

# 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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**Ruth Washburn**  
COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL

# BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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As I sit here in the fall of 2021 reflecting on the last year, I feel an immense sense of relief that we made it through the first year of the pandemic unscathed and in a solid financial position. I feel pride in our school staff, community, and Board of Governors at how we all rallied to support each other through the difficult days of the last year. And I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the efforts and sacrifices of school leadership, who used their creative problem-solving to navigate the choppy waters of the storm.

The 2020-21 school year began with a lot of anxiety about the future: would we financially survive the potential closings related to COVID-19; could our culture sustain the fundamental changes to our structure; and how would the members of our staff and community fare with the mental stress and fatigue involved with living, working, and parenting through a pandemic? Members of the Board sat down in the fall of 2020 with all these worries in mind and developed a strategic plan to help us navigate the next few years of uncertainty.

Thanks to the vision and business skills of Executive Director Jen Filonowich, the dedication of our amazing staff, the support from our entire community, and guidance from the Board of Governors, the school weathered the brunt of the first year of the COVID-19 storm with many positive plot twists as a result. Here are a few of our wins from this year:

- We were able to scale down the number of classes offered to meet the reduced need because families kept children home during the pandemic.
- The school remained open for the entire year with only one day of COVID closure thanks primarily to stringent safety procedures.
- We created a new extended summer program, which provided 24 spaces for children to attend a 7-week session.
- We ended the school year with a \$100,000+ surplus because of the generosity of our cooperative, the pause of all discretionary spending, and the receipt of government grants and funds.
- The school employed Lois Arndt as a Mental Health Consultant to support staff and families with mental health struggles.
- Enrollment for the 2021-22 school year is at 99% of our full, normal-year capacity, reflecting a quick bounce back to typical enrollment.

# BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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The 2021-22 school year is full of hope, excitement, and joy. We are celebrating our 60th year as an organization; families are back in the classroom, and; we are welcoming seven new staff this year! We appreciate the support of this entire community over the last year and a half. The Ruth Washburn Way—our culture that thrives through community and hard work—has been a solid lifeboat throughout the pandemic, and we are grateful for another year to see our children learning through play.

## CARLY MOJICA, PRESIDENT

### 2021-22 Board of Governors

Carly Mojica, President

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Phoebe Bullard, Vice President

Gil Stewart

Teresa Aten, Cooperative Liaison

Mary Jeanne Benner-Knopp

Judy Van Valin, Treasurer

Demi Clinton

Heather Meizis, Secretary

Jackie Florendo

Suzanne Dillon

Lianne Mercer

# MISSION & CORE VALUES

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## Mission and Philosophy

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Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School (RWCNS) is a non-profit preschool dedicated to educating and nurturing children in an enriching play-based environment and engaging families in a supportive community.

## Core Values

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At RWCNS we value:

- The nursery school years as unique and important;
- A “whole child” approach to early childhood education wherein emotional physical, social, and cognitive needs are equally significant;
- Equitable learning opportunities that are tailored to each child’s needs;
- An inclusive school environment that embraces diversity;
- Child-directed learning that happens organically in enriched environments;
- Our role as leaders in early childhood education; and
- Families and their contributions to classrooms and the school community.





## Core Values

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We embody these values by:

- Trusting the nursery school model, knowing that developmentally-appropriate play is the best preparation for future schooling;
- Encouraging children to choose and direct their own work by providing engaging materials, open-ended opportunities, outdoor exploration, and interactions with peers;
- Attending to emotional, physical, social, and cognitive needs with equal care and attention;
- Modeling caring interactions that teach children to identify and meet their own needs;
- Hosting professional development and sharing best practices with the early education community;
- Embracing the cooperative community model to provide the richest, most caring environment possible for children and their families; and
- Providing ongoing opportunities for family education and support.

# SURVIVING THE PANDEMIC

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By: Teresa Aten

Hello fellow RWCNS families! As we embark on our 60th year it is not only important to focus on what the future holds, but also to look back and reflect on recent challenges and what we can learn from them to ensure the perpetuity of our beloved school.

