

WITH UNDERSTANDING COMES ACTION

by Terry Edeli, Head of School

Whenever I think of San Francisco School alumni, I invariably wonder how their current passions reflect the hopes that SFS faculty hold for them. Our hopes are articulated in the SFS mission, with phrases such as “celebrating intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise;” “practicing mutual respect”; “embracing diversity”; and “inspiring passions for learning.” Most recently, while working on a school-wide theme for the 2002-03 school year, the faculty generated the phrase, “With understanding comes action.” I resonated with this phrase, because our hope for the future is rooted in the confidence that our students’ understanding of the world will inspire each of them to meaningful action in their adult lives.

“With understanding comes action” certainly is a phrase that motivates the work of our faculty. Teachers are always consciously working to deepen their understanding of what children truly understand and how students learn best. As teachers work in this way, they expect that their own thorough understanding of children, and of each child, will inform their daily teaching practice. During this past summer, many of the faculty attended one of two intensive summer workshops. One, titled “Schools Attuned”, sought to help teachers deepen their understanding of the many ways in which children learn. The other, “Project Zero”, sought to help teachers develop curriculum that focuses student attention on the essential understandings within a specific unit or subject. Taken together, Schools Attuned and Project Zero deepen teacher

... continued on page 2 — see **Terry**

A RISING STAR

Heather Cunningham '91, Development Associate

When asked to recall his time at The San Francisco School, Erik Weiner speaks of Singingtime. He remembers one day in particular sitting on “Doug’s Rug”, when the music began and, unprompted he jumped up in front

“I paid close attention to his performance ... and came to the conclusion that this young man is just plain brilliant.”

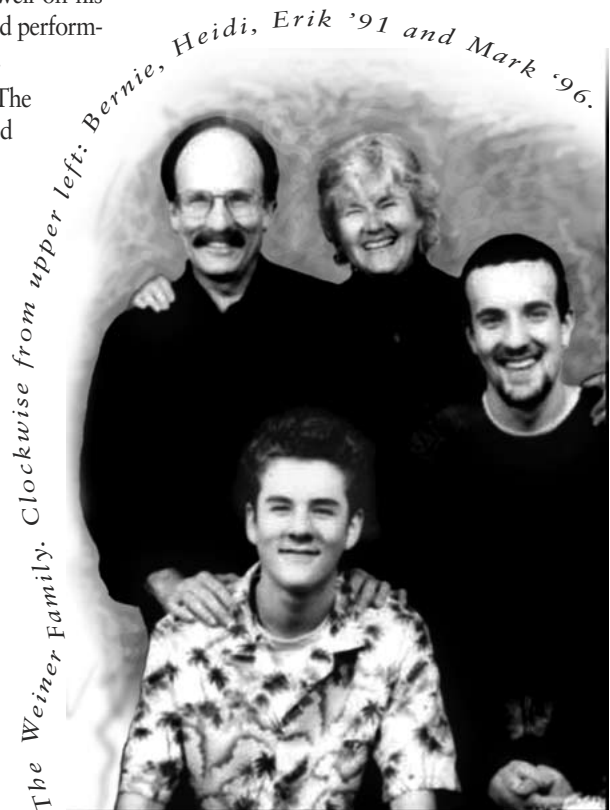
of the room and began dancing around wildly. Everyone went “bonkers” laughing and cheering him on as he moved across the floor. Immediately realizing the thrill of performing, and stirred by the enthusiasm of his audience, the next week he did it again, but this time no one laughed. Erik sites that day for two major realizations; one: vary your routine, and two: Erik wanted to be an actor. Now twenty-five, Erik is well on his way to a successful career writing and performing for the stage, film and television.

Begun as a Senior Project at NYU, The Bomb-itty of Errors was conceived and written by Erik and three of his friends, who perform all of the play’s sixteen characters and their countless costume changes. Following their NYU performance, and seeking a broader audience, the group held a “Backers Audition”, inviting producers from around the city to view their production. The performance was enough to convince prominent local director Daryl Roth (Wit). She sent them with a stipend to the New York Stage and Film Workshop at Vassar College for a summer workshop for new plays. That fall, under the direction of Andy Goldberg, and with a DJ, Bomb-itty opened off Broadway to a widely and well reviewed

seven month run. The production was featured on the Rosie O’Donnell show and received several nominations and awards, including a Drama Desk nomination, an Outer Critic’s Circle Nomination, and the 2001 HBO US Comedy Arts Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Show. The production was then picked up for a four month run in Chicago where they received a Jeffrey Award.

