



Wellsprings Friends School

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A Morning at Wellsprings Through Parents' Eyes by Pearl Wolfe and Bill Goldsmith

Our daughter, Rachel Wolfe-Goldsmith, has just begun her junior year at Wellsprings Friends School. We spent a morning at the school on a beautiful fall day in October and returned mid-day, somewhat reluctantly, to our jobs. Reluctantly, because we had to leave a world that was supportive and nurturing for our daughter and that warmly welcomed us as parents to experience her education first hand. We felt affirmed by our family's decision three years ago to offer Rachel an alternative education. Our goal was not simply for her to complete high school, but for her to regain her love for learning and feel good about herself in this complicated world.

We attended a handful of classes including Morning Circle, Math, Reading Circle, Guitar, Government, and Transitions, and stayed through lunch. We'd like to share some of our impressions.

Morning Circle set the tone for the day and for our experience. All students sit in a circle for fifteen minutes or so as the learning day begins with a period of community and sharing. Announcements are made, not one-way announcements from a loudspeaker, but a sharing of events important to each individual.

The school reflects the souls of its learners and teachers. Each classroom and hallway, with its multi-colored walls, creative murals and posters, mirrors the personal culture and free thought that has been nurtured within those walls. We felt the freedom in the classrooms. The classes were small in size and furnished for comfort. We witnessed teachers and volunteers who paid personal attention to each student. The teachers didn't simply know names; they actually knew our daughters and sons.

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I think it was the engagement that most struck us. We sat in on the classes of James, Paul, Bob and Yancey, who all shared a common thread within their teaching styles. They were all exploring creative ways to bring together a classroom of young people who are all clearly on their own paths. These teachers found an intersection, a question or piece of knowledge that joined the students together. It didn't matter that they had been learning at different levels or paces than everyone else. Bob and other teachers bragged freely to us about the various students' skills, like proud parents.

Wellsprings teachers are barrier lifters. They see the blocks in the way of students who are math phobic or who don't like to read, and then move those blocks out of the way. They figure out how to help a student learn where traditional methods have failed. They look for the strengths in each child, not the weaknesses.

Frankly, we left James' Worlds of Music class wanting to learn more about Australian music. He managed to teach music and history and geography simultaneously and kept his students fully engaged in the process.

Paul's method of teaching guitar makes every one of those students feel like they had the ability to get it and then get better and better at it. His government class offered students time to talk about their own experiences with the legal system and gave them room to ask questions and to express themselves. The classes allow the time and space to listen to students think aloud and speak their minds.

If we were to summarize our observations of the student experience from parental eyes, we'd say:

- Wellsprings is a safe, warm and inviting place to learn.
- Our daughters and sons are respected, not punished, for their uniqueness.
- Individual strengths are acknowledged and affirmed.
- Students are engaged with their teachers, not lectured to, and are an active part of their own learning processes.
- They can learn as much as they want to or need to as slowly or as quickly as they are able.
- Their high school education will be a positive experience for them.

It was a gift for us to spend the morning at Wellsprings Friends School. We found once again that our daughter is learning and growing as a result of this "one of a kind" school experience.





First Year Experience

by Tania Seese ('08)

This has been my first year at Wellsprings. I transferred from South Eugene High School, where I had been having problems both with getting good grades and just being comfortable in the environment presented to me there. My mother had known about Wellsprings and so she presented the idea to me to go there. I came to visit one day, and right away I knew that I would be a lot more prepared to succeed at Wellsprings.



Right from my first day, I loved the environment. Going from South Eugene, where there are over 1,700 students, to this school, was amazing. At South, it was easy for a student to just get lost in the crowd, and the teachers have so many students that they can't individualize the class for anyone. At Wellsprings, everyone knows each other, and everyone wants to help each other. The teachers are much more able to have one on one time with the students, and you can tell that that really helps.

Right away, I felt as though I fit in. It's always been hard for me to make friends; I've always been shy around new people. But right from the start, people were talking to me and being friendly to me, and very quickly I made friends.

This school has been an amazing experience already. I am getting an education that I truly value and have fun while doing it, instead of being stressed out every day.

Staff Profile: James Napoli

by Joe Hartman ('10)

James Napoli, the newest teacher at Wellsprings, is from South Jersey. He graduated from Ithaca College with a Bachelor's degree in the Arts. James decided to be a teacher so he can get other people excited to learn and to pick up a little more knowledge for himself. While attending college, James mainly studied music, politics, and anthropology. At Wellsprings, James teaches Language Arts (Foreign Film and Wordz), Global Studies (Worlds of Music), Personal Finance (Transitions), and Science (Science of Food, Physics, and Gardening).



After a hard day's work of dealing with kids and his usual bike ride home, James will throw on some music and pick up a book, or he could go on a bike ride to the Y.M.C.A. James said, "Wellsprings is a place where you can enjoy teaching young adults in a small community."

James moved from Ithaca with his fiancé Sayer (now his wife) and settled in the Whitaker area of Eugene. James saw the Wellsprings' website on the internet while living in Ithaca. Already planning to leave New York later in the year so Sayer could begin her graduate studies in Music at the U of O, they decided to pick up and move sooner than planned so James could be on time for his interview at Wellsprings.

"I like waking up excited about going to work," James commented. "I love being able to learn from and with kids as well as bring some new angles and information to students about all sorts of subjects.

We can be real with each other and I appreciate what we all bring to the classes and community each day."

Paul Schroder, another fulltime teacher said, "James has a brilliant mind, he's a Renaissance guy who loves to learn. He has added a fantastic personality and spark to the school."



