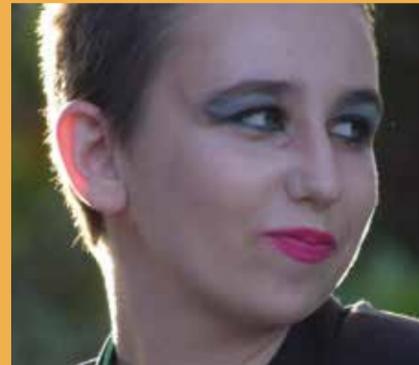
Last year, Cynthia’s focus on the history of immigration in America began with current events. Following the rescinding of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, also known as DACA, a federal policy that protects undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children from deportation, her class actively considered the perspectives of the students and families whose lives were fundamentally changed by the decision.

With the help of theater specialist Susie Tanner, one group of students staged performances that centered on monologues of Dreamers, most of whom are DACA recipients. Another group of students produced a short documentary presentation on their engagement with the Glazer Family Dreamers Resource Center at Cal State L.A. A separate group of students also interviewed and studied the work of Alex Alphaaroh, an undocumented poet/actor/activist and creator of the one-man show, *WET: A DACAmended Journey*.

At the high school, current issues are integrated into the curriculum through the social innovation program, or SIP. In one classroom, students debated the best way to share perspectives on the concept of “universal basic income” — the idea of a government providing a regular income to its citizen regardless of employment status. In their attempts to test its viability as a societal model, the students decided that an interactive game format simulating economic practice and social reactions that could then be marketed to a target audience might be a better option than, for example, a performance piece.

In another classroom, students exploring the power of art as a vehicle





GUEST SPEAKER

# Elena Mindry-King '09

Excerpt from Elena's speech:

After high school, I was so in need of a break that I chose to take a year off from studying. So, I volunteered on a winery in South Africa. I learned how to drive a tractor, how to weld, how to avoid cobras and how much it hurts when you drop a barrel on your hand. But the most important lesson I learned was the value of listening to my inner voice. Working alone in a field for eight hours a day, five days a week, you get a lot of one-on-one time with that little voice. My voice told me what made me feel good and what seriously sucked, and it told me that I wanted to learn more and continue studying. But even when I came back I had no idea what I actually wanted to study!

I enrolled in astrophysics classes and went to UC Santa Cruz thinking I would study environmental science. Turns out, I hated both subjects. But I loved my linguistics classes. I studied French, Russian, German, and Arabic; I travelled in North and West Africa to improve my French and Arabic and I even managed to land a translation internship while I studied in Senegal. But it was only while in Senegal that I got up the courage to ask the department head if I could create my own major in Applied Linguistics instead of letting the opportunity pass. Within a week he responded saying the major had been approved, and this past March I became the first student to graduate with a degree in Applied Linguistics.

My point in this rambling story is to demonstrate to you all that you don't need to know your path yet and many of you won't know your path for years to come. Try new things, go explore, but listen to what that voice in the back of your mind has to say; you can take advice from those around you, friends, parents, teachers, advisors, but your

voice is what is most important and if it's telling you that you don't want to do something, then just don't! In the end, this chapter of your life is all about finding that voice and learning what it's trying to tell you about yourself. I'd like to close with a message for the parents and guardians, but those of you on stage should listen, too. I know that you want only the best for your children, but remember that they are their own people and while you can do your best to help them along the way, their path is their own and they need to find it on their own. There's a passage from *The Prophet* by the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran. My mother's mother shared it with her and my mother shared with me. I hope you will hold it in your heart as I do:

*Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of  
Life's longing for itself...*

*You may give them your love  
but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts...*

*You are the bows from which your children  
as living arrows are sent forth ....*



Elena currently lives and teaches high school English in Bourcefranc-le-Chapus, France.



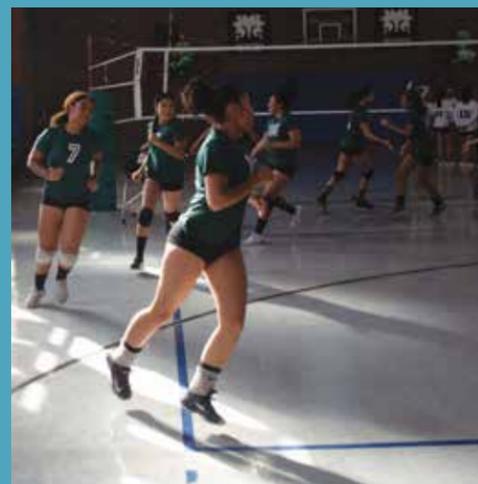
High School



Middle School



High School



Middle School



# A Delightful Sound Humanities at the High School

Two years ago, I wasn't getting enough sleep. Sam, my 16-year-old son, had joined the pioneering class of 10th graders at Sequoyah's High School. I would come home from teaching my own students, craft a sumptuous meal for my family, clean the war zone that is our kitchen after I cook, and be on my way to bed when a voice would detain me.

