

CONNECTIONS



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The authors in this edition were charged with creating articles centered around a common theme, community. As you read through each one: certain common threads within the theme will emerge. You will also notice seven distinct voices sharing their thoughts and experiences.

It seems only natural when dedicating a newsletter to community that we invite everyone reading these articles to share your own thoughts and experiences on the theme. If you find yourself inspired, challenged or simply wanting to share in the community of ideas, please post your thoughts on the Upland Hills School FaceBook page. I look forward to reading them and learning more from each of you!

— Rob Himburg

facebook.com/pages/Upland-Hills-School

True Community — Rob Himberg, Associate Director

The other day as I was walking into school with my son, Taj, I had to stop and let the scene wash over me. A bright morning sun was cresting the trees, creating misty steam on the dome and around the willow tree. A few kids were on the swings, laughing, and I could hear music coming from inside the school. I just couldn't believe how happy I felt. It was magical. And I knew I had just moved a little closer to the center of a community that's been creating a daily dose of joy and magic for over four decades.

It takes time to build a strong community and a person cannot simply join, like a kind of club. Community requires connection — connection through shared experiences of all kinds. And even then, there is no guarantee. The people in a community have to be bonded by something deeper and more powerful than a collection of experiences. At Upland Hills, I think the connection has always been teaching and learning through love. And that is just what I was experiencing the other morning — a snapshot of a community built on love.

It's been a little over two months since school began. Those beautiful snapshot moments happen daily. More complex and difficult moments have arisen as well. There is perhaps nothing more difficult than realizing the school must terminate the enrollment of a student, but unfortunately, we came to this realization about four weeks into the year. This kind of situation can easily devolve into defensiveness, accusations and irrational decisions on the part of the school and the family. However, nothing of this sort occurred for anyone involved. In fact, by the end of the conversation in Phil's office, there were tears, we all hugged and everyone promised to stay connected. I've learned that at Upland Hills, people can have honest and challenging dialogue precisely because of the unconditional positive regard for everyone that has been nurtured over time. Everyone in the community has a voice and everyone is heard. As far as I've seen, it's a community that guides and inspires people to make decisions based on the principles of the school's mission. I think that is an unwavering

force here. This is where the real work of a thriving community happens.

There are many important decisions to make during this transition year. With the impending change of directors, the community can feel fragile and that can feel scary. But fear just doesn't seem to get very far at Upland Hills. Mostly, the community elders see to that by remaining calm and patient, wisely guiding the conversation back to love and abundance. Through careful actions and words, they are shining the light for us to go forward. Our job is to honor their work by manifesting the vision of a thriving learning community for another forty years. And together, we will.

Because the Board and staff have had the foresight to create mentoring years as a model for transition, the school is stable and focused on abundance going forward. For instance, there are more exciting new initiatives underway than at almost any time in the school's history. In roughly a year's time, the team of architects and builders who built the Ecological Awareness Center in 1980 will design



Rob Himberg and son Taj.



Sailing on the Sea of Cortez, Baja Mexico.



Zip line and high ropes course in Kauai, Hawaii.

and build a net energy zero house on three acres of land that was recently donated to the school. I am thrilled to be part of the design process and even more grateful for the opportunity to live in the home as director when it is complete. Beginning this year, I am working carefully with teachers to create a professional development plan to continue to meet the growing needs of a diverse community of learners. There is also a full-length documentary film in the works, which focuses on Phil's leadership over the past forty-two years and the love-based, connected and inspired learning community at Upland Hills School. And this winter, the entire faculty will embark on a once-in-a-lifetime learning adventure to deepen our relationships and grow as world teachers. Finally, beginning this summer, Shaun Piazza and I will be leading a learning adventure trip to Costa Rica for current students and alums. I plan to offer multiple learning adventure trips each year as rite-of-passage experiences for our current and past students. There is an exciting synergy between the past and future in each of these initiatives, but it is almost unheard of to do things this way. Traditional independent school thinking believes that those transitioning out should go quickly and quietly, without interfering. And perhaps in communities that are based in fear and the selfish

competition that arises from scarcity, it is necessary to cast aside community elders for the gain of whoever comes next. This idea certainly has no place in the community Upland Hills School has created over time. Through the purposeful collaboration of multiple generations, we can stay rooted in the values that have created such a special

“The people in a community have to be bonded by something deeper and more powerful than a collection of experiences.”

community while tapping the creative energy of newcomers and their ideas to take the school successfully forward. Upland Hills is practicing the concept of “seven generations of sustainability,” recognizing and honoring everyone's place in the community past, present and future.

