# Connection for families friends and alumnity

An annual publication for families, friends and alumni of Mount Madonna School

#### **OUR MISSION**

We are a diverse learning community 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 VALUE**

- Our learning community, which includes our students, faculty, administrators, staff, families, alumni and local, national, and international peers communities
- Each individual, and all of their unique qualities which weave into the tapestry of our shared humanity
- Intellectual inquiry that fosters a love of learning, open-mindedness, curiosity, self-discipline and perseverance
- Commitment to practices that support equity and racial, social, economic and environmental justice

#### On the Cover:

Kindergarten students learn about indigenous Ohlone practices from Dayanand Diffenbaugh. Photo by Hema Walker

Mount Madonna School land acknowledgement:



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# THE POWER OF VOICE AND ACTION



Mount Madonna School (MMS) offers an innovative approach to learning that is focused on academic excellence, creative self-expression and positive character development. The 2022-23 school year felt joyful as we returned to offering our vibrant academic program, rich with learning opportunities such as service to society, learning journeys, performing arts and an array of enrichment and athletic offerings.

Student learning journeys and serving society are cornerstones of a transformational MMS education, building character by inspiring and leading change and reframing how students understand themselves in the world. At

MMS, all students from preschool to grade 12 participate in service learning. The lessons and experiences gleaned expose them to the broader humanity, supporting introspection and learning the power of their voice and actions. For example, twelfth and sixth grade students examined agricultural practices through a social justice lens. The students received an unvarnished lesson and a glimpse into the working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers and their families. This powerful experience ignited ongoing service projects across grade levels to help address immediate needs. That's on Period Project, a student club, highlighted "period poverty" and menstruation stigma, whereas other students focused on collecting essential items such as food, new and gently used clothing, books and toys for children. The 2022-23 learning journeys included trips to India, Washington, D.C., Boston, Santa Catalina Island, Yosemite National Park, Sierra Outdoor School and classroom studies of Nordic cultures, traditions and history.

Exposure to different ideas, a variety of cultures and people from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and lived experiences, cultivates and nurtures compassion, empathy and respect. As a result of the educational opportunities and experiences at MMS, students graduate as kind, compassionate and discerning global thinkers.

ann socuert

Ann Goewert, Ph.D. | Head of School

## EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Mount Madonna School (MMS) is committed to providing an inclusive and equitable learning environment. This is an inherent core value of our school. As a diverse community of learners, we believe that an inclusive and equitable education system is critical in unlocking the full potential of each and every student, faculty and staff member.

What we have learned in over 40 years is that we cannot have equity without inclusion. We also recognize that creating an equitable and inclusive school is an iterative process. We are committed to engaging in this important work in several ways:

- By continually exploring the ways in which teaching and learning are used to bring awareness of unjust and harmful systems of oppression, and how they can also be used to help develop empathy and compassion
- Exploring the structural ways that MMS can actively support equity and inclusion
- Helping our students and ourselves reflect on our own knowledge and experience of race, color, ancestry, culture, religion, ability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and socioeconomics
- Focusing on developing behaviors, forms of communication, and relationships that reinforce our commitment to equity and inclusion
- Dismantling conditions that prevent everyone from inhabiting the educational space, and feeling seen, heard and valued

Read the complete statement at: www.MountMadonnaSchool.org

# **END RACISM, BUILD PEACE**

On September 21, 2022, Mount Madonna School (MMS) hosted its inaugural commemoration of the International Day of Peace. Following are excerpts from two student reflections.

"Ending racism and building peace is a cause that is very personal for me as a Latinx student of color and the founder of the Art and Activism club at Mount Madonna School. A lot of what we do in the club is about sharing the work of diverse artists, tackling systemic problems and celebrating different cultures and identities through artwork. In a time that is plagued by social issues such as racism, violence, poverty, and war in countries like Ukraine, Palestine, Ethiopia, Iran, Venezuela, and many others, holding events such as these remind us to continue our efforts toward achieving global peace are extremely important.

While an event like the International Day of Peace dedicated to ending racism may not have immediate tangible effects, it can inspire us to take action to better our world and be more compassionate towards our fellow humans. Change always starts small, and localized events like this can spark ideas that travel to a wider scope of people."

— Zoey Ocampo-Sobkoviak, grade 12



"Focusing on ways to end racism is an essential endeavor. Participating in Mount Madonna's International Day of Peace is just one way to come together, acknowledge that it exists, and discuss meaningful ways to end it. Racism heavily affects and impacts individuals and communities everywhere.

I have felt the effects of racism within my own family. I am the product of a mixed-race union where my mother is Hispanic and my father is white. As it turns out, I present as a white person and have benefited firsthand from the privileges that come with my skin color.

My mother, born and raised in El Salvador, has had a very different experience. She fled the Central American country to come to the United States due to the severity of the civil war."

— Irulan Faith Cockrum, grade 11





#### **LEARNING JOURNEY** TO **BOSTON**

Each year Mount Madonna School (MMS) eighth grade students and faculty participate in a learning journey to historic Boston, Massachusetts and surrounding cities. They visit sites of colonial and revolutionary events and other more recent cultural sites highlighting the history of the people in the United States. Since Boston is a city that experienced slavery, revolution, war and abolition, these travel experiences deepen student understanding of the foundational arguments for freedom and democracy, a core theme in the eighth grade U.S. history curriculum. Students also get to be part of a unique experience that contributes to the school's mission of fostering students' creative, intellectual and ethical growth. Before departing, several eighth graders shared thoughts about the upcoming experience:

"We will be able to build stronger friendships and deeper connections." – *Victory Gulizia* 

"We can all look out for each other" - Theo Esposito

"We must be respectful and put forward a collective effort to respect one another's personal space." – *Kiko Horne* 

The first Boston learning journey was in 2018, when Mount Madonna's class of 2022 seniors were in eighth grade. Following, several of these seniors reflected on what they have learned about themselves through participating in school learning journeys.

