Why Do You Give?
Pacific Primary’s Annual Fund
By Lynda Sanjurjo-Rutter

Money alone cannot make a preschool great, but a great preschool cannot serve children and their families effectively without the generous support of parents, grandparents, friends, and alumni. After 35 years, Pacific Primary is proud of its efforts to change the world, one child at a time. The Annual Fund helps to underwrite every element of the experience, including our tuition assistance program and creative arts program and specialists. Gifts at every level are very much appreciated and every one counts.

Pacific Primary now has two schools, and both schools offer an exceptional and nurturing learning environment filled with play and hands-on experiences. Our extraordinary teachers and vibrant curriculum provide children with creative problem-solving skills, a love of difference and celebration of diversity, and an astonishing confidence to connect meaningfully with the people and communities around them.

Pacific Primary inspires a lifelong love of learning, creating and caring and many in our community give to the Annual Fund in celebration of their Pacific Primary experience. Why do you give? You can hear from you. Write or send an email to:

Belann Giarretto, Director
Pacific Primary
1501 Grove Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
belan@pacificprimary.org

Please make the subject line of your email: Why I Give

Alumni Notes
By Tita Bell

Alexis Bogerdus (1986) graduated from the California Culinary Academy, worked as a pastry chef at Shattil’s Deli, and now works part-time at the Sandbox Bakery on Cortland. She recently brought her 18-month-old daughter Saoirse to Pacific Primary to see her former teacher Roxie!

Jonathan Hunt (1996) is in his final year at The Bay School of San Francisco. He has been a summer assistant at Pacific Primary for the past four years and recently completed a seven-month internship at Pirate Cat Radio 87.9 FM, which ignited his passion for radio. The highlight was having Toby O’Regan on.

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Tobin O’Donnell (1979) has lived in Chicago since graduating from Northwestern University in 1993. For years he worked in the theater, primarily as a puppeteer and puppet festival producer. Simultaneously, he worked as a product design and business consultant. In 2003 David obtained a master’s degree in urban planning and worked on energy efficiency and renewable energy policy for the City of Chicago. David is now exploring independent opportunities in the energy efficiency fields and still lives in Chicago with his wife, Jessica, and their daughter, Willa Marie.

Tobin O’Donnell (1979) is a freelance puppeteer and brand strategist, but still wishes he could work in a sandbox because he feels it he did some of his best work in the sandbox of his youth. His parents, Kris and Owen O’Donnell, were among the founding families of Pacific Primary. His mother, Kris, still volunteers at Pacific Primary, which Tobin thinks is wonderful.

Gabriella Franchi Archini (1982) is still good friends with many of her Pacific Primary graduates. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, Christopher. Gabriella works in real estate and savors all that this great city has to offer.

Alex Hedgpeth (1995) is a student at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, where she won a partial scholarship and placed into the honors science program. Alex is majoring in environmental studies.

Marina Hedgpeth (1996) is in her sophomore year at Drew High School and is a staunch advocate for marriage equality. She was active in the 2008 campaign against Prop 8.

Corinne Schneider (1988) graduated from USF and is now getting her Masters of Science in Athletic Training at Montana State University at Billings.

Magical art drawers. Gobs of colored tape. A Ramp Project that begins in November and doesn’t end until May, sprawling through every hallway, encompassing physics, art, math, and engineering. Hot buttered toast every morning (organic whole wheat, no trans fats!). The Peace Place, where conflicts are resolved. Children marching around the block to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday, singing “We Shall Overcome.” These are just some of the images that sprang to mind when someone asks, ‘What makes Pacific Primary so unique?’

What Pacific Primary parent hasn’t had their child clamor for colored tape? Who hasn’t had their child come home covered in wads of tape or with amazing objects made of nothing other than empty paper towel rolls and tape? How amazing is it that our kids’ daily art projects are dreamed up and executed entirely by them, with little instruction, to lines to fill in, or recommended materials. The openness, freedom and creativity of these art projects is utterly organic and wouldn’t be possible without the school’s dedicated art teachers.