"Odyssey?"

Dutifully, I would follow Sam into his room, ready to read aloud from Homer's epic tale of a soldier's ten-year quest for home. On those nights, I felt like Odysseus, a decade from my own bed.

Sam didn't have much background in mythology, didn't recognize the face that launched a thousand ships or the names of meddling gods who interfered. I became his Wikipedia Dad, reading aloud and offering mnemonics to help him tell Hades from Hermes, Artemis from Athena. His cousin Emilia, also a classmate, joined us via speakerphone. They were a terrible audience, frequently interrupting—at first with questions but then, increasingly, with comments, connections, and insights that only happen when students really engage with a text. Sam would jot down lines on the theme of hospitality, while Emilia had an ear for Homer's language and how his extended maritime similes were an apt device for the seafaring Greeks.

"Why do you keep interrupting me?" I'd ask, longing for my pillow.

"That's how we read in Ian's class." I could see their humanities teacher, Ian Chang, was going to work me hard.

To combine history and English in a humanities class is itself a statement of the school's philosophy. Just as the physical location of the high school is in the shared space of a Unitarian Church—and its student body a blend of diverse identities—so is its curriculum a wrecking ball to barriers of all kinds. "Integration (of history and English)," Ian explains, "means that we can demonstrate for students that the record of human endeavors, including literature and art, is itself integrated, much the way their own experience is lived integrally, and only divided by effort of mind."

What better loom to weave history and literature on than a poem? After the 2016 presidential election, a study of metrical verse in the form of sonnets turned into an experimental project on citizen engagement. The name of the project, "A Dreadful Sound", was born after the students had memorized the final couplet of Walter Raleigh's sonnet, "On the Cards and Dice": *Full many a Christian's heart shall quake for fear/ The dreadful sound of trump when he shall hear.*

To mark the first 100 days of the Trump presidency, students and faculty wrote a cycle of 100 sonnets reflecting on their real-time relationship to the experiment of American democracy. On Exhibition Night in 2017, a culminating event at the high school, sonnets in iambic

pentameter adorned the walls: *Untax the rich...plans to stack the bricks against outsiders...a man of conflicting intents...pawns who see one square but not the rest.*

The humanities program at the High School asks students to engage with their own pedagogy beyond the schoolhouse gate. With the Social Innovation Program (SIP), students are tasked to look at community problems that need to be solved. During the program's initial year, teams focused on the L.A. River, a literal and figurative single strand through our city's environmental, economic, and social challenges. They met with residents both housed and homeless, business owners, community leaders, and officials at the Mayor's Office. They identified problems and presented viable solutions at Exhibition Night.

Last spring, under the direction of RJ Sakai, Director of Social Innovation, 10th and 11th graders travelled to Alajuela, Costa Rica, where they lived with host families, learned about the Costa Rican economy, climate, and culture, and showed their gratitude for the visit by helping to build and paint a local church.

"Students were paired with families in a small coffee-growing community nestled in the mountains. They had conversations with community members about their structure as a growers association and a producer-owned cooperative," RJ explains.



"Students related the social and economic justice work they do through SIP to the ways coffee growers share profits, make collective decisions, and distribute labor as key stakeholders in the global coffee economy."

SIP also fosters team building and responsibility. At Exhibition Night, I forgot for an hour that I was attending a high school event because it felt more like an extended TEDx talk. One team of SIP students, working with Hahamongna Nursery, had launched a small-scale

green space program. They obtained a booth at a local farmers market and gave away one-hundred native plants to families without green space in their homes. Another team was moved to help victims of domestic violence. Calling themselves "Survivors-to-Thrivers," they met with the staff at Shepherd's Door, a domestic violence resource center, and helped redesign the comfort baskets that the center provides to survivors by adding handwritten notes and stress balls to enhance mental health.

Another team of students became interested in street art, which has been both a political and artistic feature of Los Angeles' history. Inspired by the exhibition Sin Censura: A Mural Remembers L.A. at the Natural History Museum, they created a social studies curriculum for 5th graders that presents murals as windows into the often under-represented stories of L.A. history. They also built a website to share their curriculum with 5th grade teachers for free.





While the SIP program draws students' interests toward community issues, another hallmark of the high school curriculum at Sequoyah—Talking Leaves—turns their focus within. When the eponymous Cherokee Chief Sequoyah saw the written language of white settlers, he was amazed by their “talking leaves,” and set out to create a phonetic alphabet for the Cherokee language. He understood the power of a written language to preserve a people’s history—their stories—for many generations to come. In keeping with that original intent, Talking Leaves challenges students to discover a relevant thread throughout the year’s curriculum, write a paper about it, and then present their thesis to a panel of peers and teachers. This semester-long project makes it impossible to memorize and move on. Students have to mull, make connections, argue, write, and defend. Their learning, like Chief Sequoyah’s syllabary, is designed to last.

