

BROOKS

THE PBS ALUM NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023





Armando Cerrillo, Scott Hunt, Amanda Tachis
Advancement Team

FROM THE ADVANCEMENT TEAM

In my new role within the Advancement Team, I am excited to revitalize our commitment to alum engagement. Our newly established Alum Program aims to build and maintain strong connections to you! Our focus is to support each other, creating an enduring network ranging from our very first graduates to our emerging middle schoolers.

My personal journey from student to faculty member, and now a member of the Advancement Team, showcases the extraordinary impact PBS connections can have. My time as a student empowered me to unearth my full potential, offering insights into both the world around me and the potential impact I could have on it. Transitioning to a faculty member, I gained a firsthand perspective of the power of a life-changing education, knowing that the world's future change makers sat in my second grade classroom. It was a natural step to join the Advancement Team and ensure that the traditions and values we hold dear continue to thrive. All to say, the PBS community is more than an institution; it's a family.

I am excited about the journey ahead and the opportunities it presents. On the final page of this newsletter, we invite you to build, connect, and support each other as a lifelong PBS community. Your involvement and support are invaluable. Together, we will create an enduring legacy.



Hello, my name is Brooks. I'm your friendly PBS mascot. My favorite things are eucalyptus trees, #2 pencils, and hot lunches. Oh, and hanging out with PBS Lifelong Learners! Often, I make an appearance at campus events - the students love to see me! For now, we've named this newsletter after me, Brooks. But maybe there's a better name out there - don't worry, I won't take it personally! If you have an idea, please submit it to:
alum@phillipsbrooks.org

Amanda Tachis '03
Assistant Director of
Advancement and
Community



Amanda, circa 2003

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Phillips Brooks School recently celebrated its 45th anniversary. This milestone sets the stage to reconnect with you, our alums, as we approach our half-century mark. Our school remains united around our core value of community. Thank you for the important role you play in PBS's history. I am excited about this opportunity to build a PBS Alum Program to celebrate you and our extended community.



PBS is focused on providing a high-quality, research-based learning program that is aligned with the child-centered ideals of our founders in 1978. We've launched a five-year Strategic Plan, which is rooted in our core job of educating students. It is grounded in our conviction that a great school like PBS always desires to be even better with actionable, achievable initiatives.

We are also focused on championing faculty and staff. A key objective is talent retention, and I am proud that this year we've had the lowest teacher turnover in five years. In recent years, we've also recognized three amazing educators who retired and whom you know well: Barby Little, Margie Tully, and Stan Drake. Their combined service to PBS is more than a century!

Thanks to the generous support of our community and the steadfast commitment of faculty and staff, we responded well to the pandemic. Parent and guardian engagement is thriving again, and we have a vibrant program for volunteer leaders on campus.

With all of this in mind, my team and I seek your partnership in building an Alum Program. We're planning a modest start with newsletters and select events to bring us together. I encourage you to reconnect with your school, get involved in the planning, reach out to alums you know, and share your thoughts and feedback with us. Please enjoy the articles in this newsletter and the opportunities to be together as an extended community. Thank you for your commitment to PBS!

Scott Erickson
Head of School



Child-centered learning remains, as always, at the heart of a Phillips Brooks School education.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: MAEVE KNOTH

PBS Librarian and John Newbery Award Committee Chair

Maeve Knoth, a San Francisco native, grew up with a love for picture books and illustrated chapter books that has lasted until this day. In fact, her mother was concerned about her reading habits as Maeve shied away from “boring books with just words.” Her mom’s worries were for naught. Maeve became an enthusiastic reader and pursued an English major. Her passion for education led to a career in both schools and public libraries before ultimately joining PBS in 2013, combining her love of library and elementary education.

Recently, a career-long dream of Maeve's has come true, as she has been appointed to Chair the John Newbery Award Committee to select the “most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” of 2024. This is a significant achievement and an opportunity for Maeve to showcase her expertise in the field and exemplifies her belief of nurturing young minds through children’s literature. After recently discovering this excellent accolade, we sat down with Maeve to find out more.

