



association of children's services

about  
us

children's  
programs

teacher  
education

community  
programs

news  
and events

fundraising  
info

contact  
us

## news and events

newsletter

calendar

bulletin board

in this issue:



July 2003

[From the  
Co-Directors](#)

### From the Co-Directors:

[Summer Staff](#)

In June we said good-bye to the first of our families going off to elementary school after many years of membership in this special community. One of the pleasures of our work is watching tentative young parents with tiny babies turn into confident families ready to be part of a bigger world. It is time to say good-bye to the Class of 2003 with special memories of the part their families have played in the life of AOCS.

[Staff  
Appreciation  
Dinner](#)

[Fee Increase  
and Sliding  
Scale for  
2003-04](#)

The following children are the last ones in their families to graduate from AOCS (their lucky new schools in parentheses following their names):

[Quality  
Education](#)

- Alexi H. (White Pony School) and her parents Cindy and Joanne who have worked with the Parent Education and Parent Services Committees to create and facilitate events.
- Andy M. (St. Paul's School) and his parents, Anita, who has edited, advised and mentored many grant applications for AOCS and Paul, who has been an eager workday volunteer both for muscle work and networking.
- Ceci G. (Redwood Heights School) and her parents Carmen and Robert who chaired the Raffle for several years as part of the Fundraising Committee.
- Miriam G. (Crocker Highlands School) and her parents Doug and Donna who have helped with fundraising and workdays.
- Shoshana W. (Aurora School) and her parents Jane, who has been part of the Parent Education Committee and scrip sales, and Charlie who has lent his photography skills to many events.
- Simone B. (Montclair School) and her parents Winter and Matt who coordinated the big class finale, the class gift and sand workday.
- Sydney S. (White Pony School) and her parents, Bonnie and Karen, who have managed the Parent Participation program for several years.
- Thomas Mose H. (Head Royce School) and his parents Debra and Chris who have been the "AOCS Handypeople" for many years, fixing gates, toilets and everything else; Debra has also brought many wonderful science projects to the Nursery School children.

[Life is Change  
at AOCS](#)

[Snapshot in  
the Wobbly  
Walkers](#)

[Class of 2003  
Workday](#)

[AOCS Potluck](#)

[AOCS  
Anniversaries](#)

[Comings and  
Goings](#)

[Birthday  
Books](#)

[Newsletter  
Archives](#)





- William M. (Black Pine Circle) and his parents Leslie and Rory who have been part of the workday crews on many occasions. We are happy that although these next children are graduating, their families will remain a daily part of AOCS:
- Adam B. (The Academy) and his parents Meredith and Guy; sister Joy is in the Playroom.
- Caleb R. (Joaquin Miller School) and his parents Seth and Molly; sister Ellie is in the Wobbly Walkers.
- Elizabeth L. (Archway School) and her parents Jan and Paul; brother Robert is in the Toddlers.
- Zachary K. (Chabot School) and his parents Lisa and Ken; sister Ariella is in the Playroom.

We send these fine children on their way with confidence in their abilities to take from and contribute to the world.

- *Liisah & Claire*

[Back to Top](#)

## Summer Staff

Summer brings vacations not just to families and children but also to our hard-working staff. This summer Mimi Segalini and Todd Krake are off for extended periods. Many other teachers, however, will be out for 1 – 3 weeks during the summer. Ameena and Janice spend hours each week scheduling substitutes so that all groups are covered, and try to arrange the substitutes so that the children know them and the subs know the group routines.

We are fortunate to have several students helping out this summer – Sarah Wetter, an AOCS grad now at Holy Names High School, is volunteering for 6 weeks with the Infant group. Sarah Haywood, who usually works in the late afternoon, is subbing full-time for the summer. Sarah's fellow student at Cal State Hayward, CeCe George, is working in the late afternoons. UCSB student Alice Hale is subbing for the morning start-up through July, then will extend hours as needed in August.

Other staff schedules may shift here and there to accommodate the program. Our goal is always to keep a core staff in each group to anchor the children.

[Back to Top](#)

## Staff Appreciation Dinner

The 3rd Staff Appreciation Dinner was a great success! Lots of food, lots of flowers and lots of giggles from the Banter. Thank you to the Staff for coming and giving us the opportunity to thank you officially for all the wonderful care you provide us and our kids. Thanks also to the Parent Services Committee for all their energy and creativity in putting this event together: Janet K., Linda S. and Molly R. for the Banter, the flowers and MC'ing; Audrey Y. for organizing the food; Jane S. for invitations and decorations; Corinne C. for organizing all set-up and clean-up and the PA system; Sufen C. for decorating the flowerpots; Brett S. for greeting and setting up and all the other volunteers who created a memorable event!