As Pacific Primary enters its 35th year, there is little doubt that the list of our school’s compellingly unique attributes couldn’t be contained within this newsletter. For Director Belann Giarretto, what makes our school so special, is the amazing staff and their dedication, passion, and willingness to experiment as they develop the best methods possible for teaching our kids how to learn. Not only are the staff empowered to take continuing education classes, teachers get help from a support teacher three hours a week, giving them significant time to reflect and observe the children’s curiosities and interests. This is what makes possible the emergent curriculum that is Pacific Primary’s trademark, that has resulted in endlessly inventive projects that have incorporated everything from buildings and maps to babies and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Parents love that Pacific Primary’s daily schedule—open year-round from 7:30 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.—provides flexibility, and that there is no stigma around early drop-off and late pick-ups. (We also know that quite often our kids don’t want to leave!) Our children also love due to enriching out-of-town summer field trips designed to complement the school’s emergent curriculum—picking anyone!—and the fact that parents are always encouraged to stop by and read a book, do a cooking project, or chaperone a field trip.

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A beautiful new Pacific Primary website was created by Boone Spooner in the fall of 2009:

www.pacificprimary.org

The new website has info on both schools, admissions, a newsletter archive, a way to donate, and much more!

THANK YOU, BOOZE, FOR ALL OF YOUR EFFORTS!
Pacific Terrific
continued from page 1

Our school is proud to be known for its forward-thinking leadership. And we lead by example. Most of our supplies are recycled and “found” materials. The Orange Sun School is fully solar. Kids compost (and teach their parents.) Regarding food: local and organic is our motto. Diversity is real and treasured. We openly discuss awkwardness that may arise due to economic differences; celebrate racial, ethnic and family diversity, and also invite the sharing of our vast range of cultural traditions. While many schools have a “barbell problem”—families at the low and high end of the income spectrum—our school has an amazing mix that truly reflects its commitment to diversity.

Over the past 35 years, Pacific Primary’s core values have remained true to its founding families. They have been kept alive by passionate alumni and parents and staff longevity. (Some have been here for over 30 years!) And they will undoubtedly shape the school—and another generation of children—over the next 35 years. As many parents say: I hope my kids stay in SF so that their kids can go to Pacific Primary!

A month-long investigation of sea life in the Panda class spurred the creation of toothpick sea urchins and a summer field trip to Crab Cove, Alameda.

The Rainbow Dolphins look intently at a jar of caterpillars collected from the garden.

Gray Whales make glitter playdough, inspired by one of the students as part of a project to explore materials using their hands.

Out-of-the-box creativity by the Coyotes...

And in-the-box play by the Penguins.

A Message From the Directors

35 years ago, in September 1974, Pacific Primary opened its doors! Nine families helped create a school that has always put the needs of children first. 35 years later, two of our founders are still connected to the school. Roxie Jones is still teaching and bringing her great love of children to all of the classrooms at the Yellow Sun School as our Support Teacher. How fortunate we are to have Roxie! Alums visit the school and are thrilled to see a teacher who still remembers them. Kris O’Donnell, another founder, volunteers every Wednesday with the youngest classroom, the Penguins, at the Orange Sun School and is also a substitute teacher. We are very grateful to the founders and Mary Bodo, Founding Director, for taking the extraordinary steps of opening the school. We thank the O’Donnell, Jones and Twist families for encouraging our board to take the steps and handle the risks in opening a new school. After the start of our second year as two schools, we are delighted to say that it feels like both schools have always anchored the corners of Grove and Baker. To offer the Pacific Primary experience to 75 additional children and their families is a joy.

Every generation of graduates has fond and powerful memories of the school. Many older graduates tell us that Pacific Primary is the best educational experience of their life. We are grateful for the work of Mary Bodo and second Director, Charlotte Burchard, for shepherding the school to new heights.