Both SIP and Talking Leaves give Sequoyah students far more agency in their own education than you will see at most other high schools. As Humanities

teacher Sean Hamidi observes, “I’m most proud when guests walk into my classroom, take note of students facilitating their own conversations in groups or as a class, and have to look around before confirming that there is, in fact, a teacher in the room.”

At Sequoyah, you won’t find A.P. (Advanced Placement) U.S. History. The acronym itself, A-PUSH, reveals why: 11th graders won’t be pushed to memorize facts bound for the bubbles on a multiple-choice exam; they’ll be lured into the drama, blood, discord, compromise, and imperfect order that make up our national story. Instead of a textbook, they tote *A Little History of the United States*, a one-volume sweep of the subject, part of the Yale Little History series. Instead of A.P. practice tests, they play



the Constitutional Convention game, a re-enactment that gets them to don white wigs and deliver persuasive speeches in the voice and identity of our Founders. Poetry makes an appearance here too: why memorize the Presidents when you can memorialize them in a collaborative poem, each student wrangling a different Commander-in-Chief, from Trump to Washington, into a single stanza?

Late in my son’s junior year, I found myself getting to bed on time. Humanities at Sequoyah had tampered with my biological clock, and I couldn’t fall asleep before eleven. I knocked on Sam’s door; he was busy writing an essay about the 2016 election and how the path to the Democratic nomination had been corrupted by the party itself.

“How’s that going?” I asked.

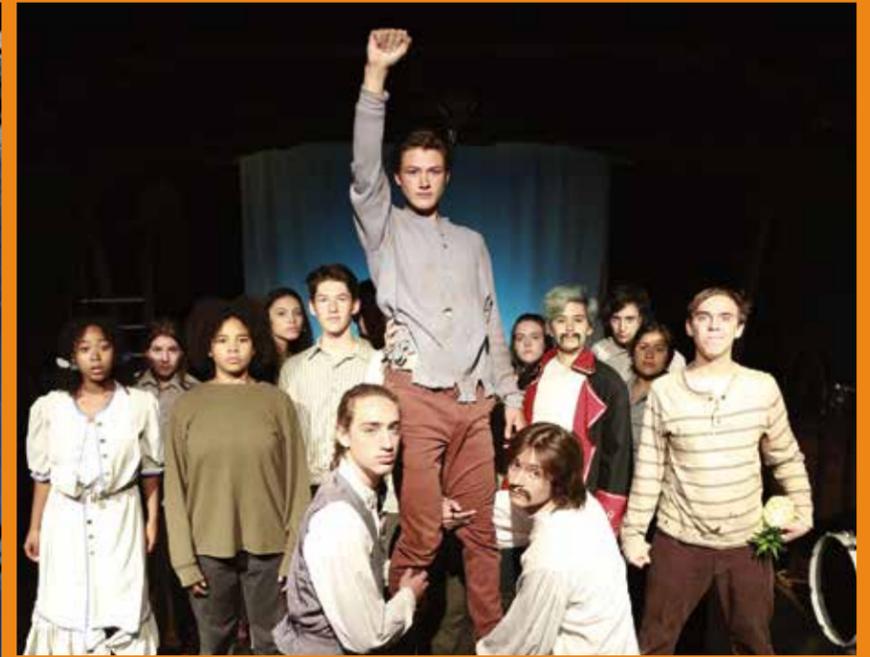
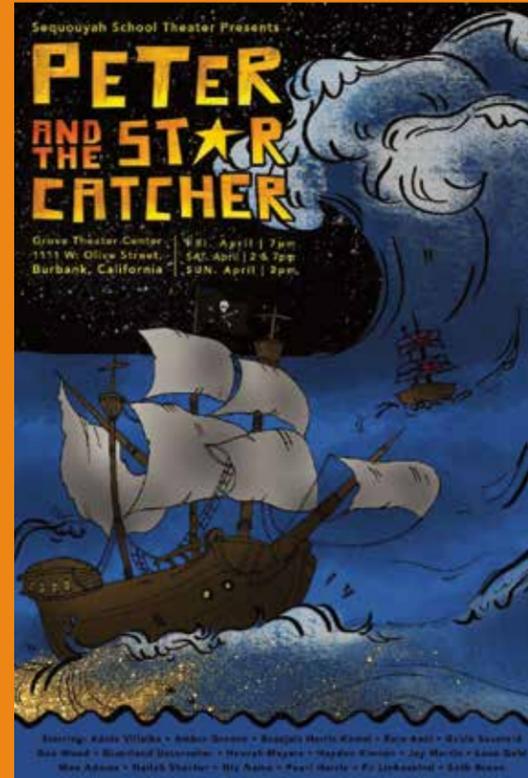
“Great,” he said. “Almost done.”

“Need any help? With grammar or anything?”

