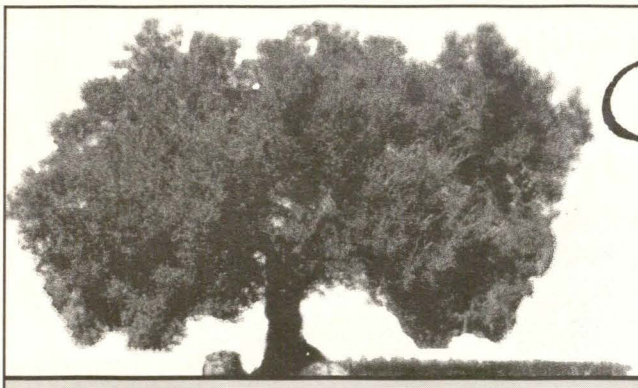


OAK GROVE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1993

"If children are to keep alive their inborn sense of wonder... they need the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with them the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."
–Rachel Carlson

Notes from Afield

Imagine the impact on a child's development if her or she were to participate in 25 to 30 camping trips during the course of elementary and high school education. This is a reality for a student who attends Oak Grove from age 3 to 18. Travel and camping are integral to the educational program because they provide unique opportunities to develop relationships with nature, with oneself, and with one another. They add a rich dimension to learning without the confines of regular school and schedules.

When teachers plan their curricula, they usually include two camping trips per year. Trips begin with one nighters for the 3- to 7-year olds, lengthen to several nights for the 8- to 11-year-olds and graduate to 1 or 2 weeks for junior high and high school students. The younger students usually sleep under the stars on the school playfield, surrounded by oaks and mountain vistas. Older students travel farther afield and have visited the Los Padres National Forest, the Channel Islands, the beaches and coastline of California and the deserts and canyons of the Southwest this fall.

Photo by Karen Sanchez

Travel and camping are integral to the educational program because they provide unique opportunities to develop relationships with nature, with oneself, and with one another.

When students go camping they face new challenges and learn many practical skills. Journeying away from the security and amenities of "the known" is difficult, but students adjust to cooking, eating and sleeping outside in all kinds of weather. Solving practical problems presented by a rainstorm or a flat tire develops confidence and resourcefulness as students successfully manage these surprises. Teachers who insist that they will not become finders and keepers of cameras, hats, canteens, etc., teach students to manage their gear or suffer the consequences. So most students learn organizational skills.... However, some defy the laws of probability with the number of lost socks and utensils! Camping trips offer unique opportunities to be responsible, and students develop a repertoire for handling diverse outdoor situations.

Camping and field studies often provide the spark that fuels interest in a subject matter for several months or culminates a unit of study. A refreshingly different rhythm is often established as the hurried pace of everyday school life diminishes. This is accompanied by changing perspectives and groundedness. Even though teachers and students often return from extensive trips exhausted, their inner world has been renewed by deepened friendships and shared experiences.

One's relationship to nature begins at home in the back yard, moves to the neighborhood, extends to the school campus and the local geography, and is carried wherever one visits. Our pancake-crusted Coleman stoves bear witness to the many exquisite mornings our children have shared together on camping trips. With these experiences, respect for oneself, others and the environment grows.

–Karen Hesli, Elementary and Junior High School Director

Fall Sports Roundup

The first word that comes to me when I think of the Oak Grove High School sports program is expansion. The program only began a few years ago. But directors Jeff Otterbein and Jake Ainsworth have taken dramatic steps to develop fun and competitive sports teams. The most significant of these changes is Oak Grove's joining of the California Interscholastic Federation, enabling us to schedule games with other independent school teams. So far we have soccer, volleyball and basketball for both girls and boys. Fall is the season for boys' soccer and girls' volleyball.