In early 2010, we will soon be a “Preschool to 4th” site. We were invited to be part of this program last year and we successfully completed the ECERS (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) assessment in October. The evaluation for all 8 classrooms determined that Pacific Primary is an exemplary school. PFA benefits include a discount in tuition for parents of four-year-olds, funds for the school, staff development and teachers.

We are also very excited to announce that in 2010 Pacific Primary will be starting a two-year pilot Sensory Integration Program made possible by a generous grant from an anonymous donor and from the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund. The goal of this program is to provide support for the children in the Pre-K classrooms and education for parents, as well as the teachers. This is often a topic that parents and teachers may have an awareness of, but are not always confident in knowing what to do when a child has sensory integration issues.

Some of the components of this program will be assessing the current materials in the classrooms, in order to meet the needs of the children through tactile, movement, visual and auditory areas of their development. We will also have Occupational Therapists, in conjunction with the classroom teachers, to assess those children who are eligible for kindergarten and to determine if there are sensory motor issues before they graduate from Pacific Primary. Then we can decide how we can best support them.

Another important aspect of the program will be professional development for the teachers as well as parent education workshops. The workshops and staff trainings will be conducted by early childhood educators that have specialized in Sensory Motor Development and Brain Development.

All of these opportunities will enhance our program on a continuing basis for our children, parents and staff as we strive to provide the very best program for our community.

With Love and Gratitude,
Belann Giaretto, Executive Director
Lynn Turner, Associate Director
Giving to Haiti
By Vanessa Maren

The Pacific Primary parent and staff community showed an amazing outpouring of generosity recently. It started with Sandpiper parent, Cheri Gonzalez, whose friend (a parent at Sacred Heart School) received approval to load a plane full of supplies for the Haitian people. Within 30 hours of an email from Belann requesting supplies for Haiti, both school sunrooms were packed with suitcases and boxes of medical supplies, personal items and clothing. A hair salon owner even donated $1,000 worth of shampoo!

The drop-off to Haiti was arranged by Sirona Cares—a San Francisco nonprofit organization established in 2009 to build sustainable communities in developing countries. Following the devastating earthquake, Executive Director Michelle Lacourciere, worked through frantic NGO messages and media calls and got right into the business of Haiti relief. After three days of collection, a 1000 square feet warehouse supplied by Nancy Pelosi was packed from floor to ceiling with contributions from the entire Bay Area (including Pacific Primary).

Thank you, Cheri, for your initiative in arranging this and giving Pacific Primary families an opportunity to contribute to Haiti relief efforts!

In the coming weeks, Sirona Cares will be coordinating a larger food drive with the San Francisco Restaurant Association. For those who would like to donate further or volunteer your time sorting through items, please visit http://www.sironacares.org or e-mail volunteersirona@gmail.com

Financial Highlights

In fiscal year 2009-2010, Pacific Primary anticipates total revenues of $2,870,120. Tuition and fees account for 99% (or $2,551,412) of that total.

The 2009 annual auction raised $130,000. Staff payroll costs comprise 8% of our total expenses.

In 2009-2010, Pacific Primary has 46 staff members.

The Tuition Assistance Endowment Fund currently is over $860,000. Investment income from this fund pays a portion of our tuition assistance fund each year.

This year, 17% of students received tuition assistance, totaling $192,208.
Chefs.

Betty McMillian has been Pacific Primary’s chef extraordinaire for 30 years. She takes tremendous joy in cooking delicious, organic meals for the children at the Yellow Sun School. When speaking to Betty, there are two things that are instantly obvious: her incredible warmth and her strong sense of responsibility. Photos of kids with allergies on the fridge door help to avoid any mistakes. And she has a strict no-kids-in-the-kitchen rule, no matter how much the children beg to learn how to cook. While preparing vegetable soup and corn bread for lunch, here’s what Betty had to say:

**CHEF BETTY’S MACARONI AND CHEESE**

There’s no one at Pacific Primary who doesn’t love Betty’s Macaroni and Cheese (even our older alumni fondly remember this). She makes this dish once a week (always accompanied by either broccoli or string beans), and the kids insist, “Betty makes it best!” Here’s her secret:

1 tsp. salt
2 Tbs. heart healthy margarine
1 tsp. oil
3 cup milk
3/4 lb. mild cheddar cheese, grated
1 Tbs. flour
1 lb. elbow macaroni
1/2 tsp. black pepper

Add salt and oil in boiling water. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni according to instructions and drain. Add all the other ingredients to the hot macaroni and mix. Pour into baking dish and bake for 30-35 minutes. Serve with green vegetable.