“Nope. But I’ll be ready for you to scratch my back in fifteen minutes.”

I stood there in the doorway feeling bereft. No longer the Wikipedia Dad, I now had time to kill mopping the kitchen floor. Which means that Humanities at Sequoyah has inspired my son, invested him in his own education, and tempted him with the intrinsic motivation of learning that happens when you are curious and challenged, and your ideas are taken seriously by teachers and peers.

This Spring, Sam and fifteen fellow pioneers will be the first graduating senior class at Sequoyah before leaving for college. Lucky for me, another niece of mine will still be at Sequoyah in the 9th grade. I’ll be waiting by the phone, Homer in hand.



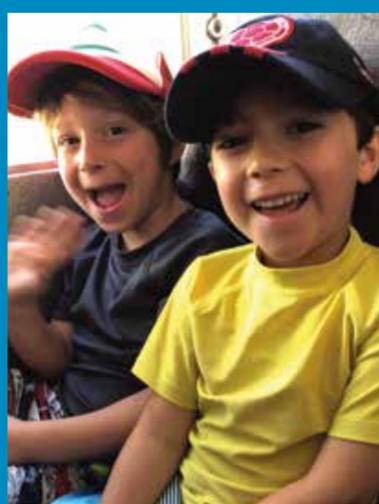
High School Play

10th & 11th grade  
Cedral, Pérez Zeledón Province  
Alajuela, Costa Rica  
May 2018





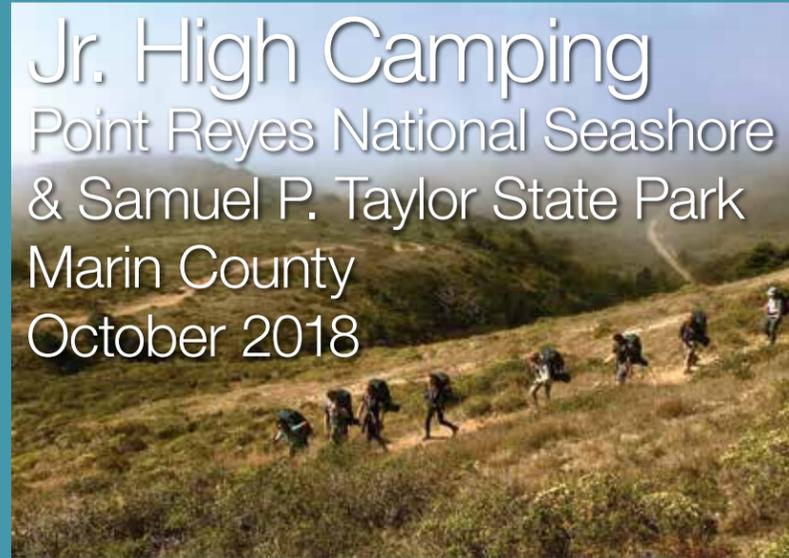
Beach Day



9th & 10th grade  
Quaking Aspen  
Southern Sierra Nevada  
August 2018



Jr. High Camping  
Point Reyes National Seashore  
& Samuel P. Taylor State Park  
Marin County  
October 2018





# Elena Phleger



Dear Sequoyah Families,

While I am sad to leave, I am also ready to be on my way with all of you in my heart. I will be joining my husband on the east coast where he recently became the Dean of Vermont Law School. My two boys brought me to Sequoyah twenty years ago. It was just the right place for each of them and for us as a family. In many ways, it has been the most important school in my life.

In 2006, I became Sequoyah's first full-time Director of Development. A year or so later, I was asked to take on communications. In each role, I was given opportunities to learn. Imagining a path through complex challenges, expressing a compelling vision, and raising the necessary funds and setting a course of action are collaborative efforts. It has been my pleasure to work side by side with exceptional colleagues and volunteers. Together, we developed the K-8 campus, adding new buildings, the perimeter fence, landscaping, gardens for learning, and solar power. We started a new high school and strengthened relationships in the community.

Over the years, I spent a lot of time thinking and writing about Sequoyah's HABITS OF MIND, and because they relate to what I have been doing I wanted to share some thoughts about three of them in particular:

## CREATIVITY

We should celebrate the role of imagination—and I don't mean this in a trivial way. It is very difficult to imagine and then realize a possibility—these are equally important things to be able to do and very difficult to do without someone else's help. It requires compromise and...

## COLLABORATION

My father once told me, "You do not want to be the smartest person in the room, you want to be the most prepared and the one who listens...the one who asks good questions and is a pleasure to work with. Find a way to spend your days working with people you want to be with, that you enjoy being with, that you learn from." And,

## STEWARDSHIP

Good ideas and good schools, like good people, do not always succeed, but we should support them. And this is very important—there is no foregone conclusion.

Communities with purpose require lots of thought, work and investment, planning, conversation and sometimes difficult decision-making.