"I do well in group situations, but I also need breaks from people sometimes. I have learned how to respect other people's personal space, and be respectful of how I am impacting shared spaces." — Cecily Kelly

"I have learned how to live with other people who have different living styles and may not value the same things in terms of hygiene or tidiness... I understand what my needs are, and how to tell people when and what I need if it's actually important." — *Mariah Cohen* 



"I have learned that I love to engage with new places, people and experiences. Living in a different way for a period of time can be very informative and insightful." – *Jacob Sirk-Traugh* 

#### THE WARM DEMANDER: HONORING SAMPAD MARTIN KACHUCK



Even before I was born, Sampad was an integral part of my life and family. He is a dear friend of both my parents. My dad met Sampad in the 1970s and they quickly bonded over their mutual love of music, theater, humor and Babaji's teachings. Sampad directed my mother in the "Ramayana!" – she played Princess Sita while pregnant with me! After the period of seclusion that Babaji recommended for newborns and their families, Mount Madonna Center was the first place I visited, and Sampad was among the first people to hold me.

In all the most treasured memories of my childhood, Sampad was there. The ever-entertaining master of ceremonies, he would open fun community events with loud, boisterous and hilarious rhymes. He pumped up the crowd at summer volleyball tournaments down by the old sand courts, and perfectly captured each student lucky enough to star in one of his senior graduation speeches. Sampad also spoke beautifully at my mom's memorial service. He is a powerful orator – the kind of speaker who can hold an audience captive. Sampad has the unique capability to make you laugh and cry in the same minute.

I can't think of Sampad without ruminating on the "Ramayana!" In our house, "Ramayana!" time was just as exciting and adored as any holiday. One of my favorite moments is from circa 1998. I was sitting on my bed doing homework, when suddenly the climactic vocals of Ravana's theme boomed out of our garage! My parents were always in the band with Sampad, and rehearsals were often at our house in the "music room." The "Ramayana!" truly had me under its spell from toddlerhood – I could sit and watch the whole thing by age three. I gasped when Maricha transformed into the golden deer, and I knew without a doubt that magic was surely afoot. My memories swim with costumes and monsters, camaraderie among peers, the way we admired our older schoolmates, the smell of the makeup and hairspray – and Sampad, the master artist behind it all.





I remember making a Saturday Night Live-type video in honor of Sampad's 40th birthday. Fast forward to now; I will be turning 40 in a few months. I have been teaching for a decade, a calling inspired by Sampad and teacher Anupama Forson. While I was in college working toward my teaching credential, I learned about the concept of the "warm demander." As my professor explained the idea, Sampad leapt to mind instantly. He fits the definition precisely – that teacher who cares deeply for you and expects your best effort, always.

We always wanted to do our best for Sampad. He encouraged every student to take risks and try new things on stage. In English class, the line between writing and theater was blurred, as he explained a concept like chronological order by animatedly hopping over pieces of furniture. Above all things, what Sampad bestowed on his students was fearlessness. He quietly and kindly held space for those kids who were terrified by "share a song" during the first days of school. He acknowledged that it was scary, but waited patiently while the nerves settled. Through theater, he made public speaking less intimidating. This serves us all well decades later – at work and throughout our lives.

One of my most fervent life goals is to have a teaching career spanning many years and devoted to my students' growth and wellbeing. I will consider myself very fortunate if I can be the warm demander to them that Sampad always was for me. I treasure him as a teacher, and I love him endlessly as a human. Thank you Sampad. Your gifts live in all of us forever – in our classrooms and memories, and always in our hearts. Now remember Babaji's words – "Work hard" (check!), "Meditate every day. Meet people without fear, and PLAY!" It's your time now to rest and play.

— Oriana Valdez [Lakshmi Potter ('02)]



#### A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY



The "Ramayana!" production has been central to Mount Madonna School since its founding. "With this show, we carry forward a tradition inspired by Baba Hari Dass (1923-2018) and supported by the Mount Madonna Center," said Head of School Ann Goewert. "It's the culmination of months of work during the academic year and is a year-end celebration for our community embracing diversity and creative self-expression. The Ramayana is a timeless classic teaching the universal values of truth, duty, love and service to the greater good. As students work together to prepare for this ambitious show, they embody the values embedded in the Ramayana."

Mount Madonna Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences is a residential community and conference center founded in 1978 atop a mountain in Watsonville. Baba Hari Dass (Babaji), a silent monk, teacher and practitioner of yoga, was the inspiration behind the founding of the center, which shares a history and mission with the school. The annual "Ramayana!" performance is part of this mission. The well-known tale with origins in India was adapted into a musical by members of the Mount Madonna community in the 1970s.

This whole-school production brings together all Mount Madonna School (MMS) students, big buddies and little buddies, connecting them in ways they may not otherwise share during the school year. As the process unfolds, the performing arts team guides and provides structure, but more importantly, endeavors to "create space" for young actors to instill their own creativity, imagination and ownership of their roles, and the production. "Ramayana!" is emblematic of theater as community. The development of myriad skills and strengthening of confidence to be bold in presentation are woven into the team's time with the students.

— Leigh Ann Clifton



#### BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING, CRISPR AND EDITING GENES



Eleventh grade students enrolled in the Biomedical Engineering course conducted a gene editing experiment using Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) gene editing technology.

CRISPR is named after the DNA sequences that gave scientists a clue about how bacteria recognize and destroy viral invaders. This technology was used by Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, recipients of the 2020 Nobel Prize in chemistry, to find and cut very specific DNA sequences. It has the promise of revolutionizing medicine over the coming years.

The students successfully turned a lactose-tolerant gene into a lactoseintolerant gene. The experiment concluded a study unit on the ethics and implications of genetic editing.

"If someone is suffering, then as a society, we should be able to help them with gene editing," commented student Erin Kavitsky. "But if someone's parents just want their baby to have blue eyes and blonde hair then that's where we draw the line."

MMS launched a first through twelfth grade engineering sequence last year, with the University of Californiaapproved honors course Biomedical Engineering offered as an upper division lab elective. Other units in the class include designing a robotic prosthetic limb, designing and testing pill coatings, reading medical images, and going through the engineering design process to propose a medical innovation.

