

CŌNFLUENCE

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News from the **Alliance for Public Waldorf Education**

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FROM THE FIELD



Educators from Public Waldorf schools across the U.S. attend the Annual National Conference in Sacramento, California, in 2018

Deeds of Courage, Acts of Will WALDORF EDUCATION AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE

by **LIZ BEAVEN, Ed.D.**

Around this time of year, many Waldorf communities gather to celebrate deeds of courage and the gifts of the harvest. As the outer light in the Northern Hemisphere dims, we look within to remind ourselves of our inner light and strength. The unspoken messages of festivals of courage have a positive, formative impact on children, building resilience as they navigate our challenging world. With over 1,000 Waldorf schools in 65 countries, we can readily imagine a network of seasonal festivals across the globe, nurturing each one of us.

In this season of courage, it is instructive to look at Waldorf education itself through this lens: the many deeds of individuals and communities on behalf of a “new art of education” that the founder of Waldorf education, Rudolf Steiner, knew would be essential if we were to achieve lasting change and social and personal transformation. It is fitting to note that this pedagogical movement was birthed to create positive change at a time of acute disruption, with social, political, and economic upheaval and a future that seemed both uncertain and unpredictable. From the start, Waldorf education challenged the status quo and questioned assumptions about schools and education. As a couple of simple examples, Waldorf education was offered initially to the children of factory workers, treated girls and boys the same, required that all students participate in all subjects of its rich curriculum, considered the invisible aspects of education, and asked that its teachers engage in and take responsibility for

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continued from page 1 their own development and education. Each of these was revolutionary in 1919; some are still revolutionary today.

Now approaching its 100th anniversary, Waldorf education has continued to challenge prevailing assumptions about the why, how, when, and what of education. Today, many of our practices are supported by research on brain development; there is wider recognition of the role of the arts, the strength of

“whole-child” education, and a greater understanding of the importance of a developmental approach. Yet, in other ways, Waldorf education remains a cutting-edge education for the future, ahead of its time in its emphasis on integration and connections, the role of the teacher, and the comprehensive image of the human being and human life that it strives to serve.

Our Alliance for Public Waldorf education and its member schools are very much a continuation of the theme of disruptive force. This edition of *Confluence* honors that theme, featuring several of the courageous individuals who supported the expansion of Waldorf into public education. Our work arose out of a conviction of the need for wider access and a desire to serve a more inclusive range of students than was possible in the traditional U.S.

independent Waldorf schools. When we focus on the deeds of individuals, there is always the danger of leaving someone out; in recognizing a few, we salute every individual who acted as an ice breaker, pioneer, innovator, or disrupter of prevailing assumptions. Each step of our growth has taken courage and deeds of will, born of a conviction that every child who so wishes should have access to the life-affirming gifts of Waldorf education.

The idea of Waldorf education in public schools lived in hearts and minds long before it came into existence. Many of us working in the independent schools were devoted to Waldorf education but were also committed to the ideals of public education; education as a cornerstone of a democratic society and the rights of all children to a quality education,

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■ ALLIANCE MEMBER SCHOOLS 2018



Alliance
FOR PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION

Deeds of Courage, Acts of Will

continued from page 2 regardless of the ability of their family to pay. It was not until the early 1990's that an opening appeared that would allow these ideals to start to merge—an ongoing process that we are all still working on today. We have a few individuals to thank for creating that initial opening: two superintendents of schools, Rudy Crewe in Sacramento and Robert Peterkin in Milwaukee, who each asked, “What about our children? Don't you have something for them?”; Betty Staley and Arline Monks at Rudolf Steiner College—Betty for immediately addressing curriculum and teacher preparation, and Arline, who would work as a tireless crusader on behalf of funding and supporting this expansion of Waldorf until her death; a group of experienced teachers from independent Waldorf schools (Mark and Laura Birdsall, Linda Williams, Mary Ruud, and others) who supported and guided the fledgling Milwaukee Urban Waldorf School; and a group from independent schools in Northern California who provided training for an emerging cadre of teachers in Sacramento.

Others must be added to this list: Rudolf Steiner College, guided by the passion of Betty and Arline, provided a home for the summer Public Schools Institute, an important doorway for many into the possibilities of arts, story, movement, nature, biography, and a coherent framework of child development. Year after year, we witnessed teachers becoming re-inspired through their participation in the Institute—and we should note the steadfast, warm-hearted contribution of Anna Rainville, who shared her wisdom as faculty of the Institute for over 20 summers. For many years, the Public Schools Institute included a track for “at risk” youth, tied directly to the remarkable work of the T.E Mathews Court and Community School, led by principal Ruth Mikkelsen (another of our tireless crusaders).

In the early 1990's, charter legislation developed as a mechanism for developing new approaches and solutions for education. George Hoffecker immediately saw the opportunity and seized it, developing Yuba River as the first Waldorf-based charter school and paving the way for the rise of our member charter schools.