Of course, one of the biggest challenges that we have all faced is the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are still a few uncertainties surrounding this, I certainly hope with all the new knowledge that we are on the better side of the pandemic going forward. All of this really got me thinking, how on earth did our precious school survive this crazy time in history? To be honest, if I were not a member of the board I would not be able to answer that question. I am sure some of you are wondering the same thing so I would like to provide a little insight to you on how our school trudged forward through a great time of uncertainty.

The very first thing that helped Ruth Washburn was the fact that the school adhered strictly to the direction of our local health department regarding protocols for COVID-19. Therefore, you saw the introduction of cohorts in classrooms, outdoor drop offs, and individual snacks brought from home. While I understand this was a movement away from our community values, it was a necessary one to ensure the safety of the cooperative. Hopefully in time we will be able to reinstate some of these beloved practices.

Furthermore, I am sure you are all aware that the school and board work in strategic planning cycles and formulate goals in those plans to execute over a long period of time. The last planning cycle was in 2020 so fortunately the board was able to identify clear goals and paths to meet those goals to help Ruth Washburn moving forward through the pandemic. In the strategic plan, the overarching institutional vision for the next two years is to preserve “The Ruth Washburn Way”—our school’s culture and identity—so that we can return to normal as soon as possible without losing the intangible essence of what makes Ruth Washburn such a special place.

In support of that vision, the school director and staff made sure that our community was able to connect in different and safe ways as to preserve our values at Ruth Washburn. I know I personally attended zoom happy hours, online parenting support groups, and outdoor playdates with our cohort classes. I know it was also wonderful for many of you to receive take home kits for your children if they had to be absent for long periods of time. Hopefully all of you were able to attend some of these as well. It made our first-year experience wonderful, safe and full of ease even if it was not the normal in past years.

The school was also able to keep up its fundraising efforts without gathering in large groups by offering the Read-A-Thon in the fall and the “Not a Box” event in the spring. The spring event was such a wonderful event for families to gather on zoom and create a wonderful and creative project with the little ones and have a sense of school community while meeting other families.

That being said, the board, school staff, and all the cooperative families really came together to make sure that everyone had the support they needed during a very difficult time. I truly hope our 60th year brings much needed joy and events that we can enjoy as a cooperative community.



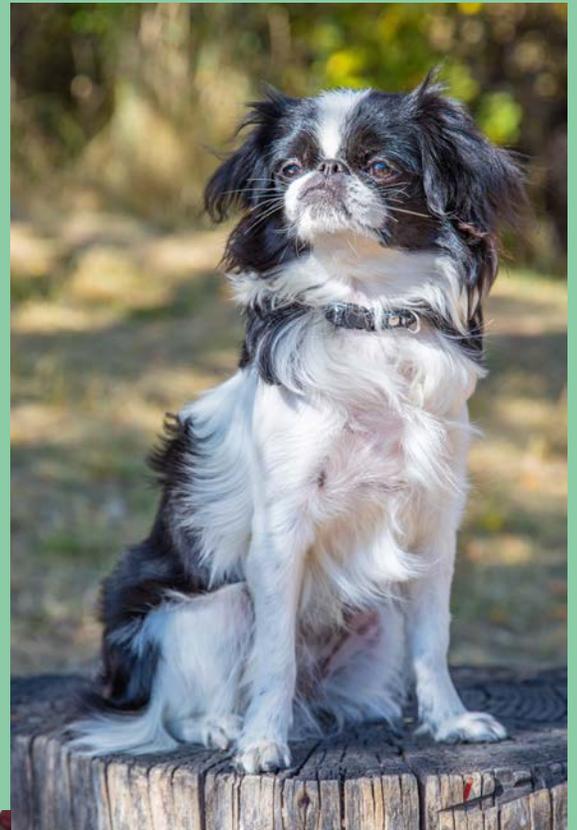
# SERVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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## Introducing Izzy

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We have a new friend at school! Her name is Izzy, and she is our school's therapy dog. Izzy is a Japanese Chin. She usually visits the school twice per week. The children can feed her treats and pet her as much as they want. She visits the classrooms where children learn about her care and training. She is also available when a child is upset and needs a bit more snuggles. Children are often afraid of dogs so no child is ever required to interact with her; they are always given the choice. She loves the kids and hopes they will love her too!