For all of us, there are more new ways than ever to connect with people and communities near and far. Terms like “global community” and “online community” are commonplace. Because of that, it's tempting to dismiss many

emerging notions of community, but we have a responsibility to reach out and deepen our connections around the world. Jean Houston refers to Upland Hills as “a school for the world.” She reminds us that it is more important than ever to live the mission of our learning community. In doing so, we will find and connect with other thriving communities near and far and make friends around the world. Just last week, I spent a morning at the new Grace Boggs School in Detroit where my friend is the director. She and the incredible staff and students of the Grace Boggs School are building a learning community based on values very similar to Upland Hills'. It was beautiful to see such a nurturing and creative environment growing in a neighborhood that has many struggles. We shared many ideas about ways to bring our two schools together, since both communities place great importance on making friends, near and far. It's not hard to envision the UHS learning community being a part of a network of communities connected by shared values and commitment to a sustainable future. Indeed, the Upland Hills community is primed to reach farther than it ever has, and share the abundance in our community with others, while we, in turn, learn what all those communities can teach us.

Real Community — Phil Moore, Director

Our school began in the fall of 1971. It was the beginning of a new decade which followed one of the most daring, chaotic, creative, violent, innovative and disturbing decades of the century. You could say that our school was a part of the “Free School Movement,” an explosion of alternative schools that revolted against the rigid, prison-like structure of public education, and that would be partially true. You could say our school was deeply rooted in the ideals of justice and equality of the Civil Rights Movement and again, that would be partially true. You could say that our school was a ‘Hippie School,’ which was how many of our neighbors in Oxford and Lake Orion spoke of us, and at that time it was a way of saying something derogatory about us. Or you could say that our school was an attempt to make a community, and that would be closer to the truth of my experience from October of 1971 all the way through to today.

Community building was my generation's attempt to discover how to heal our planet and ourselves. It was our attempt to stop directing our attention outward at all of the things that were wrong with the world and to work on ourselves to discover if it were possible to live in a different way. We had our teachers and our guides, most notably Ram Dass who was saying that if we, those of us who protested the war in Viet Nam, kept on demanding “Peace Now, Peace Now!” by raising our voices in righteous indignation, we were only making matters worse, and R. Buckminster Fuller who demanded that we focus our attention on the tools and technologies that would lead to a world that “worked for 100% of humanity.” We had a deep desire to live a simple life that would allow us to focus on being the best parents we could be. We wanted to form deep relationships with others who cared about the Earth and cared deeply about the future. We wanted to grow food in our gardens, eat potluck dinners together and play volleyball on Sundays, and we wanted to work in jobs that were meaningful and in harmony with our values. We wanted to live close to each

other and we wanted to learn how to love more deeply.

Many of us had visited communes that had sprung up between 1969 and 1979. Some of us were drawn to make one here and we even held meetings to determine if it were possible to buy a large tract of land and build our own houses. We read books, listened to teachers, attended workshops, built buildings and organizations, organized marches and teach-ins, listened to and made our own music, and traveled near and far. Over time we decided (in part by default) to live independently and to stay connected by our values and our various interests. Our school and our Ecological Awareness Center had become the center of a community of people, and we were definitely on an adventure — for me, this was the greatest adventure of my lifetime.

“ True community is
always, among other things,
an adventure. ”

— M. Scott Peck

The first thing I learned about community is that it was not what I thought it would be. I thought a true community would attract people who held similar values, but through many eye-opening and sometimes even painful experiences, I discovered that a true community was one that was open and diverse instead of homogenized and deeply opinionated. The second thing I learned was that chaos is an integral part of community building and that for a time one must be prepared to navigate complicated and dangerous terrain. We human beings come with lots of agendas and opinions about a wide range of topics, and it's in community that we can learn how to experience very different points of view. If we're able to understand one another, only then can we make progress and find harmony. The third thing I learned was that there is a

stage of community building that demands that we empty out our opinions, suspend our judgments, and let go of our ideas of how things ‘should be’ done in order to finally come to the kind of clarity that one finds at the peak of a mountain. We find ourselves able to see the vast beauty and complexity of this world we live in. It dwarfs us and humbles us at the same time. It makes us feel alive and so lucky to have discovered the best in each other, and we learn how to focus on something greater than ourselves. Community building is the antidote to loneliness.