We continue to engage in new opportunities to engage, impact, and disrupt education and to benefit the lives of children and families. Over the past few months, the Alliance has collaborated on the formation of a set of principles or optimal conditions for early childhood education (Ideal Learning Round Table); met with colleagues from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and Waldorf Early Childhood Association (WECAN) and RSF Finance to explore possibilities for advancing our collective work; and opened a dialogue with Montessori colleagues around the pressing issue of high-quality, appropriate teacher education. There is a sense of finding our voice and claiming our seat at the table.

As we do so, we are aware of those whose ideals and acts of will got us to this point, and of all of you in schools across the country who continue to explore the real meaning of inclusion, equity, and access and to examine both the opportunities and challenges of the unique conditions and needs in this country. We wish you continued courage as we celebrate the traits of courage and conviction that we see again and again in the unfolding story of our collective work on behalf of public school children and families. ■

Liz Beaven, Ed.D. is President of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, former Director of the Sacramento Waldorf School, and provost at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).



WAYS TO CONNECT

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The Birth of Public Waldorf Education

BY CHIP ROMER & RAINBOW ROSENBLIOM

In 1994, two founding pillars of the Public Waldorf movement were conceived—Yuba River Charter School (YRC) in Nevada City, California, and Oak Ridge Elementary School (now called Alice Birney) in Sacramento. As a magnet school, Oak Ridge is unusual in the Public Waldorf movement, where, as a charter, YRC led the way for many schools to come. YRC was seen as a funding stream by its small rural authorizer, Twin Ridges Unified School District, which went on to authorize River Oak Charter, Golden Valley Charter, Napa Valley Charter (now Stone Bridge) and Woodland Star Charter.

George Hoeffcker, who had been a class teacher at the private Live Oak Waldorf School in Applegate, California, was hired as YRC principal in 1996. Shortly thereafter, Hoeffcker was contacted by an organization called People for Legal and Nonsecular Schools (PLANS), which filed a lawsuit against the two Public Waldorf schools' authorizers. Led by disaffected former independent Waldorf school parents Debra Snell and Dan Dugan, PLANS posited that Waldorf schools promoted religion and did not belong in the public sector.

PLANS' campaign against Waldorf education caused a whirlwind of attention, and the lawsuit, which was settled in favor of the school districts after seven years and \$1M in legal defense costs, served to galvanize the nascent Public Waldorf movement. YRC principal George Hoeffcker met with private Waldorf colleagues, including leaders at the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), about the case and its implications for all of Waldorf education.

Initially motivated to share information about the lawsuit, in 1998, Hoeffcker and colleagues **Donna Burgess**, **Debi Lenny** of Golden Valley, **Katherine Lehman** of the former Oak Ridge (then renamed as John Morse) and **Arline Monks** of Steiner College chose to produce a conference for public Waldorf administrators and board members at Steiner College. The conference has continued annually, and by 2002 it had become an educational renewal conference for about 80 people—teachers, administrators and board members.

In 2002-03, leaders of AWSNA encouraged Hoeffcker to form an alliance of the public Waldorf schools through which to share information about the PLANS suit and to represent the public Waldorf movement in conversations with AWSNA. Throughout 2004-05, Hoeffcker met regularly with his conference team



Left to right: Initial Alliance board members Rainbow Rosenbloom, Bonnie River, Martha Collins, Susan Olson, George Hoeffcker, Donna Burgess, Chip Romer, Bill Bindewald and Joe Glorfield (behind camera).

plus **Chip Romer** (Woodland Star), **Tim Connelly** (Journey School), **Martha Collins** (Eugene Village School), **Joan Jaekel**, a charter school developer from Los Angeles, **Joe Glorfield**, a Yuba River Foundation board member, and Stone Bridge parent **Theresa Bindewald**. The group supported the ongoing annual conference and envisioned a formal organization of Public Waldorf schools, eventually settling on the name Alliance for Public Waldorf Education.

In 2005, concurrent with the Alliance group working at Steiner College, **Rainbow Rosenbloom** and **David Hill** of Monterey Bay Charter School and **Bonnie River** of Live Oak Charter School gathered to plan a collegial conference for February 2006. George Hoeffcker contacted this new group to inform them that a conference for Public Waldorf schools had been hosted by Rudolf Steiner College for each of the previous five years, and that a committed group had begun the formation of an association nearly two years earlier. He warned that a new impulse (from Rosenbloom, Hill and River) could splinter the nascent movement, and he invited the three to join the existing conference and organizational efforts. Both groups agreed.

