

## Learning Buddies, Conservation and Public Action

Science classes at MMS incorporate learning between different grade levels, building relationships and collaborating on curriculum. This year the freshmen joined with the fifth grade, and their studies led to a visit to the National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration's Sanctuary Exploration Center in Santa Cruz.

The fifth graders chose humpback whales as the topic for their in-depth environmental project. Intelligent and vocal, with distinctly shaped pectoral fins and a knobby head, the humpback whale has long captured human interest, appreciation and, most recently, our concern. The ninth grade, meanwhile, became "urban backpackers" dedicating themselves to plastic pollution reduction. Throughout the school year the two classes worked independently, and at times collaboratively, to understand the issues affecting these topics and work toward solutions.

"When my buddy Ami and I were exploring the sanctuary's visitor center we learned that the Monterey [Submarine] Canyon is actually as big or bigger than the Grand Canyon," said fifth grader Tej D'Costa Hemp. "We also learned that trash goes through our streets and gutters and it all ends up in the ocean. Trash goes all the way down in that canyon and that is sad. We have to protect our bay!"



Students worked together to clear debris from a local beach

Together the students picked up trash on Cowell Beach, with ninth graders documenting their finds on tally cards.

"One thing that I really understood after our field trip is that there is actually a lot of plastic trash on our own beaches – it isn't just happening

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## Engaged Citizens and Relevant Questions

We hope you were able to follow the students' spring journey to Washington, D.C. via their blog and/or attend the Values Presentation in May, where students shared their reflections and deeper understanding of those they interviewed who have chosen a life of service.

This learning journey, part of the MMS Values in World Thought program, provided an opportunity for students to interview a broad array of government and social action leaders, including members of the House of Representatives, State Department, as well as non-government leaders including the presidents of Vital Voices and Running Start, and the secretary general of United Nations Foundation's Council of Women World Leaders. Among those interviewed were journalist Cokie Roberts of NPR and ABC News, and Ezra Levin, a co-founder of the national Indivisible movement.

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Juniors and seniors in Washington, D.C.

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## Our Mission

We are a community of learners dedicated to creative, intellectual and ethical growth. We support our students to become caring, self-aware, discerning and articulate individuals. We believe a fulfilling life includes personal accomplishments, meaningful relationships and service to society.

### We gratefully acknowledge and thank the photographers whose work is included in this issue:

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# Growing Moral Courage: A Letter from Our Head of School

With the onset of the current school year, MMS is celebrating the 40th year since its founding in 1979. Decade markers often bring with them reunions, and a time for reflection and examining who we are and why we continue to do the work we do. At our August retreat, we spoke with the school trustees about our history and mission, with a vision toward future generations. There are some constants that we see running through our educational practices over 40 years with committed teachers, staff and administrators.

We often speak of the three pillars of our school: academic excellence, creative self expression and positive character development. These words were chosen after a careful process of appreciative inquiry with faculty, parents, administration and staff. Ideas within these headings are like the warp threads on the loom, woven into all the coursework and projects created in the daily learning environment at MMS. *The Connection* magazine generally highlights one pillar, although the three principles are truly part of the same cloth.

This year our upper school joined a project at Harvard School of Education called Making Caring Common. At the annual Head's conference, Richard Weissbourd, Ph.D., spoke about Harvard's national effort to make moral and social development a priority in child-rearing and schools, with a commitment to students' ethical development. As Dr. Weissbourd shared the strategies that help people develop moral awareness and courage, I was struck by how many of these elements we already weave into our curriculum.

Reviewing the past year's stories and photos, we see opportunities for positive character development through meaningful activities and trips that deepen students' sense of purpose, connection to others and understanding of who they are in relation to their community. Positive character development at MMS is so much more than following a set of rules. Weissbourd opened his talk with a question for the heads of independent schools, "How do we fuse a moral and spiritual life?"

At MMS, we forge ahead with inquiry, fostering natural curiosity and time spent with big and little buddies. We connect students with the natural world, developing their sense of place and stewardship. Team building experiences on the stage, trips and athletics, teach caring for others to accomplish a goal larger than oneself. We practice reflective thinking, alone and together. We end journeys with thoughtful questions that encourage a self-discovery process. In their commencement speeches, our 2018 graduates commented that at MMS they felt appreciated for who they are, and that they weren't expected to be like everyone else. That search for identity is common to young adults, and MMS takes this quest for self-understanding as a core benchmark of a good education.

Many of the lessons and reflections from our students are showcased in this issue of *The Connection*. In the upper school, students share writings from D.C., the middle school camping and backpacking trip, a student-hosted veterans assembly, and the Santa Cruz County Civics Summit. These are just a sampling of the projects that emphasize ethical thinking and moral development.

Our big buddies projects, trips and performances foster mentoring, cross-age education and caring for those younger or older. That both our fifth and ninth grade were chosen to attend the national WE Day event is truly remarkable and a testament to their environmental efforts! Appreciating our ancestors and diversity with a whole school *Dia de los Muertos*, created a bond of shared respect for family and each other. Our lower school Cultural Awareness performances honored our grandparents and showcased the cultures of Southeast Asia, while educating the entire school. Lower school students visit local organic farms and plant in our Life Lab garden, generating an awareness of where our food comes from and encouraging healthy eating habits.

While much knowledge is learned along the way within each of these projects, the lessons are really a vehicle for the development of positive character. Learning is truly inspiring and profound when the lessons connect people together in purposeful activity that serves the community around them in a meaningful way. In order to graduate "engaged citizens," MMS provides opportunities to practice and become "engaged students," who grow moral courage, where the only choice is to act because it's the right thing to do.



Mary Supriya McDonald

Head of School

# Embracing Individuality and Interpersonal Connections



Enjoying the view during a hike at Big Basin Redwoods State Park

A cornerstone of MMS is the inclusion and involvement of its community, and one way this principle is supported in middle school (MS) is through the annual start-of-school camping trip.

“Our camping adventure provides a neutral territory for new and returning students to find common ground, and develop interpersonal connections while promoting individual growth,” commented trip leader and Dean of Students Bob Caplan. “It provides a much-needed transition from the care-free summer to the responsibility of school days.”

The chaperone crew is comprised of faculty, parents and alumni, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and role modeling across age groups. Parent and chaperone Stevan Manzur reflected on the experience.

“Typical barriers that students may face, like making new friends and fitting in, are dissolved as youth and adults work together to build the camp, prepare and serve meals,” he said. “Group activities, like untying the human knot, the ‘name game’ and hikes exploring the area, continue to support inclusion. Whereas, the talent show, personal journals and quiet time encourage introspection, embrace individuality and celebrate each person’s talents and abilities.”

Parent chaperone Jen Astone said that the setting, intentional array of activities, and committed adults contributed to building a sense of trust and community.

“We learned about ‘crumb-free camping’ to save the marbled murrelet who nests on old-growth redwoods,” commented Astone, “and the

alumni are fantastic: fun and full of creativity, energy and great questions!”

MMS encourages its students to feel comfortable being and learning outside. Chaperone and MS Athletic Director Erin Mitchell (’10) said throughout the school year she hears students referencing good memories of this trip and special time together.

“As a new eighth grade student at Mount Madonna, starting school with camping and backpacking was quite different from my other school experiences,” shared Liana Kitchel. “When I showed up the first day, I was nervous and anxious.

Top: Cooling off in the creek  
Bottom: Untying the “human knot”



I had to talk to younger kids and people that I did not know, and it was a little uncomfortable at first. I soon figured out that this trip was all about building connections and relationships with new people, even for the people who had been there since kindergarten. This trip gave me a chance to meet my classmates and some of the teachers, not in a classroom, but camping, a more relaxed environment where we could be our complete selves.”

On the second day of the trip, the eighth graders and several chaperones depart on a backpacking excursion, before meeting up with the rest of the group on the final day.

“For the eighth grade, this is the culmination of their MS camping experiences and as with many culminations it is also a beginning, and an initiation that marks the start of their eighth grade year,” commented faculty member Dayanand Diffenbaugh, a participant and trip leader for many years. “The school year will again culminate in their solo time on the spring Rite of Passage camping experience at Mount Madonna and emphasizes the transition of this life stage, as these youth prepare to become more responsible young adults.”

Faculty member Nicole Tervalon has participated in and/or led the backpacking portion of the trip for more than a decade.

“Our intention for bringing the eighth grade out into the back country away from their devices and general comforts of their usual life is to give them space to slow down, breathe in the beauty of the physical world, and build strong bonds together as a class,” explained Tervalon. “As eighth graders they will be the MS leaders and we encourage them to reflect on their school experiences so far, and to look inward for how they can be responsible, respectful models for each other and their younger peers. The shared challenges bring the group closer together, and the astounding beauty of the natural world and disconnection from busy routines remind us all of our deeper priorities.”

The intrinsic value of the middle school camping trip can be as varied and unique as the students.

“From my observation,” commented Manzur, “one of the common takeaways for students is their realization of how much they have learned and can accomplish on their own, contrasted by the silent acknowledgement of their vulnerability and the necessity for community support. In the end, the students seem to enter the school year and classroom with a bit more confidence and ease, feeling connected and a part of their community.”

— Leigh Ann Clifton



Top: Relaxing around the campfire  
Middle: Making friends  
Bottom: Identifying the flora and fauna

## Powerful Voices and Literary Gems

In their English classes last fall, freshmen and sophomores participated in the *Yes! Magazine* National Student Writing Competition, and writings by three MMS students were recognized: an essay by freshman Morgan Westbrook was selected as a Literary Gem and Powerful Voice semi-finalist; classmate Nadia Rassech was one of six Powerful Voice finalists; and an excerpt from the essay by sophomore Fiona Burgess was published as a Literary Gem selection.

Student writers responded to the prompt: *Think about someone in your school or community who is vulnerable and may need protection or support. This person may be a neighbor or a classmate – it may even be you. Are you willing and brave enough to stand up against injustice? Describe what you would do, and how your actions might make a difference.*

This is our students’ second year participating in this contest. I’m drawn to this model because the writing prompts address real-life issues and ask students to think deeply about their own values and how they interact with the world. It was so illuminating and inspiring to see how every single student defined and reflected on the concept of injustice and how they choose to engage with the issues that matter to them. They recognize the interconnectedness of our humanity and how our beliefs, decisions, and actions have a huge impact on the health and integrity of the global community.

— Haley Campbell ('02)

*It was that day I realized it was real. Discrimination, hate, injustice and inequality. Even if they were just a few little kids, it was from that conversation I realized why they were never allowed to come over to my house for a playdate, or why their parents didn't seem to get along with mine. When my father later comforted me in his car and handed me another tissue, I realized my mistake. I shouldn't have shied away from telling the truth about my parents. I shouldn't have felt ashamed about my fathers' love for each other.*

*I should have stood up for myself.*

*'Nidoto nai yoni' is the phrase. Nidoto nai yoni. Let it not happen again. Never let it happen again.*

*And I won't, because I made a promise to my eight-year-old-self.*

— Nadia Rassech, Powerful Voice Finalist

• • • • •

*I am the only child of the Westbrooks who has dark skin. At home, my mom and dad explain the facts of racial injustice and I can witness them anytime my dad and I walk into a store that sells anything worth stealing.*

— Morgan Westbrook, Powerful Voice Semi-Finalist and Literary Gem Selection

• • • • •

*Men refer to their cars and boats with a female pronoun, making things they own female. So maybe this is part of why many men, strangers on the street, have felt this ownership of women's bodies leading to this gross justification to follow, touch and call at women and girls. However, understanding the roots of the problem still doesn't make any of it okay. Women deserve the same freedom of movement as men.*

— Fiona Burgess, Literary Gem Selection

# Determination, Focus and Competing with Character



Jordan Willis reaches new heights during a boys varsity match

The girls varsity volleyball and boys cross country teams were both recognized with the Central Coast Section (CCS) of the California Interscholastic Federation's Scholastic Championship Team Award.

"We are so proud of all of our student athletes," commented Head of School Supriya McDonald. "Participating in athletics helps student concentration and increases the self-discipline needed to succeed in the classroom."

The inaugural middle school (MS) cross country team had a fantastic first year. This co-ed team had a whopping 36 runners, including some fifth graders.

