

# Danville

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Meet  
**Chris Pancoast**  
Hometown Advocate for Education,  
Exploration and Community

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# Meet Chris Pancoast

## Hometown Advocate for Education, Exploration and Community

*By Anne Angstenberger, Resident since 2006*

*Photos provided by the Pancoast Family*

Chris Pancoast grew up in Danville, California with parents who provided many positive opportunities and experiences for him and his sister. After school and homework, it was always “playtime.” He was lucky to have lived in the Verona neighborhood, which had several families with children his age. He loved being around people and making new friends, rather than staying indoors playing video games or watching television. On an average day you would find him riding bikes with my friends on the Iron Horse Trail, hanging out at a park playing hide and seek tag, or using the natural environment to role-play various scenarios such as spy or cops and robbers. His family had a cat named Jake and a black lab named Pepper, who he absolutely loved.

As a true west side child, Chris attended Montair and Rancho Romero Elementary, Stone Valley, and San Ramon Valley High School...which were all within riding distance. Another school he attended, which impacted his hands-on/authentic learning style, was the Meher School/White Pony Preschool in Lafayette. Even as a young child, he remembers being exposed to the value of active learning and “learning by being physically engaged in the activity”.

Once he was old enough, each morning his friends would wake up and ride bikes to school...stopping along the way to discover the natural beauty of the environment. That included going down in the creeks, climbing trees, and creating opportunities where we put our imagination to use. Chris’ favorite class in high school and the one that really made me decide that he wanted to work with others, the Child Development class at San Ramon Valley High. The class served as a functional preschool for parents and a lab school for the students. Each student was assigned to a child where the high schoolers would read books to them, tell stories, take them on adventures around campus, and play on the playground.

The child Chris was assigned to was a triplet named Louis. He had two sisters and so the other students and Chris had a lot of fun going on daily adventures with them. After graduating from SRVHS, Chris attended DVC where he majored in Early Childhood Development, Psychology and Special Education, earning several AA degrees. Since he did not want to stop there, Chris attended Sonoma State University earning a BA degree in Liberal Arts and a MA degree in Early Childhood Education.

When reminiscing about his childhood and growing up in Danville, a fond memory stands out in his mind. Chris remembers a visit to Frontier Barbershop in Danville to get a haircut. “After I sat down in the barber chair, one of my idols, Chris Mullen from the Warriors came in, sat in the chair next to me, and got his haircut too. I was probably 13 and did not realize exactly who he was until he left. I have always enjoyed watching the Warriors, and with me being 6’3”, I enjoy playing basketball when I can. If Chris Mullin reads this, I would love an opportunity to meet him again. I am a huge Warriors fan.”

Growing up, Chris always looked for creative ways to make money. His first job was a newspaper route for the San Ramon Valley Times office located in downtown Danville. “While I took pride in having my own job, it was definitely hard getting up at the crack of dawn each morning. Then there were the garage sales as well as frequent flower and lemonade stands that I would plan on a regular basis. I would babysit, tutor, and accept as many yard work jobs I could find, making my daily visits to the SRVHS career center. Anything to earn money to afford the things that I wanted.”

From a young age, he would look forward to attending the YMCA summer camp at Rancho Romero Elementary. “We would do art projects, learn exciting camp songs and go on day trips. One day’s trip was to Old Town Sacramento. I remember boarding the bus, putting on my headphones and jamming to the Lion King. Yes, I said the Lion King. The best part of that trip was learning some of the history, going to an ice cream shop and playing at an old fashioned arcade.” Like many other Danville natives, he also worked for the Town of Danville’s Recreation Department... starting as a camp counselor and working his way up to being a site-leader and site-manager for their Little Corn Camp at Hap Magee Park. Working in recreation was a great experience as it allowed him to not only show his skills, but to challenge himself and take on more responsibility. Chris notes “my experience helped me work as a recreation coordinator and director for other districts. One of my goals in the future is to work in recreation as a full-time recreation coordinator.”

Currently, Chris remains a very familiar face to many in Danville, as he works on the Security Team at San Ramon Valley High School, the same school he graduated from in 2000. Additionally, in his free time, he is an active advocate for play in early childhood and through life. “It is through play that children build a foundation for their lifelong growth and development. I am currently working on connecting with businesses, companies, and nonprofits that I could collaborate with.” He has taken his advocacy to the next level by developing materials for the community to access. You can find them on Facebook or Instagram @Whyplay60 where he creates reviews of products and foods to promote active and healthy play all throughout life, as well as posts information about his events and author meet and greets.

In 2012, he met the love of his life, Kirsten, and moved close to their childhood homes. In 2014, Chris was married at the Sunol Golf Club, and in 2015, their daughter, Ariel, was born. They have a very loving golden retriever named Rosie who’s 3

years old. Chris had several different pets growing up and has always enjoyed caring for and being around animals which also led to him writing and publishing books.

After publishing his first book, “Why Play? Learning Through Play,” which is geared towards teachers and educators and how to help children effectively learn through play, he realized he wanted to also write a children’s book for the children to read themselves. “While visiting the San Francisco Wildlife Conservation Expo in 2019, I heard a presentation from Dr. Jane Goodall, and was inspired about the direction I wanted to take my new book. “Animal Tales ABCs” takes readers on an adventure while learning about endangered species, animal conservation, and ways we can help save them. It is a story about a boy’s beloved stuffed alien, Cosmos, who comes to life at night taking him on an around-the-world adventure learning about all the animals that are endangered and their habitats. This book was illustrated by creative high school students right here in Danville who I’ve had the privilege to work with. I will be publishing a coloring and activity book that

accompanies Animal Tales ABCs entitled, Animal Tales ABCs: An ABCS Coloring and Activity Book.”

Aside from children’s books, he has published a new book entitled, “Why Play? We Play. We Learn,” which dives into the importance of purposeful play, types of play, ways adults can promote play, how play benefits children who have special needs, the psychology of play and much more. This book can be used as a journal offering questions to consider at the end of each chapter. Chris has designed a workshop based on his book that people can purchase to host their own training surrounding play for their school, parent groups, etc.

Although Chris is quite busy, when he has free time, he enjoys attending meet and greets, spending time with his daughter and wife, watching Ariel play sports, being outdoors, taking day trips and gardening. Chris currently is proud of his seven



pomegranate trees, a nectarine tree, a lime tree, an apricot tree, some blueberry bushes, and peas growing in his garden. Gardening with his daughter is one of his favorite ways to unwind at the end of the day. Next time you run into Chris in town, be sure to say hello, he can’t wait to meet you!

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