Erik was singled out in critical reviews including one (from an especially unwilling fan) which stated, “The one thing I found just thrilling was the performance of Erik Weiner . . . Weiner took the role of Luciana. . . and made her the funniest dumb blonde since Judy Holiday graced the stage. Lest he just be a good drag queen, I paid close attention to his performance

... continued on page 2 — see **Erik**



Terry — continued from page 1 . . .

understanding about how students learn. With teacher focus “attuned” in this way, instruction can “zero” in on the most meaningful concepts, taught in a way that connects with and motivates each student. Deep teacher understanding of how students learn leads to successful instructional action, instructional action which in turn lead to deep student understanding.

“With understanding comes action” captures, too, what we as faculty hope for, strive for, even exist for, in our work with our students. Just as we seek understanding to guide our teaching, we want students to understand themselves. This perhaps is the truest path to successful learning, healthy social interactions and both physical and emotional well-being. We also want students to understand the connectedness of the world, the nature of human relations, and the fragility of our environment. We trust that by developing such an understanding of the world, students will instinctively act with responsibility and with compassion. If students understand the interconnectedness of existence, they will take action in search of social justice.

In my musings about former SFS students, my children and nearly one thousand other alumni, I wonder how deep were the understandings with which they left SFS. I wonder how deep those understandings have grown with further education and life experience. And wonder to what action on behalf of humanity that deep understanding has propelled each and every alumnus of The San Francisco School. If you would like to share with us what you are doing now, and how you have felt the effect of The School on your life, please call or email us at (415) 239-5065 or alumni@sfschool.org. ●

Erik — continued from page 1 . . .

in other roles (it wasn't always easy to see who was who under wigs and costumes) and came to the conclusion that this young man is just plain brilliant.” Now those of us who know Erik from his time at The School know he is much more than just a good drag queen. In eighth grade Erik was voted both Most Artistic and Most Eccentric and, appropriately, played the Jester in his class performance of *The Holiday Revels*.

While *Bomb-itty* is now playing in Chicago's Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier, and at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, it is with a new cast, as Erik and his friends are hard at work in Los Angeles. Following their rave reviews in New York and Chicago, MTV bought the movie rights to *Bomb-itty* and the group signed a contract with MTV to write and act in a musical sketch comedy series for the channel. MTV sent the group to the Writers Lab at the Sundance Film Festival in Sundance, Colorado to create the screenplay for *Bomb-itty*, and then relocated them to Los Angeles to begin development on the show. They are writing and shooting at an intense rate this summer, with the half-hour program scheduled to premiere September 21st. Somehow amid all this excitement, Erik also managed to get a role in the film *Brown Sugar*, starring Taye Diggs, Mos Def, and Queen Latifah, scheduled for release October 11th, 2002.



Erik as “The Jester” during his eighth grade *Holiday Revels*.

While Erik remains humble about his success, we at The School are certain that with his winning combination of brains and humor Erik is sure to wow Hollywood as surely as he did his classmates fifteen years ago on “Doug's Rug”. ●



The San Francisco School

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The San Francisco School cultivates and celebrates the intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise of each student in a community that practices mutual respect, embraces diversity and inspires a passion for learning.

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The San Francisco School is accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS)

The Gaven Street Gazette is published three times annually by the Development Office of The San Francisco School.



BUILDING A RIVER

by Dolores Elkin, North Class Teacher



Artist and parent Gregory (Hailey '10)

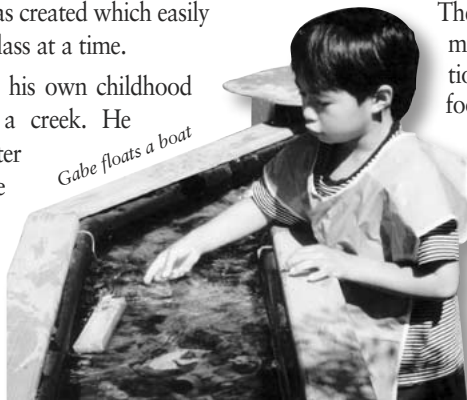
The river in the North class yard began as an idea in an artists mind. Parent, artist, and professor Gregory Gavin (Hailey, First) approached the teachers with a thought he had about building a river in the North yard as an end of three years for his daughter; a parting gift of vision and labor. Gregory planned with the teachers extensively. He came to watch how the children played in the yard. He talked and walked through many ideas of where and how it might look and function in the yard. In the end a fabulous "river" was created which easily accommodated half the class at a time.

