



2021

# The Oak Grove Owl

*A Newsletter and Annual Report for the Oak Grove Community*



EXUBERANT ENGAGED EAGER

Nurture the child.  
Empower the student.  
Unleash the potential.

# Thoughts from the Head of School



Photo by Gabby Noller

*Dear Friends of Oak Grove Montessori School,*

So, I decided to take a stroll across the campus at Oak Grove Montessori School to give me inspiration for this message to everyone about the school year 2021/22. Today is the Ides of March and is the second anniversary of the pandemic. What a myriad of things we have experienced, learned, cried over and fought against during such a hard time in the history of humanity. After working in 13 schools in 10 countries I truly feel that coming to the Grove and working with the teachers and watching the students learn in a traditional, intentional, loving Montessori setting has to be the pinnacle of my 37 years in education.

What students learn at Oak Grove are the skills necessary to be successful not only in school but also in life. Every student is on a different page at the same time. They are all working on student-centered projects based on their interests and their needs. Combine this with gentle yet consistent guidance from the dedicated faculty who spend countless hours preparing the classroom for continuous successes throughout the day, month, year — until our students graduate and go on.

Standing in the middle of the forest and looking over at the campus across the vernal pond I see the bright, shining beacon of hope known as Oak Grove which represents to me not an alternative to education but the imperative for education and I only hope that such amazing learning experiences can be replicated in other schools across the world because every child deserves the finest education and that is found at Oak Grove Montessori School.

The gathering spot by the red oak in the forest reminds me of a park ranger's amphitheater in a national forest. Moving down to the vernal pond shows the juxtaposition of land and water where life is rich in abundance and easily studied by our Owls right in our backyard. Walking by a baby white pine recently planted shows hope springing eternal as a new member of the forest has been tended by the students and a sign posted to show respect for what is bound to become a thriving tree amongst all of her friends here. On my way out of the forest I pass a large maple in and think of the sweet sap beneath her bark that nourishes us if we decide to borrow some.



Across the footbridge I enter the trimmed yard walking up to Seth Brody's Orchard, a painting of which is also hanging in my office and the plaque reads: *In loving memory of Seth Brody — Class of 2018 — Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund — Established 2019*. This orchard is a very special place and we are honored to be the caretakers in remembrance of his time at the Grove and his love for nature and especially Gala apples.

Crossing the soccer field, I'm flanked by the Primary play area to my left and the Lower and Upper Elementary play area to my right, while moving on towards the outdoor gardens, the glorious greenhouse and Piper and his friends at Yolk Grove. Walking across the main playfield I notice students sitting outside enjoying the sun. The pavilion is an inviting space to sit at a picnic table and read a book or watch the student's playing basketball on the court or lying on the grass enjoying Mother Nature at her finest at the Grove.

We truly need your support to continue for yet another 40 years as we have already done so for the past 40. Your ideas, comments, donations, time, dreams, hopes, and interest in our Owls developing to their fullest potential is all we can hope for. Let's make today the BEST day ever! Let's continue to *Flourish* at Oak Grove Montessori School!! Go Owls!!!

With much gratitude,



DR. JORGE NELSON,  
HEAD OF SCHOOL



# ...Where are They Now?

For over 38 years, Oak Grove has educated hundreds of students. These alumni leave our school and join a talented group of individuals that are leaders in so many different fields. Time and time again, we hear from our alumni how their Montessori education, at Oak Grove, prepared them with the skills needed to greet the next chapters of their lives. Most notably, they recognize that Oak Grove's curriculum and environment fostered essential communication skills, time management skills, and collaborative work abilities that contribute to their ongoing success.

The research continues to demonstrate, unequivocally, that an educational setting based on student-centered learning, high levels of engagement, peer-teaching, collaboration, and problem-solving, yield the most positive long term results for students. The multi-aged Montessori classroom and three-year cycle offer a curriculum that prepares our children with the skills they need to greet their futures with excitement and anticipation.