"Our group competed in four meets against the Watsonville and Aptos middle school teams," said coach Nicole Silva Culbertson. "We improved each meet and had enough athletes to field five teams. At our last meet we ran against other small schools like MMS. Our teams won the overall division. It was an amazing way to end the season!"

While the high school (HS) cross country team was much smaller, with five boys and two girls, it competed in all league meets, with junior Noah Kaplan a consistent top-10 finisher out of a pack of about 60 runners.

"We had a great season," commented coach Nick Cabassa. "While we couldn't field a full girls team, junior Anika Compoginis and freshman Kira Kaplan did a great job of representing MMS. The

boys team is continuing to develop into a group of solid runners."

MS Athletic Director Erin Mitchell ('10) coached varsity girls volleyball. The team finished third in the Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League (SCCAL), second in the CCS DV championship, and as DV finalists at NorCal (essentially third in state)! The Hawks' collective GPA was 3.83, first among CCS girls volleyball teams in 2017.

"With this team scholastic award my assumptions have been confirmed," commented Mitchell. "These girls are not *just* incredible athletes, not *just* devoted students. They are truly a team made up of

student-athletes, who hold those two positions on the same tier."

"One of my proudest moments this season was the interscholastic award because it's so hard to do!" said senior and varsity athlete Gracie Howley.

Marissa Otteson coached JV girls volleyball. A season highlight was defeating St. Francis in a well-played match in October 2017.

"This team improved so much and worked incredibly hard every day in the gym," said Otteson. "They always came in with positive attitudes and played with perseverance!"

The seventh-eighth grade girls Blue volleyball team was undefeated the whole season, finishing first in the Silicon Valley Athletic League!

"These girls played with passion, enthusiasm and a dedication to the success of the team," said coach and HS Athletic Director PK McDonald ('04). "This special group of athletes know how to fully commit themselves to the process of improving every day and supporting each other."

The MS fifth-sixth grade girls Gold volleyball team finished fourth in their SVAL class, with a record of 11-3.

"There was such raw talent and energy from this group of girls," said coach Pedro Aguirre ('15). "Everyone was focused and working to improve. Their sweet, friendly attitudes made my first coaching experience a joy. Yet their fierceness and determination are not to be overlooked; those girls know how to compete and take charge!"

MMS continues to work towards establishing winter season athletics. Coach Nick Cabassa said he is committed to building a sustainable HS basketball program.

"Our basketball season was successful this year," commented Cabassa. "Although we didn't play any actual games, we did have a large group of students come to practices and participate in drills and scrimmages. It was a great way to begin the program, and this year the team will play games with other schools. I'm looking forward to really getting this program off the ground and have high hopes for its future."

Beginning a winter wrestling program also got a big step closer to reality, with the purchase of an NCAA official tournament mat. Thank you to the Garrison family for the funds

Imogen Cockrum and John Dias run a practice lap



AnMei Dasbach-Prisk clears the hurdles





The girls varsity at NorCals



Middle school cross country runners compete



and assistance in helping us to acquire this great addition!

Track and field athletes had a strong season: seniors Will Murphy and Elias Moreno, junior Noah Kaplan and sophomore Paola Jacobs qualified to compete and represent MMS in the discus, shot put and high jump in the SCCAL finals.

“Team members broke school records and surpassed their personal best scores in their events,” said coach Sara Sobkoviak. “Paola finished second in shot put and competed in the CCS semi-final, where she again beat her personal best with a throw of 29 feet and four inches!”

The varsity boys volleyball team, coached by McDonald, finished second in SCCAL.

“The season ended with a loss in the CCS D-III semifinals,” said McDonald. “But the season was filled with accomplishments and adversity, and

offered opportunities for our student athletes to continue to grow as players, teammates and develop character as individuals. The Hawks start began with an awesome home match against Bellarmine, taking one of the top teams in the state to five,” he continued. “They defended home court in league going undefeated at home. They also got their first tournament ‘first place’ since 2013, taking the Battle of the Bay tournament championship. The Hawks finished third in the Bellarmine Invitational and took a set off of the fifth-ranked team in the state, Monta Vista, in the semifinals.

“Through their many achievements, these Hawks showed themselves to be among the top teams in the state.” he continued. “Seeing the athletes rally together and step up to the challenge when faced with adversity is what defines team success.”

JV boys volleyball was coached by Aguirre, and the team finished the season with an impressive 10-2 record.

“We had a nice mix of novices and veterans,” said Aguirre. “With support from the more experienced players I saw strong improvement from those who were less experienced. I have some great memories of playing for our school and I hope these athletes made some as well.”

The fifth-eighth grade boys volleyball Black team, coached by Sidd McDonald, played well all season. The team went 9-2 overall, finishing second in the Central Coast Athletic League.

“For a predominantly young team to finish second in league and third in year-end tournament was above my highest expectations,” said McDonald. “Led by eighth graders Ben Pearson and Addy Catterall-Pendleton, the younger players really developed their skills to provide some good positional volleyball and make us competitive.”

Fifth and sixth graders represented MMS in the county-wide International Games hosted by Soquel High School.



Top: The girls junior varsity team  
Middle: Middle school Blue team  
Middle: Middle school Black team  
Bottom: The boys junior varsity team

“This event exposes students to track and field in a very ‘official’ manner giving them a taste of field sports,” commented coach Jessica Cambell. “The students trained together once a week for about two months and took all of their races very seriously. They competed well and numerous students finished in some top spots.”

— Leigh Ann Clifton

## Special Honors

### CCS Scholastic Champions

— Boys Cross Country

### CCS Scholastic Champions

— Girls Volleyball

### All-SCCAL

### High School Volleyball, Girls & Boys:

First Team —

*Brigg Busenbart, Jordan Willis*

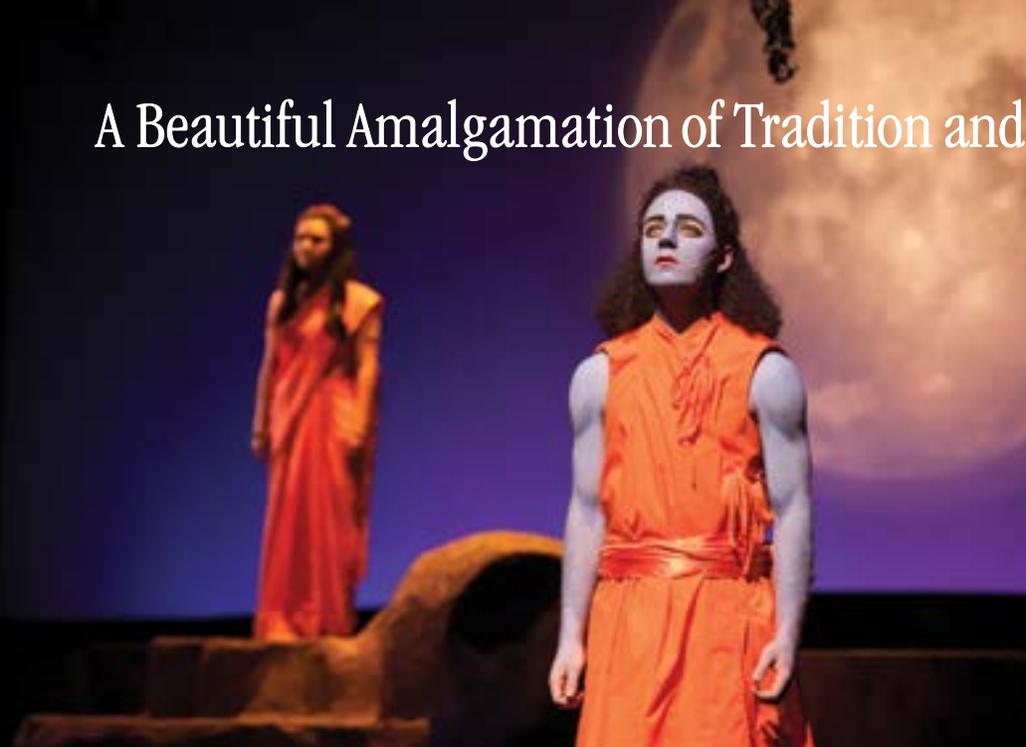
Second Team —

*Indigo Kelly, Paola Jacobs,  
Sage Turner, Zac Clark,  
Zach Wagner*

Honorable Mentions —

*AnMei Dasbach-Prisk, Luca Peruzzi,  
Mara Peruzzi, Samith Lakka*

# A Beautiful Amalgamation of Tradition and Community



Central to MMS, *Ramayana!* is the culmination of months of work during the academic year and an annual celebration for our entire community. With this show we embrace diversity and creative self-expression and carry forward a tradition inspired by Baba Hari Dass (“Babaji”) and supported by the Mount Madonna Center. The *Ramayana* is a timeless classic teaching the universal values of truth, duty, love and service to the greater good.

Our 40th anniversary production broke many records for attendance including alumni, Dress Circle and sellout matinees on Saturday and Sunday. We are so grateful to everyone who attended, whether as part of our “volunteer village,” an audience member, or both. We could not have done it without you!

With so much creativity in our ranks, the show is continually evolving, including songs, vocal and musical arrangements, choreography, masks, elaborate sets, props, monster rigs and costumes. Many props were originally created by Babaji, with support from Ma Renu, a university art professor, and other devoted artisans associated with the nonprofit Hanuman Fellowship. Every item in the show is a work of handmade art.

We are honored by the accolades *Ramayana!* received this year, including a Certificate of Recognition from Watsonville Mayor Lowell Hurst, and the Commendation plaque from the mayor and city council of San Jose. Joining us for the final performance, San Jose Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco shared the site history of our host

venue, the Mexican Heritage Theater. The plaza is considered “sacred ground” as it is near the home of Caesar Chavez, where Robert Kennedy met with Chavez during the civil rights movement. She acknowledged that the *Ramayana!* is now part of the theater’s history.

Ambassador Venkatesan Ashok, the Consul General of India, San Francisco, spoke on the universal appeal of the show, and thanked MMS for making this story accessible to a broader audience. “I am delighted to attend, once again, the annual production of *Ramayana!* by Mount Madonna School,” said Ambassador Ashok. “This year is special as it celebrates the 40th anniversary show.



My wife, Usha, and I have been greatly impressed by the effort and attention to detail put in by students from across the school. What makes this so remarkable is the general transition, whereby parents who acted in the play, now come to see their children and grandchildren bring alive a story which forms part of a living heritage and tradition, and which has provided comfort and solace to millions of people for thousands of years.”

“I see *Ramayana!* as a beautiful amalgamation of tradition and community,” commented Sampad Kachuck, director of the show for 35 years. “The power of theatre, and of this play in particular, is how it brings all of us together. Each of us as audience or participant can have our own experience, while acknowledging and honoring the efforts of the whole. Over the course of four-plus months, we work and play hard, and through teamwork and trust, take the risks of engagement, experimentation and discovery. This dedication is what makes each year’s production new.

“Our purpose is not to merely re-create what has been done in the past,” he continued. “Instead, the true value of the endeavor lies in our willingness to be present, engaged, and, within our dynamic collaboration, open to new discovery. In the end, we create a play called *Ramayana!*, paradoxically both familiar and quintessentially unique.” — Leigh Ann Clifton





# The Gift of Meaningful Work: Hamsa Robin Heinrich

*In May, Head of School Supriya McDonald shared the following appreciation at a retirement luncheon honoring Hamsa.*

Dear Hamsa,

Today we honor your teaching service and role in building the MMS program. Your creative spark, great wit and humor, loving spirit and kind wisdom have added to the “stone soup” of MMS for more than three decades.

You have spanned the elementary spectrum – from assisting in the preschool classroom as a young mother, to teaching every grade in the lower school, finally settling in grade three for how many years? So many things to count:

*Your creative artistic talents:*

The many faces you colored with make-up for MMS productions, the many times you taught reversible pumpkins at Halloween, and how many Sundays did you spend designing and finishing art projects, quilts and bottle dolls?

*Your great love of world literature:*

How many plays have you scripted and directed for Cultural Awareness, how many trips to the library and bookstores looking for the perfect grade three literature or biography for moral heroes?