— Leigh Ann Clifton

#### THE SPACE TO PLAY

#### Athletic Participation Builds Character and Supports Students' Academic Success and Creativity

Athletics is a meditation with the present moment, a dance with our surroundings, the inner battle to fully believe in yourself and to unify with your team. How everyone accomplishes each of these things will be unique to them, and takes complete dedication in order to be truly successful. This blend of body, mind and spirit makes athletics, at its highest form, an artistic, creative outlet for self-expression.

— PK McDonald ('04)



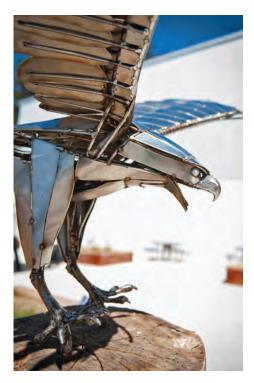
Middle school ultimate frisbee



Middle school la crosse



High school girls JV volleyball





Middle school cross country

All-SCCAL High School Volleyball Bella Cambell Mariab Coben Honorable Mentions Cecily Kelly Cy Harris



High school cross country



High school girls varsity volleyball

Participation in school sports fosters positive character development by instilling resilience and determination. Teamwork cultivates cooperation and communication, while sportsmanship encourages fair play, fostering integrity and empathy. In sports, both wins and losses teach humility and grace. Mount Madonna School sports serve as a powerful arena for individuals to develop into well-rounded individuals. — Nicole Silva Culbertson



Middle school girls basketball



County-wide International Games



Middle school cross country



Middle school flag football



High school girls JV volleyball

Beyond the physical realm, the benefits of participating in school athletics can help students succeed in school and beyond, positively impacting academic performance, social skills and overall well-being.

— Nick Cabassa

#### ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT AND POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS



The spring 2023 track and field season did not disappoint, with the varsity girls 4x100 team breaking a 2019 school record at their first season meet, the Garlic Classic Track Invitational at Christopher High in Gilroy. The team, consisting of sophomore Lagi Hunnicutt, senior Zoey Ocampo-Sobkoviak and juniors Emma Monclus and Beatrice Miller, broke the record with a time of 54.36! This same team ended the season at the league championships with another school record in the 4x400m at 4:46.49.

Junior Ona Musoll-Buendia held her position all season as one of the league's leading triple jumpers, breaking her previous school record with a jump of 32'11.75". Mount Madonna athletes competed for the first time in school history in pole vault, with Monclus and Ocampo-Sobkoviak tackling the high bar jump. Ocampo-Sobkoviak has set the school record at 7'.

Junior Logan Shaw competed for the first time this year in high jump, coming out strong to break a school record set in 2016. Shaw set a new school record jump of 5'02" during a league meet at Santa Cruz High School. Each season the Hawk track and field team continues to grow and make a positive impression every time they compete!

Sara Sobkoviak



#### COLLEGE ADVISORY PROGRAM NURTURES STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS



Last spring, as college acceptance letters rolled in, Mount Madonna School (MMS) shared that its Class of 2023 was overwhelmingly accepted into the most selective University of California (UC) campuses: Los Angeles, Berkeley, Davis, Santa Barbara, San Diego and Irvine, as well as top technology and engineering programs at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo and select private schools.

In fact, for years MMS seniors have been offered admission in the program of their choice at top UCs; and for the 2021-22 school year, Mount Madonna School had the highest UC-acceptance rate of all private schools in Santa Cruz County and ranked third among the Santa Clara County private schools.

The process of building a college list, writing entrance essays, applying for scholarships and financial aid, and choosing extracurriculars to round out a strong application can be daunting for students and parents alike. That's why MMS offers an exceptional college advisory program to guide and nurture students to their fullest potential.

This program formally begins the spring of junior year with a semester-long class that breaks down the process into attainable steps, as well as one-on-one meetings with Director of Upper School Shannon Kelly.

"Many larger high schools have one college advisor for every 400 students," Kelly said. "Our small class sizes make it possible to truly understand the needs and desires of each student we work with."

MMS college advisory is rigorous and holds students to their highest potential, but is always full of heart and humanity. MMS understands that "success" looks different for each person. Therefore, the college advisory program is based on a student's individual passion, strengths and unique identity.

— Carly Wheelehan

#### COLLEGE BOARD ACADEMIC HONORS

Seniors Cecily Kelly, Mariah Cohen and Zoey Ocampo-Sobkoviak are among 62,000 students awarded by the College Board National Recognition Program for academic achievements and outstanding performance on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) 10, and/or Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

The students received the National Rural and Small Town Award, and Ocampo-Sobkoviak was also recognized with the National Hispanic Recognition Award.

In addition, as a result of their sophomore and junior year AP tests, Cohen, Ocampo-Sobkoviak, Samuel Kaplan and Benjamin Pearson ('22) received AP Scholar with Distinction recognition; Kelly was named an AP Scholar with Honors; and Sandy Astone, AP Scholar.

#### THE JIVANTI RUTANSKY MEMORIAL AWARD





For nearly four decades, Jivanti Rutansky selflessly served Mount Madonna School (MMS) and its students — as a founding teacher, "Ramayana!" producer and longtime administrator. To honor Jivanti"s memory, MMS faculty give one high school student and one middle school student an award in her name each year. These awards are presented to students who embody the qualities that made Jivanti such an important ambassador of the school mission.

The recipients of this award will be engaged and dedicated members of the school community, empathetic, compassionate classmates, engaged and curious learners, honest and selfreflective individuals, and protectors of the environment. The recipients, senior Zoey Ocampo-Sobkoviak and eighth grader Noa Zands, also demonstrate support of their classmates in their endeavors, and commit themselves to service.

#### POSITIVE ENERGY AND DEEP GRATITUDE: SUMMIT FOR THE PLANET

The 17th annual Summit for the Planet Walka-thon and Celebration on April 29 was a great success! The weather was beautiful and allowed attendees to enjoy the school's lovely mountaintop campus. We raised \$23,204 with a net profit of \$21,028. We are so thankful for the participation and support of our students, families, friends, faculty and staff.

Mount Madonna School was pleased to welcome the Bay Area Herpetological Society, Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center, Mt. Madonna Stables, Time To Be Herd, Be Nice Shave Ice, Carbon Direct and Sabor Hidalgo.