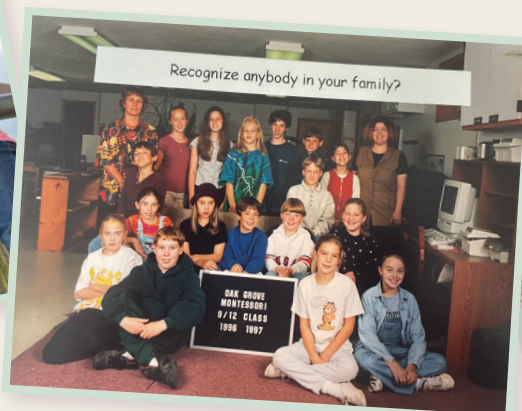
The most meaningful way to know about the outcomes of an Oak Grove education and experience are to hear directly from our graduates themselves. We asked three more graduates to share some thoughts about their time at Oak Grove. We asked about their lives after Oak Grove, their hobbies and interests, their real-world vision, and about how their time at Oak Grove has influenced their journey.

Former students and families are vital to the stewardship of the Oak Grove community. You serve as an integral support system for the school and help us paint a vivid picture of success for our current and future families. We are committed to broadening and building alumni relationships; we want to hear from you and want to know what you are doing now! Please email, call, or stop by. We would love to swap stories and keep you connected.

**PROFILE** *What are our graduates doing now?*

**REAL-WORLD VISION** *What is important to our graduates?*

**IMPACT** *What habits, skills, character qualities do our graduates trace directly back to their time at Oak Grove?*



# Luke Stover



## Profile

I graduated from the University of Rhode Island last spring (2021), with degrees in Aquaculture & Fisheries Science and Biological Science. Now some may read this and ask, what is aquaculture? Aquaculture is farming, but in the water, and my goal is to eventually start my own ocean farming operation; I plan to sustainably grow crops such as oysters, scallops, mussels, and kelp, right here in New England, providing locally sourced food for the community, while also cleaning the water and helping the environment. After wrapping up my time in college, I find myself in an animal research lab at Yale University, where I take care of thousands of frogs used in clinical research. These amphibious *Xenopus tropicalis* frogs are used as models for the study of birth defects in human children, and through this research, doctors can better understand what specific DNA sequences can cause these often detrimental life-long genetic diseases. As far as down time goes I'm an avid scuba diver, a hobby I picked up by taking scuba classes at URI. I enjoy fishing too, and in winter I try to go snowboarding as often as I'm able.

## Real-World Vision

**If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?**

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as binding more atmospheric carbon dioxide and stopping ocean acidification, should be the primary objectives of every true world citizen. If we harness the power of the ocean, we can feed our people through sustainable aquaculture practices that actively contribute to reversing the harm that's already been done to our planet.

## OGMS Impact

**What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?**

My time at Oak Grove was life changing. As a kid who personally struggled to even learn how to read, the much smaller class sizes allowed me to get the personal help that I needed to excel early on, until eventually I was reading well above my grade level. I remember even the methods by which I was taught math, with physical or visual aids to represent the numbers in the problems, were a great aid to my established staff members not just as teachers, but as friends that could be directly approached with any issues and confided in. I always found that the freedom given to the teachers at Oak Grove allowed for more creativity on their part, resulting in more creativity from students as we navigated our own way through the curriculum with our teacher's gentle and often subtle guidance. Oak Grove taught me to never be afraid to be yourself, and to always ask pertinent questions.

*"Transitioning out of Oak Grove into a public middle school was certainly jarring in some respects, but my time there allowed me to easily navigate the rough waters that are the public school system once I arrived. At Oak Grove, cooperation was always a ruling principle, and the ability to get along with others through a myriad of different situations is something I can absolutely attribute to my time there."*

**How does the mission and philosophy (Respect, Independence, Engagement) of OGMS still guide you today?**

Oak Grove has always been a place where no one has to be afraid of expressing themselves. There is a mutual trust and respect between the teachers and students that I have not experienced at a school since, which stems directly from the personal connections that teachers are able to build with each and every one of their students. Oak Grove instilled in me a strong will, and a desire to serve the world in some way. I found myself looking for that way forward to serve before I even knew what it meant, and after moving on from Oak Grove I continued to connect my interests to that desire until I settled on restorative ocean farming as my answer.

