



# Wellsprings Friends School

“THE LITTLE SCHOOL WITH THE BIG HEART”

Autumn, 2012

Newsletter

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## Funding Change Hurts Wellsprings Community

After seven years of full enrollment, and even a waiting list, this fall we unexpectedly began the year with only 45 students. A change in policy by the Bethel school district concerning referrals to alternative schools, about which we were given no advance notice, resulted in twenty fewer students from that district attending Wellsprings than the year before. The consequent and unexpected reduction in anticipated referral tuition income has necessitated *severe* budget cuts on all aspects of our program.

### You Can Help

Our nonprofit school is a social service and community asset. From the beginning, Wellsprings has been supported by individuals who believe in young people and believe in the holistic education that Wellsprings provides for both academic achievement and personal growth. There are many struggling teenagers out there who really need the supportive, “outside the box” education that Wellsprings offers, but who without a referral are unable to attend. We need *community support* more than ever, to ease the drastic operational cuts and especially to provide scholarship assistance that can enable more students to enroll privately.

### Some Good News!

In response to this situation, a Eugene couple who are long-time supporters of Wellsprings have offered a \$50,000 challenge gift! Every dollar of support we receive (up to that amount) from now through June will be doubled! *Please help.* Contributions are tax-deductible, and a return envelope is included with this newsletter for your convenience.

We want to keep Wellsprings flourishing and we hope you also do. Our students rely on us, and love this school. We love them, as the late Hanna Still did. (See articles about Hanna inside.) We have fewer students than in recent years, but the fact is that the number of teens who need alternative schooling has not changed—only the opportunity. *You can help make a difference in the lives of those young people. Please invest in them today.* Thank you.

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## Welcome to Our Newest Trustees

Our Board of Trustees has been greatly strengthened over the past 15 months through the addition of three new members: Lisette Ewing, Cheryl Armstrong, and May-Britt Jeremiah.

Lisette and her husband Tom have been long-time supporters of Wellsprings. When her busy life allowed, Lisette joined the Board in September 2011. A recent profile in the newsletter of the Eugene Friends Meeting, which she attends, noted that “those who know her can’t miss her passion and pizzazz!” Lisette has been a Special Education teacher for almost two decades. She has worked in several states as well as having published articles and lectured internationally about art for blind and visually impaired students. The individualized curriculum for alternative learners at Wellsprings fits Lisette’s educational philosophy very well.

Cheryl brings more than twenty years of professional fundraising and executive leadership

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## The Hanna K. Still Memorial Fund

Hanna joined the Board of Trustees as a founding member, and lavished her time, attention, and resources on Wellsprings for 18 years. The day before she died, Hanna asked to have the minutes of the most recent Board meeting read to her. She listened, and reaching towards them she asked to keep them next to her, and her caregiver tucked them into Hanna's bed right beside her. The school meant *that* much to her.



She was unquestionably the spiritual heart of the school, always speaking up at Board meetings to remind us of the deeper mission of Wellsprings whenever the discussion focused too much on the merely mundane. As she herself once wrote, "Fulfillment for me is to experience the spiritual truth of any moment."

Hanna loved the students. Her love was unconditional, and they knew it. Until she became unable to do so, Hanna regularly visited Wellsprings and 'hung out' with the students, always making each kid she spoke to the sole focus of her attention. Though often a student might barely know who Hanna was, they would open up to her loving warmth and share their innermost thoughts with her.



*Hanna and her family*

To maintain Hanna's spirit of unconditional love into the future at Wellsprings, we have with initial support from over a dozen people established an endowment, the Hanna K. Still Memorial Fund. We hope that gifts in Hanna's memory will continue to be forthcoming, and that over the years the fund will grow to a size that will have a significant financial benefit.

No one has expressed the heart of Wellsprings in her life more so than Hanna. By contributing to the Hanna Memorial Fund, readers of this newsletter can help us keep Wellsprings available for the young people who need and want the joys of learning and growing in "The Little School with the Big Heart."

### **Our Mission**

Wellsprings provides alternative learning approaches, supportive community, and a culture of individual affirmation, in which teenagers are mentored and assisted towards meeting the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

Wellsprings Friends School is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

# Hanna Still: An Inspiring Life

by Eleanor Still Howe

Hanna Kenmore Still was born in 1925 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. She lived most of her early childhood in Vienna, Austria. Due to the dangers they saw in the rising Nazi regime her family sent Hanna and her brother Peter to attend a Quaker boarding school in England for half a year. This was a life-changing experience for Hanna. The family immigrated in 1939 to New York. Although new to the English language, Hanna graduated high school as a member of the National Honor Society. She attended the only college to which she applied, Swarthmore College, where she majored in psychology. One year later she entered McCormick Seminary in Chicago, where she earned a Masters Degree in Church Social Work.

Over the decades after her marriage to Doug Still, she fearlessly collaborated in the work of Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers movement in California, the civil rights movement on the South side of Chicago, public education reform efforts in Washington, DC, and the promotion of alternative energy in the Pacific Northwest. Hanna and Doug were united in their optimism that faith, determined effort, and an understanding of power dynamics in regional and national politics could and would lead to needed social change in the United States. Hanna brought to bear on these ambitions her superior intellect, extraordinary insight into the human condition, empathy for others, a willingness to skip sleep, and an ability to be creative, playful and to "think outside of the box."