Students added to the excitement of the day by hosting informational booths, games and food to purchase. This included:

- High school Culinary Studies students' vegetarian burger bar, guided by teacher Sara Sobkoviak
- Student clubs: Environmental Justice members educated guests about wildflowers, while the Social club sold strawberry shortcake
- Eco-carnival games hosted by lower school grades

In the afternoon we were graced with the musical talents of students, faculty and













parents, along with a visiting band from Rio Del Mar Elementary School.

Summit for the Planet is such a special event because our entire community of students, parents, family, alumni, faculty and more, fill our campus with so much positive energy. Deep gratitude to the many hardworking volunteers, with whom the event wouldn't have been possible; their collective support is instrumental to filling vital roles like in walker registration, trail work, set up, clean up and first aid.

We also thank our media sponsors: GMH Today, Growing Up in Santa Cruz, KAZU 90.3FM, Morgan Hill Life, Gilroy Life, SantaCruzParent.com and Santa Cruz Sentinel; this essential support helps to ensure a successful event!

We look forward to Mount Madonna's 18th Summit for the Planet planned for Saturday, May 4, 2024.

— Linda Manzur

# STUDENTS PARTNER WITH COUNTY FOR FOREST RESEARCH

Senior students are helping Santa Clara County's Department of Parks and Recreation to monitor forest health in Mount Madonna County Park. This collaboration is a part of the honors course Science with Humanity.

This long-term project involves students in monitoring and recording the presence and coverage of native and invasive species, vegetation growth rates and signs of intensified pathogens.

"This is an excellent opportunity for students as it is real-world science work and they are contributing and making a difference in their own community," said teacher Nicole Silva Culbertson. "They get to participate and learn first-hand how ecologists and scientists work to help protect and support the health of our own environment."

Science with Humanity is a survey of college-level life science topics with an emphasis on bioethics. The central questions of the class are "what can science tell us about being a human being?" and "what are the ethics of using the tools we've developed in science?"

"By studying the intersection between science and society, I am able to learn about the practical applications of scientific discoveries and how they impact our daily lives," said senior Sky Weir. "For example, studying the effects of climate change on human societies has allowed me to understand the importance of sustainable practices and the need for collective action to combat this global challenge."

— Carly Wheelehan





















#### PHILANTHROPIC GENEROSITY ANNUAL GIVING

Annual Giving ensures that all Mount Madonna School (MMS) students receive a quality education by contributing to tuition revenue that covers about 85% of the program expenses. This annual campaign also shows support of the school's mission and program from the wider community to our accreditors. MMS relies on the philanthropic generosity of its committed donors and their tax-deductible gifts.

Thank you to the donors who contributed \$175,860, including \$17,930 raised through the Drive for Schools fundraiser. Annual Giving netted \$157,930 in donations which surpassed the \$151,000 goal. For eight consecutive years, our school community has surpassed this fundraiser's goal! This philanthropic generosity from current families, alumni, faculty, staff, alumni families, grandparents and friends is vital to the continuity of Mount Madonna's transformative educational program.

#### Thank you to the following donors for their support:

VISIONARY | \$50,000-\$99,999 Adelle Tomash

**AMBASSADOR \$25,000-\$49,999** *No donors at this funding level* 

**LEADER \$10,000-\$24,999** Elizabeth and Laurence England Silicon Valley Community Foundation

#### CHAMPION | \$5,000-\$9,999

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#### **DIRECTED** AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Each year, Mount Madonna School (MMS) families, friends and community members give generously to the school, with some donors directing their gifts to specific programs. In 2022-23, MMS received monetary donations directed towards mending "Ramayana!" costumes, student scholarships, the Model United Nations program and Gay Straight Alliance club. Other gifts were in-kind contributions including classroom furniture, playground equipment, "Ramayana!" photo books and costumes. — *Linda Manzur* 

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

Amazon Smile Foundation Anonymous Jessica and Forrest Cambell Sudh Chinni Sandi and Jeff Clark Susan Delgado Ganesh Deo Angela and David Doriot Elizabeth and Laurence England Freeway Toyota of Gilrov Usha Ganeshalingam Great Lakes Scrip Center Christalyn Jeanne Bhushan Lengade Minako Lopez-Nakayama and Benjamin Lopez-Galvan Amy Lundquist

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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 Ann Goewert at 408-847-2717.

## **ENDOWMENT FUND**

The Mount Madonna School (MMS) Endowment Fund earned \$85,275.98 in interest during the 2022-23 school year, bringing the fund to \$1,228,889 at the end of the fiscal year. At the discretion of the Board of Directors, the funds can be used to recruit and retain talented faculty and staff, as MMS remains dedicated to improving the compensation of its employees. The board of directors may also allocate funding toward student scholarships. The overall goal is to raise \$5 million. The board of directors regularly reviews the investment strategy and efforts to raise additional funding.

Please join us in continuing the MMS legacy with an endowment gift. You may donate online at: www.MountMadonnaSchool.org/support/endowment/. For more information, contact: school@mountmadonnaschool.org or 408-846-4032.

— Linda Manzur

















#### DEPTH, MEANING AND ENTHUSIASM-FILLED LEARNING

Mount Madonna School (MMS) pursues its mission through the integration of academic excellence, creative self-expression and positive character development. These principles permeate school culture, bringing depth, meaning and enthusiasm to learning. The school community is dedicated to universal values, including empathy, honesty, forgiveness, respect, cooperation, generosity, compassion and kindness. The community works together to take responsibility, practice self-reliance, exercise leadership and integrity, and to assist and care for one another.

At Mount Madonna, a sense of belonging and safety allows for students to flourish. The school recognizes that the interaction of the explicit and implicit curriculum shapes the learning and student experience. While the explicit curriculum is found in the choice of content, activities and materials, the implicit curriculum is expressed in our school culture through relationships, modeling and classroom practices.

MMS strives to instill in students curiosity, intrinsic motivation and an understanding of their place in the world. The school provides a stimulating, safe and secure environment where students are challenged to explore ideas through different lenses, to think critically, problem solve, analyze and interpret the complexity around them. The integration of creative arts and academics are mutually reinforcing and beneficial, individually and collectively, allowing students to overcome limitations and uncover new gifts, passions and talents.