**What defines the OGMS experience?**

At Oak Grove, we are all a part of one family; everybody knows everybody else, and it's a community all its own. It's the place where I grew up. It's the place where I made a miniature solar powered boat because, why not? It's where I learned how to sing. Oak Grove is the first place that I cared for an aquarium tank: first a reef tank, then a painted turtle. The experiences I had at Oak Grove are ones that I never would have had at a public school, both due to the scale of operation, and the flexibility of curriculum, and I think without my time there I would have been a drastically different person, I cannot recommend the Montessori Method enough.

P.S. - If you're ever having a rough day, ask Cindy for a hot chocolate ;)

# Anna Turner



## Profile

I am almost through my senior year at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where I am an American Studies major with minors in Geography and Urban Studies. For about a year, I've been working as a Project Coordinator at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, helping facilitate collaborations between incarcerated artists in Minnesota and artists around the Twin Cities for an upcoming exhibit called Seen@WAM. During my time at Macalester, I've also worked as a peer writing tutor, a radio DJ, and currently, as a teaching and research assistant for the Urban Geography program. My hope as of now is to continue working in a museum, particularly in education or programming, or an arts organization when I graduate. In my free time, I like biking around the Twin Cities, cooking, playing tennis, reading and listening to music.

## Real-World Vision

**"If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?"**

Almost everything if possible! But the things that feel especially urgent and important to me are police and prison abolition and climate change mitigation.

## OGMS Impact

**"What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?"**

To this day, I credit Oak Grove with instilling in me a deep love for learning, a strong sense of creativity and independence in the classroom, and an appreciation for community and collaboration. I cherish the qualities that Oak Grove encouraged in me and believe that without that fostering I wouldn't be the student or person I am today. I also always think of the creative writing curriculum at Oak Grove as being central to my love for writing that persists even now!

*"I spent the first twelve years of my life in Montessori environments, and five of those years at Oak Grove, so adjusting to an entirely different way of learning, in addition to the typical social and environmental adjustments, was disorienting when I first started at a new school. Soon though, I found that the curiosity, kindness, and sense of self that my Montessori experience fostered in me were real advantages in a new school. I certainly attribute my ability to connect with my peers and my teachers in middle and high school to the emphasis at Oak Grove placed on community respect and interpersonal relationship building."*

**How does the mission and philosophy of OGMS still guide you today?**

I think the OGMS mission and philosophy are big parts of how I think about myself within the world. Oak Grove taught me to extend grace and respect toward the planet and all people, to be confident and independent in my thinking, and to engage with issues and causes that matter to me. Guiding principles in my life as a student, the OGMS mission and philosophy are also beginning to take on greater significance for me as I think about possible career paths.

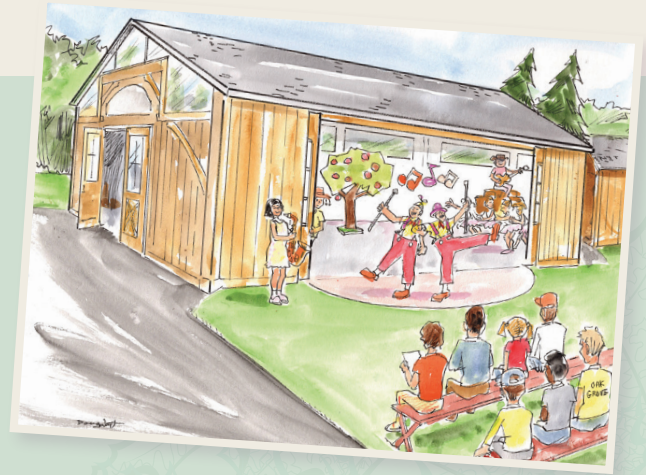
**What defines the OGMS experience?**

In my memory, the OGMS experience is about allowing students to be unapologetically themselves and about offering an education that trusts, respects and celebrates the individual as much as it does the co-created classroom communities. Elements of the OGMS curriculum that stick out in my mind as being particularly definitive are the storytelling workshops, senior projects, and field trips. All of these experiences challenged me as a student, stretched my imagination, and brought my peers and me closer together in the learning process.