Soccer

Photo by Issa Ainsworth

Soccer coach Jeff Otterbein reviews game strategy

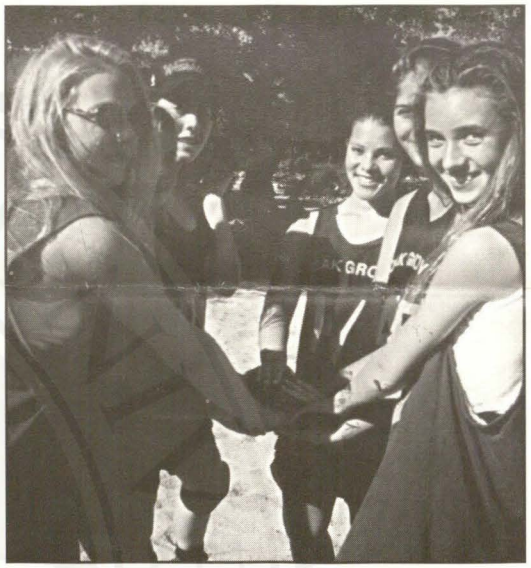
This season the soccer team has had its share of ups and downs. Coming off the '92 season, when we lost only 2 games, we had great hopes with the big additions of senior Fletcher Chouinard and sophomore Bryce Breslin. Unfortunately, in the first few games we were rocked by injuries. Fletcher broke his ankle, Adonai Sanchez broke his wrist, and Soo Young Kim pulled a muscle in his leg. There have been other sprains and pulled muscles, sidelining team members from practice and games.

The team has been able to compete with most schools, gain much experience, and have a lot of fun.

Salvaging the season has been a challenging experience. But it's not as bad as it sounds. To make up for injured players, many of the less experienced team members have gotten a lot of valuable playing time, and they have responded well. The extra slots on the team have also given junior high players Jay Jayenetti, Bo Ainsworth, and Kyle Stasse a chance to show a little of the bright young talent coming up to the High School. With these additions, the team has been able to compete with most schools, gain much experience, and have a lot of fun. The Oak Grove Soccer Team has a strong looking future.

Volleyball

The girls' volleyball team, like the boys soccer team, needs time to grow and develop. Its members range from 9th to 11th grade, and many are playing competitive sports for the very first time. The team began only last year and is improving rapidly. Because there has been so much interest among the High School girls, every game has a different line-up. This gives everybody a good amount of time to play in a game situation.



High School volleyball team members Sarah Rupp, Aja Bulla-Richards, Rowan Frederick, Gina Loring, Chloe Gladstone and Serra Maynard gearing up for a recent match

The volleyball team held their own this season against much older and experienced teams. There have been many exciting games, especially at home, which have had close scores. Coach Jake Ainsworth recently commented on the team's hard work. "We never abandoned our commitment to ball control and teamwork. It takes a surprising amount of skill and cooperation to 'bump' and 'set' the ball for your teammates. It was a pleasure to watch the girls move the ball with such grace and expertise." The girls have had a lot of fun playing on the team and are already looking forward to next season, when their recently gained skills and experience can be developed and refined.

–Auri Berg, Oak Grove High School sophomore

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From Dancer to Documentaries - Notes on a Creative Life

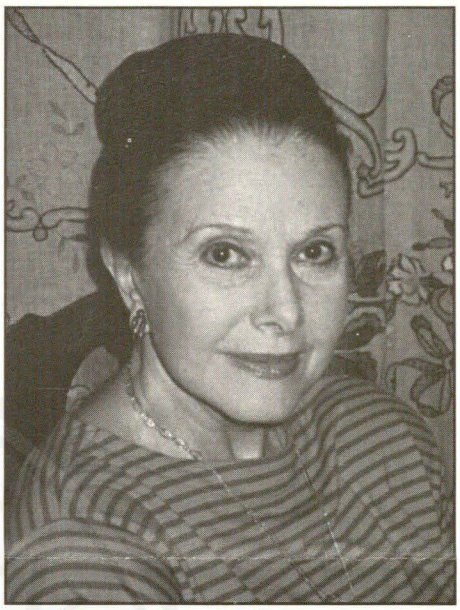
(This profile of Evelyne Blau is the second in a series of sketches of the interesting and diverse people who compose the board of trustees of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America.)

Evelyne Blau's inner composure is expressed outwardly by her poise and presence. This physical grace is no accident. For years, Evelyne made her living as a classical Indian dancer, touring with her sister. She was inspired by Uday Shankar, the great Indian dancer and brother of musician Ravi Shankar. Her interest in East Indian and Hindu dance developed as a result of her early childhood education. Evelyne's mother was intrigued by the innovative educational ideas of German philosopher Rudolph Steiner, and as a result of her mother's interest, Evelyne attended one of the first Waldorf schools in the United States. The school's emphasis on the power of movement and the importance of fine arts left a lifelong impression on the young student.

As an outgrowth of her Indian dance career (which included appearances on the concert stage and in the film *Kismet*), Evelyne became interested in Eastern philosophy. Once again, her mother served as a guide, introducing her to the teachings of Krishnamurti, which presented a radically unconventional approach to living. Evelyne traveled to Switzerland to hear Krishnamurti speak, and as she recently stated, "I was never a joiner or one who belonged to groups, and was delighted to know there was nothing to join." Thus began a lifelong dedication to inquiry, creation and service.