— Ann Goewert

#### Community Food Drive

"One of the most consistent themes that we explore over the course of the second grade year is cooperation and helping others. We ask such questions as "how can one person make a change?" and "what can we do to help others in our community?" Leading the holiday food drive at Mount Madonna every year allows second grade students to take these principles into action and build skills of empathy and compassion." — Prema Gammons "Honors oceanography students build and test remote operated vehicles on Catalina. Students form teams and compete off the docks, flying their creations through an intact kelp forest and viewing the myriad underwater life in the pristine ecosystem at Emerald Bay. Students in the Engineering club built the motors, camera housings, tethers and monitors from electronic components." – Lisa Catterall

# Santa Catalina Island

# **Cultivating Joy**

"Every step of the way, the Mount Madonna School curriculum has been an incredible balance of encouraging children to step out of their comfort zones and embrace and enjoy new knowledge. Going into first grade my son THRIVED. The teaching style of Mrs. Laffin consistently engages every child, allowing them to feel heard. Mount Madonna offers a unique curriculum and methodology that recognizes the social-emotional needs of children, and tremendously enhances their ability to learn and cultivate joy, wonder and enthusiasm in an educational environment." — Divya Rathore

#### Model United Nations

"I find great value in mine and my peers' involvement in Model United Nations (MUN). I believe the only way that the world can begin to understand each other is through communication and meaningful conversations. If we cannot even do that, then we as a society will be run into the ground. This is the whole mission of MUN – to find and come to a consensus with each other." — Lagi Hunnicutt, grade 10 "Yosemite offers a real-world science environment and brings to life the concepts that ninth grade students study in their year-long biology course, such as ecology, environmental processes, evolution, and the amazingly diverse flora and fauna. Students explore the natural world through hiking, observations, journaling and science experiments, as well as many activities and time that allow them to bond as classmates." — Nicole Silva Culbertson

#### **Yosemite National Park**

"Sixth grade's focus on agroecology was a semester-long study with field trips to increase their understanding of how agricultural systems are also ecological systems. They visited two working organic farms where they harvested berries and observed agroecological research in action, A Farmworker Reality Tour provided a personal glimpse into migrant farmworkers' lives, learning about the injustices they experience and gaining appreciation for their work. Lastly, students viewed artists' expressions of farmworkers and agriculture at a museum exhibition, and prepared a sustainable food potluck with their 12th grade buddies." — Hilary Alvarado

# **Digging Deep**

# Sierra Outdoor School

"It was an amazing trip and I was grateful to spend the time up in the majestic Sierras with the kids, other parents and teachers. We had so much fun every day! I don't think I have ever started my days at 6:45am playing Hacky Sack and ended at 10:00pm getting a tour of the constellations. In between, we learned how to pan for gold and play music on ancient shaman instruments. We played basketball, dined together and built unforgettable memories." — Jason Kasznar

## **Oral History Project**

"I was curious to know how the war made his life difficult. I was surprised to learn about the pranks my grandfather used to play on the Nazi soliders when he was a boy and what happened when he almost got caught." — Amelie Thams, grade 6

Thams' interview with her father, who recalled his father's stories of serving in the Danish Resistance in World War II, was featured on the StoryCorps website and is stored in the Library of Congress. "The hikes with our daughter's class, classroom potlucks, meaningful curriculum and joyful learning environment are truly special experiences. The teachers are gentle, knowledgeable, kind people who have taken the time to get to know our child and help her grow and build confidence. Mount Madonna School offers a caring, nurturing and connected community." — Michelle Sunga "To enhance their study of ecology, third grade students learned how to identify a biome, what plant and animal life thrive in different climates, where in the world different biomes exist – and created biome dioramas using cardboard, recyclables, art supplies and other objects. Everyone picked their own biome to research so that student choice and curiosity drove the project. It was a beautiful learning experience that blended science, engineering and presentation skills." — Madeline Hayes

**Biome Studies** 

#### Connected Community

"The middle school camping tradition creates a context for intentional community building at the start of the school year. Students share that this annual ritual is especially meaningful for them because it provides an opportunity for deepening friendships with peers and is a wonderful way to welcome new students. Overall this experience increases the community of support for each student throughout their academic learning, creative growth and character development upon return to school." — Blythe Collier ('12)

# **Uvas Canyon County Park**

"I started the marketplace project a few years ago to add an activity to an existing social studies curriculum about trade and bartering during the California Gold Rush era. I was looking for something that would allow students to experience what it was like to sell, trade and barter goods. Using our classroom currency tickets - fourth graders made and sold products to their fellow first through fifth grade classmates. The students made bracelets, cookies, necklaces, artwork and even came up with some interesting, creative marketing ideas. This project is always a favorite of the students and creates an opportunity for real hands-on learning that they will always remember." - Nick Cabassa

#### **Marketplace Learning**

A Supportive Environment

"At Mount Madonna, dedicated, caring preschool teachers provide students with a safe and supportive environment to explore the wonder of nature, follow their curiosity, and form strong bonds of community. It was a joy to watch my child grow in confidence, develop personal gifts and find joy in friendships." — Brooke Sampson

#### Sambandh/Connection: India Learning Journey

"McLeod Ganj is a rare kind of place and I still find myself thinking about its curious cultural position. It seems that at least a third of the people living there are monks who study at the temple adjacent to the Dalai Lama's house. Many more Tibetan lay people also live there, drawn to the seat of the government in exile. Some are descendants of tribes who live in the mountains, and some are Indians from the surrounding state of Himachal Pradesh. On one hand McLeod Ganj is like the capital of Tibet. While China has taken over the Tibetan state, Dharamshala has acted as a beacon to many Tibetan's searching to practice their religion freely and escape Chinese oppression. Dharamshala has become the home and archive of Tibetan things, people, culture and religion. On the other hand Dharamshala is not part of Tibet, it is part of India. In a way, all of the Tibetan refugees are visitors or guests in India. As Rinchen Khando, founder of the Tibetan Nun's Project, talked to us about, Tibetans still yearn to reclaim their homeland. What does it mean to have a government and religious leader who people flock to, operating under the refuge of another government? What does it mean to have a culture carried on only by people and not by a specific place? What does it mean to watch as another government tries to strip your cultural home of its culture?" — Samuel Kaplan, grade 12