Gregory was inspired by his own childhood experiences of play in a creek. He wanted to create a water environment for the children that involved their imagination and energized as well as engaged students. The idea of running water created a whole new



Phoebe builds a bridge with Legos.

stones, wood, large Lego blocks and shells engaged children endlessly. Imaginary play with animals and sea animals donated by families extended the play. It has been amazing to watch how involved and excited the children are with the river.



Gabe floats a boat

The river was built from modular pieces, each section of the river about a foot wide and three feet long, the river spanning twelve yards. It begins in a wide, shallow basin of circling water three feet off the ground with a platform for the children to stand on, the waterfall from

experience of movement of floating objects, just like in a creek in the countryside. The river also has the extra benefit of the sound of running water to cover the freeway noise. Opportunities to build bridges, islands, and boats using

the basin beginning the river. The river extends the width of the North yard, ending in another pool. The river's wide lip allows for bridge building and other minor "construction" projects. Because of its modular design it is possible to deconstruct and rebuild the river in another school location, and because of its size and flexibility, it can be adapted for age appropriate play for any grade.



Zachary plays with a plastic turtle in one of the waterfalls.

We in the North class have felt very lucky to have the gift of the river. It involved an enormous amount of Gregory's labor, time and vision. The children add their own creative activity to the river, which keeps it alive and full of life. As ideas blossom the river has been added to creating a work of play in progress and constant change; like the flow of water



John Jehu, SFS Caretaker and Resident Artist

ARTIST-IN RESIDENCE

by Rebecca Greco, 8th Grade Teacher

Many SFS students, faculty, and alumni are familiar with the artwork of John Jehu, SFS

Caretaker, resident of 311 Gaven Street, parent of SFS alumna Nell Jehu, and unofficial artist-in-residence at The San Francisco School.

New works regularly appear in the kitchen, and lucky early-morning arrivals to The School get to discuss the new pieces with John.



Inspired by the impressive collection of works that she saw on a wintertime visit to John's San Bruno Avenue studio, SFS Cook and Alumni parent Patty Corwin organized and hosted a show and sale of John's work at The School in early March. The Terry Edeli Activity Room filled with students, parents, teachers, alumni, fans and supporters of John throughout the afternoon and evening.

While aptly titled "Works on Paper," the show also included a number of paintings. In addition to allowing fans of John's art to discuss and honor his brilliant and inspired work,



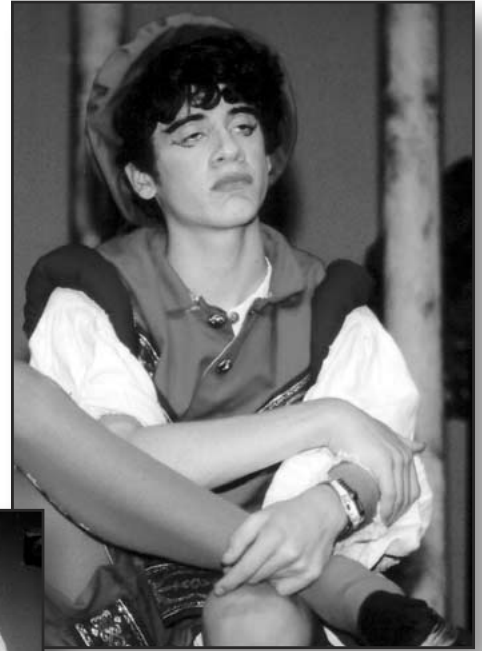
Karen checks out a drawing at John's show

the show generated numerous sales and a mailing list for John. We're all looking forward to John's next show! ●



THANK YOU BOBBY WEINAPPLE FOR TEN GREAT YEARS OF SHAKESPEARE!

photos by Jean Makanna





SUN, MOON AND STARS

Miki Walsh '90

Miki Walsh '90 is currently pursuing dual graduate degrees in Theology, Ethics and Culture, and Creative Non-fiction Writing at the University of Iowa.

