When I attended my first TJ PTA general meeting, I heard that the school had a volunteer art “docent” teaching program. Having been a credentialed art teacher at Sacramento High School, I was excited about volunteering and getting in front of kids again. It’s hard to believe that was more than eight years ago.

Just a couple of years earlier, the Living Arts Docent Program was started by TJ parents Dana Moore and Erin Thurman, who depended on friends and other dedicated parents to teach artwork to both their kids and fellow classmates. Dana set about finding different resources, bringing in a full elementary art curriculum, using assorted large visual aids of traditional and contemporary masters’ paintings, and cobbling together a minimal inventory of art supplies. Over the ensuing years, Dana and her crew built the program from a barely stocked supply of markers to our current collection of shelves, flat files and cabinets well-stocked with a range of supplies. Our current art supply inventory would rival that of a small high school’s. This speaks highly of the type of parent-participation PTA that has been led by, and populated with, so many of the strong parents here at Theodore Judah.

After several years of leading the program, it was time for Dana to step aside and let a new coordinator take the reins. I had helped Dana during those years but I couldn’t take on the large task of moving the docent program into its next evolution. Enter Susan Rabinovitz, a local artist with solid relationships in Sacramento’s arts community and an artisan shop of her own. Susan launched the program to a higher plane. Some dead weight was lost – she let go of the much-loved but difficult scarecrow project, which some new docents always found daunting, and brought in an outside artist program full of talented comic book artists, poets and writers. She established and wrote a schoolwide arts curriculum that tied into our Garden and Science Alive! Programs, and led a fun end-of-year kite art project that always seemed destined to occur on a day with no wind.

Through the PTA’s dedication and Susan’s leadership, those years saw incredible growth. Our art materials budget grew with the auction pieces that classes created for fundraising. One specific piece a few years ago brought in more than $1,200.

Once again, to Susan’s credit, she noticed that we might have been shortchanging the program and many parents. With that in mind, she started the option of creating smaller individualized pieces so that all parents could actually own a piece of their child’s artwork. One year, one of the class projects my wife and I orchestrated as docents actually made more money than our “big” art piece.

This school year is the first that the PTA decided to fund 11 hours a week for a paid Art Coordinator. I was at a good point in my own graphic design business, and felt I now had the time to devote to the art program, so I applied and was awarded the position. But once again the strength of the program always shows through with the inventiveness of our docents. Take a walk through the halls and you’ll see amazing, diverse examples of projects I had no hand in.

I am working with our new music instructor, Rob Keedy, to develop a new music and art fundraiser to be held at the school’s Open House on May 25. Docents will again prepare either a large classroom piece or smaller individual pieces (or both, if they’re so inclined). All pieces will be on display and the auction will most likely be a timed silent auction. Hopefully this will evolve into a Spring Art and Music Festival next year, with art booths and demos much like our current Harvest Festival.

Even more exciting times lie ahead. Years ago, the Arts Alive! Program shared a room with the Science Alive! Program, but as enrollment grew, we took the stage (literally – that’s where our art supplies are stored). But after this Spring Break, the Arts Alive! Program will have its own classroom again, in what is currently Mr. Duke’s room. All of our art material inventory will be moved over, and the possibilities abound – perhaps the room can become an open art studio where students can make art during lunch or recess.

Thanks to all past, present, and future docents! This program stands on your shoulders every year, lesson in and lesson out. The future has never looked brighter for Theodore Judah’s Arts Alive! Program.

– Bill McCloskey, Arts Alive Coordinator
BILLM@THEWONDERSHOP.COM
April’s character trait is TOLERANCE

Tolerance is defined as “sympathy for or acceptance of feelings, habits or beliefs that are different from one’s own,” according to the Merriam-Webster student dictionary. This character trait is timely in our very charged political climate.

SCUSD recently published their Safe Haven School District policy which begins, “SCUSD is committed to the success of all students irrespective of their immigration status, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability, sex and gender identity, socio-economic status or beliefs.” Read more at SCUSD.EDU/SAFE-HAVEN-DISTRICT.

So how does this translate to our children? Teaching tolerance is like following the Golden Rule – treat others the way you want to be treated. But how you like to be treated sometimes requires questioning. As a nurse, I have learned that not all patients want the same thing. For example, something as simple as water can be a cultural preference. People from several cultures do not want ice water and instead want their medications with warm water. Asking people is the key to tolerance, understanding and finally acceptance. Ask people what they like, what their culture values, what their customs are at home, what their food preferences are, what their holidays look like, what their traditional clothing looks like? All of these learning opportunities open our eyes to celebrating differences rather than being afraid of them. Our kids are always listening to what we say and watching what we do, so lead by example. Stepping out of our comfort zone shows our kids that it’s ok for them to do that too. Stretching these comfort zones to encompass all those around us helps to create the Safe Haven School District that SCUSD is aiming for. We are all part of this solution to creating a community where differences are celebrated.

The Child Development Institute published How to Teach Your Kids About Tolerance (childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/communication/talk-to-kids-tolerance). One of the steps was to “learn together about other cultures and traditions. Explore how different cultures celebrate occasions in their own special way and go about life. Talk about it and appreciate the experience.” Check out the article for additional ideas on promoting tolerance at home and in our community.

– Laura Barrett, Kindness Alive Program Coordinator

The all-school photo was a huge success! Thank you to J. Bouné Photography (FACEBOOK.COM/JBOUNEPHOTOGRAPHY ) for taking the photo. The photographer, Jessica, was amazing, nimble and, patient as she captured a great moment in our Judah history.