*Going beyond classroom duties:*

There were the numerous camping and ski trips you shopped for with endless list making, cooler packing and unpacking. How many times have you inventoried the make-up trunks, sewn *jettas* for Ram, Shiva and Lakshmana or painted students into blue Ramayana gods?

*You have touched the lives of many over 31-plus years of fond memories:*

Like the time you slept in the kitchen tent at Yosemite with your son Santosh who was sick. You chased a bear out of the tent in a fashion that only a true Alaskan with an instinctual scream could muster, before promptly going back to sleep!

And the day you taught me to ski by following your graceful zigzag tracks down an intermediate slope on the school ski trip.

The many buddy lessons that you and Lisa Catterall lovingly crafted during your carpool rides to school.



The way you and Sri Gyan McCaughan would banter at staff meetings, like siblings – honest, trusting and with a few friendly jabs.

Practicing staff class with Babaji, as you and Dr. Nicole Tervalon had private lessons in an effort to learn the techniques to teach the students.

Finally, you must have clocked the most mileage up and down the mountain between MMS and the west side, since 1978!

You are so much of what MMS is today; we thank you and love you. Enjoy the rest that retirement will bring, and maybe come back and teach art class one day a week?

Love, Supriya

Top: Hamsa on an early MMS camping trip  
Middle: With her husband Greg at the beach  
Bottom: Helping with *Ramayana!* makeup



# Making Caring Common

Mount Madonna is among the nation's first schools to join Harvard's Making Caring Common Project and Caring Schools #Common Good Campaign, intended to catalyze schools to prepare young people to be constructive community members and citizens who envision a better world.

"Several years ago, the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) released a report entitled, *Turning the Tide*. The report advocated using the college admission process to '...send compelling messages that both ethical engagement – especially concern for others and the common good – and intellectual engagement are highly important,'" shared Director of Upper School Shannon Kelly ('92). "Reading the report, and seeing the buzz it generated in higher education and the college admission world was encouraging. It is exciting to see other people recognizing that the kind of work we have been doing at Mount Madonna School for the last 40 years is essential. I want to amplify what we are already doing and create new programs that fit with this important movement."

By working with schools nationwide, the campaign seeks to advance these goals: deepen students' care for others and their communities; increase equity and access for all students in the college admissions process; and reduce excessive achievement pressure in communities where it is detrimental to students.

"Our country is at a crossroads," said Dr. Richard Weissbourd, an HGSE senior lecturer and faculty director of the Making Caring Common Project. "We need to mobilize the great strengths of Americans to prepare young people to build strong, inclusive communities and to protect democracy. This work has perhaps never been more important."

To participate, schools commit to taking substantial, meaningful action to advance one or more of the campaign's goals and to engage in a self-



assessment or evaluation process to measure the impact of their action(s). At MMS, a significant part of this process is meaningful reflection.

"What does it mean to be a citizen, both locally and globally?" commented Kelly. "How do we move beyond thinking of the rights we have as citizens, to the realm of responsibilities? At MMS we ask our students to take care of this beautiful land they are schooled on. We ask them to understand the impact of their choices environmentally and socially. We provide them opportunities to travel and engage with people, cultures, and environments different than they are used to. They have conversations with individuals with different moral matrices. They are asked to explore who they are, what they value, and what responsibilities they have to themselves and their communities; all of these things help our students develop into caring and engaged citizens."

Toward its campaign commitment, MMS has developed the Sustainability Capstone Project for seniors based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and a community service requirement for all middle and high school students.

"The U.N. goals address issues as far-reaching as ending poverty, creating affordable and clean

energy, industry, innovation, infrastructure and reducing inequalities," said Kelly, "and they align perfectly with Mount Madonna's commitment to global and environmental citizenship.

"We want students to learn how to successfully undertake a project of this magnitude, understand how disciplines intersect, engage in a broader service effort, connect with their school community, and practice essential research and writing skills before they head off to college.

"Our project aligns with the campaign's mission of engaging and connecting with others in a compassionate way," Kelly continued. "It helped our students to see how the issues they were studying affected people in their own communities, the nation and globally. It allowed them to study the issues and look for ways to be part of the solutions as engaged global citizens." — *Leigh Ann Clifton*



Making Caring Common Project:



Caring Schools #CommonGood Campaign:



Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern:



## Students Participate in Earth Day Poster Contest

"Ride Not Drive," a poster promoting environmentally friendly transportation by sophomores Aaron Saavedra, AnMei Dasbach-Prisk, Braeden Will, Connor Murphy, Ksenia Medvedeva and Tabitha Hardin-Zollo, earned fifth place (out of 36 entries) in the Santa Cruz Earth Day teen poster contest. The students are members of the student-founded Environmental Justice Club. Club members have a blog, [envjusticeclub.blogspot.com](http://envjusticeclub.blogspot.com), and an Instagram account, [@environmentaljusticemms](https://www.instagram.com/environmentaljusticemms).

# Summit for the Planet: A Celebration of Stewardship

Mount Madonna School students, faculty, and families came together on April 28 for the 12th annual Summit for the Planet; a fun way to raise money for school programs and highlight environmental awareness through games, music and exhibits run by students and community partners. This event was quite successful, grossing just over \$32,000 due to our wonderful students, parents, faculty, staff, board members, extended families and the broader community. The time and effort of every individual who participated through gathering pledges, walking, volunteering and donating is sincerely appreciated.

We are so grateful for our community partners who participated in this event by donating their time and resources to make Summit for the Planet a success. — Linda Manzur

## Thank you to:

*Allterra Solar*

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(BAARS)*

*Bay Area Discovery Museum*

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*World Centric*



# Brain Building: Research Supports a “Playful” Approach to Preschool/Kindergarten Learning



*“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”* — Albert Einstein

Everyone knows that young children love to play, but the latest in brain research clearly shows that children need to play in order to develop the skills that are required for success in academics and into adulthood. This knowledge guides the heart of Mount Madonna’s preschool/kindergarten (Pre/K) program, providing an engaging, creative, hands-on curriculum in a rich environment with plenty of free play time to explore the outdoors and develop friendship skills.

In the Pre/K, we consider play to be an essential component and balance to our age-appropriate academic curriculum. Our approach to teaching the ABCs and 123s incorporates movement, song, storytelling, art and outdoor exploration, thus providing meaningful experiences that satisfy the young child’s need to engage playfully in their learning explorations. While reading readiness and number sense skills are inherent in our activities throughout the day, we let these skills develop at each child’s pace by challenging each child at their own level, and not pressuring those who need a little longer to develop these abilities.

Whether it’s grinding acorns for the squirrels in the forest, building a spaceship out of blocks,

baking “cakes” in the sandbox, or creating play props in the art area, opportunities for child-directed play permeate our children’s Pre/K experience. With teachers poised to help the children express their ideas, negotiate positive solutions when conflicts occur and guide them in the core values of kindness and compassion, the developmental needs of the whole child are addressed.

Play involves the implementation of roles with rules, deep engagement, symbolic props, advanced planning,

changing scenarios and voluntary self-regulation. Brain research has found that all of these activities serve to develop a child’s prefrontal cortex which is the home of executive function. Pretend play forms neurological connections in the brain which in turn help children to make meaning of their world. The use of symbols in pretend play also provides the foundation for future reading.

When young children engage in the hands-on and interactive activities of our program such as drawing, painting, baking, using scissors, felting and sewing, as well as large motor activities such as yoga, dancing, running, jumping, climbing, swinging and mindful “ocean” breaths, their “play” is actually developing their vestibular and proprioceptive neural systems. The development of these systems is called sensory-motor integration or “brain mapping.” Studies show that sensory-motor integration is essential for developing the executive function abilities required for reading readiness and number sense.

Pretend play and well-developed executive functioning are linked to a variety of positive outcomes including increased language, communication, creativity, problem solving skills and the ability to delay gratification. We know that a child who walks earlier will not be a “better” walker, and reading earlier is not an indicator of higher intelligence. In studies that follow children through adolescence and into adulthood, the level of executive functioning was

more predictive of positive adult outcomes than both IQ scores and socioeconomic status.

Recent research in brain development solidly supports the wisdom of Mount Madonna’s “playful” developmentally appropriate approach to preschool and kindergarten. This approach is the antidote to today’s misplaced high pressure “the earlier the better” focus for young children and the sedentary electronic activities that are filling up more and more of children’s experience. The outcome of our efforts are capable, compassionate and creative children who have a joyful and positive attitude towards education that follows them into adulthood. — Hema Walker

*For more information on this topic:*

— *Smart Moves: Why Learning is Not All in Your Head* by Carla Hannaford

— *Pretend Play and Brain Growth: The Link to Learning and Academic Success* published by the Gesell Institute of Child Development

— The National Association for the Education of Young Children



# Yoga, Storytelling and Service: Honoring Jessica Westbrook

Since its founding four decades ago, MMS has relied on the energy and positive spirit of many volunteers to help it grow and thrive. Parent Jessica Westbrook is one such volunteer and we honor her for her service to faculty and students.

Over the past three years Jessica has helped with recess duty, teaching yoga classes, chaper-

Jessica and her husband Paul complete the Summit for the Planet walk



oning field trips and, last year, serving as the ninth grade class liaison and team parent for the boys junior varsity volleyball team. She volunteered to help at the MMS booth for Gilroy YogaFEST last fall. Jessica assisted teachers with curriculum planning for the first-ever middle school yoga retreat day, prepared an Ayurvedic meal for the students and led one of the yoga sessions. Jessica also volunteers at the Ayurveda World herb store at Mount Madonna Center.

Jessica is the mother of three children: Morgan, Kaya and Elyse. Teachers and friends describe her as an aware, giving and thoughtful mother, and someone who cares deeply about the social and emotional development of all children.

“Jessica is the best!” said fourth grade teacher Nick Cabassa. “She would not only cover recess duty whenever needed, she would also do yoga



circles with the students, telling them stories and helping them to stretch and meditate. She is such a wonderful person and extremely helpful and knowledgeable.”

We are so thankful for Jessica’s gift of time and service. — *Supriya McDonald*

## Developing Positive Character

As the many tweets and millions of “likes” are posted on screens across the world, many people are calling this an age of disconnection. The irony of instant communication worldwide is that time spent on digital devices is taking away from real face time with others. Emojis aren’t the same as body language, which is how most of our communication is felt and understood.

At MMS, developing positive character is at the heart of what we do together. We build meaningful connections that encourage us to care about one another and our surroundings.

Essential to an MMS education is the practice of non-harming, where we instill daily the lessons of kindness, truthfulness, forgiveness and empathy. Embedded in programs like big buddies, performing arts, athletics, learning journeys and service projects are team-building experiences that connect and encourage students to care for others. In little ways we can see positive character development, as students transition through their childhood to young adults.

As we walk through campus we see evidence of caring in students greeting teachers and classmates in welcoming ways each morning. We hear the reflections of caring in student writings, speeches and classroom dialogue. We feel the warmth of a smile, a hug, an eye-to-eye message or a simple nod. We understand the challenge of admitting mistakes, learning to forgive, letting go and starting again to build trust when we’ve been hurt or hurt others.

True character is what we do when people aren’t watching. Do we greet each other in friendly ways that include those who might not feel included? Do we pick up that litter on the beach or the playground when it’s not a scheduled clean-up day? Can we honestly admit our part of a problem and work to resolve through compromise?

This year, we honor our students for the many seen and unseen ways they and their teachers care for one another. We encourage them to remember the lessons practiced on the mountain that connect, show kindness, and build confidence and respect for self and others. *Character matters.*

— *Supriya McDonald*





Students interview NPR journalist Cokie Roberts

“Our intention is to have our students engage leaders who are responding with creativity and courage in these challenging times,” commented program founder Ward “SN” Mailliard. “We believe engagement with remarkable public servants both inspires and supports the development of thoughtful and aware citizens who will be active participants in their communities.”