I have this memory of lying in the reading fortress of the South Classroom with a stethoscope pressed against Josephine's pregnant belly, listening for the thrum of a heartbeat, disbelieving that the full moon, the protruding planet of her stomach, actually contained a baby. As hard as I tried, I could not hear anything except watery noises and the sound of her lunch being digested. Feeling profoundly disappointed, I told her that I could only hear what sounded to me like a fish tank. Taking the stethoscope and moving it around her belly until she located the staccato of the heart beat, Josephine marked the spot with her finger, and then handing me the stethoscope, told me to try again.

This is one of my first memories from the San Francisco School, and in many ways, it embodies the school's ethic. Learning hinged on discovery, on curiosity, and it was intimate— whether we were barefoot and supine on Doug's wooden floors trying to achieve complete control, or walking blindfolded through a Calaveras night with our hands on the shoulders of the person in front of us, there was something at once quiet and intense, introspective, yet shared that shaped who we were and how we related to one another. From the time we were tiny, circling the sun in Susie and Fran's classroom, before we had even started to lose our teeth, we learned how to observe, to appreciate quiet, and later, the importance of recording.

I was reminded of this last spring when I was visiting The San Francisco School.

In the first grade we were given journals that we filled with drawings and short compositions, and we carried these books through the grades. We brought them on field trips, on camping trips, pausing intermittently to record what we saw, what we felt, what we had learned. It wasn't until I was in college taking a Greek and Latin class that I learned the etymology of the word record, which is from the Latin re-cordis, which means to pass again through the heart.

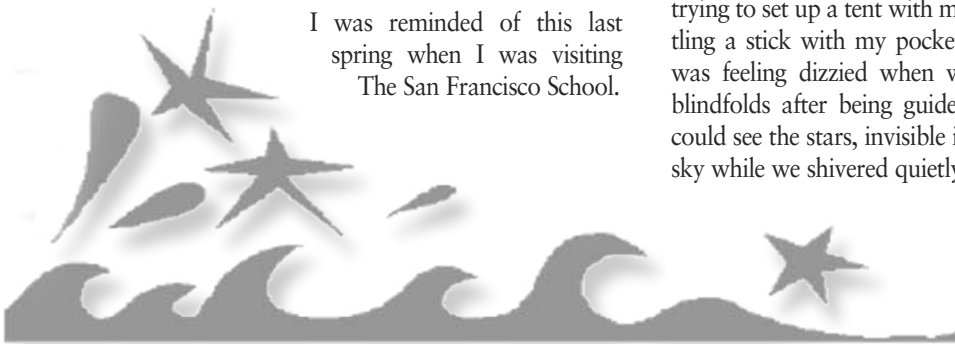
Twenty-six years old and on a tour of my former preschool classroom, I was eating lunch beside the people who taught me how to write my name. Awed by the silence of a room full of children intently eating their sandwiches and carrot sticks, I turned to Susie to comment on how odd it was that nobody was talking. Several students raised their fingers towards me as though to say peace, or victory, and nodding at them

I flashed them my victory fingers. In that simple exchange I was floored by what was passing again through my heart – a staccato of memory, the low thrum of what I had forgotten. (The first ten minutes of lunch is eaten in silence so that people eat, rather than talk. Peace fingers are used to gently remind classmates that they are talking when they should not be.)

But it was more than just this that I remembered. It was baking Hurry Up Cake with my classmates, stringing yarn through construction paper to make kites that never flew, making body music, listening for the crescendo of Coltrane's sax in music class, trying to set up a tent with my friends, quietly whittling a stick with my pocket knife in Calaveras. It was feeling dizzyed when we finally took off our blindfolds after being guided to a valley where we could see the stars, invisible in the city, shivering in the sky while we shivered quietly watching. ●



On a recent visit to The School, Miki caught up with her friend and former teacher Susie.



CLASSROOM TO CLASSROOM

An alumna reflects on her first year of teaching

Maya Kilmer '92

There is nothing quite like your first day of teaching, especially with only two and a half weeks of preparation. Nearly everything about John Muir Middle School was foreign to me; the noise of nearly 2000 middle school students swarming the halls nervously before their first class, the shock of the antiquated bell system set to decibels fit for hearing loss, and the rosters that had not fourteen, but thirty-six students in each class. I was exhausted by second period and in a daze during our first break. I couldn't understand how the other teachers



Maya as a Middle Schooler

could be so nonchalant or how they could actually eat breakfast, especially since we only had eighteen minutes. During the first two periods I had tried, as an ice-breaker, to have the students think of alliterative adjectives for their names. Out of the first two rows of students maybe one or two people had been able to think of an adjective and by the time we got to the tenth student and the sixth name that began with "m", it felt like pulling teeth. I was already losing my voice, and had no idea how I was going to do the same thing over again for three more periods.