Maeve, Congratulations! All librarians love (or hate!?) a good synopsis. Can you give us one on yourself and why selection has been a dream of yours?

The authors and illustrators who make excellent books for children are the people who make my job easy. When I have good books to offer, I can grow readers. When I have excellent literature available, I can read aloud and keep students riveted by new topics and emotions. The Newbery Award celebrates just that, the very best in writing for children, so leading a group of professionals to identify that book is a dream. I get to change some author’s life when I call to say “This is Maeve Knoth, chair of the Newbery Award selection committee, and we have selected YOUR book...” For a children’s librarian and lover of literature, there is nothing more exciting!



Maeve Knoth, PBS Librarian



Maeve Knoth teaching in her natural environment, the PBS Library!

Can you tell us what this will mean for you and your future as a children's educator and librarian?

Each time I work closely with a group of professionals, I learn from them. I have served as chair for less prestigious awards and lists, and those experiences have given me new insights into literature and children. I look forward to bringing what I learn this coming year back to the PBS community. Our students are learning how to work together, how to listen to each other, and how to read closely and find the ways an author's word choice and literary structure impacts their experience as a reader. Deep book discussion with colleagues can't help but rub off in how I teach and what I share with our students. And of course, enthusiasm is infectious so I hope our kiddos are as enthralled with this process as I am!

We know you have run a program in which our older PBS students can read the Newbery Award candidates and mock "vote" for their favorite. Will you let your PBS students' selections influence you?

Next year is all about reading and listening for me. I will listen to our students, listen to colleagues, read deeply, and listen some more to my committee members. I will be much more closed-mouthed about my own opinions than I usually am because the Newbery process requires confidentiality, but my thoughts about books are always influenced by what moves different readers.

What motivates you to continue your career at PBS?

I love coming to work each day. I love reading aloud and watching students respond to the written word. I love listening to their questions and thoughts. I love exposing them to new ideas. The students and my smart, curious colleagues make "work" just a joy.

ALUM SPOTLIGHT: ALEX KVAMME '99

Pathlight CEO, PBS Parent and PBS Trustee

Please tell us about growing up and how PBS has been a part of your life then and now.

I grew up in Menlo Park with three siblings—all of whom went to PBS! In fact, attending PBS has really become a multi-generational tradition—my uncle attended as one of the first students—and now, my eldest child is in the ELC with my second child soon to follow. Since its inception, PBS has stood out in the area as one of the best schools for a well-rounded education - one that included social-emotional learning (which back in my day was simply called “communication”). I started in the ELC (then called “Room 9”), and I met the best man in my wedding there on the first day when we were 3 years old! PBS builds lifelong connections right from the start.

What do you remember about PBS, and why did you choose it for your own children?

I have fond memories of each year and teacher at PBS (for example, one that baked a cake every year and pretended to accidentally sit on it, to teach us that all people make mistakes) and I believe that’s the mark of a happy and fulfilling childhood school experience. I remember the unique support that PBS gave—one year, I broke my leg, and PBS made sure that the students, teachers, and facilities were all there to support me. Returning back after many years, this time to look at PBS through a parent’s eyes, I wondered if it still maintained the spirit and values that I remembered—of knowing and loving each child—and it did. I saw that a strong academic component was present, and so was the emphasis on social-emotional learning, and the motivation that every student turns into a well-rounded person. And that’s what I wanted for my kids.



Alex Kvamme '99



Alex circa 1995

Tell us how you felt when you left PBS and what you've been doing in the years since.

I know I left PBS very prepared for middle and high school at Menlo School and then, afterward, for Duke University. My educational journey gave me a passion for building and investing in what I see as great technologies. This passion led me back to the Bay Area—there's still no better place to be than the San Francisco area for the combination of entrepreneurship and technology. I've gained a wife and two young children now, and have come back in a full circle now to where I started! My PBS classmates were also all very well-prepared upon graduation and have also gone on to find fulfillment in their own lives and personal endeavors.