# Ruth Washburn Way Committee

By: Carly Mojica



When the pandemic started, many things at the school changed overnight. Suddenly, we couldn't share a family-style snack, parent helpers weren't allowed in classrooms, and we couldn't have in-person meetings. This was a huge change for our culture. The Board of Governors was concerned we were at risk of losing touch with the quintessential Ruth Washburn Way. Our most recent strategic plan (2021-2023) identified the formation of a Ruth Washburn Way Committee as a goal to keep in touch with those who remember Ruth Washburn pre-COVID.

The purpose of this committee is to serve as a collection of individuals from all levels of the organization (parents, Board members, teachers, administrative staff)—past and present—who understand the essence of the Ruth Washburn Way. The committee is working to document Ruth Washburn's unique culture to preserve it for future generations. As soon as allowed, the school will add back these critical aspects of our culture. In 2021, we've begun the shift back by allowing families in the classrooms once again!

# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

By: Phoebe Bullard

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee has been active for three years and has created a yearly calendar of activities to support RWB families, staff, and community. We are committed to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in our school. This means providing each child with equitable learning opportunities, supporting every family through our shared cooperative community, and reaching out to the greater community. The definitions below are the definitions that our committee uses when referencing the concepts of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

**Diversity** is the representation of all our varied identities and differences (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, tribe, caste, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles, etc.), collectively, and as individuals.

**Equity** seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to information and resources for all.

**Inclusion** builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people.



# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Calendar

## October

**Gear Giveaway:** Families donate winter gear they no longer need. At the Harvest Festival, any family that needs gear can choose from what was donated.

**Needs Survey:** We send a survey to all school families to identify who needs/who has extra resources (food, clothing, childcare, housing, social needs). School staff collects from those who have extra and anonymously pairs with those in need. Families with additional social needs are paired up.

## November & December

**Grocery Cards:** Families donate grocery cards and these are distributed to families who could use a little extra help.

**Giving Tree:** The Board of Governors + school staff provide holiday presents to a few families from the school.

## February

**Valentine's Snack Bags:** Families donate snack items, lotion, and socks. The children make art to include and work to package them. The snack bags are delivered to Westside Cares for distribution to neighbors in need in our local community. Last year, the Owls class took a walking field trip to hand-deliver some of the bags.



# SUPPORTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

By: Lianne Mercer

At Ruth Washburn, the environment, inside and outside, is an essential part of our community. The large outdoor space has many unique features that encourage play, exploration, and risk-taking. The environment inside is designed to encourage children to direct their learning through play and support their development through open-ended opportunities. Without this environment, it would be difficult to realize many of our values.

We are committed to the continual maintenance and development of all aspects of our environment. We strive to balance safety and functionality in the natural landscape of the outdoor space. We look for sustainable solutions inside that allow for accessibility and ongoing exploration. Maintaining the environment at Ruth Washburn has been ongoing despite the many challenges and changes of the last year.

Here's what that looked like this year:

- Completion of a large permanent pavilion on the Farm play area to provide much needed shade in a sustainable way.
- Flooring has been updated in multiple places, which provided better aesthetics and functionality in these areas.

Discussions about projects that will sustainably support the outdoor landscape and increase safety are underway, with more information and updates coming within the next year.



# RECOGNIZING STAFF

By: Jackie Florendo

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Thank you for 10+ years of service!

Stacy Holmes (22)

Mary Jean Coyne (22)

Jen Filonowich (11)

This year we have six new lead teachers! We'd like to introduce you to this wonderful assortment of teachers who are continuing the long-held traditions of the Ruth Washburn Way.