I found all of this and I am honored to be part of Sequoyah's story. I can't wait to hear about the next chapter. I'll be sure to keep in touch.

Thank you and best wishes,

Elena



# Susie Tanner

Greetings Sequoyah Community,

After 23 years as a Sequoyah Theatre Specialist, I am excited to move on to focus on other aspects of my career as a theatre professional. I will continue as a member of the Theatre faculty at L.A. County High School for the Arts (LACHSA). My company Theatre Workers Project will tour socially and politically relevant plays and teach workshops at underserved middle and high schools.

Through multiple grants from the California Arts Council and other grantmaking organizations, I'll be leading my team of artists in projects that include creating theatre with formerly incarcerated adults and inmates at the California State Prison in Lancaster, planning theatre workshops for LA County probation officers and the Youthful Offenders Program at Valley State Prison, and running an after-school theatre program for children of incarcerated family members. And as an independent theatre artist and member of Ensemble Studio Theatre/LA and the SAG-AFTRA Radio Players, I'll continue to direct public readings and plays.

I will always be grateful to Sequoyah for the education of my son Conrad ('05) over nine wonderful years. His Sequoyah education taught him values and skills far beyond reading and writing. Sequoyah instilled in him a lifelong love of learning, a passion for intellectual exploration, and the courage to take creative risks.

As a teaching artist, I'll always be grateful for the freedom I had to create cutting-edge theatre projects, the many deep collaborations with creative teachers, and the talented and generous parents who supported my work over the years, and of course the awesome kids! As a theatre artist with a passion for doing work that speaks to social issues, it is always my hope that the actors with whom I work will be moved and transformed by the subject matter they are presenting.

Musician and activist Tom Morello once wrote,

*I think that there are artists of different genres whose calling is to use their art to hope to affect and better the human condition...It's a group that I'm proud to be counted among.*

It is indeed a group that I am proud to be a part of as well, and it is my heartfelt hope that the Theatre program at Sequoyah will continue to offer young people opportunities to explore social and political issues and consider this calling as well.

Wishing you all many daring creative adventures!

Susie



# Alumni News & Updates

In April, **Maya Almaraz '97** and her mother, Elsa Flores Almaraz visited Maya's favorite Sequoyah teacher, **Claudia Zirolì**, now retired, on the Big Island of Hawaii (before the eruptions). They enjoyed their reunion with her.



(L-R) Elsa Flores Almaraz, Claudia and Eric Zirolì, Maya Almaraz and her boyfriend Nick

**Pazia Bermudez-Silverman '12** will be going into her third year at Brown University where she is double concentrating in Africana Studies and Computer Science. Her research work is focused on understanding and preventing algorithmic and technological bias in the computer science world. At Brown, she is the leader of Brown's Organization for Multiracial and Biracial Students and volunteers for the Sexual Health Awareness Group. This past summer she worked as a Getty Multicultural Undergraduate Intern at the Institute of Contemporary Los Angeles in the department of Learning + Engagement. She gives credit to Sequoyah for inspiring her to pursue a variety of academic and personal interests as well as giving her life-long friends.



Pazia and Sula Bermudez-Silverman

**Sula Bermudez-Silverman '07** earned her BA in Studio Art from Bard College in 2015 and studied at Central Saint Martin's School of Art and Design in London. Upon graduating, she was an honorary artist in residence at Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas. In 2018, she received her MFA in Sculpture from the Yale School of Art.



Joy Silverman, Sula and Pazia, and George Bermudez

**Eliza Cooper '00** raced in her first National Championship in Paratriathlon, and won! Now, as one of the top visually impaired triathletes in the country, she has some exciting decisions to make about what comes next.



Eliza after winning the Paratriathlon

In May, **Henry Griffith '10** graduated from UCLA, where he majored in economics.

This year **Hanne Irish-Hurlow '15** discovered a passion for environmental science and decided to shape her Westridge volunteer requirements around that passion. In June, she volunteered in Costa Rica with her best friend, Kate Crowell. They stayed at Pacuare Nature Reserve where they protected and tracked leatherback turtles during the birthing and hatching process. She witnessed and did incredible things including mama leatherbacks giving birth, relocating 3 nests, and releasing over 100 baby leatherbacks into the ocean. She highly recommends volunteering in this amazing and life-changing experience!



Leatherback Turtles

**Tosh Le '15** recently co-wrote a Dungeons and Dragons adventure called *The Magician's Compass*. This adventure will be run on a multitude of venues worldwide and will be available for purchase within the year on DMsGuild.com. Tosh will be releasing more adventures in the near future.



Tosh Le

**Mikhaila Quezada-Freda '09** graduated from The Cooper Union School of Art in December 2017 and was a part of the last class receiving full-tuition funding (the school plans on returning to providing full-tuition funding to students in about ten years). Upon graduating, Mikhaila received the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation Award for Demonstrated Ability in Art. For the time being, she is living and working in Queens, New York. She is especially grateful for her education at Sequoyah and having art class with Erin Trefry in 7th and 8th grade. Her time at Sequoyah solidified her desire to learn, and her work with Erin allowed her freedom to grow as an artist from a young age. She is photographed with **Oscar Russakis '08** who also graduated from Cooper Union.