A meeting was held in December 2005 to explore how the groups might work together. In attendance were River, Hill, Rosenbloom, **Patrick Wakeford-Evans** (RSC), Chip Romer, George Hoeffcker, Donna Burgess, and **Merri Badger** from Mountain Oak in Arizona. This group discussed the issues they felt were essential in forming the new organization, and how the ongoing annual January conference at RSC could continue to serve the growing needs of the fledgling Public Waldorf movement. In February 2006 at the Rudolf Steiner Foundation in San Francisco, members of this group first met formally as the board of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. ■

Chip Romer is founder and current Executive Director of Credo High School located in Sonoma County, CA. **Rainbow Rosenbloom** is Vice-President of the Alliance and a consultant supporting Alliance schools across the U.S.



SEBASTOPOL INDEPENDENT CHARTER SCHOOL First Official “Public Waldorf School”

BY CHRIS TOPHAM

Sebastopol Independent Charter School (SICS) currently has a lot to celebrate. The school just moved to a permanent, 20-acre campus, and it completed the self-study process to become a full member of the Alliance, a designation that allows it to use the words “Public Waldorf” in its name or tag line.

In 1995, SICS, like many other initiatives, began with humble roots in small rented spaces in a church, in a garage, in a living room and later in a former bank building. Eventually SICS owned a building in downtown Sebastopol, but there weren’t enough classrooms for a full K-8 school, so it rented a small space with a few portable classrooms next to a district middle school. This meant that the school was split into two campuses, about a mile apart. A few years ago, the district notified SICS that it may need the rented space back. Property is neither abundant nor affordable around Sebastopol (one hour north of San Francisco), so the daunting search for a new space became urgent.

In 2013, SICS purchased a residential house surrounded by a 20-acre field for \$2.7 million. After a four-year process of securing building permits, a school campus was created from bare earth, which meant that millions of dollars were spent on infrastructure. Although the whole campus project cost \$8 million, fifteen used, portable classrooms were acquired, nearly for free. The existing house was converted into an administration office and teacher workspace. SICS secured a \$4.2M, 30-year loan from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, and proceeds of the sale of the downtown campus and the school’s foundation covered the remaining cost.

SICS is pleased to now have its K-8 population united on one campus, which it owns. The previous campus provided only one-third of an acre for play space, so it’s amazing to have 20 acres for sports, gardening, farming and play areas.

As most of us know, moving is stressful, and it takes a while to get settled into a new home. Fortunately, SICS conducted the move after getting its house in order. The school had recently completed a three-year training with **Kim John Payne** to create a strong social-emotional student-support system. Over a recent two-year period, the school also created a curriculum manual that integrates Waldorf and state standards.

When SICS was offered the opportunity to conduct a self-study process and share how it is working with the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education, the community was excited to take it on. Led by part-time Director of Curriculum (and class teacher), **Antje Bojarsky**, the faculty plunged into an in-depth study of the Core Principles. It was meaningful work, and it inspired the faculty to really evaluate what is truly needed to provide a Public Waldorf education and how to improve its work with its community.

At the end of the self-study process, SICS was honored to become the first school to become a “full Alliance member” and to receive the sub-license to use the words “Public Waldorf” in its name or tag line. For now, SICS has chosen to use those words in its tagline. So, if you visit our website at www.sebastopolcharter.org, you’ll see at the top: Sebastopol Charter, A Public Waldorf School. And now—all at one address! ■

Chris Topham is the Executive Director of the Sebastopol Independent Charter School, a former class teacher, and a member of the Alliance Advisory Board.



An aerial view of the new Sebastopol school campus, along with recent images from the school’s opening in September 2018.

George Hoeffcker, Alliance Godfather

BY CHIP ROMER

I first met George Hoeffcker in 1998, when our development team invited him to speak to prospective families of what would become Woodland Star Charter School in Sonoma, California. George's warmth, wisdom, and his ability to explain Waldorf education and child development, in a friendly and accessible way, demonstrated that he was an extraordinary teacher. As Woodland Star grew into a fledgling school in a rented church, I had the life-changing opportunity to share a tiny office—the church's crying baby room—with George for three years as he joined our school as Program Coordinator. During that time and since, I have witnessed George's open-hearted offerings and influence spread across the country, and he has touched more lives than perhaps anyone in our Public Waldorf movement—as a teacher of children, of adults, of teachers, and as a savvy and inspiring political advocate for Waldorf education and the importance of making it widely available to U.S. public school children and families. George told me the story of his increasing involvement in Public Waldorf education.

As a special education administrator at Temple University, George Hoeffcker met Waldorf education in the late 1970's, when he was introduced to a book, *Rudolf Steiner Enters My Life* by a noted German religious leader, **Friedrich Rittelmeyer**. He was given the book by **Janet McGavin**, a curative nurse in the Camphill Community, who began to teach him about Waldorf education and let him know about the Waldorf Institute in Detroit, headed by **Werner Glas**. In September of 1979, McGowan was planning to teach a curative course at the Institute, and she asked George to come to Detroit and help her. When they arrived, there were only two people enrolled—so the course was cancelled. Program leader Werner Glas encouraged George to remain and enroll in the Waldorf teacher training instead, which he did. There he met his wife, **Donna Burgess**, who was in the foundation year, and they married three months later.