"What else do you have? You only have your life to give. I feel so fortunate to have come in contact with these teachings."

Evelyne moved from New York to Los Angeles, where she met and married her husband. She raised her family of three children and pursued an interest in painting which led to showings in Europe and the United States. She also began a new career as a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation. Evelyne's work for the Foundation focuses on media outreach. Her husband, Louis, is an entertainment attorney and film producer, and Evelyne was the first to apply the power of this medium to introduce Krishnamurti to a broader audience. She is the producer of two documentary films about Krishnamurti, *The Challenge of Change* and *With a Silent Mind*, and is currently developing a television series presenting Krishnamurti's philosophy, "Beyond Myth and Tradition". In addition, she is working with an international group of volunteers to develop event programming that will celebrate the 1995 centennial of Krishnamurti's birth.



Krisnamurti Foundation of America trustee Evelyne Blau

Evelyne's children have, like their parents, pursued creative interests. Gabrielle Kraft is a novelist in Portland; Eloise Coyne runs the equestrian program at the Ojai Valley Inn, and Jim is a musician in the L.A. band, Jimmie Wood and the Immortals. Evelyne believes that the strength of Oak Grove School lies in its attempt to teach children day-to-day observation, and to consciously see what is actually happening in their lives and the world. The school and the other work of the Foundation can be powerful agents for change. This work is both rewarding and important, and Evelyne feels it is a privilege for her to contribute her skills. The depth of her involvement was revealed in a recent conversation. "What else do you have?" Evelyne asked. "You only have your life to give. I feel so fortunate to have come in contact with these teachings."

Independence, Responsibility and Community Life at Besant House

Besant House, Oak Grove's boarding facility, is home this year to 12 junior high and high school students. Residents include young people from Canada, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, and the United States. The international flavor of Oak Grove's boarding program makes it an ideal forum for exploring and understanding other cultures. Students are encouraged to share their experiences and background for the benefit of all. This creates a rich and colorful environment in which to grow.

Of course the coming together of these students also means that many of them are a long way from home. As a parent of a former boarding student, I am acutely aware that our Oak Grove boarders face more than just the stress of growing up and the pressures of schoolwork. They are also coping with many other day-to-day responsibilities - household chores, laundry, and organizing their own time. Early independence often encourages greater responsibility and high levels of self-esteem, but being away from the home environment can still be tough. Many students really appreciate an invitation to join family activities, a meal, or spend a weekend with school friends or other members of the school community.

Oak Grove boarding students make a unique contribution to our school, and they enrich our lives when we welcome them into our hearts and homes.

–Meredy Maynard

To learn more about hosting a boarding student for a weekend or holiday, contact Besant House at 646-9384.

The Places We've Been...

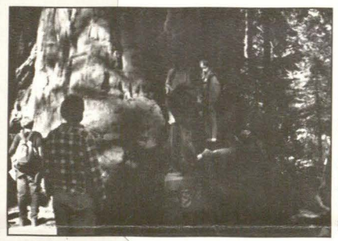


Photo by Sara Cloud

Group E measuring sequoia tree, Sequoia National Park

Photo by Theresa Bulla-Richards

Group JHT at Big Sur

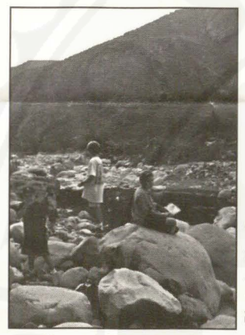


Photo by Nya Day

Group D hiking in Matilija Canyon

Photo by Jeff Wolfe

High School hiking group rained out of North Fork, Finger Canyons, Zion National Park, Utah