#### **Farmworker Reality Tour**

"As part of a curriculum unit examining agricultural practices through a social justice lens, students participate in the Farmworker Reality Tour. I want students to understand who's growing our foods, who's helping to produce our food, and what their experience is. This is important for understanding how our food choices can make a difference for a safer and more equitable working environment. Dr. Ann López has dedicated her life work to bringing awareness about the difficulties our farmworkers face and I am grateful for her fortitude and the sacrifices she has made to better the lives of so many." – Sara Sobkoviak

# **Student-Led Service**

"That's on Period Project is working to address "period poverty" and menstruation stigma. Period poverty is the struggle those who have a menstrual cycle face while trying to afford menstrual products. During the 2022 Homecoming festivities, club members led a drive to collect packages of menstrual products, and more than 100 packages were collected! The products were donated to the Center for Farmworker Families in Santa Cruz County and Community Solutions in Gilroy, which provides services for those facing times of crisis." — Sophia Manzur, grade 11

"Fifth grade's environmental project focused on pelicans, after students learned that the birds had recently come off the endangered species list. Students were fascinated by freshwater American White Pelicans, as most people associate pelicans with the oceans. The class organized a community beach clean-up with their big and little school buddies, and a lot of debris that had washed out from the winter's big rains was picked up. Assemblymember Gail Pellerin (D-Santa Cruz) attended the event, and students received a California State Senate Certificate of Recognition for their community service efforts. Through multiple fundraisers, the students raised \$1,000 to donate to International Bird Rescue to help rehabilitate a rescued pelican." Jessica Cambell

### **Protecting Pelicans**

#### **Finding One's Identity**

"This story's universal theme of identity and the struggle revolving around finding one's identity is part of human nature. Through the experience of portraying Sophie, I think I've learned how to be more carefree and bubbly. 'Mamma Mia!' characters are all longing for something bigger than themselves and I think that's something that high school students can all relate to. It also sends the message that it's important to let loose from your everyday life and be a little bit more carefree. The show completely counters the idea of the hustle culture that is prominent in today's society." - Anya Gonzalez, grade 11

#### **American River**

"The rafting trip is a time for students to come together, share summer stories and be seen for the growth and changes they have made. It is a time for new students to build relationships that span beyond their immediate classmates and form foundations of friendship. It is an opportunity for faculty to build trust with students that will translate to positive experiences in their classes. The risks that are faced are a catalyst for teamwork, trust and lasting meaningful friendships. It was incredible to see students who were afraid of heights take huge leaps and for students with limited experience in the water, conquer their fears and smile as they rode torrential rapids. Now, as classes begin, we have set the tone as a caring community, where students continue to take risks and grow. - PK McDonald ('04)

"I was excited to interview Charlotte Clymer, a transgender activist who serves on the DC Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Something interesting that she said is that only those who have no power understand power. In other words, those who face racial, gender, or other forms of discrimination best understand the effects that decisions by people in power have. Officials who have never had the experience of feeling dehumanized or weak do not really understand the power that they wield. I found her perspective very illuminating, as I had never thought about the effects the decisions of unprepared leaders can have on others, especially when those leaders have no connection to the people affected by their decisions." — Beatrice Miller, grade 11

Washington, D.C.

#### **ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT**

Mount Madonna School (MMS) 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 expenses. The school ended the 2022-23 fiscal year on June 30, 2023 having received revenue from 158 students. We raise money each year for the operating budget in three fundraising campaigns: Annual Giving, which netted \$157,930, Drive for Schools, which netted \$17,930, and Summit for the Planet, which netted \$21,028. This year we held one additional l fundraising campaign, An Evening of Elegance, which netted \$22,672.

MMS applied for the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) and received \$399,975.59. We are grateful for this assistance, as the pandemic caused significant financial disruption for many of our families and reduced our tuition revenue. The school continued to respond by granting significant financial assistance to families.

— Laurie Romero, Financial Controller

Operating Revenue	2022-23 Budget	Operating Expense	2022-23 Budget
Tuition & Fees	\$2,808,553	Wages & Benefits	\$3,050,964
Donations/Fundraising/ERC	\$611,887	Student Supplies & Services	\$540,795
Productions & Other	\$221,650	Administration	\$177,800
Total	\$3,642,090	Facilities & Debt Service	\$105,500
		Total	\$3,875,059
		Surplus (Loss)	-\$232,969

	2022-23 Budget	2021-22 (Actual)	2020-21 (Actual)	2019-20 (Actual)
Revenue	\$3,642,090	\$4,114,472	\$4,187,416	\$3,067,497
Expenses	\$3,875,059	\$5,059,532	\$4,207,951	\$3,087,510
Surplus (Loss)	-\$232,969	-\$945,060	-\$20,535	-\$20,013
Enrollment	158	172	168	172

Note: The audit for this fiscal year was conducted by the Harrington Group in November 2023. That report is available for anyone wishing to review it.

#### A SUCCESSFUL EVENING OF ELEGANCE

The inaugural Evening of Elegance on May 13, 2023 at EmmaLily Vineyards was a huge success! The vineyard is owned and operated by alumni family, Steve and Laura Petersen with daughters Emma ('11) and Lily ('16). Mount Madonna's board of directors organized this event, and attendees included alumni, current families, faculty, staff and board members, past and present. The event brought adults of the school community together in a setting that let them connect and share school memories and stories, as well as presentday activities.

In addition, with the help of generous donors of live auction items and the engaging emcee services of alumni parent Rod Caborn, approximately 70 guests were able to bid on fabulous vacation homes, musical experiences, rare wines and more. The event netted \$22,672 to help support school operations, including student scholarships. Attendees enjoyed cavorting and dancing in EmmaLily Vineyards' magical setting with distinctive wine, scrumptious hors d'oeuvres and live music. — *Kevict Yen* 



#### FUNDRAISING WITH SCRIP

Thanks to families, faculty and staff who consistently use Scrip for their everyday shopping and gift purchases, Mount Madonna School (MMS) raises additional fundraising dollars. Through the Scrip program, MMS earns an average of 5% of the total revenue of gift cards purchased. During the 2022-23 school year, \$667 was raised. Visit MountMadonnaSchool.org/scrip to purchase gift cards. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer to sell Scrip gift cards, please email linda.manzur@mountmadonnaschool.org.