By June, they were pregnant, and George took a leave from the teacher training to begin their family while running a respite care facility in Chicago, where they stayed for four years. When it was time to resume training, the couple decided to move to Steiner College in Fair Oaks and continue their training with **Rene Querido**. Donna took up training in the Christian Community and was a very active member of the church. In 1984, George had completed the teacher training and took a job at Live Oak Waldorf School in Applegate, where he stayed until 1996. He took his initial first grade and stayed with them

As a special education administrator at Temple University, George met Waldorf education in the late 1970's.



GEORGE
HOEFFCKER

up through eighth grade—those students are now 40 years old, and George has many friends among them.

Following that eight-year stint, George took a sabbatical year and did administrative work and mentoring, not only at Live Oak, but also at a struggling little Waldorf school in Cedar Ridge called the Mariposa Country School, where he worked with teachers **Dan Martinez**, **Terry Anne Pacquette**, **Doris Rainville** and **Carol Nimick**. By 1994, the Mariposa

School had gone out of business, and that same year the teachers and some of the parents began writing a charter. This was at the same time that Oak Ridge (now Alice Birney) was becoming a Waldorf magnet school in Sacramento.

In 1993, George began his second class at Live Oak, a class he loved. But by this time he was working heavily with the Mariposa group, which was now shopping for a charter authorizer. They became Yuba River Charter School and found a small authorizer in North San Juan, called Twin Ridges Elementary School District (TRESA).

At that time, a credential was not required of charter-school teachers, and the school was largely staffed by the trained teachers of the former Mariposa School. The Twin Ridges superintendent, George Olive, asked George Hoeffcker if he could create and conduct an evaluation of Yuba River teachers that reflected Waldorf education. From his special education background, George was familiar with public school administration, so **George Olive** asked him to apply to be a full-time Yuba River administrator. He decided to take the position, and the staff was very grateful to have an experienced administrator and trained Waldorf teacher as their administrator. This was the spring of 1996, and George's Live Oak class was in third grade. It was heartbreaking to leave them, but he was falling in love with bringing Waldorf education to the public sector.

As the lawsuit progressed over the next several years, Yuba River Charter flourished, growing to 260 students.

In 1997, Yuba River received a letter from a local minister, who said, "I am affiliated with PLANS, People for Legal and Nonsectarian Schools, and you're going to learn about us. You'll meet **Dan Duggan** and **Debbie Snell** and we're going to sue you, so get your pocketbook ready." So right away George stepped into controversy.

Here again, he was well suited, having done considerable legal work early in his career in Pennsylvania. He thought that Yuba River should go about translating what they were doing in Waldorf education into a more accessible vernacular. The Yuba River staff eagerly helped him to translate what they were doing into recognizable mainstream language. This was very unifying for the community, and as the lawsuit progressed over the next several years, Yuba River Charter flourished, growing to 260 students.

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Students perform at a recent Mayfaire celebration at **Yuba River Charter School**, located in Grass Valley, California

George Hoffecker, Alliance Godfather

continued from page 6 At this same time, Yuba River won a large grant from the Walton Foundation, which was very interested in bringing Waldorf education to the public sphere. This grant award and the lawsuit attracted the attention of parents and educators from around California—particularly in San Francisco’s North Bay, which developed six schools—and from Oregon, Arizona and Colorado. Many inquiries from prospective school developers came to George.

By 2000, with George’s help, Twin Ridges had grown to fifteen charter schools, including five Waldorf method schools: Yuba River, Golden Valley, River Oak, Napa Valley Charter, (now Stone Bridge), and Woodland Star. The district shared all the documents George’s team had been generating at Yuba River, and under George’s guidance, the new district superintendent, **Dave Taylor**, motivated to create a charter district, created a Charter Coordinating Council. These were great years, and TRESA rooted itself into the charter world, with the help of a young lawyer named **Paul Minney**, and **Sue Regado**, an advocate from CANEC, which would become CCSA.

All of this cooperation—among like-minded schools and charter-friendly organizations—brought considerable credibility to both the Public Waldorf movement and Twin Ridges School District. George Hoffecker and Dave Taylor were invited to serve on the U.S. Department of Education’s Education Commission for the States; as commissioners, they traveled around the country advocating that school districts could become more effective by becoming service-providing organizations instead of governing entities.

In 2000, George was drafted to become the Director of Charter Services at TRESA, where he became a liaison to the various district charter schools, particularly the Waldorf charters. This was short-lived, because George was pulled away in 2001 to become administrator of TRESA’s Bitney Spring High School, which had been struggling with

accreditation. Within a year, the school earned accreditation and those issues were resolved. George was well on his way to becoming a consultant, and took a half-time job as Program Coordinator at Woodland Star in Sonoma, where he remained for three years, and spent the rest of his time as a visiting consultant to fledgling Public Waldorf schools around the country.