The great thing about being a new teacher is that every single day gets noticeably easier. It's strange for me to remember that first day because of how far I have come. I look forward to coming to school every morning and I have great students, all 160 of them. All of my students now know how to write a five-paragraph essay and most of them can write pretty decent ones. We discussed success, persuasion, literary themes, and much more. While being responsible for creating an entire year of English education for my students was once daunting, I now look forward

to the challenge of designing and implementing projects to help my students exceed the state standards. I love how much the students' backgrounds and experiences enrich what we do in the classroom. I love the fact that each day is totally unpredictable and that lessons will never go precisely as you planned because each class and each student responds differently to it. The strangest part of this is that I'm a teacher at all, because I always swore I wouldn't be one.

I remember thinking for the first time in second grade about what I wanted to BE when I grew up. I decided to be a farmer. When I moved to Los Angeles two years ago, after graduating from Skidmore College with a B.A. in anthropology, I still hadn't quite figured that out. I had chosen anthropology because I wanted to study everything, and in studying human cultures throughout the world and throughout time I could do just that. At some point I wanted to pursue a degree in ecological anthropology, but I knew I needed some experience out of school before I did this.

After a month and a half of unsuccessful job-hunting in Los Angeles, and an unhappy stint at a computer music web company, I was forced to re-examine what I was doing. I realized I needed to find a creative job where I could really make a difference and, hopefully, share my passion for learning. My boyfriend had started teaching science that fall and, for all his humorous horror stories, really enjoyed what he was doing, and took it very seriously. I realized that as unprepared and 'unqualified' as I was, I might actually be able to contribute to a school district with an estimated shortage of 1500 teachers. After four months of testing, an extensive application process, and acceptance into the district's intern program for teachers, I was offered a position teaching seventh grade English at John Muir Middle School in South Central Los Angeles. I began teaching last September.

Almost all of my students come from low-income families, many of whom do not speak English at home. In fact, sixty to seventy per-

cent of my students primarily speak Spanish at home, which means the majority of their interactions in English are in class. The school estimates that most students are at least three grade levels behind in content knowledge and skills. The greatest challenge is figuring out how to teach the students grade level material while catching them up on the many skills they lack.

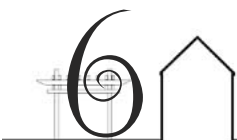
What's funny is that every single teaching method I have learned in my intern program, all of the 'cutting edge' theories that have only begun to be implemented in the LAUSD, are exactly how my sisters and I were taught at the SF School over a decade ago. Everyday that I teach, and with every new challenge I face, I think not about the pedagogy we read for class, but about how and what I was taught, about what Erika and Sally and Cathy would have done in a similar situation. In planning lessons that address multiple learning styles and intelligences, reading scores that range from two to ninety-eight, I try to remember the hands-on projects we did in middle school, how Karen helped us incorporate art and how Doug always made music

a multicultural experience. It is hard for me to explain the extent to which the SF School has shaped me as a teacher, because of how much the SF School shaped all of us that attended as people. Because SF School practices mutual respect and embraces diversity, it was just as natural for me to become an anthropology major as it was for me to teach in John Muir's multicultural environment. Because the SF School cultivated and celebrated the intellectual, imaginative and humanitarian promise of each of us, I know that every one of my students is smart, creative and has the potential to go as far as

they want, regardless of their lack of skills. I made a poster for my classroom with a quote from Thoreau that captures the spirit of what the SF School taught all of us. I strive to follow these words everyday, and I hope my own students will as well: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined!" ●



Maya in her Los Angeles classroom.