[Back to Top](#)

## Fee Increase and Sliding Scale for 2003-04

At its inception, the founding Board of Directors of AOCS made a philosophical decision to subsidize all fees for Infant and Toddler care. For many years this was done both with fundraising income and by charging more for the Nursery School than it cost to provide care to those children; the parents, in effect, paid on a "deferred payment plan" where their fees were subsidized in the Infant program, and they in turn subsidized others when they reached the Nursery School. This meant the Nursery School fees were quite high compared to others in the area, and we found a growing number of parents taking advantage of the subsidy in the early years and then moving their children to a cheaper nursery school when they got out of diapers. We couldn't fill the spaces they left in the Nursery School because the fees were so high, and so we moved to the two-tier pricing system we have now. Even so, we have continued to subsidize the Hedco program with all of our fundraising income.

Last year the Board of Directors began a serious re-evaluation of its budget philosophy. As 10% of the budget (the traditional expectation for fundraising) has crept up from \$30,000 to \$50,000, to \$100,000, to \$140,000, our fundraising is not keeping pace. In addition, when all of our fundraising income subsidizes fees across the board, it is not available for us to broaden the economic diversity of the school by targeting assistance to those who cannot afford to pay even the subsidized fees – a key part of the AOCS mission. Other factors that must be recognized are:

- AOCS will only fulfill its mission if it stays solvent.
- The quality of the programs must be sustained; labor costs are the vast majority of the budget, and they are essential to the quality of the programs.
- Increasing tuition allows fundraising income to be targeted to assist families who need tuition assistance, rather than subsidizing all families regardless of need.

In preparation for this budget discussion, AOCS contacted a number of child care centers in the area which offer programs somewhat comparable (they compare the most in terms of the respectful quality of care, rather than in the breadth of services they provide) to ours. AOCS charges more than the other 2 offering infant care, but is open longer hours (thus we employ more staff), has better ratios (thus we employ more staff), provides diapers and food (thus we employ more staff), and only closes for 1 week (thus...we employ more staff!). AOCS, also unlike the others, has trees and flowers outside and clean, well-kept spaces inside (thus we employ more staff).

The Board voted in June to increase tuition to take another large step towards covering the existing "gap" between current tuition rates and the actual cost of providing care to children under 3 in 2003-04, with the goal of charging the full cost in 2004-05. Tuition in the Nursery School will rise slightly to fully cover the costs of enrollment for children over 3. These tuition increases will take effect October 1.

Hard as it may be to believe, the Board expects this step to improve the economic diversity of the school. We know that AOCs parents choose this program, in part, because they want their children to share their lives with a diverse group of children. While we have been able to attract a multi-cultural population, and embrace many family configurations, our high fees and lack of scholarship funding have made it difficult to include families with limited financial resources. As fees move towards covering the full cost of care, we are simultaneously moving towards implementation of a "sliding scale" tuition system. The sliding scale offers a model that meets each family with the level of support it needs to be able to enroll, based on each family's individual financial situation. Therefore the new fees should be thought of as "maximum" rates on the sliding scale; we encourage anyone who feels that they will need a lower rate to complete an Application for Reduced Tuition.

Rik Hansen, Board Treasurer, will organize a meeting and make himself available to discuss the Board's decisions with parents in July.

2003-2004 Fees: Hedco \$300 monthly rate plus \$7.50/hour  
NS \$230 monthly rate plus \$4.70/hour

[Back to Top](#)

## Quality Education

In [\*Places for Childhoods: Making Quality Happen in the Real World\*](#), author [Jim Greenman](#) asks "What is the difference between a high quality early education setting and a mediocre one?" He then answers... "Not the length of the day, the sponsor, or the name. Most often it is the funding. Quality education and care is not likely with the deadly combination of \$6 an hour teachers, high turnover, minimum staff-child ratios, minimum space and equipment, and minimum training of staff. This is true whether under the auspices of a school system, a corporation, a social service agency, or a private provider -- non profit or for profit. Provide the funding for trained and committed professionals, support staff and services, and decent equipment, materials and facilities, and quality early education can and does happen in a range of settings. "Child care providers are essentially asked to build the moral equivalent of shanty towns. Visit the thrown together housing by the desperately poor on the outskirts of many third world cities (and in some US cities) and you're struck by the wonderful ingenuity and sheer effort that is possible when men or women strive to meet their basic needs. You are left with great admiration for the builders. But they have created a place to live. But not a very good place. Shanties, after all, leak or blow away, and their inhabitants alternately broil or freeze.

"And that is what we are often asked to do in child care, construct shanties -- out of the inexpensive staff we can find and keep, the found and low-cost purchased spaces and materials that we can afford, and all the energy, love, and commitment we can muster. Even the better programs with newer facades, with private or public support, and glossy brochures are never far from the minimums.

"It isn't all funding, however. What is quite astounding is not

the number of poor quality programs but that there are so many that are not mediocre. It is a tribute to how terrifically resourceful and committed child care providers are in crafting programs."

[Back to Top](#)

## Life is Change at AOCs

Year by year, month by month, day by day we are part of change at AOCs. The phrase people can't resist when discussing children – "They grow and change so fast!" – is over-used for the good reason that they really do!

In the Infants, Wobbly Walkers and Todds, there is usually at least one child entering and one child leaving the group each month in response to individual development. Sometimes several children are ready to move at once, other times they move one by one, but their development as individuals forms the basis for the decision.