Mikhaila Quezada-Freda and Oscar Russakis

**Brandt Rohde '11** and his parents, **Mel Malmberg** and **Joe Rohde**, said aloha in the town of Pahoehoe, HI to past parent and former Sequoyah administrator **Patti Pinto** and former Sequoyah teacher **Claudia Zirolì**. Patti has been volunteering to evacuate people in the path of the lava. She keeps track of everyone who goes into the affected areas and makes sure they return safely. Claudia gives educational tours and is also really involved in the community. Mel says "It was great to see them and they are safe. Come visit!"



Brandt Rohde with Patti Pinto (left) and Claudia Zirolì (right)

## Marriages



Erin Bates '04 and Rikki Johnson

On June 30th, Sequoyah teacher and alum **Erin Bates '04** and **Rikki Johnson** celebrated their marriage in beautiful Altadena surrounded by family and friends. Many Sequoyah community members helped to make the event extra special, including an (almost) all-Sequoyah parent and alumni band. Their dog, Peggy Hill, was heavily involved in the wedding and a great time was had by all.



Erin and Rikki with Sequoyah parents Colleen Dunn Bates and Darryl Bates, and Emily Bates '07



Peggy Hill being escorted by Jr. Bridesmaids Olive and Stella



(L-R) Bobby Johnston, Harrison Whitford, Lukas Frank '08, Phoebe Bridgers '09, Garret Lang '03 and Rob Waller

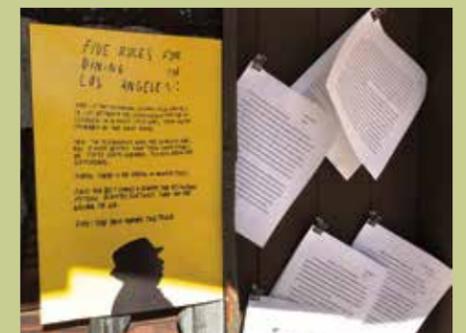
## Transitions & Passing

In the spring of 2018, **Charlie Holzweissig**, father of **Kay '82** and **Craig '84 Holzweissig**, passed away at age 84 in Portland, Oregon. He participated in the junior high camping trips in the 1980's with Sequoyah teacher Sarah Starr.



Bruce Hubbard with his children Mei-Ling and Jonathan.

**Bruce Hubbard** was a Sequoyah parent from 1991 to 2001. He brought science experiments to show the kids and built a darkroom. He was passionate about learning and teaching and seemingly knew something about everything. His love for art and science, talents and intellect, mixed with the Sequoyah experience have shaped two beautiful kids, **Mei-Ling '99** and **Jonathan '01 Hubbard**. The Art Center College of Design, where Bruce taught for 30 years, held a remembrance to celebrate his life on July 14, 2018.



Sequoyah Jr. High students display their own restaurant reviews on the patio.

Writer, humanitarian, and beloved Sequoyah parent and father to Leon, **Jonathan Gold** passed away this summer in Los Angeles. For the past decade, Jonathan would visit the Sequoyah classroom during the Junior High unit on journalism. Jonathan shared with students his process of deconstructing a meal, note taking, and recommendations for tone and style. A true Angeleno, Jonathan's life is a testament to the celebration and value of diversity. It is in this spirit that Sequoyah will continue Jonathan's legacy, making meaningful connections between the food we prepare and the communities it brings together.

## Treasurer's Report

The creation and growth of an extraordinary K-12 educational program is not possible without the generosity and support of Sequoyah community members, past and current parents, grandparents, alumni, and friends.

Each year, your generous donations to Annual Giving, jogathon, and the auction enable Sequoyah to attract and retain an extraordinary group of teachers and specialists who are committed to an innovative curriculum where individual attention and support is given to each student's social, emotional, and academic progress.

Like most independent schools, Sequoyah depends on charitable giving to sustain the school's institutional values, in particular a founding commitment to an inclusive and socioeconomically diverse school community. On average, 30-40% of students pay less than the top tuition. As a result, our students benefit from an inclusive school community with a broad spectrum of social, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

The board of trustees has taken thoughtful and concrete steps to secure the long-term financial sustainability of the school. Looking ahead, we'll continue building on this momentum through next year's capital campaign whose success will secure the future of Sequoyah for generations to come.

Lorin Knell  
Treasurer, Board of Trustees  
December 2018

## Giving to Sequoyah

### Annual Fund

Donations to the annual campaign enable Sequoyah to sustain a long-term commitment to an inclusive, diverse school community with extraordinary teaching and student-centered education. Annual gifts offer Sequoyah the greatest flexibility in addressing strategic priorities and pressing needs.