L: Prabba Sharan ('07) and Devin Kumar ('06) are engaged. R:Noah Kaplan ('19) in Melaka, Malaysia

**'97 Elizabeth Wolfe (Beran)** has been working with the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, D.C. for 19 years, and in 2023 she helped teacher and Director of Upper School **Shannon Kelly** (**Stokes**) (**'92**) and students access a tour of the Pentagon and meet with DOJ staff. The visit coincided with the 25th anniversary of Elizabeth's senior trip to Washington, D.C. with Mount Madonna School, as well as Shannon's first year teaching with Sadanand Ward Mailliard.

**'98 Ana Saroj Harris** lives in Santa Cruz, works for a small tech company, teaches Pilates and still enjoys dancing. She spent some time this past summer in Cuba studying Cuban folkloric dance, salsa and more. Her son Adrian started middle school, and he loves karate, udon, hip hop, soccer and everything about Japan. Ana and Adrian visited Japan in April 2023.

**'99** Following more than a decade of scientific research at academic and industry levels as a molecular biologist, and, more recently, a laboratory automation specialist, **Ippolito Imani Caradonna** has accepted a staff scientist position for the Biosciences and Biotechnology Department at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He will be using fundamental biology and emerging technology like Artificial Intelligence (AI) to prepare for the next pandemic and other global biological threats. He and his wife are one year into homeownership and have three children.

**'00 Derrick Diaz** has been working as the global head of information technology support at Pinterest for nine years. In early 2023, his wife Emma decided to retire and focus on supporting their home and family. Their daughter Lily has started kindergarten, and they rescued a dog named JT, who loves to lick faces and snuggle with Lily at bedtime. In their free time, they all build Lego together.

# ALUMNI NOTES

From the Class of...

'01 Dov Rohan and wife Mary Hunter started a summer camp program for children (gorgeretreat.com) in Hood River, Oregon. Josh Lewis started a software company, Sensible (www.sensible.so), during the pandemic, building tools to help developers turn documents into structured data using Large Language Model (LLM) AI. LLMs are a type of AI that can mimic human intelligence. His wife Lauren is head of fundraising for a school parent-teacher association and runs the back office of a boutique landscaping business. They just moved to a new home in the Noe Valley neighborhood of San Francisco. Their daughter Joanna has started middle school, and their son Calvin began third grade.

'02 After eight years of teaching at Mount Madonna School, J. Haley Campbell went on a nine-month road trip across the United States and Canada before settling on the Seacoast in New England. She is working as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) youth suicide prevention care liaison in New Hampshire. Leo James is enjoying being a dad and a business owner. He and his wife Lesley have two children, Jett, 3, and Ruby, 4, and they recently enjoyed a family vacation to Kauai. His business was voted "Best Event Production Services Company of the North Bay" this year. Nick Manov is in his 13th year testing batteries at Tesla, where he remains inspired by the dedication and brilliance of his colleagues and the impact they're having on the world. He and wife Allie have two girls, 5 and 2. They live in Palo Alto, and their days are filled with re-enactments of Disney princesses, riding bikes to the park, and home improvement projects ("Who knew they made safety glasses for 5-year-olds?"). After 15 years of competing in the sand volleyball scene in Santa Cruz, he is taking the pressure off and applying that energy to cycling and mountain biking.



Jenny Turk ('14) in the Rocky Mountains

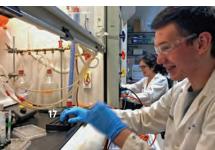
**'04 Lauren O'Brien (Mitchell)** lives in Davenport with her husband Chris and children Sterling, 7, and Goldwyn, 1. She is a clinical social worker in the field of forensic psychology. **Ryan Schmitt** and wife Sierra are expecting their first baby.

**'05** Eyla Cuenca lives in south Florida and is leading a training where she mentors and certifies women to become doulas. She also does public speaking and individual sessions on birth trauma and how to not only transform, but prevent it. She created a course with Colin Safranek ('04), that is an introduction to understanding the somatic experience. Her current goal is to create educational offerings in Spanish. She was also on a reality TV show on Amazon Prime called, "Everybody Loves Natti" with her client, pop star Natti Natasha.

**'06 Andrea Bowers (Schmitt)** lives in Coupeville on Whidbey Island in Washington state on a hobby farm (lots of fruit trees, no farm animals) with her husband Ian. They were married five years ago at Bargetto Winery in Soquel, and on November 26, 2023, welcomed a son, Rumi Andrew. Devin Kumar and Prabha Sharan ('07), after 19 years of friendship, are engaged and will be getting married in 2024. Sharing in the celebration are their two pups, soon-to-be-brothers, Yogi and Mowgli. Megan Mitchell lives in Portland, Oregon, with her wife Natasha and children: Paloma, 4, Gabe and Jude, both 22 months.

**'07 Jonji Barber** and his family moved back to Santa Cruz a year ago, and he is loving his job as a pediatrician at Palo Alto Medical Foundation Santa Cruz (any students or alumni interested in healthcare and/or shadowing can reach out at jonjibarber@ gmail.com). Jonji can't wait to bring his daughter, Phoebe, to the "Ramayana!" once she's able to sit for more than five minutes at a time!

Aaron Saavedra ('20) conducts research at U.C. San Diego



Zachary Clark ('18) graduates



Erin Mitchell ('10) marries Stephen Trevitt



Honoring Sampad Kachuck (center) at his August retirement celebration







Elizabeth Wolfe (Beran) ('97), second row Prabha Pacey ('86) at right, with juniors in Washington, D.C.

'08 Andrew Whitaker graduated with a doctorate in economics from the University of New Hampshire in September 2022 and began working for the Federal Aviation Administration. He analyzes proposed rules to determine their economic impact. Andrew was married in August 2021. Shelby Botula welcomed son Malcolm on April 21, 2023.