In order to formulate questions for the interviews, the students engaged in research, collaboration and thoughtful dialogue for several months in advance of their learning journey. Getting a question “right” . . . or asking the right question at a relevant moment during an interview is no easy task. When a question strikes an interviewee just so, students are frequently affected by the depth and content of the response. For example:

Connecting with Congressman John Lewis



“When I asked John Lewis about how we could keep our moral principles in times of crises, he looked me in the eyes the entire time he gave his answer, the same eyes that ‘saw the face of death’ on Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama,” wrote senior Elias Moreno on the trip blog. “He expressed how we as young people have the power to change the very fabric of our nation, but we must vote. If we truly believe in something we have to be unwavering in our dedication to the cause; we must always have the strength to keep fighting no matter how many obstacles we face. We have to elect people that represent us and the things we are fighting for; we must have diversity of views and perspectives.”

The following excerpts from the students’ blog illustrate the impact of their experiences.

“Both Susannah Wellford and Melanne Verveer spoke about diversity and how it enhances the richness in life. Susannah touched on how we are often comfortable in our own bubbles, and it causes us to have a hard time opening up to diversity and others’ views and opinions. But, once we learn to open our minds to what we are not familiar with, we can embrace diversity. Melanne spoke about how universities with high rates of diversity provide a ‘richer experience’ because there are people who are not just like you; learning about other people’s backgrounds and views can allow you to become a more well-rounded person.”

— Mara Peruzzi, 11th grade

“As with all other interviews I’ve participated in, the time leading up to the question I had been assigned was somewhat tense, as I continuously

repeated the question in my head in an effort to perfectly memorize each word. Before long, it was my turn to speak. Fighting my anxiety, I tried my best to speak slowly and articulately. My question was specifically concerned with political biases and how we can overcome them to be more receptive to new ideas. After I asked it, there was a brief and terrifying silence, which was broken with [Congressman Earl] Blumenauer saying that it was a difficult question. He proceeded to talk about the differences between humans in terms of who we are and the things we experience over the course of our lives, and how these differences can cause emotional biases. Much of what he talked about reminded me of a book by Jonathan Haidt called *The Righteous Mind*, which we read this year as part of our Values curriculum. Blumenauer spoke very eloquently. He provided a lot of insight into many relevant issues, and it was abundantly clear that he not only knew a lot about them, but also was very passionate about resolving them.”

— Lucas Caudill, 12th grade

“Cokie Roberts had such a great sense of humor and answered our questions happily, smiling, and often with a well-placed anecdote or joke. What struck me most was the clarity of her principles. She said that she taught her grandchildren the Golden Rule, and when we asked her about what the most important family values are, she simply said ‘respect.’ She said that it didn’t matter what position or motivation you have (religious, humanistic, etc), you have to respect and try to be kind to all people. While this seems so obvious, respect for everyone is clearly lacking in the public sphere, especially between the political parties. This theme of respect is something many of our interviews have stirred, and something very important, both in D.C. and back home.”

— Priyanka Bhargavan, 11th grade

“[Running Start President] Susannah Wellford said that no matter what choices you make, even if they’re the best ones, inevitably there will be difficulties. Keep going even if failure is a possibility. What matters are the choices you make regarding how to act towards your circumstances. It helps to allow ourselves to process pain and be able to feel it for a little while. Let it sink in, and then move on. This lets us process and see what’s good in our lives, which we then appreciate more.”

— Phoebe Grant, 12th grade

“I was personally looking forward to the Layli Miller-Muro interview because of my preliminary research on her. Layli practices the faith of Baha’i, a unique and profound religion. She emphasized the ‘oneness’ that Baha’i holds, oneness of all the gods and oneness of all the people under their eyes. Layli is exceptional because she is able to hold strong connections to her faith and weave it into her work in her organization, the Tahirih Justice Center. She holds a striking view on growth. She said, ‘There’s a human tendency to not grow unless we’re uncomfortable.’ Therefore, she emphasized that we need to embrace the uncomfortable and look at it as a chance to grow and take on opportunity.”

— Sage Turner, 11th grade



Top: Meeting with Admiral Stephen Rochon  
Bottom: Talking with Alyse Nelson of Vital Voices

“One of the most powerful aspects of our time with Congressman Lewis was ‘with belief comes engagement.’ He was only a little bit older than us when he was first arrested for his activism in the early 60s, and has continued to fight since then, even as he is the last living of the ‘Big Six’ of the civil rights movement. He has managed to stay motivated by his optimism and hope in the good of people, particularly youth. As a young person given access to the right to vote in such a turbulent political climate (where at times it feels my voice doesn’t matter), hearing the emphasis on hope as a means of perseverance from someone who, against

enormous odds, has changed so much in this country for the better, is reinvigorating.”

— Ruby Bracher, 12th grade

“Alyse Nelson is the president and CEO (and cofounder) of Vital Voices, an organization that helps empower women. Something she said that really struck me was ‘You can’t be a leader unless you bring solutions.’ It sounds obvious, but I started thinking back to all the times I’ve forced myself into some sort of position of leadership, and I realized how often I do it just so I can be a leader, not because I’m really trying to fix any specific thing. Too often I do it for myself, and not for the people I’m working with. That relates to another thing she said: ‘You have to support a team of people to create change.’ A lasting idea she gave us was that we all need to find our driving force, a.k.a. the goal that you keep in mind that pushes you to work hard. Once you find your driving force, you need to stick to it in all the work you do. Like our trip to South Africa, I came to D.C. not knowing what I would learn from the experience, and I’m leaving with more knowledge in so many different areas and aspects of life. That’s what pushed me through all the work, and it’s been worth it.”

— Carl Ward, 12th grade

“While walking back to the Pilgrimage in a wild rainstorm after our last interview, I felt a sense of responsibility and accomplishment. The torrential rain was getting all of us wet, and the few umbrellas we carried were not nearly enough to keep the water off of our suits and dresses. Yet all around me there was positive energy and a solid feeling that we had collectively achieved an experience of mind-expanding learning that would lead to a lifetime of purposeful living. This experience that I have been privileged to



Top: Interviewing Susannah Wellford  
Bottom: A discussion with Congressman Jimmy Panetta

have wouldn’t be possible without the investment that our teacher Ward has put into his students and program over a course of 30-plus years. A few days ago, after a long day, Ward explained the importance of reflection as we move forward. This trip has inspired me a lot more than I ever thought it could, and I am incredibly grateful to have been a part of this and to continue my journey with these memories and reflections.”

— John Dias, 11th grade

Read more of the students’ blog at:  
[dc.MountMadonnaSchool.org](http://dc.MountMadonnaSchool.org).

— Leigh Ann Clifton

Students enjoyed an overnight stay in the Blue Ridge Mountains



# Another Record Breaking Year for Annual Giving!

Mount Madonna School Annual Giving (AG) helps all students receive a quality education by adding to the tuition revenue that covers about 85% of the program expenses. The generous philanthropy from our committed donors ensures that students have many unique program opportunities each year. Tax-deductible gifts also help meet the rising costs of wages and benefits, without significantly raising tuition.

In 2017-18, we reached a net of \$148,735 which includes \$21,305 from the Drive for Schools kick-off fundraiser. AG received \$127,430 in donations – a record high – and surpassed our goal of \$115,000!

Thank you families, alumni, faculty, staff, grandparents and friends! For the third consecutive year 100% of our school community participated in AG, which began on November 1, 2017 and ended January 31, 2018, with pledges due by June 15, 2018.

With sincere gratitude, we thank the following donors for their generous support:

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*The 2016/2017 issue of The Connection included a list of 16/17 Annual Giving Campaign donors. We sincerely apologize to Al Tervalon for omitting his name and gift at the Patron level.*

*Every effort has been made to avoid errors, misspellings or omissions. If, however, your name has been incorrectly listed or omitted, please accept our sincere apology. For corrections contact Head of School Mary Supriya McDonald at 408-847-2717.*



# Students Bond Over Elkhorn Slough Kayak Adventure



One morning last fall, a group of teachers, students and parents gathered in Moss Landing at the Elkhorn Slough. Following a brief orientation, the seniors, third and fourth graders donned life jackets and paired off to explore – from the vantage point of sturdy kayaks – as they paddled from the slough mouth up into its interior. This annual excursion was led by Kim Powell of the Santa Cruz-based Blue Water Ventures, a guide for several outdoor explorations that are part of the MMS program.

“The opportunity to spend time learning about the biologically rich and critically endangered slough habitat, all the while having a great adventure together with ‘buddies,’ was educational and fun!” commented high school science teacher Nicole Silva Culbertson.

“I remember how much it meant to me when I was that young and had a big buddy to look up to,” shared senior Zachary Clark. “To watch the next generation of kids growing up, hopefully wanting to pursue careers in ocean exploration and conservation, as I do, and seeing how invested my little buddy was with the information we learned really gives me hope. It’s also just really nice to have a relaxed paddle around, see different wildlife and connect with the younger kids.”

“One special thing we saw while kayaking was the sea jelly,” shared third grader Byrd Mallet. “The jelly went right under our kayak. The jelly was white with long red tentacles and its top was yellow. It was almost as big as my desk! I also really liked

net fishing. We caught a sardine or smelt. We let them go after we looked at them.”

Culbertson said some students often start out a bit nervous. Older students may wonder if their little buddies will be able to paddle the kayak, and what it will be like to be responsible for another person on the water. The younger buddies are usually nervous about kayaking, and wonder if their older buddy will like and have fun with them.

“I was surprised to see the smile on my buddy’s face when he first saw me,” commented senior Brigg Busenhart. “As we paddled strongly through currents we connected as a team – gliding over a sea lion, hitting each buoy, and winning the paddling race – my buddy Lucas and I truly enjoyed each other’s company! What most surprised me was how we both began the day so relaxed, with no awkwardness.”

Fourth grader Jaxson Alciati shared a kayak with his father. He enjoyed the array of active wildlife, nibbling on samples of edible marine plants offered by their guide, and the refreshing change of pace.

“I loved kayaking with my dad,” said Alciati. “I put my hand over the boat to feel the

water. I am amazed that kayaks float so well and I loved how relaxing it was to paddle over the water.”

Before launching their kayaks, group members took turns saying what each person was looking forward to. Senior Emily Villareal said her buddy had a surprising response.

“Most kids said sea otters or seals, but my buddy said all she was looking forward to was going home,” said Villareal. “I felt kind of bad that she had to be here when she didn’t want to, but by the end of the trip I think she’d had at least a little bit of fun. Whenever the guide would ask a question my buddy would volunteer really thoughtful answers, and she’d usually be right, too. It reminded me of when I was her age. At that time I had a senior big buddy and I still remember going on hikes and talking with her, and I’m really glad that this is a program our school still does.”

Fourth grade teacher Nick Cabassa said one of the biggest take-aways was the opportunity to build relationships.

“Teamwork was huge,” he said. “Students worked together to make an ‘island’ with their kayaks, to maintain a safe distance from the marine

Continued on Page 23

Top: Students receive instructions before heading out on the water  
Bottom: Net fishing and observation along the shore

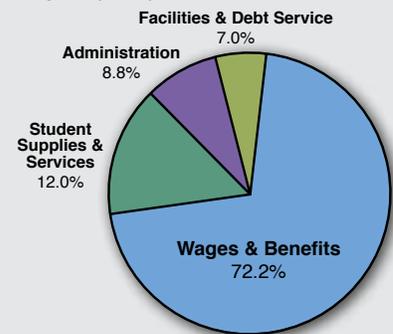
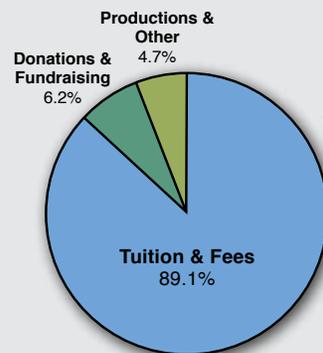


# 2017-18 Financial Report

Mount Madonna School completed its 39th fiscal year on June 30, 2018. The School operates under the committed stewardship and oversight of our trustees, board of directors and finance committee. The tuition generated by enrollment remains the primary source of operating revenue, while salaries and benefits comprise the majority of operating expense. We began the 2017-18 year with 189 students, and ended with 192 students. Our Annual Giving campaign netted \$127,430, plus an additional \$21,305 from the Drive for Schools fundraiser. This amount, which is the most we have raised for Annual Giving, along with 100% participation from families, staff and the board make this the most successful Annual Giving campaign in the school's history. We look forward to a future of increasing financial strength and sustainability, through increasing enrollment, generous donations to our Annual Giving campaign and directed donations to the excellent programs at MMS.