By 2000, with George’s help, five “Waldorf methods” schools were formed: Yuba River, Golden Valley, River Oak, Napa Valley Charter, (now Stone Bridge), and Woodland Star.

The harder PLANS pushed the federal lawsuit, the more validation the public Waldorf movement received. It was as if the schools got more strength with every effort that PLANS expended. The suit did end up costing \$1M, shared by TRESA and Sacramento City Unified School District over the ten or twelve years of the suit, but the districts never abandoned the cause. The defense was also given significant support from AWSNA, under the direction of **Dave Alsop**, and from **Jean Yeager** of the Anthroposophical Society of North America, as well as **Arline Monks** of Steiner College.

In 1998, the defendants needed to give public Waldorf administrators, boards and teachers accurate accounts of the suit—which would have a direct impact on their ongoing ability to provide Waldorf education in a public setting. George and Arline Monks felt the best way to do this was to offer an annual conference, in January, at Steiner College. They threw themselves into this effort and solicited the help of **Katherine Lehman** of the other school that was being sued, **John Morse** (formerly Oak Ridge, now Alice Birney), **Debi Lenny** of Golden Valley, and Donna Burgess. Their goal was to provide accurate information about the lawsuit and to assure the *continued on page 8*



Dancing the maypole at the annual Mayfaire celebration at Woodland Star Charter School, located in Sonoma, California.

George Hoffecker, Alliance Godfather

continued from page 7 legal defense team that all the Public Waldorf schools were on the same page. They also needed the schools to understand how to deal with the nascent California State Standards in English and mathematics and how to translate Waldorf education from private school roots to mainstream secular practice.

There was tons of resistance—from the private Waldorf movement, from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)—but the resistance just kept fading away. New people got involved, and slowly the conference group was able to gather an organization that was credible and unstoppable. The annual conferences became more dynamic, and as more people were attending, the conference was reborn in the early 2000's as an education and renewal conference rivaling the Rudolf Steiner College West Coast Teachers' Conference.

As the conference grew more established, the lawsuit was very relevant to all concerned—including the private Waldorf movement's AWSNA and the Anthroposophical Society of North America. Dave Alsop encouraged George to develop a formal association of the public schools with which AWSNA could collaborate, initially in defending against the PLANS lawsuit. George's conference team began promoting this idea every year at the conference, and meetings became more regular and more intentional. More people started coming forward.

By 2004, the Public Waldorf movement had collected significant data from the state-administered standardized tests. **Ida Oberman**, now Executive Director of the Community School for Creative Education, analyzed results from Yuba River, John Morse, Stone Bridge, Woodland Star and Novato Charter, and this is when the "Waldorf curve" was established—a graph of test results that showed that Public Waldorf students consistently out-performed the mainstream by

fourth grade, and did so increasingly in the middle school grades. This study served the movement well over the years and was shared with authorizers all over the country.

By 2009, the lawsuit had been resolved in favor of the Public Waldorf schools. And in spite of the expense in dollars and human effort, the lawsuit had served to strengthen and galvanize the Public Waldorf movement, leading to the formation of the Alliance itself. The recent resolution of challenges between the Alliance and AWSNA about the use of the service-marked words "Waldorf" and "Steiner" have led the Alliance to a clearly develop articulated Path of Membership and the opportunity to use the words "Public Waldorf" in the name or tag line of our full-member schools.

After 40 years in Waldorf education, George Hoffecker trusts the process. He sees that our movements' primary needs going forward are: trained teachers, consistently incorporating a Waldorf approach to public and special education, and clear, Waldorf-informed organizational leadership. As a consultant, he approaches school challenges much like the way, as a teacher, he approached student challenges. He believes that schools must patiently allow natural development. They must practice allowing polarities until a deeper, third way can be revealed. He believes this is where mentoring is really needed and where the Alliance can provide support and perspective to our member schools. He reflects, "Our graduates—and there are thousands and thousands of them—are social innovators, the kind of people we want as leaders of corporations and organizations, in the Senate, as our President.

"Our school leaders and teachers must be striving individuals, very serious about personal inner development. I believe this commitment to inner work is the primary difference between our Public Waldorf schools and regular public schools. Our movement just can't thrive unless we have people dedicated to growing inside themselves." ■

Chip Romer was a founder of Woodland Star Charter School, is the current Executive Director of the Credo High School, and is a member of the Alliance Advisory Board.