Camping & Field Trips,

Autumn 1993

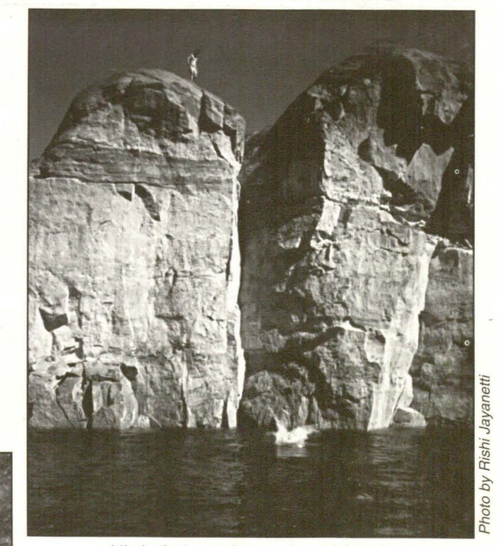


Photo by Rishi Jayanetti

High School houseboat trip to Lake Powell, Utah

Group C munching burritos, Carpenteria State Beach

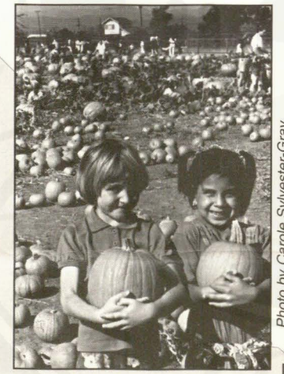


Photo by Carole Sylvester-Gray

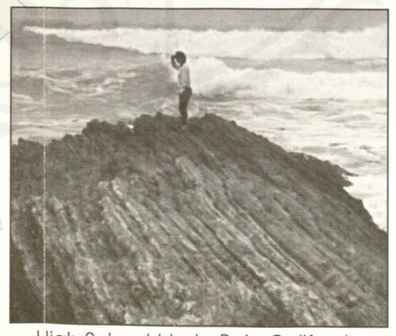
Group B at Santa Paula Pumpkin Patch

Photo by Mary Prentice

Group AM picks apples in the Rancho Arnaz apple orchard

Photo by Trudy Huberman

Group AI visits Boccali's Pumpkin Patch in Upper Ojai



High School trip to Baja California, Mexico

High School trip to Prescott, Arizona

Steering Committee Notes

The 1993-94 Parent Steering Committee is well underway. We've held three lively meetings this year and welcome many new parent members who have lots of energy to share.

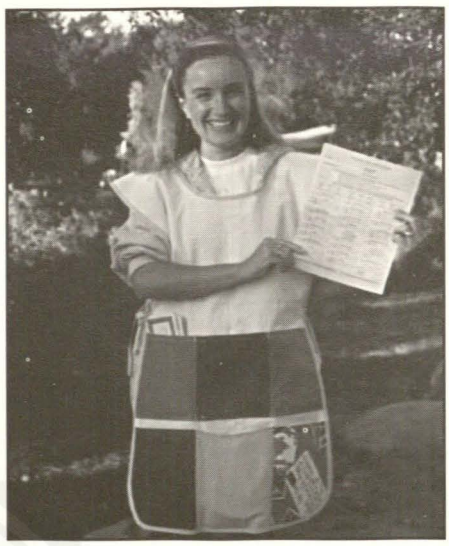
Hot fund-raising projects include Scrip Sales, Open House and Book Fair, and planning for the Auction Party. Parents, we still need help, so if you haven't volunteered already, we'd love to hear from you. Our Juice Booth at Ojai Day was a great success and lots of fun, as was the fantastic performance of the Magical Moonshine Theater. Thanks to all who helped out!

Please remember that the Parent Steering Committee is not just about fundraising. It's also about communication between parents, staff, and the School Board. The Parent Steering Committee provides a forum for discussion of issues that affect the whole school environment. It is an agent of change and growth.

Parent participation is an important component of the Oak Grove School community. This involvement benefits all our children. So don't be silent--be involved!

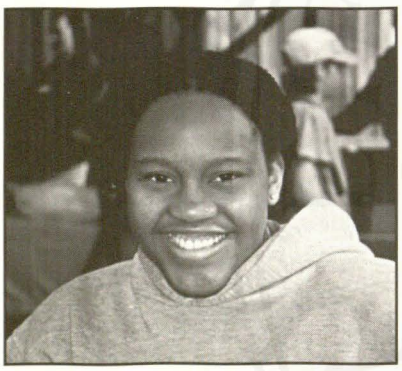
- Meredy Maynard, 1993-94 Parent Steering Committee Chair

(All parents are invited to attend Steering Committee Meetings, held the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Main House.)



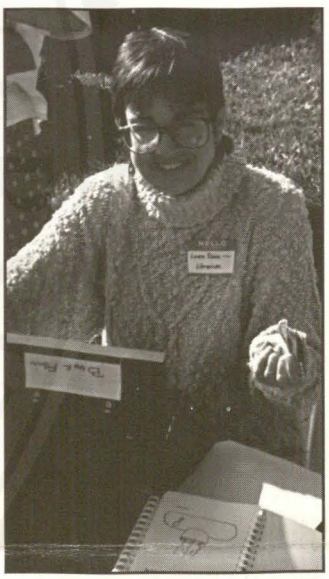
Meredy Maynard, decked out in the new scrip apron, demonstrates the fine art of selling scrip in the parking lot. To sign up for a "scrip shift", call Becky Lowe at 640-8267.