'10 Erin Mitchell and Stephen Trevitt were married on April 8. Alumni in attendance included Anneka Lettunich, Max Connor and Soma Sharan ('11). Haley Wilson (Turner) and Allison Ota ('12) were bridesmaids. "I am happily working as a lead teacher at Casa di Mir Montessori in Campbell," shares Erin. "I am loving the multi-age classroom and Montessori philosophy." Erin recently graduated with a California Teaching Credential from California Polytechnic State University, Humboldt, and Montessori Credential from the Montessori Teacher Education Center, San Francisco Bay Area.

'11 Chelsea Brodley (Bess) and husband Ryan welcomed baby Sayla on January 12, 2023. Exactly one year later - January 12, 2024 - they welcomed a second daughter, Scottie.

'12 In March 2023, Courtney Bess got engaged to Luke Kullberg; the couple plan to be married in October 2024. Courtney lives in Los Angeles and works with special needs middle school students to provide additional classroom support. McKenzie Caborn completed a women's health nurse practitioner master's program at the University of Cincinnati and now works at Nurture Women's Health & Fertility, a private practice in Santa Cruz that focuses on integrating both Western and functional medicine to support women through fertility challenges, pregnancy, postpartum, menopause and beyond. On a more personal note, she is also engaged. McKenzie met her

Chelsea Brodley (Bess) ('11) and husband Ryan with baby Sayla

fiancé through another MMS alumni, "so I know he's a good one."

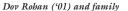
'13 Vyvyanne Mackey welcomed son Nashoba Wren on November 1, 2022. "In fall 2023, Nashoba and I moved to Hawaii to spend time on our family's organic coffee and mango farm," shares Vyvyanne. "We originally planned to just stay through Nashoba's first birthday, which we celebrated in November with a large gathering of family and friends. Now our stay is indefinite. We are both enjoying adventures in the sunshine, swimming in the ocean and lots of time with family. I'm so grateful for our community here - it really takes a village. P.S. Nashoba is walking!"

'14 In December 2022, Jenny Turk graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder, with a master's degree in environmental engineering. She is doing air quality modeling for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

'15 Rami Walker is the chef at a historic boutique inn, The McCall House, in Ashland, Oregon. If any MMS folks are looking for a unique stay in Ashland, she would love to see some familiar faces!

'17 Julia Gratton is in her second year working at Do Right Flower Farm near Davenport, California, and is loving it! She writes poetry and reads math proofs and queer theory in her free time.

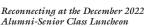
**'18 Aimee Kerr** continues to work for Zoom as a software developer, and has moved to Seattle, Washington. This past summer she traveled through Europe with fellow alumna Mara Peruzzi ('19). They initially became close on their first rafting trip together when Aimee was a sophomore and Mara a freshman, and this summer they enjoyed another rafting trip and swimming in Switzerland. Zachary Clark graduated





Courtney Bess ('12) gets engaged

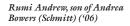








Vyvyanne Mackey ('13) with son Nashoba



from the University of Hawaii, Manoa with a B.A. in marine biology. He lives in Santa Cruz County, volunteers at the Monterey Bay Aquarium and helps to care for his grandmother.

'19 Out of 12,000 applicants, Noah Kaplan was one of three Whitman College alumni awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) grant. Recipients receive direct funding for three years of graduate research followed by a two-year teaching assistantship; Noah will pursue a Ph.D. in computer architecture at the University of Michigan." I've been traveling much of the [2023] year," said Noah, and did most of my applications abroad – including a harrowing remote Graduate Record Examination experience from the Ashram! [Sri Ram Ashram in Haridwar, India]." Noah's travels also included Malaysia.

'20 Aaron Saavedra spent the summer of 2023 working in a biology lab with a focus on plant biochemistry as a University of California, San Diego research assistant. Aaron, now a senior, began working in the lab as a sophomore, and in 2023 received a scholarship that allowed him to continue pursuing his research.

'21 Corey Mensinger received his Shodan (first degree black belt) ranking in karate. Brother Oliver Mensinger, meanwhile, was the assistant stage manager for the Cabrillo College stage production of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"; The experience inspired him to change his major to theater. — J. Haley Campbell ('02)



We appreciate learning about the interesting things MMS alumni are doing. Reach out or check-in socially! MountMadonnaSchool.org/alumni/ stay-connected



Mount Madonna Alumni (in)

@mms\_alumni

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# Congratulations! and Best Wishes to Our 2023 Graduates!

Left to right: Samuel Kaplan Co-valedictorian | Cecily Kelly Co-valedictorian | Sandy Astone | Zoey Ocampo-Sobkoviak Salutatorian Mariah Cohen Co-valedictorian | Sky Weir | Bella Cambell | Jacob Sirk-Traugh

Please note: asterisks\* denote the number of students accepted to a school; Bold text denotes school that graduate(s) will attend.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt\*\* California State Polytechnic University, Pomona\*\* California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo\*\*\*\* California State University, Channel Islands \* California State University, Long Beach\*\*\* California State University, Monterey Bay\*\* Chapman University\* Clarkson University\* Eckerd College\*\* Foothill College\* Fordham University\* Howard University\* Louisiana State University\*\* Missouri Institute of Science and Technology\* Montclair State University\* New York University\*



Northeastern University\* Pace University\* Point Park University\* Puget Sound University\* Purchase College, State University of New York\* **Redlands University\*** Rochester Institute of Technology\* Rollins College\* Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology\* San Diego State University\*\*\* San Francisco State University\* Savannah College of Art and Design\* School of the Art Institute of Chicago\* Stockton University\* Suffolk University\* Temple University\*\*

#### Tulane University\*

University of California, Berkeley\* University of California, Davis\* University of California, Irvine\*\* University of California, Icvine\*\* University of California, San Diego\*\*\*\* University of California, Santa Barbara\*\*\*\* University of California, Santa Cruz\*\* University of Denver\* University of Denver\* University of Hawaii, Manoa\*\* University of Massachusetts, Boston\* University of Oregon\* University of San Francisco\* University of Washington\* Willamette University\*\*

491 Summit Road, Watsonville, California 95076 www.MountMadonnaSchool.org | school@mountmadonnaschool.org