In the Nursery School, children are developing socially, so it is more supportive for them to be able to move as a class group. Our "Class Year" consists of a group of children born between September 1 of one year and August 31 of the next (this is consistent with the way most private schools admit children to kindergarten). The Playroom is the group where the shift happens; children enter one by one but then accumulate, through the year, into a class group which moves together into the Homeroom over the summer (one of the functions of the Summer Program is this transition). During the Summer Program we create a 7th class group at AOCs, the "Summer Playroom". These are children who are outgrowing the Todds offerings but too young to dive into the big Summer Program. They have a protected opportunity to play in the Playroom spaces with only their own small group for the summer, then will become the core of next year's Playroom class in September.

Transitions at AOCs can be confusing for parents just because they are so individualized – there is a lot of "playing by ear" involved rather than hard-and-fast rules. Any time you have questions about your child's transitions, talk to your child's Program Director (Ameena or Janice).

*-Lisa*

[Back to Top](#)

## Snapshot in the Wobbly Walkers

Passing through the Wobbly Walkers, I paused to accept four grains of sand handed very nicely to me, plump little thumb and forefinger pressed tightly together, by a little one cruising by the gate. Getting down low to accept the offering I watch the child on her way to pick a few leaves off the jasmine vine that grows along the fence. The gardener works on the tree down there to help it provide a nice shade cover, but the children keep that jasmine very well trimmed! Stepping to the side of the walk I watch three or four little ones carefully pulling off one little leaf at a time and searching out holes in the fence to poke the leaf through. It's a perfect one year old activity: pushing something through a hole, the perfect drop-box. With all the symbolism of "things disappearing" (like a parent at drop-off time) it's a nice variation on the theme of peek-a-boo.

The opportunity to explore the natural world happens in the pace of the child's day. It is the careful and conscious protection of that pace that is felt when we walk into the babies' world. Honoring this pace is one of the many abstract and almost spiritual (for lack of a better word) qualities that wonderful teachers like Paulina and Ameena know to create for the children. It is never written about in a book on how to work with infants and toddlers, yet it is a vital piece of the whole experience for the children, and a piece of what Liisa and I work to identify and articulate as we write and speak about the mystery of defining quality care. As one Wobbly wanders off to try on a hat or stroll around the climber another scoots down the slide; two sit side by side patting sand in the little sandbox; a ball goes up in the air with a squeal of delight followed by the pat-pat-pat of little feet in pursuit; now and then someone glides by on scooter. It is an idyllic way to start life.

- Claire

[Back to Top](#)

### **Class of 2003 Workday**

This year's graduating class decided that they not only wanted to leave AOCS with a financial gift for scholarships, they also wanted to leave a gift of muscle. This desire coincided with the need for new sand in the yards at AOCS. Thus the class gift purchased a 25-ton truckload of Monterey beach sand, and the parents and children came out on Saturday, June 21, to haul it back to the yards and spread it all over. Many thanks to Jennifer W., Simone's mom, for coordinating the event, and to all these who came to help: Jennifer and Matt, (Simone's parents – and her grandpa came too!), Meredith B. & Guy B. (Adam & Joy's parents), Joanne G. (Alexi's mom), Heidi & Jay J. (Hunter's parents), Leslie M. (William's mom), Anita A. & Paul M. (Andy's parents), Seth & Molly R. (Caleb & Ellie's parents), Karen S. & Bonnie W. (Sydney's parents), and Jane W. & Charlie R. (Shoshana's parents). Thanks, too, to these parents from younger groups who lent their muscle to augment the graduating class: Jeff J. (Paige & Grant's dad), Brant N. (Tess's dad) and his crew, Bart W. (Michaela's dad), and Derek Y. (Alex's dad).

[Back to Top](#)

### **AOCS Potluck**

It's getting to be that time again, when we all gather at AOCS after work and school to cavort with other families and staff at the AOCS potluck. Since we had to cancel our first potluck back in April due to weather, we wanted to make sure you mark your calendars for the next two: Friday, July 18 and August 15 at 6:00. No need to sign up, just bring a dish: main, salad, drinks, dessert or kids' food to feed about 10 people. It's a great chance to have a real conversation with fellow AOCS parents, rather than just a "Hi, how are you?" as you are rushing in and out of school. And the kids all want to be able to stay and play with their friends while their families are close by. The best of both worlds.

[Back to Top](#)

## **AOCS Anniversaries**

We celebrate the following anniversaries for our staff:

Helen Thwin 1987—16 Years!

Janice Haywood 1997—6 Years!

[Back to Top](#)

## **Comings and Goings**

### **Welcome!**

Teddy M., mom Becky S., joins the Infants.

Farewell...

Tama Forth, teacher, leaves the Todds.

Anna O., parents Liz and Tom O., joins the Infants

[Back to Top](#)

## **Birthday Books**

Grandfather Counts from Genevieve R. for her 4th Birthday

Books you can purchase for AOCS in honor of your child's birthday are displayed in the front office.

Condolences to Loretta K. on the death of her father.