AN INTERVIEW WITH BETTY STALEY

The Emergence of Waldorf Education in the Public Sphere

BY CHAMOMILE NUSZ

Betty Staley serves on the Advisory Board for the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. Ms. Staley has been a Waldorf educator for over 50 years, at the kindergarten, elementary, high school and teacher-training level. She was a founder of the Sacramento Waldorf High School, where she taught history and literature for nineteen years, and she helped to found a number of Waldorf high schools.

A portion of Ms. Staley's work at Rudolf Steiner College (RSC) was devoted to directing courses for public school teachers, entitled *The Waldorf Approach Applied in the Public School Classroom*. These courses introduced teachers from diverse school settings to innovative Waldorf teaching strategies and curricula. Ms. Staley served on the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) Public School Task Force, created to deal with requests for public Waldorf-affiliated schools throughout the United States. She was a member of the Coordinating Committee of AWSNA serving as the chair of the Western Regional Committee. She also founded the Multi-cultural Committee of AWSNA.

Ms. Staley is the author of many books, including *Between Form and Freedom: Being a Teenager*; *Adolescence the Sacred Passage*; *Splinters of the Sun, Teaching Russian Literature to High School Students*; and *Africa, A Teacher's Guide*.

Chamomile Nusz: How were you first introduced to the concept of Public Waldorf Education?

Betty Staley: When I learned about the history of Waldorf education being developed for factory children of German factory workers, I was inspired. Rudolf Steiner wanted Waldorf education to be available for every child and yet be free from government control. He worked with the local German government to develop a compromise that allowed the school to use its methods and philosophy as long as the children met the German

academic standards, assessed in third, sixth, and ninth grades.

There is a myth that the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Factory supported the first Waldorf school as an example of Steiner's threefold ideas that the economic life would support the cultural life (schools). Although this was true for some years, the Board of Directors of the factory ultimately decided not to continue, and thereafter factory owner Emil Molt paid tuition for the factory workers' children while parents of other children paid tuition. I carried the ideal that the economic life should support the cultural life, and that schools being independent of government control was a reflection of Steiner's ideas. However, in reality, that was not the case; schools in many countries have been supported partially or completely by government funding.

I grew up in a poor immigrant family in New York. My involvement in education began in the late 1950's as a substitute teacher in Harlem, and then I went to England for my Waldorf training, returning to the U.S. in 1961. My husband at the time became a teacher at the Kimberton Farms School, a private Waldorf school, located in a wealthy area outside of Philadelphia. In my early teaching years I did not think about this dilemma of public and private schools because at that time all of the American Waldorf schools were private.

We moved to Sacramento in 1965 to teach at the Sacramento Waldorf School, where both of us were involved in class and high school teaching. The dream of having Waldorf education accessible to all children never left us. In 1980, he moved to Edmonton, where he was involved in the first publicly funded Waldorf school in Canada.

In 1990, I was asked by AWSNA to be chairperson of the committee responding to a request from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to create a public Waldorf program. The Committee named the school



Betty Staley speaking at a celebration held in her honor at Sacramento Waldorf School in 2017.

The Four Rivers School, but by the time I reached the airport to fly home, the name had been changed to Urban Waldorf by the school board. This was my first realization that working within the public school arena was very challenging. We conducted a two-week summer session as part of an on-going training for the new teachers, and the school opened in 1991. I continued to be involved as an advisor until May of 1994.

In 1993, the Sacramento City Unified School District approached Rudolf Steiner College to support opening public Waldorf schools. In response, RSC offered workshops through the District, which led to summer programs in two schools. I directed the training of teachers, which was mainly focused on pedagogy and child development. If teachers wanted to be recognized as fully Waldorf-trained, they would take additional philosophical courses at RSC.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH BETTY STALEY

continued from page 9 In 1994, funds were made available to diversify public schools in Sacramento, and each inner city school had to choose a magnet focus. Because of the success of the summer programs, the teachers at the Oak Ridge School chose the Waldorf approach, and in 1996, the program at Oak Ridge began. I designed the on-going teacher training and also represented this program at AWSNA.



BETTY STALEY

With the emerging interest in the Waldorf approach in public schools, in 1994, AWSNA developed a task force to develop a plan for public schools to be recognized as “Waldorf-Inspired.” When 80% of teachers in the school had completed an approved Waldorf certification program, the school would be recognized. This was agreed to by delegates of AWSNA. However, in 1996 this agreement was challenged, and a new agreement stated that a school could not be recognized as “Waldorf-Inspired” as long as it received funding from the government and was under government control. As new public schools wanted to be recognized as “Waldorf” or “Waldorf-Inspired,” a division developed within the Waldorf movement. I became the face of the public school movement and was often criticized for weakening Waldorf education by supporting such schools.

As more public schools began to work as Waldorf-Inspired, the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education was formed to provide networking opportunities, conferences, and a structure for public schools to be formally recognized as Waldorf. Over years, tensions continued to develop between the Alliance and AWSNA, which, through a registered service mark, owns the right to use the words “Waldorf” and “Steiner” in regard to education.