Tell us about your current work with the PBS Board of Trustees. What motivated you to take on this work, and what does it mean to you to be a connected alum?

We all suffer from “recency bias”: That is, we remember our college years best, our high school years second-best, and our elementary years fade somewhat in our memories. While natural, I think a person's primary school years are foundational. For that reason, my connection to PBS is vital, as my own child attends, and I found myself with a desire for him to have a similar educational foundation to that of my own. One of the reasons I chose to join the Board of Trustees is that there are so many things that PBS does “right,” and always has—not because they're popular but because they come from the intrinsic desire to build good human beings. In this sense, PBS has maintained the same traditions it's always had and, as a Trustee, I love being part of the unique combination of historical values and forward-evolution.



Alex Kvamme and Family

HAPPENINGS ON CAMPUS: NEW TRADITIONS



A student delights in shared time with Grandpa at Celebration of Learning and the Arts.

Over the past two years, our beloved spring tradition of Grandparents and Special Friends Day has blossomed into the full family and friends-inclusive **Celebration of Learning and the Arts**, transforming our campus into a family day in celebration of classroom learning and creativity. Families and friends are invited to join their children on campus, giving PBS students the fun and satisfaction of showcasing their collective artistic and academic accomplishments to their very favorite audiences. We look forward to hosting this event again on May 10, 2024.

We hosted our first-ever **Young Alum Gathering** event on-campus last May. The Classes of 2020 and 2021 missed out on many graduation traditions and festivities due to COVID lockdowns and separations, and we were thrilled to invite them to join together once again, along with the Class of 2022. Our Young Alums reveled in food trucks, laughter, and togetherness. The event stems from our commitment to keep community connections strong. We are excited to host our second annual Young Alum Gathering on April 19, 2024.



Music across the grades is on display at Celebration of Learning and the Arts.



Young Alum and beloved teachers come together on campus.



Young Alum reconnect

HAPPENINGS ON CAMPUS: PHILANTHROPY



Brooks joins in for jogging and high fives at the Fun Run.



FUNdraising for Financial Aid at the Spring Benefit



For more about philanthropy at PBS, please read *Inspire*, the '22/'23 Impact Report at: phillipsbrooks.org/support-pbs/inspire

We kicked off the year's philanthropic efforts with the inaugural **Annual Fund Launch Party** at beautiful Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club. On a warm September evening, we came together over drinks and nibbles to recognize joyful, inspired, and meaningful philanthropy through the PBS Annual Fund. The first-ever launch party is a new way to express appreciation for our collective support of PBS childrens' education and to build community.

Recently, our families joyfully ran, walked, jogged, and cheered through campus at our **Fun Run!** Parents and guardians lined the track, while PBS students delighted in the sense of camaraderie, encouraging one another with high-fives and cheers. Amidst the laughter and lemonade, the Fun Run promoted a healthy, active lifestyle and a strong sense of community.

Our annual **Spring Benefit for Financial Aid** honors the belief that the presence of multiple perspectives on our campus and in our classrooms enriches the educational experience of all our learners. Last April, a glittering evening at Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club honored that legacy with an ever-growing commitment to making a PBS education accessible to a broad community of families. Prom gowns and tuxedos were donned, bubbles and paddles were raised, and the community rallied together for an evening of merrymaking and fundraising in support of our diverse student family. We look forward to the Spring Benefit on Saturday, May 4, 2024.

Thank you to our generous PBS donors for making an exceptional education possible for every student.



Annual Fund Launch Party

HAPPENINGS ON CAMPUS: CONTINUING TRADITIONS



Fluffy Pig Races at the
Fall Festival



The Bake-off added a Sweet Treat
element to the Fall Festival!

Do you remember your Buddy? The **PBS “Buddies”** tradition pairs an older student with a younger student for activities such as reading, pumpkin decorating, and even just hanging out at the playground! The Buddy Program, a beloved part of PBS’s social-emotional learning curriculum, cultivates a supportive community, giving our older students a chance for leadership while helping our younger students navigate both educational and social challenges. The program is so cherished that often the big ones are even invited to the little one’s birthday parties!