**Christiana Fanaro** is the new Lead Teacher of Sunflowers, the Assistant Teacher of Roly-Poly class, and a parent of an Outdoor Crickets student. This is her first year as a lead teacher at RW. Christiana created a group in the Pikes Peak Region titled, "Little Beans Play and Grow" to engage children and their grown-ups in screen-free alternatives. She attended Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design on a Portfolio Scholarship after winning their annual "Promising Artist" award. Christiana fostered this creative piece of herself and ensued a unique perspective on parenting and teaching, placing a large emphasis on integrating art into the world she lives and works. Christiana believed the only choice for preschool for her own child was Ruth Washburn. She loved the emphasis on social-emotional growth, and the outdoor classroom believing nature is one of the best places for children to learn and grow. Both Christiana and her husband are artists with family as their primary focus. She enjoys the outdoors, camping, hiking, swimming, - all it has to offer. She also enjoys sharing meals with those she loves, serving delicious gluten free and vegan food with unsuspecting omnivores. Community dinners and local events are important to her. She grew up in both the mountains of Idaho Springs and Evergreen.



**Erin Stewart-Patton** is the new Lead Teacher of the Chickadees class and the Assistant Teacher for the Hummingbird class. This is her first full year in the early childhood education field with prior experience as a nanny. She has worked with children ranging from infancy through elementary school, and beyond. It was through bringing the children whom she nannied to Ruth Washburn that she first learned about the school, and soon fell in love with its concept. As the children transitioned to elementary school, she saw the perfect opportunity to join the team at RW. She has been inspired by classes she is taking at Pikes Peak Community College and looks forward to watching the growth of the children throughout the year. Erin is a Colorado native and enjoys the outdoors. Her husband is a Horticulturist at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and is a big support for Erin in pursuing her passion for early childhood. They have two dogs, and love to tend to her house plants and the flower garden in the summer. Erin enjoys creative endeavors such as making jewelry and cards, and practicing the flute.

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**Kiley Rush** is the new teacher in the Hummingbird's classroom and assists in the Hopper's class. She is presently a student teacher, her second "official" semester of student teaching in the early childhood education field. Kiley will be graduating with her Bachelor of Innovation degree in Inclusive Early Childhood Education from UCCS in December. Prior to her formal early childhood education path, she has helped her mom in various teaching positions since she was nine years old. She is a fourth-generation preschool teacher; her mom, grandma and great grandmother were all preschool teachers as well. She is so excited to be a part of Ruth Washburn; 'a school that truly understands the definition of process art and what it means for children to learn through play'. Kiley's family has lived in Colorado Springs for the past seven years. She was born in southern Colorado, moved to the state of Washington for ten years and now is glad to be back in her home state of Colorado. She is a black belt in taekwondo and continues to train.



**Kirsten Encarnación** is the lead teacher for the Owls class and assists in the Outdoor Cricket Class. She has worked in Early Childhood for 30 years both full and part time. Kirsten taught in a Head Start program, a School District preschool and daycare program, and taught in 3 different cooperative preschools prior to coming to Ruth Washburn. In addition, she was involved as a parent in another cooperative for four years. Kirsten has a BS degree from the University of Idaho in Child Development. She is so pleased to have found the Ruth Washburn Community where she feels right at home. She believes this is a rare and exceptional community and appreciates the strong commitment to developing the Whole Child in a rich play-based environment. Kirsten is originally from Idaho but has lived in Michigan and Northern Virginia (DC metro) for more than 25 years before returning to the West in 2018. She is married and has 3 college aged sons. Her husband is a Scientist/Consultant who is Puerto Rican and bilingual. They enjoy the outdoors and hope to explore more of Colorado. Together they enjoy world travel and understanding of other cultures.

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**Olivia Back** is the new lead teacher for the Seeds classroom. Her children attended RW between the years 2016-2019. She is currently a communication major integrated with some early childhood education courses. As a parent, Olivia chose RW because it offered children a place to explore, learn, and make mistakes in an environment that is safe while providing children with the skills to develop life-long relationships. Olivia had witnessed the children being able to partake with other caring adults and children in their community when she brought her children to the school; she is excited to now be that teacher/that person for the children in the Seeds classroom and expects to learn from them too! She enjoys watching the curious nature of children and looks forward to fostering this in the children this upcoming year. Olivia lives with her husband, two children and a dog. She enjoys organizing, baking, yoga, and brunch. She is creative at heart and loves the beauty this brings. She was raised in Colorado Springs and graduated from Manitou Springs.