Open House and Book Fair Draws Record Crowd



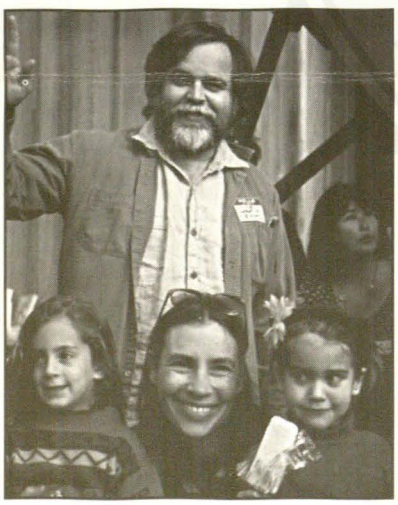
Aisha Umar,
High School sophomore

Food, books and music contributed to the festive and relaxed atmosphere



Library Educator
Laura Paine

The annual Open House and Book Fair, held on a blustery but spectacular fall Sunday, drew prospective students from throughout Southern California. A highlight of the event was a personal tour of the High School led by Director Mary Lou Sorem which attracted around 50 potential students and parents. A group discussion led by current High School students about life at Oak Grove was well received.



Michael Muller, pizza seller extraordinaire, with Nikolette Huberman, Adrienne Hoskins, and Juna Muller

Meredith Webster, Liza Shapiro and Daisy York

The Book Fair was also a great success, according to Library Educator Laura Paine and parent coordinators Collen Tully and Allison Tully. Preliminary figures indicate the event raised over $800 for the school's library fund.

Photos by Trudy Huberman

The Challenge of Teaching Without Winners and Losers

Larry Johnson received his A.B. degree in Political Science from UCLA in 1965 and his J.D. degree from UCLA Law School in 1968. After working as a public defender in downtown Los Angeles for over a year, Larry switched to a teaching career. He taught science at Windward School in Santa Monica while completing his teacher certification program. Larry joined the staff at Oak Grove School in 1983. He presently teaches high school chemistry, computers, biology, and anatomy and physiology. He is a Senior Fellow with the South Coast Science Project. Larry is married to Jane Shrout, a musician and a mediation coordinator with Interface of Ventura County, a non-profit service organization.

Photo by Guy Webster

Larry Johnson with science students Sarah Rupp, Aja Bulla-Richards and Salina Tuggle

John Christianson teaches nature studies in the elementary and junior high schools. This is the seventh in his series of interviews with Oak Grove staff members. The following interview is an extraction from several hours of conversation between John & Larry.

J.C.: Larry, why did you quit law and take up teaching?
L.J.: Because what I was doing, criminal jury trials, seemed to be about winning and losing rather than about finding out the truth.

J.C.: Why teaching?
L.J.: I heard Krishnamurti speak. He made it clear that what we were doing together was what I had been doing on my own, asking questions, trying to look into the truth of the human condition. In the course of his talks he said that a school was a place to ask such questions.

J.C.: And you feel an openness to exploring these kinds of questions at Oak Grove?
L.J.: I think part of the answer to that is what happens outside of the classroom and even outside of contact with the students. As just one example, you have been willing to spend hours talking with me, so that we finally felt we were having a real conversation, before we attempted to encapsulate it for the *Newsletter*.

J.C.: Larry, one of the topics that I think the reader might especially enjoy is your experiment with students preparing material and assuming responsibility for teaching a class.
L.J.: Yes, this is something new for me. I had a conversation with my Biology class asking for suggestions of how we might proceed after the first test, and there was a suggestion that students present the material. So far six students have done it; and in each case I've worked with the student who is going to do the presentation, going over the material, to show them the kind of thing I would usually cover.
We covered theories about the origin of life this way. Each student took responsibility for a few steps in a theoretical sequence about how life may have originated from inorganic molecules. I'm learning from this as I'm doing it. One student presented material in the manner that I do, essentially using notes that I made. This student looked over my notes from last year, comprehended it, and discussed the material with the rest of the class. Then the student worked with the class to develop together a set of notes to put on the board which the students copied. Watching this student proceed, I felt that the student got exactly my intention, including the sense of doing it together, thinking about it together. So I thought, "This is it!" But then another student didn't use my notes at all. That student only had me explain the material and generated his own notes and then did his presentation from that. And this had a different kind of beauty than the first presentation.