# The Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund

**EACH YEAR** Oak Grove is able to offer additional financial aid because of the support and generosity of the Brody family and the S. Rubenstein Family Foundation. Please join us in supporting the **Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund**.

If you would like to donate to the Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship please contact Cindy Henry, Head's Assistant at [cindy@ogms.org](mailto:cindy@ogms.org)



## The Collaboratory

Outside of the Oak Grove main building is a wonderful space, with a plaque dedicated on Earth Day 2006, to all those who made it possible: the South Windham Post and Beam Co., O.L. Willard Co., Goods and Services Auction Committee 2005, Auction Donors, and the Oak Grove Building Committee. I'm referring to the post and beam Pavilion that has stood proudly for the past 14 years on campus as a gathering space whenever the weather was agreeable.

It's now time to take the Pavilion to the next level. We have decided to re-purpose the space as an all-season facility. The space will include a movable wall which doubles as the theatre proscenium, double doors on both ends and tool benches along the back wall. With these upgrades we can use the Pavilion as:

1. A dedicated classroom for art, dance, drama and music classes including performances.
2. A maker space for project-based learning including tools and workbenches.
3. A gathering space for all OGMS community members to enjoy all year round.

We formally introduced this expansion concept at our Gala 2020. To kickoff the project we needed a new name and came up with the idea of The Henry Collaboratory, in honor of the over two decades of dedication and hard work from Cindy and Joe Henry. At the Gala we raised enough funds to kick-off the project using Raise Your Bid! donations.

The week after the Gala we took delivery of the new Toolarium, an 8 x 10 foot solid wood shed for storage of tools, etc., from the Jamaica Cottage Shop, South Londonderry, VT. Last week we installed electric conduit for 30 amp service out to the Toolarium. The project is now well underway.

Now we need to continue the efforts to keep moving forward. Your kind donations will go a long way to keeping the dream alive at the Grove for another 40 years.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration and support. Go Owls! To the BEST day ever!!

~ JORGE

# A Letter from Cindy

April 2022

## Dear Oak Grove families and friends,

The past two years have been quite a challenge but we are looking forward to much more normal days ahead! We are all enjoying our *outside mask-free days* but have actually gotten quite accustomed to wearing them indoors. They have really cut down on the amount of coughs and colds around the Grove!

We are now enrolling for the 2022-2023 school year ahead. So, if you know of anyone that would like to take a tour, just give them our contact information. We still have some space available in all of the classrooms.

We have been working on updating our alumnae contact list. Since 1981 many graduate students have started families of their own. We would love to stay in contact with our past students and feature some of them in upcoming editions of *The Owl*. It's always interesting to see where everyone is these days and what they've been up to! We also hear that there might be an alumnae Oak Grove Facebook page or two in existence. So many Oak Grove students become life-long friends and we would love to hear what you have all been doing since Oak Grove, high school, college and beyond. Please send any updates to [admin@ogms.org](mailto:admin@ogms.org). Emails and/or mailing addresses would be exciting for us to receive. We would love to hear from you!

Tale good care and please keep in touch!

*Cindy*

CINDY HENRY, HEAD'S ASSISTANT  
(yup, I'm still here!)



## 2020-2021 Board of Trustees

Ricardo Trindade, *Chair*

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Bob Powell, *Treasurer*

Megan Burnett, *Secretary*

Amy Lambeck, *Executive At-Large*

Dr. Jorge Nelson,  
*Head of School, ex-officio*

Clare King'oo

Matt Coolbeth

Dan Polhemus

## Who We Are

- We are a group of people who care deeply about Oak Grove. Most are parents of current or ex-students, or simply community members who want to help.