During the end of the 1980s, a book was published that took six years to get onto the New York Times Best Seller's list, where it remained for almost an entire decade. The book was entitled *The Road Less Traveled* and it was written by M. Scott Peck, a psychiatrist who wrote about discipline and spiritual health. But it was his book *A Different Drum* on community building that caught my attention. Peck believed that it was only in communities that humanity could be saved from self-destruction. He and his associates formed a non-profit group called The Foundation for Community Encouragement or FCE. We invited that group to send us a facilitator so that we could learn how to build and sustain a ‘true community.’

The facilitator arrived and so did about 45 people who were drawn to a workshop on community building. We began the workshop on a Friday night and concluded by Sunday afternoon. It was the strangest, most complicated and difficult workshop I have ever been a part of. The paid facilitator from FCE said next to nothing for the first two days, which as it turned out, was a very effective way to get to chaos. Once we arrived in the land of chaos, we stayed there for the better part of a day until finally, someone broke under the horrific pontificating and egoistic banter and began to cry, revealing her most vulnerable self. It was only then that we began to let go of our judgments, opinions and over-inflated egos. Vulnerability was the doorway to truth.



Early All School Picture.

M. Scott Peck began *A Different Drum* with a story called '*The Rabbi's gift*.' It begins with a monastery that has fallen on hard times. It had once flourished, but over the centuries, it had become a victim of secularism and was decaying and dying, with only five aging monks left. In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a small hut used by the town's Rabbi for personal retreats.

The monks had developed the uncanny ability of knowing when the Rabbi was there and so as soon as he arrived they sent their abbot to seek the Rabbi's advice. The abbot visited the Rabbi and spoke of his dying order and asked the Rabbi for advice but the Rabbi could only say 'I know how it is; the spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my Temple. 'So the men wept together and prayed and as the abbot was leaving he asked once again for any advice and the Rabbi could only offer this "I'm sorry I have no advice to give, I can only say that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned his brothers asked him what the Rabbi had

said and the Abbot told them that 'He had no advice but the only thing he said was the Messiah was one of us and I had no idea of what it meant.'

As the days and months passed the monks pondered the Rabbi's comment. Perhaps he meant that Father Abbot is the Messiah; he has been a leader for over a generation. Or perhaps Brother Thomas, who is such a holy man. Or might he have meant Elred who, even though he's such a crotchety guy, is almost always right. Or was it Brother Phillip who is so quiet but somehow mystical. And in this way they began to treat each other with such respect and reverence that it soon spilled over into how they cared for their monastery and the surrounding forest. People of the town had always visited the grounds of the monastery for walks and picnics but soon they too noticed how beautiful it had become and soon more and more people began to visit and finally some young men began to ask the old brothers about who they were and what this place was all about. One of these young men asked if he could join, and then another, and

within years the monastery had become a thriving order once again. This was the Rabbi's gift.

My experience here at Upland Hills School, which shares a border with Saint Benedict's Monastery, and is located in a beautiful forest, is much like this story. When we arrived I was 23 years old, married and a stepfather to an enchanting 6-year-old child. We had just returned from a year of traveling and we were determined to keep our adventure alive. Being a part of a newly-formed school was our introduction to community building. During the second year of our school, we had a core of 5 teachers who, like the Brothers in this story, saw the best of each other on our good days and supported each other on our bad ones. Even as old teachers left and new ones appeared, we had learned the secrets of acceptance and forgiveness. We laughed and cried and we put our hearts and souls into this work because deep down we knew we were all — every child and every parent, every teacher and every friend — we were all messiahs in hiding.

Connecting to Community

— Karen Troshynski-Thomas

When my husband Tim and I sent Jack, our first child, to his first day at the school in our neighborhood, we stood at the end of our driveway and watched teary-eyed as his small self climbed the tall steps of the big yellow bus. We met his kindergarten teacher and other parents when we volunteered in his classroom or chatted briefly during school-sponsored events such as a back-to-school picnic or music program.