ManiFest

by Andrew Eames ('08)

Two chainsaws roar, the screeching of the deceased echoes through your mind, as your soul is assaulted by the rhythmic pounding of war drums. That's how a death metal show could be described, but that's just the music; there's also a sense of community that is almost palpable. The concert has always meant a lot to me, and my friends. ManiFest allows us to listen to music we love or be around our friends, and help bring the youth of our culture together. ManiFest can and has enabled and empowered our generation, to come together and help those less fortunate than ourselves.



Death metal has a certain allure that not many can understand. Its grotesque, abominable lyrics and savage vocals combined with the pure carnage and chaos of the guitar and bass layered upon an epileptic sprawl of pure adrenaline inducing drum work makes it so there aren't as many death metal events as one who listens would hope. That's why ManiFest is so great, it promises at least once a year a real show, a brutal

moshpit, and independent musicians. Not some sold out excrement that allows corporations and record labels to line their toilets with gold and diamonds, but it returns the profit to the community and helps underprivileged youth succeed where without it they might not have. I think that's part of the appeal to it, it lets us express ourselves, while funding our school and investing in our community.



"ManiFest IV - Hell Is Not Punishment: It's Training", Student-made banner

society's numbness and hypocrisy, without succumbing to the temptations of violence. ManiFest in essence is a monolithic expression of death, sorrow, and rebirth. And it shines through the fire to bring us closer to ourselves and what we care for.

ManiFest is very important to me, and has been since its inception. I found myself drawn to it because it dealt with love, pain, and deathmetal. But it is more than that. My first ManiFest brought me together with people who are now some of my closest friends. It allowed me to express my pain with others, and to feel accepted within our small school. Years later, I watch it bring us all together again, initiating new and old Well-springs people into one community.

Exposure, to music, life, and ideas, is another part of it, exposing people to music they might not have listened to or enjoyed before, exposing lifestyles and the people who lead them, and exposing the ideas of a generation that has been overlooked and neglected as most of the young generations are. It lets us vent hate and aggression at our



Transitions: Helping Students Move On

by Anna Scheri ('08)

This year's Transitions class, taught by James Napoli, is a chance for seniors to explore their options for life after Wellsprings.



One of the first projects we started was the dreaded job applications. We took a trip to the mall, learned how to ask for an employment application, collected a few each, and spent the next few days filling them out. James taught us the importance of neatness and

filling out all of the application thoroughly.

A big part of the class so far was learning to write our resumes. For many of us, it was our first time ever writing one. James helped us organize information about our education, work and volunteer experiences, references, and activities. Each of us also learned to write a personal profile on our resume that highlighted our best qualities for the working environment. It was neat to see who we are captured on paper.

James asked Don (the Outreach and Development Director) to help conduct mock interviews for everyone in class. Each of us had the chance to be interviewed and watch everyone else go through the same thing. We learned how to answer many commonly asked interview questions effectively and even what questions we legally did not have to respond to.

The class involved completing a few online personality and career tests as well. This helped us explore

career options that fit our personal interests. One class we spent visiting the Employment Department where we learned about resources available to people looking for jobs. We also had the opportunity to review jobs that are open online and in the newspaper. We also learned to write a cover letter to be included with resumes.

During one class, Julie Beck, an experienced high school guidance counselor and transitions coach, came to speak with our class. She has helped more than 1,000 students gain admission to colleges that met their goals and aspirations.

We also took a trip to the University of Oregon and listened to a presentation by the admissions personnel, followed by a campus tour. This was followed by research on colleges that might be of interest to us.

James has put together a very practical and helpful class for all of us who are facing the end of our high school years.



Is a music career in their future?



Is Wellsprings In Your Will?

When you include Wellsprings Friends School in your **Will or other Estate Plans**, your partnership with caring, life-changing, alternative education continues for generations. Here is non-legal information that may be helpful.

A **Will** is a legal document that sets forth the distribution of your property after your death. With a **Will**, you:

- Determine where your property goes at your death
- Are likely to save taxes and other expenses for your family
- Can name a guardian for your under-the-age-of-18 children
- Name a person or institution to manage your assets after your death
- Can create trusts, and
- Can give a gift (perhaps your largest gift ever) to Wellsprings Friends School.

When preparing to write a **Will**, you have some important personal work to accomplish. You start by collecting or creating the necessary information. (Note: Preparing all of this before you see your lawyer may save on some legal expenses.)

1. If you have a child under the age of 18, who do you want to take of her or him if neither parent is alive? Do you have someone's commitment to serve as your child's guardian? Do you have an alternate's commitment?
2. Create a list of everything you own. Do you own each item outright? Do you own anything "jointly or in community"? Include any investments, retirement accounts, bank accounts, residences, etc. (Note: Some of these will "pass outside of the will;" that is, they will not be included in your will. It is important to make clear "which is which" with the help of your lawyer or financial consultant.)
3. Do you have any debts, mortgages, loans, etc.? If so, list where, with whom, and how much. Include directions for paying each off.
4. Make your decisions as to "who you want to give what to" and determine the form of distribution. For example, one way (of three) to make a bequest to Wellsprings is to say in your **Will**, "I give, devise, and bequeath to Wellsprings Friends School, Eugene, Oregon, the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate. The property comprising this gift is to be placed into the endowment of Wellsprings Friends School and used to further the purposes of the School at the discretion of the Trustees of the School." Two other ways to make a bequest to Wellsprings are to specify a percentage of your estate or to name a specific amount that you want to go to Wellsprings.

Please let us know if you decide to include Wellsprings Friends School in your will. If you have questions, please contact Don Ingraham at 686-1223 or discuss it with your financial advisor.