## What We Do

- We actively support and promote the school's mission, vision, strategic goals, and policy positions.
- The Board sets policy and focuses on long-range and strategic issues. Trustees are not involved directly in specific management, personnel, or curricular issues.
- Trustees have the responsibility to support the school and its head and to demonstrate that support within the community.
- Trustees contribute to the development program of the school, including strategic planning for development, financial support, and actively being involved in annual and capital giving.



# Thank You All for Enriching Our School with Your Generosity

THE OAK GROVE ANNUAL FUND helps us to evolve, meet our operating budget each year, and ensures that our educational programs and thoughtful investments in faculty and facilities are maintained and strengthened for years to come. Your generosity helps us honor our commitment to uniquely nurture our children's love of learning as well as their sense of personal and social responsibility. **THANK YOU!**



## 2020-2021 Annual Fund Donors

### Visionary (\$15,000 & above)

David Miller & Rich & Carrie Brody

### Champion (\$5,000 - \$10,000)

Matthew Coolbeth & Sixia Chen  
The Benevity Fund

### Guardian (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

CENAXO  
Todd & Emily Schutte

### Sustainer (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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Mike Gnazzo & Beth Acly  
Scott & Myriah Melville  
Laura Michalek  
Network for Good  
Pat Noeker  
Ricardo Trindade & Roxana Mocanu

### Ambassador (\$500 - \$999)

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Leslie Poulos & Bill Stover  
Yilian Qin & Tianfeng Lu  
Roberta Sanborn  
David Slisbee & Charlotte Pyle  
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Elizabeth Tylawsky

### Supporter (\$250 - \$499)

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Wayne & Emely Silver  
Haiyan Tan & Honglian Wu  
Malcolm & Alene Toedt  
Kathy Tuttle  
Robyn VanLandingham  
Valera & Jon Volin



*This report gratefully acknowledges gifts received between July 2020 and June 2021. Donations to the 'Raise Your Bid', 'Planned Giving' and 'Giving Tuesday' are included in the Annual Fund. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our deepest apologies and notify Cindy Henry at [cindy@ogms.org](mailto:cindy@ogms.org). Thank you once again for your generosity!*

**This year's Annual Fund helped to directly support our Financial Aid Fund & Supplemental Operating Costs.**

# 2021 Gala & Auction

Just as the previous year, our Annual Auction was exclusively online. We had such an incredible Auction team this year, and we were able to create an amazing experience for all those who participated in **For the Love of Oak Grove!** Over \$25,000 was raised through the silent auction, raffles, and sponsorships.

A enormous thank you to our entire auction committee for coming through for Oak Grove during such an unprecedented time to raise much-needed funds for the school. Thank you to our families for making this event so successful, and we extend our sincere gratitude to everyone that made our online Auction a huge success.



## 2021 For the Love of Oak Grove! Auction Committee

Amy Lambeck  
Ashley Covey  
Cindy Henry

Heidi Groeger  
Jen Scapetis-Tycer  
Jennifer Nelson

Lindsey Baah  
Natasha Sheer  
Sherrie Clune

## Thank You to Our Sponsors

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## Thank You to Our Donors

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Dr. Myriah Hinchey at Tao Vitality  
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Isankofa Natural Skin Care  
Jason & Aidan Henry  
Jeanne Adler & the Wednesday Night Quilters  
Jennifer Scapetis-Tycer  
Jess Wainer, Glass Artist  
Jo Ann Aitken  
Joe & Cindy Henry  
Josh Milotte & Megan Burnett  
Karina Adler & Jarrod Thompson  
Karina Adler & Jarrod Thompson  
Laura Sczurek  
Laurelynn & Byron Martin  
of Logees Greenhouses  
Lisa Jordan  
Liz and Bob Powell  
Lutz Children's Museum  
Mansfield Drive-In Theater  
Mohawk Mountain

Mohegan Sun, Andy & Helen Martin  
Mount Southington  
Mycelial Matt's Wild Foods  
Mystic Seaport Museum  
Natasha Sheer  
Nelson's Family Campground  
Nicki Lawrence  
Pasta Vita  
Patricia Calvo  
Pizza on Main  
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Tamora Toscano  
The Adventure Park, Storrs  
The Barbash Family