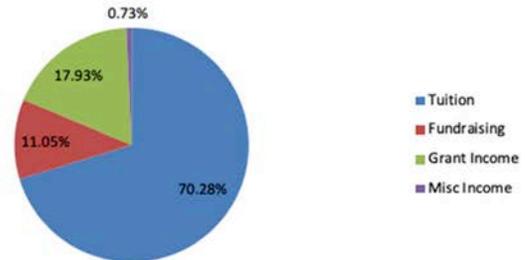
**Silke Howarth** is the new lead teacher in the Sprouts classroom, assistant in the Seeds classroom, and Early Morning Explorer. Silke obtained her degree in the field of Early Childhood Education in 2001, then chose a career as a stay-at-home mom for seventeen years. This is her third year in the early childhood education field. Her prior experience for teaching children and when she turned her love into a professional passion was when she was an au pair in 1995 in the US and turned that love into her profession. She has experience with ages two years through school age in German preschools and early childhood education centers where she obtained her degree. In addition, she has coached toddlers and preschoolers in gymnastics for the past two years. This is her first-time teaching in a US school. Silke is very grateful to be a part of a program and in a classroom setting where she can watch the children grow and thrive; she 'enjoys just to be a small part of their lives'. She loves the play-approach at RW and the focus on the social-emotional development of children. Silke is from Cologne, Germany. She has been married to her husband Tom for twenty years; they have a 17-year-old daughter, 13-year-old son, one dog, and three cats. She enjoys photography, crafting, traveling, learning languages, reading, and fostering kittens.



# FINANCIALS

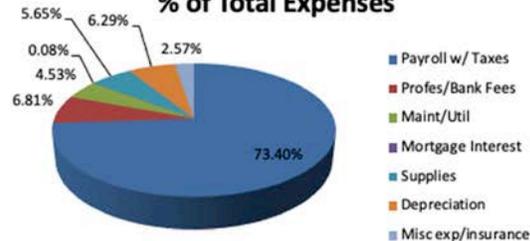
	\$ Dollars	% of Total
Total Income	\$ 561,364.00	
Tuition	\$ 394,548.46	70.28%
Fundraising	\$ 62,040.07	11.05%
Grant Income	\$ 100,674.76	17.93%
Misc Income	\$ 4,100.71	0.73%

**% of Total Revenue**



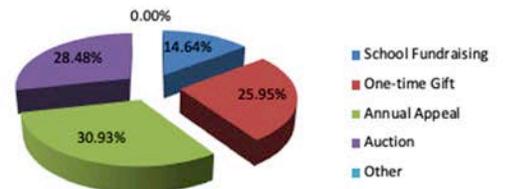
	\$ Dollars	% of Total
Total Expenses	\$ 493,094.34	
Payroll w/ Taxes	\$ 364,382.00	73.40%
Profes/Bank Fees	\$ 33,826.00	6.81%
Maint/Util	\$ 22,495.79	4.53%
Mortgage Interest	\$ 381.89	0.08%
Supplies	\$ 28,039.89	5.65%
Depreciation	\$ 31,214.00	6.29%
Misc exp/insurance	\$ 12,754.77	2.57%

**% of Total Expenses**



	Income	Expense	Net
Auction	\$ 17,212.79	\$ 497.67	\$ 16,715.12
School Fundraising	\$ 11,004.49	\$ 2,415.48	\$ 8,589.01
One-time Gift	\$ 15,226.93	\$ -	\$ 15,226.93
Annual Appeal	\$ 18,595.86	\$ 445.51	\$ 18,150.35
Other			\$ -
	62,040.07	2,860.99	59,179.08

**% of Total Fundraising**



**Ruth Washburn**  
COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL

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