ALUMNI NEWS

Heather Cunningham '91, Development Associate

70's and 80's

Congratulations to **Omar Nielsen** who recently wed his fiancé Julie Hunt Nielsen, an opera singer. They celebrated with a European honeymoon. Omar is continuing his work South of Market as an Instructional Media Designer, building online courses for Digital Think. **Leonard Earl Jones** is working as a consultant for International Risk Management in the Philippines. **Ben Fiedler** recently got in touch with The School; he is living in Denver. **Sarah Klein** recently visited school in conjunction with her job teaching natural history and art for Tree Frog Treks. She is also a filmmaker and artist and recently screened a video at the Film Arts Festival of Independent Cinema. She also teaches bread baking to kids. **LisaMarie Miramontes** completed her degree in Educational Psychology at University of Northern Colorado and is now working on her doctoral dissertation on development during wilderness experience. She is also working on a dragon-based trilogy. When **David Hochschild** is not playing in his winningest City League basketball team (they finished last season 0-10) he is hard at work on the Vote Solar Initiative, promoting cities nationwide to implement solar initiatives. Congratulations to **Tashana Holsonback** who is scheduled to be wed in September to her fiancé Zach Master. Tashana's daughter Cordelia is now four and reportedly bears a striking resemblance to her mother. When he isn't living in Massachusetts building houses and barns and playing in a contra dance band, **Ben Yeomans** is living in Chiapas, Mexico doing photography. **Marina Hotchkiss** retired this year from Alonzo King's Lines Ballet Company. Her daughter Hanna will be a North Class Kindergartener in the fall. Congratulations to **Chris Galvin** and his wife who were thrilled to announce the arrival of their first

child, a girl, last fall. **Ginger Fahrenwald** is to be wed this summer in a ceremony featuring alumna **Paprika (Becky) Fahrenwald**, **Maya Kilmer-Fahrenwald** and **Laralyn Bergstedt**. **Jasmine Oberste** is in school studying acupuncture. SFS alum parent and painter **Olive Ayhens'** work was recently reviewed in *Art in America* while her nine expressionist oil paintings were being displayed at Gary Tatintzian gallery in New York City.

90's

Jesse Zitrin has returned to San Francisco from Atlanta where he worked as an assistant teacher following his graduation from Emory in 2001. **Jonny Beals-Nesmith** who is studying Forest Ecology at Oregon State University, recently married his college sweetheart Katherine in a lovely ceremony in Santa Cruz. **David Edeli** and **Erik Weiner** attended and Jonny's father Claire helped officiate. **Katy Barnhill** is teaching a World Dance Fusion Class at Rhythm and Motion Dance Center. **Arica Sobel** is traveling throughout the US pursuing her interest in photography and photojournalism. She was last seen in Maui working in a café and taking classes in photography and painting. **Patrick Kawaters** is studying to be a Sound Technician at Ex'pressions Center for New Media. **Jeff Erkelens** is living and working in New Orleans, when he's not spending months at a time backpacking in Florida's Everglades. Having just completed the AIDS Ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles, **Maya Kilmer-Fahrenwald** is teaching Middle School English in South Central Los Angeles, and looking forward to her sister Ginger's summer wedding. **Joeonna Bellorado-Samuels** recently returned from Ghana where she was working and studying. Upon his graduation from Brown University with a degree in Psychology,

Matthew Watts took a four month tour of Europe. **Isaiah Chase** and **Robby Stephens** graduated from Oberlin College this spring. Isaiah was awarded a two year fellowship from the Shansi Memorial Foundation of Oberlin College to study in Japan, take on an internship in the field of his choice and to teach English as a Second Language at Obirin University just outside of Tokyo. **Ashley Slater** spent the spring in the Dominican Republic working in a shelter for abandoned children with AIDS. **Dash Talbot** took a year off from UC Santa Cruz to study International Politics at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. **Brittany Soracco** and **Soloman Chase** both finished their first year of college at Rochester Institute of Technology and Sarah Lawrence College, respectively and are both very happy. **Brett Stemme** and a friend were recently featured in *The Chronicle* after surviving a freezing night on Mount Tamalpais when they got lost returning to their car from a waterfall sightseeing walk after dark. Search and Rescue volunteers reported the two did the right thing by stopping for the night next to the trail. **Molly Rose Treadway's** Cross Country team at University High School won 1st place in Division V of the CA State Championships. She placed fourth on the team. **Jessica Young** graduated from Tamalpais High a year early and is now attending Reed College in Oregon. **Zach Shedd** is having a great time at Urban. **Gideon Chase** and **Matt Burkhead** recently met with Mayor Willie Brown to discuss and potentially improve the state of skateboarding, skate parks and skateboarders in San Francisco. **Paolo Ferretti** recently traveled to Australia with People to People as a Soccer Ambassador. ●





Michaela and Grace cheer on the eighth graders in the 8th Grade versus The Staff basketball game.

calendar

August

31st . . . Saturday All School Fall workday

September

4th . . . wednesday. First Day of School

19th . Thursday All School Potluck

October

1st . . Tuesday Elementary Back to School Night

20th . Sunday walkathon

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