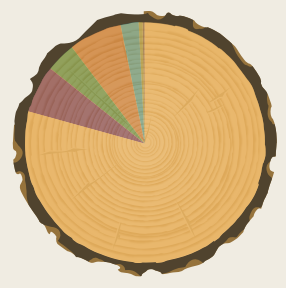
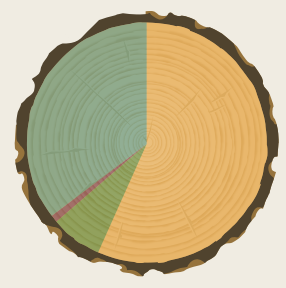
The Bench Shop  
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The D'Alessandro Family  
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The Gnazzo Family  
The Grossi Family  
Thomas Hooker Brewery  
Tied & True by Amanda Hawkins  
Tony Freitas  
Tree House Brewing Company  
Villari's Martial Arts  
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art  
West Haven Academy of Karate Willimantic Branch  
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Willimantic Waste Paper Company  
Windham School  
Readiness Council



# OGMS Statement of Activities and Expenses

for the fiscal year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

Income Expenses



Tuition	56.7%
Fundraising	7.0%
Summer & Enrichment	0.0%
Before & Aftercare	1.0%
Grants	35.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$969,356</b>

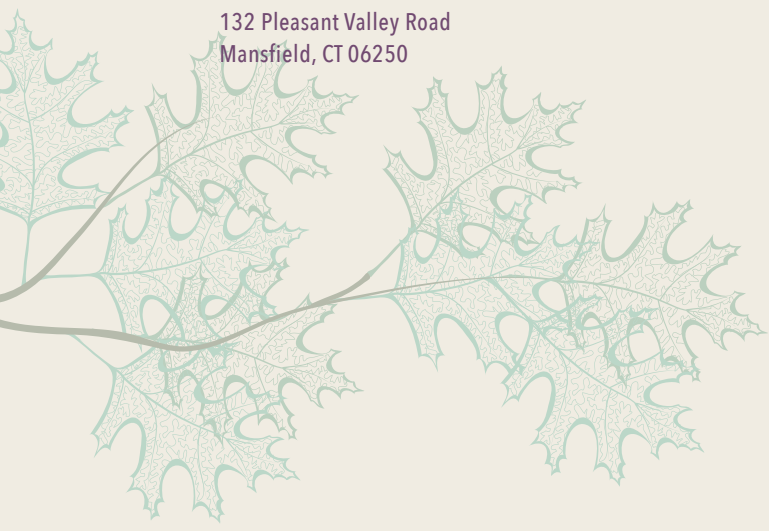
Wages & Benefits	79.3%
Financial Aid & Sibling Discounts	6.4%
Mortgage & Utilities	4.0%
Professional Development & Insurance	7.1%
Maintenance, Building & Grounds	2.4%
Classroom Supplies & Field Trips	0.5%
General Supplies, Postage & Printing	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$971,619</b>





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## Congratulations to the Graduating Class of 2021!

# Save the Date!

4PM • JUNE 18 • 2022

**YOU'RE INVITED** to an OGMS Young Alums Celebration! We will host an outdoor gathering for all past students, parents, and teachers of Oak Grove Montessori School who would like to come back to school and connect with others who have shared the joy and magic of OGMS.

We'll have the barbeque fired up, a DJ will set the mood with fun music, and we'll take a moment to honor the 2020 seniors whose graduation was curtailed by Covid. We'll also celebrate Sheila Kaytis, who will be retiring this year, and we'll thank David Silsbee for his many years of (continuing) service. We hope you'll join in the fun!

More details will follow via email, snail mail, and Facebook! **Please spread the word amongst your OGMS networks, and email [Cindy@ogms.org](mailto:Cindy@ogms.org) if you'd like to RSVP** to the festivities or be sure to be on the Young Alums mailing list.



*Madison Covey*