### June Olson Fund

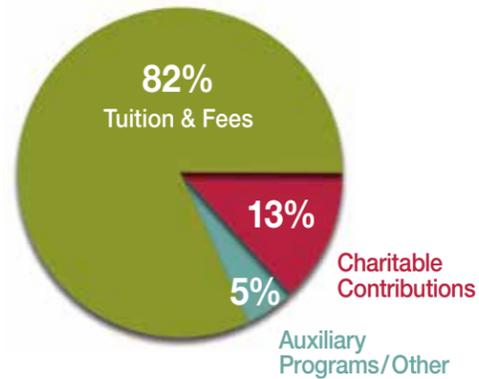
Established in honor of June Olson to promote socioeconomic diversity at Sequoyah, this fund is used to assist with tuition; subsidize daycare; provide monies for camping trips and camping equipment; and provide funding for other special programs.

### Yvonne Pinto Scholarship Fund

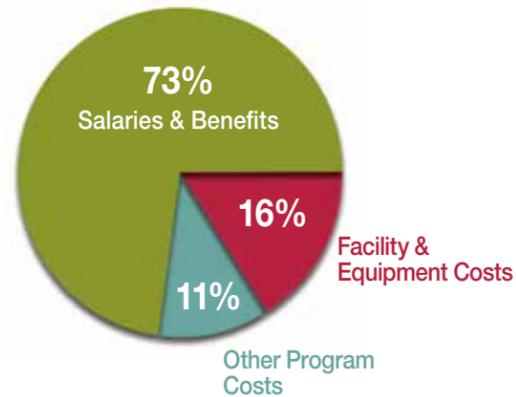
The fund's annual interest benefits students attending Sequoyah whose parent(s) or guardian(s) are Sequoyah employees. Grants can be provided to assist with tuition, subsidize daycare, and provide for field studies and other special programs.



### Revenue



### Expenses



## Financial Statements

### Sequoyah Educational Center Statement of Financial Position

|   | 2018                 | 2017                 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Assets:</b>                          |                      |                      |
| Cash & Equivalents                      | \$ 5,263,589         | \$ 3,789,770         |
| Accounts Receivable                     | 5,597,449            | 5,046,054            |
| Pledges Receivable                      | 65,715               | 142,210              |
| Prepaid Expenses                        | 26,840               | 26,840               |
| Marketable Securities                   | 161,096              | 149,603              |
| Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment       | 4,108,663            | 4,324,566            |
| <b>Total Assets</b>                     | <b>\$ 15,223,352</b> | <b>\$ 13,479,043</b> |
| <b>Liabilities:</b>                     |                      |                      |
| Accounts Payable                        | \$ 12,663            | \$ 48,035            |
| Accrued Liabilities                     | 412,401              | 235,343              |
| Bank Loan                               | 2,444,092            | 2,549,581            |
| Deferred Revenue                        | 8,340,807            | 7,397,165            |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>                | <b>\$ 11,209,963</b> | <b>\$ 10,230,124</b> |
| <b>Net Assets:</b>                      |                      |                      |
| Unrestricted                            | \$ 3,441,634         | \$ 3,024,174         |
| Temporarily Restricted                  | 500,300              | 153,290              |
| Permanently Restricted                  | 71,455               | 71,455               |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                 | <b>\$ 4,013,389</b>  | <b>\$ 3,248,919</b>  |
| <b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b> | <b>\$ 15,223,352</b> | <b>\$ 13,479,043</b> |

### Statement of Changes in Net Assets

| For the fiscal year ended                | 2018                | 2017                |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Revenues:</b>                         |                     |                     |
| Tuition & Fees                           | \$ 7,476,648        | \$ 6,192,711        |
| Fundraising                              |                     |                     |
| – Recurring Events                       | \$ 707,660          | \$ 587,597          |
| – In-Kind Contributions                  | 15,779              | 121,274             |
| – Other Gifts                            | 500,300             | 87,909              |
| – Subtotal: Fundraising                  | \$ 1,223,739        | \$ 796,780          |
| Other Revenue                            | 414,890             | 362,658             |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                     | <b>\$ 9,115,277</b> | <b>\$ 7,352,149</b> |
| <b>Expenses:</b>                         |                     |                     |
| Program Services                         | \$ 5,243,804        | \$ 4,770,384        |
| Supporting Services                      | 3,107,003           | 2,205,481           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                    | <b>\$ 8,350,807</b> | <b>\$ 6,975,865</b> |
| <b>Change In Net Assets:</b>             | <b>\$ 764,470</b>   | <b>\$ 376,284</b>   |
| Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year  | \$ 3,248,919        | \$ 2,872,635        |
| <b>Net Assets at the End of the Year</b> | <b>\$ 4,013,389</b> | <b>\$ 3,248,919</b> |

# Donors

## Annual Fund 2017–2018

\*5-9 Years of Giving \*\*10+ Years of Giving (Consistent records for giving started in 2002)

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Marsha Bohr  
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# 8,312 Miles and Counting

## Reflections on the Journey and Experience of High School

Throughout my sophomore and junior years at Sequoyah, I've travelled 8,312 miles by van, bus, train, plane, and river raft across the United States and Costa Rica. According to Google Drive, I've produced 4.7 GB of research papers, creative writing assignments, and Powerpoint presentations. And, I have participated in 293 Morning Meetings. Of which, seventeen hours and seven minutes were spent in meditation.