When Jack began his time at Upland, he was already in the 3rd group at the “youngsters” end of the building. Children at this end walked into the classroom straight away, joyfully greeting their classmates old and new. As a parent, I felt slightly disconnected from the clear joy Jack felt at his new school. I wasn’t really clear on what was going on. It definitely felt different from his previous school. Where were the permission slips, calendars, and thinly disguised solicitations for money in the form of crappy fundraising schemes? Was he ever going to have homework?

That was my first introduction to a community that differed from anything else that I had known. At Upland, teachers and parents were open to one another, working at being fully present in their roles in these children’s lives while being honest about the hills and valleys of this work. But it took some time for me to see how this community worked and how I could become involved in it.

At the old school, the opportunities for parental involvement were quite clear — PTA membership, volunteering in the classroom, frequent parties and concerts. At Upland they were a little less clear. The opportunities were things like helping shelve books in the library, bringing a potluck dish for the Theatre Play Shop kids, maybe stuffing envelopes for a mailing...

Finally I heard from someone that a group of UHS alumni parents met for coffee at a Starbucks in Lake Orion every Friday morning. So I took myself there one day to meet these parents and to try and figure out what was going on.

My daughter Clare was a toddler and so I had her in hand. The group was warm and welcoming — both supportive and understanding of my interest. All of these parents were still meeting for coffee more than 10 years after their children had graduated from Upland. They had met each other when their children had first started at Upland, chatting in the Apple Tree parking lot. When their conversations extended beyond their ability to stay warm and comfortable while standing together outside in the wind, cold, rain, and mud, they moved to a coffee shop in Lake Orion. When that coffee shop closed, they moved to another. Their children began high school, then college and they continued to see one another. And so did their children.

In talking with these parents, I heard wonderful stories of their children and more importantly for me at the time, stories of their children after Upland — what they were doing, and the schools they had attended. It was clear to me that everyone was doing fine and that this Upland Hills School community continued to connect families with one another long after they had left its physical space. This was a very powerful image for me.

And, despite their distance, many of these alumni and parents had continued to be physically present at the school as well. I met them again at the annual Women’s Retreat, working with the Handwork Group, through my work with the Upland Hills CSA, and through my husband’s work with the board of trustees. Their families returned to the school to design and build the new kitchen/staff lounge, renovate the dome, or provide accounting, fundraising, landscaping and carpentry services to the school. They sent their children and grandchildren to Upland. Clearly the Upland Hills community not only provided a sense of connection to its members but encouraged them to act on it, in support of the school and one another.

For my own experience, my first year at Upland was a little slow. I met Jack’s teachers and tried to support activities

at the school. I met a few parents on the playground after school and in the Apple Tree lot in the morning. But Jack was a little older and ready to begin his day without me. And I had two younger children who occupied much of my time in his absence. I felt a part of the community but still slightly disconnected.

Sending our second child to Upland Hills was a completely different experience. We hugged Simon and kissed him in the Apple Tree parking lot along with the rest of his classmates

“ Nobody sees a flower —
really — it is so small it takes
time — we haven’t time —
and to see takes time, like to
have a friend takes time. ”

— Georgia O’Keefe

and their families. Together, we watched as these four and five year olds were greeted by Holly who gave them each a paper cone filled with peanuts in their shells and a paper windmill to blow. They followed Holly down the steps and up again to their new classroom while we parents stayed behind, sharing our names, our excitement, and our anxieties for our children, lingering long after their day with Holly began.

Beginning in the first group was a completely different experience for me. The school schedule for the first group was half days to begin with and every family was at school in the morning and then again after lunch (and if you had older children, again in the afternoon). I knew all of Simon’s classmates’ parents by name. Like us, many of them had younger children as well. We often stayed at school to play for a few minutes and then eventually moved to play dates

at the park or coffee in the morning between dropping kids off and picking them up. I count many of those parents as close friends today.

I also had the opportunity to attend the Upland Women's Retreat — a beautiful weekend of food, handwork, and discussion held offsite. It was a perfect opportunity to get to know some of the parents - both new and alumni - whose interests I shared or appreciated. One of the outcomes of this weekend was the beginning of a project — either a quilt or other item — for the auction. More importantly for me, it was the friendships that began or were expanded over that weekend that were its true gifts.