Now we are in a new phase of Waldorf education, building agreement between the Alliance and AWSNA. The Alliance has an approved school membership process, giving full-member schools the ability to use the words “Public Waldorf” in their names and descriptions. We are nearing the end of the extreme division between public and independent Waldorf schools in the U.S. and beginning to recognize each other as colleagues. ■

CHAMOMILE NUSZ is the Secretary and Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, founder and School Coordinator for the Tomorrow River Community Charter School in central Wisconsin.



Alice Birney School: A Story of Enduring Success

BY LIZ BEAVEN

Alice Birney School in Sacramento, California, has the distinction of being the longest continuously operating public school to operate from the Core Principles of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. Its story is one of tenacity, challenge, collaboration, engagement, and an abiding determination that this approach to education would thrive and be available to the children of the city of Sacramento. An examination of its founding and early years is helpful for all of us who wish to see this approach grow and thrive in the public sector.

The school now known as Alice Birney has had at least three sites and changes of name: Oak Ridge, John Morse, Alice Birney. As understandings and requirements around the service mark shifted, it was variously named and referred to as Waldorf-methods, Waldorf-inspired, and a member school of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. Anyone in the field of public education understands that such shifts present complex challenges, yet Birney has navigated them with good humor and grace.

The initial impulse for Alice Birney arose from an intersection of several essential factors: local knowledge and experience of Waldorf education; an informed group of educators who were committed to both public education and Waldorf education and were determined to bridge the two; local resources that could provide ongoing teacher education and mentoring; and a school superintendent who was seeking innovative approaches to creatively meet the needs of all students and families in a highly diverse school district.

Much work was done before the school opened its doors. An initial group of Sacramento City public school teachers with interest in a Waldorf approach received early training, made possible by Title I funds, a supportive superintendent, and collaboration with Rudolf Steiner College and a few local Waldorf teachers. A spark had been lit, and a small group of teachers emerged from this initial exploration determined to carry their vision forward. The move toward magnet schools as a tool for desegregation gave the pioneering group the opportunity it sought and several transferred to Oak Ridge School in Oak Park, an inner-city neighborhood, with an agreement to take on the formidable task of converting the existing faculty and school into a “Waldorf methods” magnet. A period of considerable challenge followed, with resistance from some faculty, families, and an external group that argued forcefully that Waldorf could not belong in the public sector. (A lengthy lawsuit ensued and consumed enormous energy and resources before it was finally dismissed; this was an important deed for all of our schools.) A major lesson had been learned; such an alternative approach could not be imposed but would require local education, dialogue, and buy-in.

Despite these challenges, the flame did not go out. A core group of the teachers were offered another chance at a different, vacated, school site. John Morse

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USE OF “PUBLIC WALDORF SCHOOL” WORDING NOW POSSIBLE!

SPECIAL REPORT

BY CHARLES BURKAM

Over the summer, the Alliance and AWSNA agreed on the Alliance Path of Membership and the possible use of “Public Waldorf” as a service mark extended to full-member Alliance schools. In late June, Alliance board members **Chamomile Nusz** and **Liz Beaven** represented the Alliance at an AWSNA conference in Washington, D.C., where the formal signing of the amended sub-license took place. **Read** a joint AWSNA/Alliance announcement about the expanded agreement.

This expanded agreement allows schools that have qualified for Full Membership under the agreed Path to Membership to use the term “Public Waldorf” in their school name, tag line, or description. Happily, I can report that Sebastopol Independent Charter School is the first school to complete the process and obtain Full Membership and the right to use the words “Public Waldorf” in its name or tagline.

From our Board perspective, the most exciting aspect of this new step will come from the self-study process, through which a school can review and understand its alignment with the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education and build an action plan for growth and development. Current school memberships will continue, but schools will not be awarded a Full or Developing Membership designation until completing the self-study and a peer site visit review.

The site visits have value for both the school seeking Full Membership, which gets the benefit of external perspectives, and for the schools that release staff to serve on the site-visit teams. The visiting team members can bring back new perspectives and best practices they may encounter during the site visit.

New school initiatives will now apply, affirming their intentions to work within the Core Principles. Current initiatives, while not required to engage in the formal self-study, will need to take that step to move from Initiative status into the Developing Member status.

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Alice Birney School *continued*

continued from page 10 Waldorf Methods opened in 1997 with an unsustainable core of ten dedicated teachers, 86 students, and the directive that they had a year to grow the school to a sustainable level. Those pioneering teachers speak of canvassing the neighborhood, holding multiple community events, conducting direct mail campaigns, and doing whatever they could to find families that would enroll in the school. The school acquired its third principal at John Morse, importantly one who was supportive of Waldorf education, and continued to receive support from the school district and teacher training from Rudolf Steiner College. The teachers willingly gave time to their training and to the many additional hours needed to foster growth; the results surpassed expectations and by 2010 the school had outgrown its site. With support of a new district superintendent who was committed to whole-child education, the school moved to the current campus as “Alice Birney,” with space to develop into a fully double-tracked transitional kindergarten-8th grade school.