In October, the **Fall Festival** transformed our school into a bustling hub of laughter, camaraderie, and pumpkin-spiced delight. From fluffy pig races that had everyone on their toes to pumpkin painting that let our creativity flow, the festival was a medley of activities that brought smiles to all faces. Delectable student-baked creations added an extra layer of sweetness to the festival, and remarkably, a volunteer group of teachers taste-tested all 29 entries to determine the winning “Most Creative” and “Tastiest” entries.



PBS Buddies

FAREWELLS

While faculty and staff welcomes and farewells are a natural part of the rhythm of our school, three recent farewells in particular deserve special mention for you, our alum readers. If you're reading this, you were taught by at least one, if not all three, of these exemplary educators!



Barby Little
Faculty member
1980 - 2019

Barby Little retired in June 2019 after almost four decades at PBS. She joined the PBS faculty in 1980, coming to our young school with a background in junior high, high school, and college teaching. At PBS, she truly found her calling. Most recognized as the ever-patient experiment-loving leader of our science program, the PBS science classroom was named "The Barby Little Science Lab" in her honor in 2020. Barby also taught math and art during her tenure. She loved PBS and has been a mentor to many alums and a role model to all.



Margie Tully
Kindergarten Teacher
1996 - 2021

Margie Tully, after 25 years as a beloved PBS Kindergarten teacher, retired in 2021. Born and raised in England, Margie joined the PBS faculty in 1996 after beginning her teaching career in England and then the Dominican Republic. The mother of four PBS alums, Margie always taught Kindergarten at PBS, never taking her focus off the 5- and 6-year olds that she found filled with curiosity, enthusiasm, fun, and warmth. In her retirement, Margie has been spending time volunteering locally and enjoying her two grandchildren. If you're lucky, you can sometimes still catch her substitute teaching in PBS classrooms!



Stan Drake
Physical Education Teacher
1978 - 2023

Stan Drake, after 45 years of encouraging each and every PBS child's athletic endeavors (not to mention remembering the name of each and every one of them), retired in June of 2023. Since the first day PBS opened its doors, Stan embodied our promise "to know and love your children." He consistently modeled our mission and core values with an optimistic and growth mindset. He cared about students achieving their best in class and in sports while also insisting that they be their best selves. Aside from well-deserved time with family and friends, Coach Drake has been continuing his important role as PBS ambassador and, sometimes, as a substitute PBS teacher during his retirement.



Current PBS Parents and Alum enjoy time with each other (and wine!) at the Annual Fund Launch Party.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

Whether you graduated a year ago or 35 years ago, we seek to maintain the connections, inspiration, and support you experienced as a PBS student. Your roots in this community are vital, and we want to help you maintain and nurture them. Stay updated with PBS events and initiatives by visiting our website, attending upcoming alum gatherings, and connecting with us on social media @phillipsbrooksschool.

As we launch this new Alum program, we need your help! We are building our database, so please continue to update your contact information and encourage your friends to do the same. Share your news and let us know what you would like to hear from campus. We are planning events, so volunteer and make suggestions about what alum events you would like to create or attend. The success of the program is built on our partnership, and together, we can continue the legacy of PBS.



We love when alum come back to visit us on campus!

Find us at:
phillipsbrooks.org/about-us/alum
 OR
 Email: alum@phillipsbrooks.org





Today's PBS students benefit from the involvement and generosity of our community.

GIVING TUESDAY–JOIN US!

Giving Tuesday is a global movement that inspires millions of people to come together and give back. On Tuesday, November 28, we hope you will join us in building a culture of giving within our alum community.

Giving to the PBS Annual Fund enriches the PBS experience and empowers the next generation of lifelong learners. The Annual Fund is the driving force behind our mission, and it ensures that every student at PBS thrives academically, socially, and personally.

Visit:

phillipsbrooks.org/support-pbs/annual-fund





Phillips Brooks School