These moments of profound introspection, the unforgettable cross-country and international experiences, and the insatiable curiosity of my teachers and peers have transformed my perceptions of not only the world, but also the potential of one's presence within a greater community.

Through the Talking Leaves curriculum, the Social Innovation Program (SIP), and the Stewardship groups, Sequoyah has educated my classmates and me about the interconnectedness of the world around us. We are taught to identify unusual parallels between academic subjects and explore underlying similarities between seemingly separate societal factions. And, most importantly, we are encouraged to question, discuss, and debate these discoveries.

However, Sequoyah is a school of action and a community of changemakers, so simply teaching and examining these topics has not proved satisfactory. Instead, the administration has encouraged student activism and organized countless hands-on, service-oriented field trips, providing us with opportunities to engage with members of our communities, whom we might not otherwise meet.

In SIP, teams of freshmen and sophomores conceptualized and implemented solutions to social, political, and environmental problems. As a junior, I participated in the high school's first group of independent SIP projects. With the freedom to identify an issue specific to my interests, I spent the year researching food waste and food deserts; interviewing stakeholders; visiting off-campus sites; and presenting my findings to peers, teachers, parents, and other professionals.

Students are also afforded many opportunities to contribute on-campus in addition to our off-campus participation. While the culture at the high school has evolved, the emphasis on student involvement has remained consistent. As the Co-Chair of the Student Activities Committee, I helped plan several school-wide events, such as the Gryphon Olympics (a day of inter-advisory competition), Spirit Week, and Sequoyah's first Winter Formal! These challenges and accomplishments taught me about the significance of effective collaboration, communication, and organization within a functional team. The school dance was



especially rewarding because it allowed guests from other schools to familiarize themselves with Sequoyah's students and emerging traditions.

This experience inspired me to start the Preschool Partners club (a group that organizes fun activities and games for the preschoolers with whom we share our campus) and join the Ad Hoc Student Affairs Committee (student activists who planned two school-wide walk outs in honor of victims of school shootings, a day of educational workshops about the history of gun violence and gun legislation, and a protest to promote gun reform).

During our first international trip to Costa Rica, my classmates and I not only escaped from our phones, but we also experienced what it was like to leave the excessive, complex lifestyles to which we have grown accustomed. While living with my host family in Cedral, I most admired the joy and fulfillment they found in simplicity. Their lives were built around meaningful relationships, unobstructed by many of the materialistic distractions prevalent in my life. Travelling to another country forced me to understand how limited my perspective is, but it also inspired me to reexamine the world from hundreds of new angles. I am so grateful to have had this life changing opportunity, and I can't wait for the many more exciting Sequoyah adventures to come.

## UPCOMING 2019 EVENTS

### MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY—ALL SCHOOL MEETING

January 18

### 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

February 9

### JOGATHON

February 22

### HIGH SCHOOL PLAY — BIG FISH

April (dates TBD)

### EARTH DAY HOT LUNCH CELEBRATION

April 19

### CONFERENCE FOR YOUTH CHANGEMAKING

April 27

### MUSICALE

April 26 & May 10

### 8TH GRADE PLAY

May 31

### HIGH SCHOOL EXHIBITION NIGHT

June 3

### K-12 ART NIGHT

June 4

### 8TH GRADE GRADUATION

June 6

### HIGH SCHOOL BACCALAUREATE

June 7

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

June 8

### Sequoyah Connect Coming Soon!

Connect with the Sequoyah community across continents, industries, and generations — whether you are looking for college or career advice, want to connect with fellow alumni, or need to hire an intern or employee, or would like to be a mentor, SEQUOYAH CONNECT makes it all possible. Look for an email invitation to the online network in 2019!

### Alumni Committee

The Sequoyah Alumni Committee has been working behind the scenes to support our upcoming 60th birthday party (see back cover) and on some exciting plans to grow the alumni database and encourage more alumni to reconnect and participate in alumni events. The committee's goals also include recruiting class representatives and planning an alumni weekend.

To learn more about alumni activities at Sequoyah, update your contact information, or share news & updates, please contact Kay Yamamoto at [kyamamoto@sequoyahschool.org](mailto:kyamamoto@sequoyahschool.org).

## 2018-19 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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# Celebrating 60 years of Sequoyah

FEBRUARY 9, 2019  
K-8 CAMPUS  
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.



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