— Eric Forbes, Business Manager

Operating Revenue	2017-18 Budget	Operating Expense	2017-18 Budget
Tuition & Fees	\$2,772,804.00	Wages & Benefits	\$2,247,900.00
Donations & Fundraising	\$193,150.00	Student Supplies & Services	\$374,975.00
Productions & Other	\$146,500.00	Administration	\$273,400.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,112,454.00</b>	Facilities & Debt Service	\$218,700.00
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,114,975.00</b>
		<b>Surplus (Loss)</b>	<b>- \$2,521.00</b>



	2017-18 (Budget)	2016-17 (Actual)	2015-16 (Actual)	2014-15 (Actual)
<b>Operation Budget</b>	\$3,112,454.00	\$2,984,777.00	\$3,111,036.00	\$2,892,286.00
<b>Total Students</b>	194	179	193	190

Note: The audit for this fiscal year was conducted by the Harrington Group in September. That report will be available in December for anyone wishing to view it.

## Directed and In-Kind Contributions

Each year, our families, friends and community members give generously to specific programs for which they have a special affinity. These include scholarship funding, athletics, performing arts, Values in World Thought journeys and environmental education. Additionally, merchant giving programs – such as the Scrip gift and grocery cards – contribute to supporting programs vital to MMS. Some gifts were cash, while others were in-kind contributions, including food items. Thank you, as well, to all who purchased Dress Circle reception tickets, which directly supports our annual *Ramayana!*

### Thank you to our in-kind and directed donors:

Amazon Smile Foundation  
 Kelly Beck  
 Box Tops for Education  
 Ross Bryan  
 Alan Church  
 Christine Connors  
 Kathy Cytron and Shmuel Thaler  
 Sarada and Dayanand Diffenbaugh  
 Ecology Action

eScrip  
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 Nanette Hardin and David Zollo  
 Kalpana and Sampad Kachuck  
 Gary Kampf  
 Gwen and Rod Koda  
 Freddie Lee  
 Kranti and Ward “SN” Mailliard  
 Mary Supriya and Sidd McDonald

Ann and Nico Peruzzi  
 Raley’s of Bel-Air  
 Ian Rusconi  
 Nicole Tervalon  
 Tomash Family Foundation  
 Jessica and Paul Westbrook  
 Wharf to Wharf Race  
 Cheryl Winterburn and David Pope

## Fundraising with Scrip

Shopping with Scrip is a no-cost way to raise money for MMS. Before you purchase groceries, gifts or gas, consider stocking up on Scrip gift cards or signing up for a Presto Pay account. Each Scrip gift card purchase generates anywhere from 2-5% of the purchase price and goes towards school income. Thank you to Deana Woodrow for serving as our Scrip sales coordinator, and to all of our families who participated. For the 2017-18 school year, scrip sales and other merchant donations netted \$2,200 in revenue. Visit [www.mountmadonnaschool.org/scrip](http://www.mountmadonnaschool.org/scrip) for more information.

— Linda Manzur

# Honoring the “Greatest Generation:”

## Teen Engages Veterans to Discuss War, Sacrifice and History



*In the following article, twelfth grade student Cyrus Kamkar offers a perspective based on his interest in World War II and the veterans who served. Kamkar organized a Veterans Panel held at MMS in March.*

World War II (WWII) history has always been a strong interest of mine. When I was 14, I remember telling my mom “I need to meet and talk to a WWII veteran.” The very next day, I saw an old man wearing a WWII combat veteran hat. I thanked him for his service and told him about my interest. He offered to arrange a meeting so he could further tell me his stories. His name was Joe, and he served in the navy on a destroyer ship in the Pacific. He passed away about a year after I interviewed him. Since then I have continued to interview veterans.

At the beginning of the school year, a teacher asked us to pick something that you are passionate about, and create something social or interactive with it. I decided to do the project on what I have already been doing, and to branch out to veterans from other wars, such as Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq/Afghanistan. I also thought it would be a good idea to bring a panel of veterans up to MMS to share their stories, which took a lot of work to organize. I made sure to interview each participating veteran before the event so I could have individual questions

for each person about their experience, rather than the same questions for all.

I feel that respect for veterans in today’s culture is lacking, unfortunately, especially amongst my age group. The panel discussion at MMS was amazing! I wanted to make sure students had the opportunity to listen to these veterans’ stories. The event went for two and a half hours, and I was shocked to see at the end, that instead of going straight to lunch, all the students walked up and thanked the veterans for their service.

My goal with this effort is to spread awareness of the importance of soldiers’ sacrifices. When people talk about how horrible Hitler was, they forget to mention that he could have won. If it weren’t for the United States and its brave soldiers, the world would be a very different place. What I am doing is not a message of pro war, it is anti-war. The further away we get from remembering these incidents in history, the closer we are to war and losing freedom. This can’t be thought of as something that happened a long time ago. War is relevant.

I am thankful to our faculty for allowing this panel discussion to happen. I am also very grateful for the veterans who participated: James “JP” Petersen (Navy, WWII), Al Hopson (Army Air Corps, WWII), David Perez (Army medic, WWII), Rick Noble (Army, Vietnam), Gary Doubledee (Army, Vietnam), Mike Baker (Army, Vietnam), and Dean Kaufman (Army, Gulf War).

One of the veterans I know sent me a list of local veterans, one of whom is Bob Osborne. Osborne is a Korean War army combat veteran. He is 85 years old. I spoke with him on the phone and told him about my project and he was willing to do an interview.

Suddenly I remembered an event from last year. It was Memorial Day, and I was eating at Roger’s Diner in Watsonville. I walked an old man with a T-shirt with an American flag on it, and the shirt read, “Try to burn this flag.” Then he turned around, and I saw his Korean War veteran hat. The Korean War is referred to as the “forgotten war,” and I thought he deserved some recognition. Because of this, his T-shirt and the fact that it was Memorial Day, I knew I had to shake his hand and thank him for his service, so I did. I also complimented him on his shirt. He told me, “I never get thanked by people your age, but it’s refreshing.”

I don’t know why, but that memory popped in my head while I was on the phone with Bobby, so I asked him, “Hey Bobby, you don’t happen to have a T-shirt that says, ‘try to burn this flag’ do you?” He said, “Yes, I do. You don’t happen to be the boy who shook my hand and thanked me for my service at Roger’s Diner about a year ago, are you?” I said “Yep, that was me.” It makes me really happy that he remembered me, but also very sad. He should have so many people thanking him that he wouldn’t remember any of them.

Every step we take in a free society, every movement, every breath was made possible by our veterans. Every freedom we have has been fought, bled and died for. The will to protect and preserve the ideas that shape us as Americans must continue to live on and show as a shining example for the whole world to see. We are a unique country that was formed off of a reaction of oppressive government rule, and we have successfully been consistent with those values by being the strongest

In March, United States veterans gathered at MMS for a discussion attended by middle and high school students





Top: Army Air Corps soldier Al Hopson, 18, during WWII  
Bottom: Al Hopson, 95, and Cyrus Kamkar

enemy of tyranny and biggest preserver of freedom around the world.

There is nothing that could sadden me more than to see our country become alienated from these unique and integral values. War must be avoided at all costs, but we should always be the first to sacrifice when it's needed to ensure freedom. This is why it is important to not just respect our veterans, but to show them that you respect them. A WWII veteran once told me "We aren't called the greatest generation because of what we did. We were the greatest generation because of who we were. We could not have done what we did if it weren't for our values and patriotism. And always remember this Cyrus, we didn't fight for us, we fought for you." I will always remember that.

There is a quote that was found in a dead U.S. soldier's diary on the battlefield from World War I that always gives me the chills: *America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone.*

## Observing Traditions: Día de los Muertos

**D**ía de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, is a two-day celebration that takes place most notably in Mexico and is full of rich cultural traditions. On November 1-2, families gather and take a special journey to the grave sites and resting places of their loved ones to spend time honoring their past lives feasting, dancing, and sharing memories. This is a time of reflection and appreciation of time spent with those who have passed. This holiday is not related to Halloween and is not meant to be scary; it is a time to reflect and remember special loved ones. Traditionally *ofrendas* or altars are decorated with flowers, candles, figurines, food, and objects representing loved ones.

"Many students asked us if they could bring in photos of special loved ones (including pets) that have passed and that they would like to honor," noted middle and high school Spanish teacher Sara Sobkoviak. "We [Sobkoviak, and Spanish teachers Anand Darsie and Prema Gammons] welcomed students to use this installation as a way to celebrate those who they would like to remember."

MMS students studied the history, art and traditions of Día de los Muertos. Each class created works for the *ofrenda* showcased

Top: Students' stories, poetry and art  
Bottom: Making *calaveras de azúcar* or sugar skulls



A portion of the celebratory *ofrenda* or altar

outside the upper school Spanish classroom, and parents and visitors were invited to view the installation. Students and guests also had the opportunity to taste the traditional food and drinks prepared by the students.

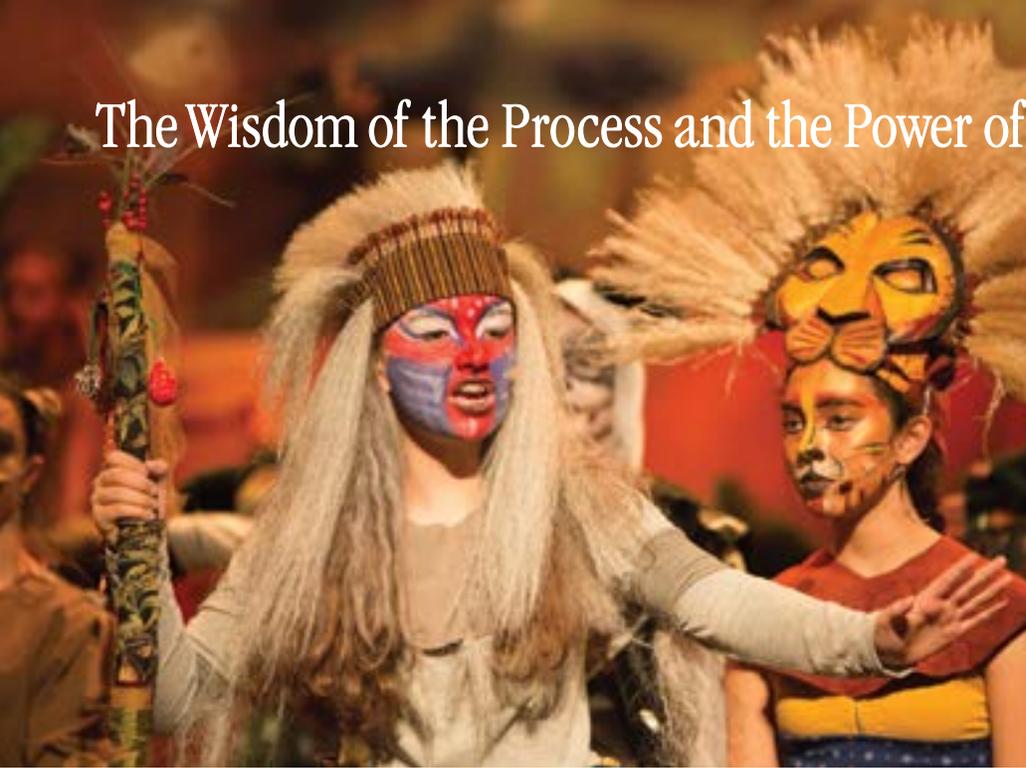
All grade levels participated in different traditions including baking the *pan de muerto*, creating skeletons, *calaveras de azúcar* (sugar skulls), dioramas, poetry, stories and art pieces.

"It's gratifying to see the entire school coming together and collaborating across grades to celebrate Día de los Muertos," shared Gammons. "Through the creation of traditional crafts, elementary students have the opportunity to connect to something tangible and culturally relevant in their Spanish studies that takes place in nearby communities."