The photo will adorn the new building when it opens this spring!

Principal Search

The principal search continues. Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting on March 6 to provide input, or who sent input to Mary Hardin-Young via email. Following that meeting, resumes were screened, and in late March the approved candidates took questions from an interview panel that consisted of community members, parents, and district staff. Candidates who were successful in that round then met with the superintendent and members of the school board. The new principal will be introduced at the April 6 school board meeting. Shortly after that, we can expect to meet our new principal at school. He or she will officially start as principal of Theodore Judah in July!
MUSIC ALIVE

This month has flown by! Staff, students and parents: thank you so much for all of your support. You have made me feel incredibly welcome.

In our most recent lessons, we have been putting the FUN in our music fundamentals ;)

I generally break music into three primary pillars: Rhythm, Pitch, and Expression. We have engaged in a variety of different listening, call and response (echo), and rhythmic notation exercises to practice these aspects of music.

Rhythm is the foundation. We have been spending the majority of our time in this category singing our “Ta-Ti-Ti-Tas” or our “1-2-and-3s,” and then learning to write and read the notation of these rhythms. Once we understand rhythm we can focus on the pitch or tone of the music. We have worked on proper instrument handling and performance techniques as well as good and bad quality of sound. We have also been practicing how to sit and stand up straight so we can properly sing our “Do-Re-Mi” exercises. Lastly, expression is the hills and valleys of the musical landscape or how loud and soft passages are performed. We have just begun in this category through the introduction of forte (loud), mezzo-forte (half-loud) and piano (soft).

The students’ fundamentals are improving week to week and it has been really great to watch!

– Rob Keedy, Music Alive Instructor

GARDEN / SCIENCE ALIVE

Our Science Alive! Program is ready to celebrate spring! Spring time means the opening of our new building here on campus, which will be home to our returning Science Lab. This is so exciting for the Science Alive! Program and all of our students, since this space in the new building will be used by all ages to further explore science with hands-on labs and other opportunities. Spring also means the return of our seedling sale. One of the many special attributes of this sale is that our students, through their time in garden, have an opportunity to contribute by maintaining our compost, planting the seeds, and many other tasks. The seedlings are a product of our hands-on garden curriculum. Thank you to our garden docents who always do their part to help make our program shine. Selling a product that our students produced to improve your gardens and benefit our program is a beautiful gift to our school community and an amazing learning opportunity for our garden geniuses.

The Science Alive! Program will explore more concepts from the Next Generation Science Standards, including magnets, electricity and forms of energy. Each week, half of our students remain in the classrooms with the teachers, who provide the lab, while our garden docents and the other half of the class spend time in the garden, getting it ready for spring. Students alternate each week. If you have any ideas or time you would like to contribute to our Science Alive! Program, please contact us anytime.

– Tracey Abernathy and Cindy Cole
Garden/Science Alive Team

The PTA is proud to announce a new partnership that will have Big Spoon Yogurt on campus every Thursday after school selling frozen yogurt cups for $3 apiece. And be on the lookout for more information about other restaurant fundraisers!

upcoming events

April 22  Happy Earth Day
April 7  Eat at Roxie night (3 to 7 pm)
April 10-14  NO SCHOOL – Spring Break
April 17  State testing for 3rd through 6th graders (through 1st week in May)
April 19  PTA General Meeting
April 28  Wear ORANGE for Kindness Day
April 29  8th Annual Fundraising Gala
May 1-5  Teacher Appreciation Week – this year’s theme: ELEVATE!

Roxie Night

The final two Roxie Deli fundraiser nights are Friday, April 7 and Friday, June 2. Eat at Roxie’s C Street location between 3 and 7 pm on those nights, mention TJ, and a portion goes to the PTA! We will not have a Roxie night in May. HUGE THANKS to Roxie Deli for their support!
Be sure to check out the TJ PTA web site at THEODOREJUDAHPTA.ORG to buy tickets before they’re sold out! Let’s fill the room from wall to wall to support and celebrate Judah! This is our largest fundraiser and funding source for our supplemental student programs including Science Alive! Arts Alive! Garden Alive! Kindness Alive! and Music Alive! These weekly programs, held during the school day, inspire our children to create, innovate, explore and think critically about the world around them. Let’s make this the best year ever!

Theodore Judah’s 8th Annual Fundraising Gala in on Saturday, April 29 from 6 to 11 pm. This year’s theme is Sparkles and Spurs, a western glam theme; costumes will be admired, but are not required. Either way, come and have a great time! We will return to the beautiful Turn Verein on J Street for an evening of dinner, beverages, entertainment, and live and silent auctions! Dinner prepared by Rick Mahan of The Waterboy and OneSpeed and appetizers prepared by Marvin Maldonado of The Federalist Public House.

We strongly encourage pre-registration of your credit card to reduce your wait at check in and check out. Now you can enjoy more of your night while we check you out with our mobile technology!

We will open some items from the Silent Auction the week of the Gala for pre-bidding – check the website often to see what items have come in and get your bids in early to snag the best items!

Can’t attend the Gala but want to be able to bid on the Silent Auction items? Email HELLO@THEODOREJUDAHPTA.ORG to get a bid number and bid from home! Thank you so much for supporting our students and programs.

Questions? Please contact Sarah Wallace at SARAHTJPTA@GMAIL.COM or 916.215.1474.