J.C.: What are some of the qualities that you appreciated in the student that you assisted minimally?
LJ: He figured it out and organized it himself, presenting something he understood in his own words. That's what I try to do when I have to prepare for a class. I work out something myself.

JC: Would you say a little more about the qualities in the students that worked more closely with your approach to presenting the material?
LJ: I'll see a student-teacher interact with the class with the feeling that I have meant to share: We're together, we're moving together. When part of a student's presentation doesn't work, I see it as part of the back and forth of finding out if we are with each other, in terms of both subject matter and our feelings about what we want out of our lives. One element of our student teaching experiment which has helped this process is that the students are not being graded on these presentations. They are being graded, as before, on whether they have learned the unit at the end.

JC: What about the challenge of acknowledging differences without comparison where a student feels that they're somehow less than another?
LJ: I find myself doing that kind of comparison, valuing one person more than another. In my own education there was the experience of being favorably and unfavorably compared. For me it's an ongoing process, wonder-

Continued on back page

Johnson Interview continued from page 7

ing how to do anything about any of this. There is an awareness of different students, and there is an intention to find out a way to work together without comparing. It's a constant challenge.

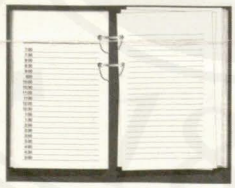
JC: There is a difference between not being as skillful at doing the problems and the next step--to thinking you're not as good a person.
LJ: That seems right to me. In some parts of my education, I was highly rewarded for success; and I feel that recently, especially with my wife Jane, I see my attachment to that success is a barrier. As long as I have an emotional difference attached to something that I know how to do better than you then it's a barrier to communication between us. I can't say that barrier doesn't exist, but I can say that I see that barrier. As long as I have attachment to my own success, it's the biggest barrier to doing the thing that I most want to do. I'm seeing this in my daily interactions with students.

JC: I was recently filling in as a house parent with our students at Besant House. I had joined 3 of the students in a game of two man baseball with a tennis ball. The other team, after a few low-scoring innings, exploded for 7 or 8 runs in one of their at-bats, and I dropped a fly ball that could have ended the inning. I started getting down on myself, saying "I can't believe I dropped that !" My voiced dismay with my own playing was having an immediate, adverse effect on the spirit of the game for everyone. Up to then the game had been quite friendly, with everyone trying to play fair. My self-criticism was taking me out of that spirit of friendly play and endangering the tone of the game for the other players. As I became aware of how my self-judgment was limiting everyone's enjoyment, I let go of it and was able to appreciate the other team's thrill in having such a high scoring, World Series, sort of inning. When the game had to be called for dinner, one of the opposing players expressed appreciation for my pitching and we enthusiastically recapped their big inning as we walked into Besant House.
LJ: That's it. I continually rediscover that my own desire to be the winner, to be admired as better than someone else--stands in the way of the world that I want to live in.

Assembly Celebrates Turning of the Season

Family and friends of Oak Grove students are invited to our annual Winter Assembly, to be held at 10:30 a.m. on December 15th, the last day of school before winter break. The winter assembly is an opportunity for classes to present music, dance and drama performances to celebrate this special time of year. The assembly will be followed by an all school picnic with a potluck dessert buffet that promises to be a feast for eye and palate. Please join us!

Save The Date



December 4, Saturday
Montino Bourbon, Music Teacher
Indian Music Concert, 7:30 p.m.

December 7, Tuesday
Parent Steering Committee
Meeting, 7 p.m.

December 9, Thursday
Storyteller/musician, Michael Parent 6:30 p.m.

December 15, Wednesday
Winter Assembly, 10:30 a.m.

December 30, Thursday
Oak Grove Alumni Reunion, 3:30 p.m.

January 4, Tuesday
Parent Steering Committee Meeting, 7 p.m.

March 5, Saturday
Fundraising Auction, 6 p.m.

The First Occasional Oak Grove Alumni Reunion Party

This academic year marks the 10th anniversary of the first High School graduating class.

To celebrate, Oak Grove is inviting former students and alumni to our first ever reunion party.

Date:	Thursday, December 30
Time:	3:30 p.m.
Place:	Oak Grove School Pavilion
Cost:	$7.00
Activities:	Good food, music, conversation and fun!
R.S.V.P.:	Send with check to Oak Grove School by December 5.