"For the first time at MMS," noted Sobkoviak, "all students have the opportunity be a part of this lovely and meaningful celebration of culture and history." — Leigh Ann Clifton



# The Wisdom of the Process and the Power of the Experience



*The following is excerpted from the keynote address given by teacher and performing arts director Sampad Kachuck at the June, 2018 high school commencement ceremony.*

The Philadelphia 76ers refers to their NBA basketball team as The Process. The common definition of that term implies a series of actions or steps taken to achieve a particular end. I would tweak that to be more along the lines of evolution, bravely bolded by a curiosity, an openness, a willingness to venture into the unknown, the less comfortable; to rethink, reconsider, reshape, to allow a trust in the formation of something new, for in the tension and dynamic of the unfolding is the true learning.

One of my favorite points of the year is when the upper grades share reflections on their learning

journeys as part of the Values program at our school. This year the 11th and 12th grade occupied Washington, D.C. Post trip, students articulated their experiences, to not simply dismiss or distance themselves from it, but to embrace the inspirations, the stirrings and discoveries, the expansion of thinking. The act of reflection acknowledges the growth edges: the challenges, difficulties and confusions, the letting go of preconceived notions. As they exemplify in their presentation, learning has no clear finish line.

We each get to decide at some level what matters to us, where to put our passions, our energies, our dedications. At the same time, we are all often compelled to invest into arenas that may not immediately attract or inspire us. The invitation may even frighten us. What then?

Maya Angelou said, “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” If involvement is mandatory, the expectation is that we somehow find avenues into the experience that also contribute to the world around us.

This brings us less than subtly to performing arts. By requirement at MMS students are involved in performing arts. Thus, the challenge is to develop acceptance and formulate passion for the opportunity.

Performing arts has been my heart and home for over three decades at this school. Yet time and tradition don’t always dictate relevance. I’m continually reflecting on the program’s place in the larger context of garnering an education. What essential life skills do we foster within performing arts that apply to real world needs? Is it simply about putting on a great play, of actors singing, dancing, speaking or not speaking lines, standing in the front or the back, saddled with big or little parts, learning how to move bodies energetically, sing on key, and play characters fully?

A student and/or parents may ask, “Why be in this class when I-he-she will never be a singer, dancer, or actor. I want to be an astronaut, a soccer player, a politician, a genetics engineer, or entrepreneur . . . what does anything we do in performing arts have to do with those ambitions?” To answer the questions of pertinence and real-world connection may require a brief summary regarding the journey of the class itself, which begins with Song Share.

“Goddesses” rehearse their *Ramayana!* song



The performing arts team in action



Guiding young actors to embody their characters





Rehearsing dance moves for *Urinetown*

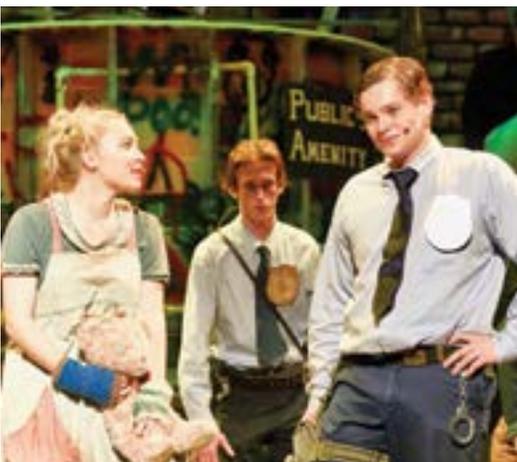
At the outset of each year, middle and high school students vocally share a small section of a song, not to highlight who can sing or who can't but to establish connection with the group. By disarming, we build trust that we can be vulnerable with one another, and not be attacked or judged. We are who we are for that moment and that has to be fine with all, including ourselves.

Students are also called upon to audition, an emotionally challenging endeavor that includes learning and presenting choreography as well as extracting a song, scene, or monologue out of the original work, then devoid of its logical build and framework, perform it with meaning and connection in front of their peers, often in competition for the same roles.

Once cast, we look to discover the character's core and put ourselves into the character's situation and allow them to function and breathe. An actor seeks to make such a strong personal connection so that he or she can inhabit the character without judgment or hesitation.

Yet the true theatre magic occurs in rehearsal

Inhabiting characters without judgment or hesitation



and eventually performance, when actors interact with other actors. We don't act in a tunnel, nor simply depend on practiced emotional responses. Acting is honestly reacting, our listening heightened. It is in receiving that we truly expand and deepen our portrayals by discovering our humanity.

The production process fosters life skills of preparation, concentration, commitment, acceptance, the taking advantage of opportunity, of expanding abilities, of improving group interaction, of absorbing direction from intensive people, of dealing with disappointment, and embracing success.

Even more so, theatre is a collaborative activity, students alongside fellow students, adult designers and directors, all focused on a similar goal, doing our best, compromising and adjusting, working with integrity and openness. The communal learning parallels our societal needs in terms of complex problem solving.

Performing arts is one essential weave of the larger beautiful learning tapestry that is our school. In a world desperate for human empathy, this process presents the invitation for practicing our humanity, of appreciating the other, for fostering awareness of not just close friendships, but the larger circles. We make human connection despite our differences, our preferences, our appearance, social groupings, our ages, philosophies, religions, or family upbringing. We find unity in our community. That's the power of the experience.

life and to practice paddling techniques," he said. "I appreciated the chance to bond with the older students who I didn't really know, and for our students to share stories and get to know each other better."

"My favorite thing about kayaking was being with my big buddy Will," shared fourth grader Gabriel Yellowhorse-Ruiz. "He let me 'call off' the paddle – right, left, right, left, and taught me how to make my strokes with the paddle even."

This activity is the perfect combination of trust building, learning and physical activity.

"The opportunity for the senior buddies to enjoy nature like little kids again, partaking in 'kelp wars,' kayak races, and secretly holding on to other kayaks without getting caught provides for meaningful connections," noted Culbertson. "Both buddies end the day happy and tired. The conversations on the bus ride back have changed from what might the day hold for them, to the natural conversations that happen between friends who have bonded. We all end the day with smiles and big hugs."

"One of the most memorable moments for me was when our group caught fish with a large net, and seeing our little buddies running after the fish," said senior Sienna Clifton. "They were just so excited to be in the moment! My buddy Harmony rushed around with excitement in her eyes. The opportunity to spend the time with my class and our younger buddies reminded me of the importance of community."

— Leigh Ann Clifton

Students enjoy an outdoor adventure





Fifth grade students were invited to attend an environmental panel discussion at Apple headquarters

in some far-off land and it's a threat to all of us," commented fifth grader Colby Culbertson.

"One of the things that I found most interesting was how whales can feed ecosystems for more than ten years after their death," said ninth grader Octavio Moreno. "I appreciate the opportunity to do this work with our little buddies. I found it constructive and beneficial for my buddy and me because we could converse about the things we are both interested in, making learning fun."

"Traveling together provides students with a shared learning experience over a topic both grades are working to make a difference with," observed fifth grade teacher Jessica Cambell. "Fifth graders were able to use the Litterati app (which wouldn't be possible on their own due to age requirements), allowing the buddy teams to engage in a unique way to track litter and interpret data. Ninth graders answered questions and helped their buddies understand the information.

"Fifth graders have passion, energy and excitement for this topic, which rubs off on their older buddies and engages them on a deeper level than just reading a book or watching a film," she continued. "Together they see and understand the problem, and separately are working to create positive change. It is affirming to see what a difference empowered fifth and ninth graders can make!"

"These high school students love participating in projects with their younger buddies," commented high school science teacher Nicole Silva Culbertson. "It gives them a sense of purpose and a chance to be a positive role model, providing the platform to teach the younger students what they know and to partner up in their shared love of the environment.

"This ties into our curriculum because students should understand the biggest ecosystem in which they live – its biology, ecology and physical properties – and how vitally important it is to their everyday lives," she continued. "We study conservation and community activism to continue to support the health of the larger environment."

Throughout the school year the two classes met to share data, watch documentaries, meet with guest speakers and work on ideas of how to reduce plastic pollution.

"I am a ninth grade student interested in the safety of our environment, especially in the reduction of single-use plastics that are polluting our world every day," wrote Kira Kaplan in a letter to Assemblymember Mark Stone. "Currently my class is working with Jackie Nunez, founder of The Last Plastic Straw, to reduce single-use plastic in our own lives. We have become urban

Interactive learning at the NOAA Exploration Center



backpackers, and by bringing reusable bottles, utensils, napkins and straws with us, we can spare the millions of plastic straws, utensils, cups and napkins used every day. We take our experiences of this easy change, and blog about it on [studenturbanbackpacker.tumblr.com/.](http://studenturbanbackpacker.tumblr.com/)"

Ninth graders created original posters about the topic, which were exhibited at the State Capitol in support of AB 1884 (a proposal by Assemblymember Ian Calderon to have restaurants serve straws only upon request, and which passed in May).

Their work frequently had the students "on the go," participating in the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Ocean Plastic Pollution Summit (ninth grade) and hosting a booth at Monterey's WhaleFest (fifth grade).

Fifth graders were special guests at a panel discussion hosted by Apple, "Powerful Women for the Planet." The event was an opportunity for Apple to highlight work being done by women across the environmental sector. The students were invited after word of their own project caught the attention of Apple officials.

"We were very impressed to read about Mount Madonna School's fifth grade environmental project," said Nadine de Coteau, manager of external engagement for Apple's Environmental Initiatives team. "Lisa Jackson (Apple's Vice President of Environment, Policy & Social Initiatives and the event moderator) is really focused on inspiring the next generation of environmentalists, and we thought this would be an inspiring and educational event for the students."

This spring, despite the slim odds of even one class being invited to attend an exclusive WE

Fifth graders hosted a booth at WhaleFest





Ninth graders with their artwork

Day event (WE.org), both the fifth and ninth grades were invited because of their environmental service work! This was particularly sweet for the younger class, as WE Days are primarily attended by high school students.

“I was so excited about WE Day because we were chosen for our work and it’s probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all of us,” commented fifth grader Emi Lord. “It’s special to me because it shows how hard work can really make a difference and pay off.”

“These buddy classes have two distinct projects but one common goal – to help protect the environment so that animals and people have a world in which they can live and thrive,” commented Silva Culbertson. “One project has been to reduce single-use plastics in our school environment as well as in our local community, which goes hand in hand with the fifth grade project of protecting the humpback whale. Together, students are simultaneously working towards a common goal of stewardship towards our planet.

“I want our students to know they can create positive change in the world,” she continued. “If something fun like WE Day ignites that spark and helps to fuel their passion of caring for the broader community, I’m all for it. What a powerful experience to be surrounded by so many other kids who are all taking action and helping to create a better world.”

Fifth grader Kinsey Don Carlos agreed.

“Being around thousands of kids who have the same goals as us will be amazing,” said Don Carlos. “It makes me feel like our generation really can change the world.” — *Leigh Ann Clifton*

## Juniors Participate in County Civics Summit



The high school County Civics Summit at Cabrillo College

In an effort to deepen students’ understanding of local government, the importance of civic engagement and role of elected officials, last fall the MMS eleventh grade U.S. Government and Politics class joined 200 other local high school students at the Santa Cruz County Civics Summit at Cabrillo College.

California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird delivered a keynote address, and then students participated in workshop sessions with local, county and state elected officials on topics such as city and county governance, state legislatures, education law, voting and elections.

“City council and board of supervisors are in charge of our local communities and solving housing and transportation issues or making them better,” said student John Dias. “Our responsibility is to follow issues that we care about and understand that change starts at a lower government.”

Classmate Priyanka Bharghavan said citizens should pay attention to issues that affect us not just nationally, but at the local and state levels as well.

“The government affects our personal life every day,” commented Bharghavan. “Prices of everyday necessities are all determined through economic politics, such as the state by state differences on sales tax and income tax.”

In addition to learning about how our governments and elected officials work for the citizens and communities they serve, another

theme of the Civics Summit was understanding the responsibilities of individual citizens.

Exercising the right to vote is the primary way that citizens make their voices heard, and in order to have our votes be meaningful, we must first educate ourselves about the issues.

“By actively voting,” said junior Mara Peruzzi, “we are contributing to our democracy to change the community.”