Neighboring, a time when the three youngest groups came together in circle time and shared activities, was also open to parents and served as another opportunity for community. We learned Upland Hills songs together that families before us had been learning since the school first began. We participated in Knock Hockey games, wrote letters to one another, and experimented with watercolors. It gave us some insight into the beauty of our child's day and

provided us with more connection with one another.

Another year, some of the teachers and alumni parents came together to offer parenting forums. They led discussions on different topics and current parents were able to talk about different issues as they came up in our children's lives. These forums provided a sense of connection with one another and even more importantly, gave newer parents a historical sense of the culture of teaching and parenting that is at the heart of Upland.

After settling in a bit and supporting Clare's entry into her days at Upland, I volunteered with a number of groups at the school that piqued my interest. Participating in the handwork group, serving as newsletter editor, helping in small amounts with the school auction, serving as Garden Manager for the CSA — all were opportunities to meet other Upland families and to share stories, kudos, and concerns.

While my time is once again divided by the delightful presence of another child "pre-Upland," I try to look for easy opportunities to connect with

Upland Hills. Many days, the simplest and yet most beautiful thing available to me is to walk my kids up from the Apple Tree lot and to collect them from the playground. I chat with teachers, Rob, and Phil. I commiserate and celebrate with parents new and old. And I remember why we chose this school and why we are so happy to be here.

And now, when I think of the community at Upland, I think of the Empty Bowls dinner. This special event was originally begun by two potters who felt that by creating and sharing bowls and soup together, they could change people's lives. After sharing a meal with one another and members from Gleaners Community Food Bank, everyone in the Upland community comes together in song, circles weaving in and out. It is a beautiful manifestation of the circles that come together at Upland — new families, old families, teachers, parents, children, all coming together to get to know one another better and to support one another and others in our time in this world.



Karen Troshynski-Thomas, Stacey Totkze and Renee Miron-Alimpich.

How “Doing” Builds a Community

—Terry Gardner, Business Administrator

For over twenty years, I have had the pleasure of participating in all kinds of groups grown at Upland Hills — groups made of enthusiastic, earnest people with a common interest and a desire to join together. And for many of those years, I have watched new families begin the process of understanding many facets of the UHS community and try to form a quick understanding. If newcomers ask for advice, my recommendation is always to take some time to traverse the landscape of this diverse, creative environment. It takes a bit of time to find your footing here, but you *will* find your way, depending on who you are and where your interests lie.

I like to imagine our community as possessing a series of doors that one may choose from. Long ago, the first door I entered into this community led to the Handwork Group. There are many other doors into this community; some of them open onto the improvement of place, or help to raise awareness of a broader community need. Others provide opportunities to experience personal growth, or raise funds in support of a meaningful cause or simply to become a part of creating beauty. Over the years, I have worked, created and played alongside the staff and parents dreaming up projects, planning them, then gathering together to work and reveling in the projects' completion.

Joining in takes courage and a bit of vulnerability, but can be deeply rewarding, gifting us with a sense of

belonging, a purpose and at best, a sense of relatedness with others within a community.

It has the possibility of bringing us to our better selves.

Here are voices from a few of the diverse groups that help make up our Upland Hills School community:

Chris Tarr, alumni parent, and past Director of the Upland Hills Ecological Awareness Center, regarding the **Stone People's Sweat Lodge** community/group:

"It was about twenty years ago that I first knelt and entered an Inipi lodge on the land we call Upland Hills. Since that frozen New Year's Eve when more than 30 of us huddled for hours in the hot steam and darkness, offering song and prayers of gratitude, I have sat in ceremony here perhaps a couple hundred times with over a thousand 'brothers and sisters' of many religious persuasions, ethnicities and walks of life.

There are many ways and places for experiencing community — sports stadiums, churches, concerts, family gatherings — but for me, no other way quite compares to the sense of deep belonging I feel when participating in Sacred Inipi Ceremony under the guidance of a wise and skilled teacher. It's about connecting with that which is 'sacred' — or most important — where we honor and invoke the wisdom of 'all my relations,' the community of all beings, including those who have come before and those yet to come. Little by little

peeling away the layers of the illusion of separation — viscerally experiencing a sense of Oneness within our small circle and the greater Circle of Life. For me, this is the profoundest sense of community I know of, and why I continue to return..."