As an example, when living in greater Chicago, one day Hanna received a threat against my Dad's life from a member of a white supremacist organization. Hanna engaged the caller in a lengthy dialogue about his views. Slowly and deliberately, she connected with the caller. At the end of the call, Hanna finished by saying, "Well, I'll pray for you," and the gentleman responded, "I'll pray for you." The next day, the phone rang again, this time from someone higher up in the racist organization, and referring to the phone call from the previous day, he wanted to know of Hanna, "What did you *say* to that guy?" "Ask him," she replied.

All who knew Hanna were touched by her natural interest in relating to children and in facilitating their development into fulfilled members of this world. Countless young people and their parents have been affected by Hanna's commitment to them. Hanna had seen the evils of racism and the abuse of power. She personally knew the hardship of physical pain through her congenital malformed hip and her scoliosis. She also knew the capacity of the human spirit to turn away from evil and suffering. She was an agent of change who nurtured individuals, communities and organizations and who helped them find the courage within toward the deep, the profound and the possible. She quoted wise words of the sages and routinely gave books to all she knew -- reflecting her commitment to inquiry of the mind and of the soul.

Hanna was widely known in many circles in Eugene and Cottage Grove for her work in peacemaking, conflict resolution, storytelling, building intentional community, and for her involvement in the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Brethren Church, and the interfaith community. She was a proud founding board member and keen supporter of Wellsprings Friends School. As a board member and contributing editor, she wrote the "Dear Hanna" advice column in the Eugene-based multicultural children's magazine, *Skipping Stones*, for more than 20 years. She mentored students and nurtured a women's group. Hanna was a longtime board member and supporter of Aprovecho Institute in Cottage Grove and went on to become a founding member of the Tiara Intentional Neighborhood in south Eugene.

Hanna died peacefully in her home on July 11, 2012, shortly after turning 87 years old. A few days prior to her death she opened her eyes and told her eldest child, "I've just been in heaven." At the time of her death, surrounded by loving caregivers and a hospice nurse, she put forth a tear and a smile and left us.



## Wellsprings Alum Featured at First Annual Toast-n-Roast Event

*“The teachers and staff at Wellsprings looked at us as people who could succeed, regardless of others who said we couldn’t.”*

--Anne Sondag

Over one hundred people participated in our first annual Toast-n-Roast held on Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at the Lane Community College, Center for Meeting and Learning. Some attendees had a long history of connection to the school, while for some it was their first time learning about Wellsprings Friends School. Many in attendance enthusiastically embraced the mission of Wellsprings by making generous gifts that night to support the school and its role in helping our community’s young people.

A special highlight of the evening was a presentation about her personal experience at Wellsprings by special guest, Anne Sondag, class of 2010. Anne said that when asked to speak at the event, she knew she would do it even though she had never spoken in public before. She explained that the work being done at Wellsprings is too important for her to not get involved in this way. With courage and grace, Anne told her story. She became pregnant when a junior. Wellsprings teachers were very supportive. One wrote her a letter encouraging her to make her decision out of love, not fear. Instead of fearing missing involvement in her child’s life, Anne decided to love her and give her the best she could, and opted for an open adoption. Anne was able to continue in school and complete her senior year. Guests were moved by Anne’s description of how Wellsprings impacted her young life in very important and meaningful ways, from which she is still benefiting as an adult.

Several local celebrities were featured throughout the evening, with well-known radio personality Bill Barrett serving as master of ceremonies. The “roastees” were Pat Kilkenny, best known for his former role as the University of Oregon’s Athletic Director, and Matt Templeman, KMTR’s News Director. Both listened good naturedly while being “roasted” by their close friends and family, including Tim Fox of KKNU Radio, Joe Giansante, John Kilkenny, Sid Leiken, and Ken O’Neil.

Guests enjoyed music performed by Wellsprings staff musicians, and an amazingly delicious meal prepared by Chef Ib Hamide of Eugene’s Café Soriah. Adding to the many individual donors who made gifts to Wellsprings at the Toast-n-Roast, were the event sponsors: Lucky Duck Foundation, KMTR, Cafe Soriah, Bourland Printing, and Siuslaw Bank.

We would like to thank everyone who participated, attended, donated and/or sponsored this event, from which we were able to net nearly \$12,000! We couldn’t have done it without you, and we look forward to your continued support as we begin planning next year’s event.

Trustees *continued from page 1...*

experience with non-profit and higher education organizations to the Board, which she joined this past May. She is passionate about the mission of Wellsprings and is eager to make a difference in the Wellsprings community. She is a trained life and business coach, and has been an entrepreneur. A native of Eugene, she returned to live here in 2009 after many years living and working in Michigan. Cheryl currently serves as a regional director of development for Michigan State University.

May-Britt is the newest Trustee, having joined this fall. A multi-lingual native of Denmark, she has lived and worked in five different countries. A trained midwife and doula, May-Britt owned and operated a doula services company in San Francisco. Since 2005, she has been the Business Manager of the University of Oregon’s Theatre Arts Department and University Theatre. She has served as a board member and officer for eight nonprofits in two states. May-Britt’s personal philosophy centers on “a keen interest in educating the whole being as a life-long process.”

*Also currently serving on the Board are John Etter (1994~), James Fox (2004~), and Lisa Marcus (2010~). We are grateful to all six hard-working Trustees, who generously volunteer their time, energy, and resources to the school. Wellsprings could not be the wonderful resource for teenagers that we are without the caring efforts ‘behind the scenes’ by these extraordinary people.*