The Civics Summit was especially timely as a follow-up to a campus visit by Santa Cruz County Clerk Gail Pellerin, who visited juniors and seniors earlier in the school year to encourage voter pre-registration for students who are 16 or 17 years of age. — *Tiffany Wayne*

Students met with Santa Cruz County Supervisor Zach Friend





# Humor, Compassion and a Dedication to Service

*An interview with Prabha Sharan ('07) by Renata Massion ('15)*

fall. She values the opportunity to care for them and help them to “still be a part of society and function normally.”

It takes a special person to do this job, and Prabha could not be better suited for it. After a 12-hour shift, or a particularly rough day, Prabha reminds herself why she chose this profession: “Being there in those hard times is what makes this work so beautiful. To lend a shoulder to cry on, to lend an ear for them to speak their frustration when they feel most alone. To be able to make a patient or family member laugh when they are in pain is a gift I hold very dear to me.”

One of the qualities Prabha credits her success to is her sense of humor. She explains that she would not be able to take on the heaviness of caring for others every day without also having the ability to see the light in every situation.

“Nursing is rarely linear, there are constant rollercoasters and people’s lives can change within seconds, may that be good news or bad news,” she said. “The skill that has served me the most so far in my life has been humor and serving others. I watched Babaji (Baba Hari Dass, a founder of both Sri Ram Ashram and Mount Madonna Center) serve others with humor, love and compassion. He did so from the goodness of his heart without expecting anything in return and he did it every single day. I chose nursing because it allows me to give back to people when they are in their most vulnerable stage in life.”

She credits the members of the Mount Madonna community both abroad and in the States for helping her become the person she is today. Having grown up at the Sri Ram Ashram with 85 siblings, Prabha learned the importance of sharing with many different personalities and stepping outside of her comfort zone, which has served her in her work and in her daily life.

Coming to the United States was a challenging transition, but Prabha says her success is due to the people that surrounded her with love and support. “Mount Madonna gave me a community while I adjusted to a new culture and a new education system. In the safety of the community, I found confidence in a time of utter confusion and trauma. It was destabilizing to adjust to a new education system in the tenth grade and to be able to perform at the same level as other students who had grown up in America. The community carried me and gave me what I needed to succeed in this new world and furthermore pursue nursing.” The people in the Mount Madonna community were endlessly patient and supportive while she adjusted to a completely different life from the one she had been used to.

Prabha especially credits Babaji for being a role model for her. “The most influential person in my life has been Babaji because he has taught me to live a virtuous life and to give back to others as much as possible. We all are here doing what we love because of him.”

From her early foundation at the Sri Ram Ashram in Haridwar, India, to her experience within the Mount Madonna community, Prabha Sharan has taken in lessons of compassion and love throughout her life. Now working as an orthopedic nurse at Stanford Hospital, Prabha gets to use those qualities as she cares for her patients. Every day she eases pain and helps people get back to their normal lives.

Prabha’s work is never boring. Working at a hospital ranked ninth in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*, Prabha often sees patients who need specialized treatments that cannot be provided at other hospitals. She loves being challenged and constantly being in a learning environment. Furthermore, Prabha’s work gives her perspective on the ephemerality of life.

“One of the best things about my work is being able to help take care of people when they are sick, to watch them get better, to hear that they don’t have cancer or that they should be able to go home just in time to watch their daughter give birth,” she explained, reflecting on her job. “We often don’t realize how comfortable we can become in life, we forget its impermanence.”

Most of the patients that Prabha sees are older people who have arthritis or fractures from a

Prabha and friends celebrate a coworker’s birthday at work



Additionally, Prabha is eternally grateful to Rashmi Cole, who lives at the Sri Ram Ashram full time.

“Rashmi-didi has been a mom to us since the day she decided to live at the Ashram full time and take care of us,” Prabha commented. “She sacrificed everything here just so she could help us succeed in life.” When Prabha and Soma Sharan ('11) came to Mount Madonna, Jivanti Rutansky took over the “mom role.” During a difficult transition, Jivanti went beyond the call of duty to care for the girls. “It was one of the toughest times of my life and I defiantly tested my boundaries, but Jivanti-didi never left my side. I definitely pushed her to her limits but she never gave up on me.” Both women were extremely influential in Prabha’s upbringing and gave her the opportunities and care she needed.

Moving forward, Prabha would like go back to school for a master’s degree. Although she hasn’t decided what she wants to study, she knows that she wants to continue caring for others in every way possible. In her personal life, Prabha wants to spend time with her dog Mowgli and be able to travel and experience new cultures.

Prabha’s life has taken her along a winding path. From India, to the Mountain, to Stanford, she carries her sense of humor

Prabha with her dog Mowgli



Top: Celebrating the Hindu spring festival of Holi at Stanford  
Middle: Family and friends joined Prabha at her American citizenship ceremony  
Bottom: Prabha with her sister Soma Sharan ('11)

and her ability to serve others with compassion and grace everywhere she goes. Prabha aims to fill her life with joy wherever this winding path takes her. “My main goal is to be happy. Wherever I may be in the world I just want to be happy, healthy, and serving others.”

To future and current MMS students, Prabha offers this advice. “Learn to accept yourself and be happy. Find the confidence within yourself or learn to find it. It takes work, every single day. You are as capable as anyone if you set your mind to it. This confidence is what will take you far because you will know when to ask questions, when to raise your voice to demand what is right and just, in a world full of injustice. Most importantly learn to be disciplined, work hard and never take life for granted.”

## Hacking the Future with Gaia Dempsey

In July, Gaia Dempsey ('05\*), founder and CEO of 7th Future, organized Hack the Future: Between Earth and Sky (HTF) with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI). The event was designed as an opportunity for teenagers and young adults to learn entrepreneurial skills. Gaia worked with the Tribe for about a year, consulting on strategic technology and economic development initiatives, in particular around workforce development and developing entrepreneurship capacity within the Tribe.



“It was a hands-on, immersive learning experience designed for youth, ages 16 to 26, to go through the process of moving from idea to prototype,” shared Gaia. “It is a project I conceived and pitched to MBCI as part of a long-term workforce development initiative. I was responsible for designing, recruiting the steering committee, developing the objectives, and running the event. This included everything from developing the agenda, to managing speakers, to signing on partners like NASA, General Assembly, and the engineering and computer science departments of the universities in the region, to conceptualizing our VR Gallery.”

“Hack the Future is an important vehicle for developing entrepreneurial skills, building greater confidence, and encouraging long-term thinking in our younger generations,” commented Tribal Chief Phyliss Anderson. “This initiative fundamentally supports our capacity to innovate, which leads to greater tribal self-determination and economic resilience. But here in the home of our ancestors, our innovation ecosystem won’t be just like Silicon Valley, because we are embodying an Indigenous Futurism mindset that honors our traditions while embracing innovation and technology.”

— Leigh Ann Clifton

\*Alumni non-MMS graduate

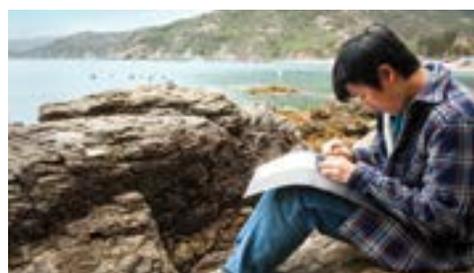
# Experiential Learning and Academic Excellence

The annual ninth and tenth grade learning journey to Santa Catalina Island provides students with a rare opportunity: to assist working scientists with their research, explore a protected, pristine marine environment and to learn about ocean conservation up close.

Another rarity is high school students taking marine biology and oceanography – courses generally not offered until students enter college! For these year-long courses, MMS students complete much of their coursework before their five-day spring trip to Catalina.

Once there, freshmen complete the lab portion of their course requirements, while also engaging in team-building and leadership activities through the Catalina Environmental Leadership Program (CELP). Sophomores, meanwhile, work as “citizen scientists” and engage in the cutting-edge research that is underway through the University of Southern California’s Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies and Marine Science.

— Leigh Ann Clifton



## Passages: Rabindra Rick Bazarnick

Rabindra Rick Bazarnick passed away at home at Mount Madonna Center (MMC) on Sunday, August 12. The father of alumnus Jesse Bazarnick ('00), Rabindra was MMS' first basketball coach in the 1990s. He was also a strong, skilled athlete who enjoyed competing in basketball and volleyball.

“Babaji loved his company building the rock walls and also loved watching him play on every ‘killer’ team,” recalled Sarada Diffenbaugh, president of MMS’ board of directors, referring to MMC community volleyball matches.

“Rabindra was a skilled tile and stone artisan whose attention to quality and detail was impeccable,” commented Sadanand Mailliard, who worked alongside him on many projects. “All of

the flawless tile work at the MMS upper campus is his, as is the stunning tile and stonework in the MMC Conference Center.”

Always willing to lend a helping hand, Rabindra was a founding member of MMC, where he lived for more than 30 years. A man of few words, Rabindra was more prone to action than speech. Even as he became aware of his illness, he continued to work on stuccoing and tile setting at the new gym.

The community came together for a *Sbraddha* memorial service on August 25. He is survived by his son Jesse, brothers Mike and Steve Bazarnick, and his life partner and dear friend, Jaya Maxon. We will miss his quiet, loving presence.

— Supriya McDonald



# Alumni Notes

## From the Class of...

**'85 Lara Kilpatrick** resides in Santa Cruz, and offers support in marketing and fund development to FishWise and California CASA Association, and serves on the boards for Teen Kitchen Project and Santa Cruz Indivisible. She balances this work by adventuring – having traveled in the past year to Bali, Indonesia, Hawaii, Alaska and Washington – practicing yoga and spending time with friends and family.

**'86 Prabha Pacey** lives in Santa Cruz and works full-time as district manager for Starbucks' licensed stores in the area. She also serves as board president for the Hanuman Fellowship, the umbrella organization for MMS, Mount Madonna Center, Pacific Cultural Center and Sri Ram Foundation. Prabha is pursuing a B.A. from Arizona State University, and traveling, with recent trips to Canada, Scotland and Hawaii.

**'89 Usha Kilpatrick** is splitting her time between the Big Island of Hawaii and Mazama, in northeast Washington. When not hiking, outrigger paddling, running, or otherwise adventuring, she serves as the program director for the Bill Healy Foundation. Usha oversees grantmaking in Hawaii for this organization that focuses on environmental conservation and the well-being of children. Her daughters Ella and Rowan are in college, on the east and west coasts, respectively.

**'90 Marm (Auston) Kilpatrick**, Ph.D, continues to serve as an associate professor, department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), focusing on the ecology of infectious diseases, including West Nile virus, influenza, white-nose syndrome, Lyme disease, and chytridiomycosis. When he's not teaching, mentoring graduate students, or doing research in the field, he's playing ultimate frisbee, swimming or diving in the ocean, or out exploring the flora and fauna of other countries.

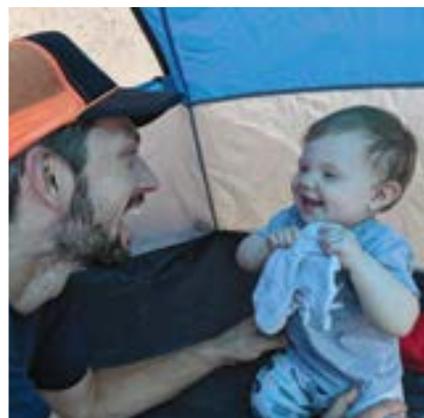
Laura Johnston Ramsay ('97) with her family



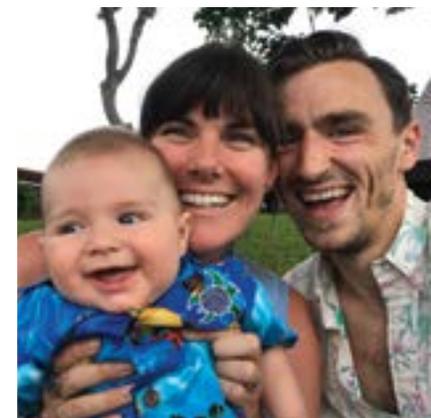
Kai Ramesh McDonald ('99) wed Ashley Shoshan



Nick Manov ('02) with daughter Sierra



Alison Alderdice ('01), husband Alexi and son Constantine



Ryan Oliver ('94) with fiancé Louise Place



Brightstar Ohlson ('92)



Lara Kilpatrick ('85) and Usha Kilpatrick ('89)

**'91** After high school **Govind Davis\*** attended the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) and then earned an M.B.A. from Case Western Reserve University, Weatherhead School of Management. He founded the software company mcftech.com, before changing directions and running a marketing agency, bigm-marketing.com. He is living in Reno with his wife and four children, with a fifth child expected this fall. Govind also has an active social media project, [www.facebook.com/artinyoga](http://www.facebook.com/artinyoga).