This is now a reality; every class is full, with waiting lists. Parents speak of the school as a place of community, peace, and rich learning for children. Their viewpoint is supported by research that was undertaken by the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE, 2015). The District has added two more Waldorf-based schools: **George Washington Carver High School of Arts and Sciences** and **AM Winn Elementary School**. Both benefitted significantly from Birney’s experience and knowledge. **Rudy Crew**, the superintendent who initially asked for Waldorf within the district, wanted five schools; at the time this seemed far-fetched, but that goal is now entirely realistic.

If we are wise, we learn from those who have traveled before us. The Alice Birney story stands as an important lesson for our growing movement of schools based on the Core Principles of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. It demonstrates the impact of a group of committed individuals with a vision of what they wanted for children, parents, and teachers. The local conditions were supportive, an important factor that was reinforced by the hasty imposition of this approach on Oak Ridge School, where support did not exist. There was access to quality, consistent teacher education from individuals who shared and supported the vision. District leadership was supportive and also shared the vision. At the school level, they discovered the importance of leadership that was committed to Waldorf principles. Possibly of most importance, the Birney story demonstrates the need for flexibility, good will, and thoughtful compromise as needed. This has been part of the story of developing Waldorf education from the first school founded almost a century ago; Birney demonstrates that it is possible for a Waldorf approach to thrive and be fully integrated within a public school district. We thank the many pioneers who created a pathway for us. ■

A concise history of Alice Birney can be found in the report of a study conducted by the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education: <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/scope-report-waldorf-inspired-school.pdf>

SPECIAL REPORT

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It appears that at least six more schools will begin the formal membership process and self-study this school year. There is also one other school that has completed its self-study, had its site visit and is awaiting the determination of their membership category.

I have been checking in with schools to see where they are in their awareness of the Core Principles and new Path of Membership. My intention is to help member schools determine when undertaking the Self-Study and Peer Review Site Visit can best align with other planning or organizational endeavors, such as major training initiatives or charter renewals.

If there is not calendar space for schools to undertake a self-study within 2018-19, I hope that most established schools will begin the process in the following school year. There will be another information session at the February 2019 Alliance conference, but I hope many schools that want to proceed in 2019-2020 will already have made that decision by the time of the conference.

If I have not yet connected with your school, and you are interested in a conversation, or are even considering starting the process this year, contact me so I can send you a copy of the Handbook for the Path of Membership, which will also soon be available in a new "Members Only" section of our Alliance website. I try to always be available for a conversation. ■



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Peer Review Site Visit

FROM A SCHOOL'S POV

BY CHRIS TOPHAM

Executive Director, Sebastopol Independent Charter School

The focus of our self-study was on how we are successful and how we need improvement in embracing the Alliance's seven Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education. SICS conducted studies, staff development and formed new committees in our work to better understand each principle. We had great conversations during many faculty meetings, discussing each core principle after having studied them and receiving reports and presentations. We finally produced a self-study document, which covered what parts of the core principles are strong in our school and what plans we have created to improve our weaknesses and challenges.

Then we had the site visit with a team comprised of an experienced administrator and two experienced teachers. They met with representatives of our faculty, board, students, parents and school leaders. After this visiting team considered our self-study document and interviewed school stakeholders, it made a presentation of commendations and recommendations, captured in a document. It was a meaningful experience in our path to be affirmed as a Public Waldorf school. Having the tagline "A Public Waldorf School" next to our school's name now feels true for us. ■

FROM A VISITING EVALUATOR'S POV

BY THOM SCHAEFER

Education Director, Credo High School

I served on two Alliance review teams, and I was accompanied on each visit by two other evaluators. The Alliance provided our team with a set of rubrics with which to evaluate the school, looking at mission and vision, pedagogy, governance and administration, facility, community, budget and finance. We arrived on a Sunday evening and planned our activities for the visit, then spent two days at the school, culminating in a comprehensive report to school representatives. During our observation time at the school, we met with a faculty leadership group, board members, parent groups, students, administration, business office and staff. According to Alliance guidelines, we assessed the school's teaching and learning environment, its partnerships with parents, its collegial relations, the organizational life of the school, and other outstanding characteristics. We considered essential methods, how they were reflected in school documents, and how they were evident in practice. We assessed whether the school was working out of a developmentally appropriate model. We paid attention to student engagement, artistic activities and classroom safety and organization. The faculty shared their self-study about how their school aligns with the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education. At the end of our visit, our team gave report of commendations and recommendations to 25 representatives of the faculty, board and parent body, followed by a Q & A session. The school was welcoming, and the process was insightful and fun. ■



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