**Celebrating Chef Betty’s 30 Years**

By Vanessa Maren

Pacific Primary’s mission reflects its commitment to all families, including lesbian and gay parents. But how does a school like Pacific Primary fulfill this promise?

We begin by striving to mirror San Francisco’s diversity in our staff and families. For staff, it means being encouraged, under Belann’s leadership, to cultivate the ability to both appreciate our process and goals and to critique and change practices that are not aligned with the complexities of an ever-changing world. These efforts have enabled us to evolve from being a school that merely welcomes all families, to one that is a national model of how to create a welcoming environment for LGBT parents.

In 2002, in recognition of our accomplishments, the Haas Jr. Fund asked us to work with seven local nonprofit agencies to develop what became the LGBT Early Childhood Education (ECE) Initiative. Belann and I served for five years on the Initiative’s steering committee (which I co-chaired), and helped develop the first-in-the-nation college course to teach aspiring educators how to create welcoming environments for LGBT families. This class continues to be taught at City College of San Francisco today. The Initiative also developed a training model that was implemented in many San Francisco ECE programs, and a checklist for parents and teachers to assess their program’s inclusivity.

In conjunction with this effort, Jim Pohl, an alum parent, created a documentary called, “Real Families,” which includes several Pacific Primary lesbian and gay parents. Belann and I presented the film at the 2005 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference. to more than 60 workshop participants. Attendees ranged from the staff of a faith-based program that was about to welcome its first two-mom family, to a progressive preschool that wanted to learn how to strengthen its already inclusive program. It was immediately evident that the participants were excited to learn about this topic and eager to meet people who could offer information, support, and advice. Today, I continue to present annually at NAEYC, and other conferences on topics ranging from introducing books that include gay and lesbian parents into the classroom, to supporting LGBT staff.

The work that Pacific Primary does within the field of ECE to help schools establish a welcoming environment for LGBT parents and their children is just one aspect of our commitment to social justice. But it is a great source of pride and satisfaction for me, personally, and for our community.

Brian Silveira is Pacific Primary’s Polar Bear Lead Teacher, Senior Lead Teacher, and Diversity Coordinator. He received the 2009 David Gwenis Award from the NAEYC LGBT Interest Forum for his outstanding work as a teacher, leader, and change agent.

Our Strong Commitment to LGBT Families

By Brian Silveira

**PACIFIC PRIMARY STAFF**

**ORANGE SUN SCHOOL**

**PENGUINS**

Sandra Fuller, Lead Teacher
Brandie Braxton
Jarrod Fischer

**PRAIRIE DOGS**

Jocelyn Halili, Lead Teacher
Rosanne Lutz
Tammy Burchas
Patricia Phillips, Afternoon Teacher

**PANDAS**

Kelly Fox, Lead Teacher
(on maternity leave) Verónica Lee
Kali Polk-Matthews
Katheren Hernandez

**POLAR BEARS**

Brian Silveira, Lead Teacher
Alyssa Chazen-Richards
Megan Matteoni

**Music and Movement Specialist**

Kevin Genzerat

**Expressive Arts Specialist**

Elise Jacobs

**Support Teacher/Afternoon Teacher**

Sean O’Connor

**Sunroom Coordinator**

Joan Vigliotta

**Afternoon Sunroom Teacher**

Katheren Hernandez (Sept.-Dec.)

**Afternoon Supervisor**

Rebecca Walsh

**Chef**

Donald Meints

**Permanent Substitute**

Amy Fernandez

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