**'92** Congratulations to **Brightstar Ohlson**, a strategist and the founder of Bright Research Group for being included in the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' (YBCA) 100 list, recognizing 100 people, organizations and movements that are using their platforms to create change and move society forward. Bright Research Group is a community-centered design and research firm. On November 3, YBCA hosts the fourth annual YBCA 100 summit, where attendees participate in a dialogue with the honorees to explore questions that inspire their work. More information at <https://ybca.org/ybca-100-2018-summit>.

**'94** "It was amazing to see the 40th anniversary *Ramayana!* after 14 years of 'exile' in Pittsburgh, Boston, and Los Angeles," shared **Ryan Oliver**. Ryan and fiancé Louise Place are planning a summer 2019 wedding. In July he became the

regional executive director for BUILD Bay Area and Los Angeles, which uses entrepreneurship as a vehicle to propel youth in underserved communities to college and career success. His adopted son, Arturo, is completing a psychology master's program, and he and his partner welcomed a baby boy in December. "I continue to be involved in the Mount Madonna community and hope to give more time and energy this year."

**'97 Laura Johnston Ramsay** is the regional human resources manager for New Leaf Community Markets. She and husband Mike have three children: Simon, Elliot and Susannah.

**'99 Kai Ramesh McDonald** married Ashley Shoshan on March 9 in San Pancho, Mexico, surrounded by family and friends. They spoke their vows during sunset at Punta Monterrey, followed by a fiesta with horses, dogs, bonfire and plenty of dancing. They now reside in Malibu where they are busy remodeling a house. For the third consecutive year, **Marita Priya Diaz** and husband Ravi Albright received a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for their nonprofit, the Anindo Chatterjee Institute of Tabla (ACIT) Seattle. The award is funding the Access to Ustads Project, a series of public concerts and educational workshops this year in the greater Seattle area. **Yolanda Sangita Diaz-Houston**, husband Jai Raj Brandon



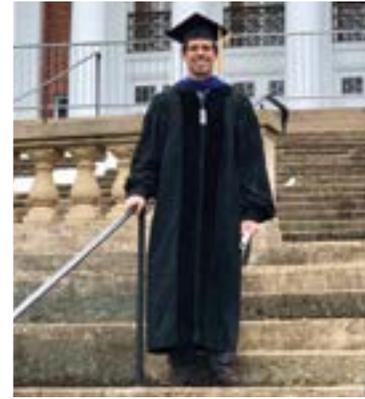
Derrick Diaz ('00) with daughter Lily



Casey Lightner ('06) and girlfriend Kaelin in the Emigrant Wilderness



Madeline Weston-Miles ('07) finishes first



Aaron Colton ('08) earned a Ph.D

and daughter Kailani welcomed baby Koa Bodhi, on December 17, 2017. In September, Yolanda began teaching a course on social justice research methods at Cabrillo College.

'00 **Derrick Diaz** is working at Pinterest as the helpdesk manager, wife Emma works with DoorDash and daughter Lily turns one in October. **Jennifer (Johnston) Levy** is keeping busy with her active family and as director of accounting for West Marine.

'01 On December 1, 2017, **Alicia (Weston-Miles) Carlson** and husband Sam welcomed their third child, Everly, to join sisters June and Vera. **Alison Alderdice** and husband Alexi welcomed a son, Constantine, on January 31. "He is a giant and full of joy!" she commented. Alison was promoted to Clinical Director of the Berkeley office of The Wise Mind Institute; and The Saxophones, Alison and Alexi's band, released its first full-length album and are set to tour Portugal, France and England this fall.

'02 **Nick Manov** and wife Allie welcomed daughter Sierra in October 2017. "She is happy and healthy, and to no one's surprise is 99th+ percentile in height!" shared Nick. "I am in my eighth year with Tesla running battery abuse testing, which is fun and challenging. Volleyball is finally going

to slow down for me, although it's been a blast competing and traveling to attempt to qualify for pro tournaments."

'03 **Corina Kusum Forson Allen\*** and husband Mitch welcomed baby Ryder Quinn Allen on April 28. **Lea (Nash) Allen** and husband Sam enjoyed an "amazing family trip" to Thailand with daughters Iris, 3, and Lily, 5. A story by **Shruti Swamy** was published in the summer issue of *The Paris Review*; an interview with her was included in the same issue.

'05 Watch for scenes with **Tapan Lockwood** as an "extra" in the upcoming *Bumblebee* movie and the new FX miniseries *Devs*, set to premiere in 2019. "Thanks to Mount Madonna, I still enjoy the energy and fire of performance," said Tapan.

'06 **Casey Lightner** lives with his girlfriend in Santa Cruz and works as a biomedical engineer in Campbell. His current project involves next-generation catheters that are going through FDA approvals. "These devices will do everything from deliver stents, expand nasal passageways, deploy new artificial heart valves, and gain access to the femoral vein for drug delivery," shared Casey. **Alyssa (DeBenedetti) Watt** and husband Kevin welcomed twin sons Dale Chase and Reid Miller on September 9.

'07 **John G. (Jonji) Barber** received his M.D. in June from the David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles. He graduated as president of the student body and with honors in academics and humanism through the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and Gold Humanism Honor Society. **Madeline Weston-Miles** is taking on more responsibility at Tesla. In July she was the first woman to cross the finish line in the 50K Silverton Alpine in Colorado with a time of 6:17:33, and the ninth finisher overall!

'08 In May **Aaron Colton** graduated with a Ph.D. in English language, literature and research from the University of Virginia. This fall, he'll join the School of Literature, Media and Communication at Georgia Tech as a postdoctoral fellow. **Andrew Whitaker** was admitted to the Ph.D. program at the St. Paul School of Economics, University of New Hampshire, with a full scholarship. He is considering a focus on macroeconomics and agent-based modeling.

'10 **Jack Massion** is living with his girlfriend in Chicago, and working as a financial systems consultant for SystemsAccountants Inc. When he's not working, Jack plays for a local rugby club and enjoys taking naps.

Jennifer (Johnston) Levy ('00) and family



Alicia (Weston-Miles) Carlson's ('01) daughter Everly



Corina Kusum Forson Allen ('03)\* and family



Class of 2015's Cooper Stevens, Cassie Caborn and Renata Massion in Argentina





Kellyn Cardinal ('12) with classmates Nicole Nascimento and McKenzie Caborn



Sally Shields ('14) graduates



Graduate Talia Speaker ('14)



Alyssa (DeBenedetti) Watt ('06) and her husband Kevin welcomed twin sons

'11 **Emma Fladeboe** is working in sales for a San Francisco technology startup and just moved to London to help head their United Kingdom office for the coming year. **Soma Sharan** is an advancement associate for the Liberty Hill Foundation, a leading social justice foundation in Los Angeles. In April Liberty Hill honored Congressman John Lewis at its annual Upton Sinclair Awards and raised over \$550,000. "When I spoke to the Congressman during the dinner, he said he always enjoys meeting with MMS students," shared Soma.

'12 **Blythe Collier** joined the MMS board of directors as an alumni representative. She is the leadership and after-hours coordinator at San Jose Job Corps, where she serves as a student government advisor, leadership instructor and manages tutoring programs. **JonJon Blunden** earned his master's degree in music industry administration from California State University, Northridge, along with the Future Executive Award. **Kabir Ahluwalia** has completed the first year of a Ph.D. program in clinical and experimental therapeutics

at the University of Southern California. In June **Kellyn Cardinal** graduated from UCSC with a B.A. in fine arts. This spring **Palak Bhatnagar** graduated from Columbia University with a master's degree in health administration, and is now working for medical device company Derma Sensor.

'13 In May, **William Bryan** graduated *cum laude* with a B.A. in journalism, media and screen studies, and a minor in photography from Northeastern University. **Vyvyanne Mackey** earned a B.S. in wildlife, fish and conservation biology from UC Davis. She is living in Sacramento (a housemate of **Aimee Hopkins**), doing some catering and domestic pet care while pursuing an internship in the field.

'14 **Roger Hooker** graduated from Tufts University with a B.A. in political science and Middle Eastern studies. **Sally Shields** graduated with honors on May 18 from Whittier College with a B.A. in anthropology and sociology. **Soul Kerr** graduated in May with a B.S. in business from Menlo College. **Talia Speaker** graduated in May from Scripps College with a B.A. in organismal biology.

'15 **Renata Massion** attended Di Tella University in Buenos Aires for a semester earlier this year. In July, high school classmates **Cooper Stevens** and **Cassie Caborn** joined Renata in Bariloche, Argentina for some adventuring.

'16 **Julia Gratton** is a student at Whitman College and recently embarked on a semester of study in Ecuador. Check out her blog at [pasillodeslizante.bome.blog](http://pasillodeslizante.bome.blog). **Lily Petersen** has accepted a paid, fall internship opportunity with Sony/ATV Music Publishing in Nashville. She attends Belmont University, where she is majoring in entertainment industry studies, and will receive class credit for the internship. "I am more than thrilled to be spending my time there until December," said Lily.

\*Alumni non-MMS graduates



Stay Connected! Let us know what you are up to. We love learning about the interesting things you are doing! Contact the Mount Madonna School Alumni Facebook group or check in at [mountmadonnaschool.org/alumni/stay-connected/](http://mountmadonnaschool.org/alumni/stay-connected/)

## A New Appreciation

*Zoë Kelly ('15) is a student at Whitman College in Washington*

This summer I interned at Running Start, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization in Washington, D.C. that trains young women to run for office. I first connected with Running Start during my junior year of high school when I traveled to D.C. with the Values program. One of our interviews was with Susannah Wellford, the founder and president of Running Start. I was beyond inspired by her and her work and realized that this was an organization that I wanted to stay connected with. I participated in their Young Women's Political Leadership Program that same summer, and have stayed in contact with Susannah and the organization since.

Four years later, I had the opportunity to go to work every day in the office that I have admired and aspired to since I was 16. This has only been possible because of Mount Madonna and the Values program, not only because of the initial introduction, but also because of the skills that I gained on the mountain. As a rising senior in college, I was surprised to find that the majority of praise I received for my work this summer was all based on specific lessons that I had learned in high school. It gave me a new appreciation for the level of critical thinking, problem solving, and accountability that Mount Madonna instills in its students and reaffirmed my love for my old school.



Zoë listens to Susannah Wellford



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## Congratulations and Best Wishes to Our 2018 Graduates!



*Back row, left to right: Lucas Caudill, Zachary Wagner (Salutatorian), William Murphy, Carl Ward, Brigg Busenhart, Jordan Willis, Zachary Clark, Gracie Howley, and Cyrus Kamkar. Front row, left to right: Phoebe Grant, Sienna Clifton, Indigo Kelly (Valedictorian), Emily Villareal, Elias Moreno, Ruby Bracher, and Aimee Kerr.*

### Class of 2018 College Acceptances:

American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Los Angeles\*  
Bard College  
Cabrillo College\*\*\*\*  
California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo\*\*  
California State University, Channel Islands  
California State University, Humboldt  
California State University, Long Beach  
California State University, Pomona  
Cuesta College\*  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Lewis and Clark College  
Reed College\*

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
San Diego State University\*  
San Francisco State University  
San Jose State University  
Santa Clara University\*  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Scripps College  
Smith College  
Sonoma State University  
Southern Oregon University  
University of Arizona

University of California, Berkeley\*  
University of California, Davis\*\*  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University of Hawaii, Manoa\*  
University of Nevada, Reno  
University of Puget Sound  
University of Rochester  
University of San Francisco  
University of Washington  
Whitman College  
Willamette University  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute\*

\*denotes school graduate(s) selected to attend