Go to uheac.org for the next lodge date.

Linda Bowers, alumni parent and past Development Director of Upland Hills School, regarding the Book Club:

"The **Upland Hills Book Club** is in the midst of its 13th season. As UHS parents, alumni parents and book-loving friends, we gather nine times a year on the third Thursday of the month to discuss and rate the current book. Part of what makes Book Club so wonderful is the members themselves — one needn't even read the book to come and enjoy this supportive and loving community of bibliophiles. We catch up with one another, get filled in on our children and school, share edible delights and eventually get around to talking about this month's read. If you love to read, please join us!" Book Club meets the third Thursday of the month from August – May. Contact Renee Miron-Alimpich at rama77@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Holly MacMahon, alumni parent and alumni teacher, regarding the **Handwork Group**:

"Over twenty years ago, current and alumni parents and teachers created the Handwork Group. Our purpose has always been to create projects for our annual auction, to strengthen community



Sweat Lodge at the Ecological Awareness Center.



A gathering of the UHS Handwork Group.

The Give and Take of Community

— Ryan Bandalene, Ted's Group Student

and to foster the importance of handwork. Our projects are inspired by the people who participate each year and have included quilts, wall hangings, and needle-felted objects. An overnight retreat is planned for January 2014, in conjunction with occasional day-gatherings at the EAC." If you would like more information send an email to terry.gardner@uplandhills.org for information on the upcoming gathering.

Other groups you may be interested in ... **Coffee and Conversation Group** — On the last Friday of each month, we invite parents, both current and alumni, to meet at the EAC to share their morning coffee, while getting to know each other.

Monday Yoga, 3:45 p.m. — Contact Melissa (melisslynn3@gmail.com). Yoga for Adults is held at the EAC while a children's Yoga Class is held in the big room at school.

Auction Committee — Staci Brodeur has coordinated our auction for six years. She has skillfully developed an effective core committee that enjoys working together on this most important fundraising event. This years' UHS 2013 "Power of Love" Auction is March 22nd. If you would like to help in creating this special auction, honoring Phil and his 42 years, please email Staci about auction at uplandhills.org

If you would like to learn more about any of these groups, or if you have an idea to share, please stop in or call the school office and have a conversation.



Ryan with Sean Lindner and alumni Garrett Brodeur.

One morning this year, my group came to school ready for a test but instead, one of our teachers, Shaun, told us we were going to the monastery lake. When we got there, I sat on the dock with the rest of Ted's Group, overlooking the lake. We wrote in our journals while Shaun played the guitar. The beauty of the sun hitting the lake and bringing this glowing light was a special moment that is one of the highlights of my time at Upland. I looked around at all the different faces in my group and noticed the friendship and trust between them. All of these things are part of the Upland Hills community but it takes not just eyes, but your heart to see how special this community is.

Before I came to Upland Hills School, I was taught competitive learning. The teachers at my old school told us that the people sitting next to us were our competition. It didn't matter if you did your personal best — you had to be on top or you didn't matter. There was no time to develop friendships because all of our time was taken up listening to lectures. After I left that school to go to Upland (and no one from my old school seemed to notice I was really gone), I asked my former classmates, "How is school going?" They said "Bad." I asked them "Why?" And the answer that I would always get was, "Because it is school!" I'm sad that these people will never understand the experience that I have received from Upland.

One last thing I would like to point out is that nobody really went to the fundraisers at my old school. Nobody cared. Now I think back to the Work Day at Upland at the beginning of the school year, when I saw people big and small helping in all of these different tasks. Upland is based on a give and take environment and that is how community works.



Lake at the Monastery.



Choosing Community — Erin Hammond

Community is what we were looking for when my husband Jason and I decided to send our oldest son, Max, to Upland Hills School. We were living in Lathrup Village and had the option to send Max to the Berkley school. It was a quick five-minute drive from our house and we knew a couple of neighborhood kids who were attending the same grade school. Max came with us to visit the classrooms and we all left feeling that it was a good option. Jason and I attended the

Kindergarten Ready meeting, curious about the process. We sat in the gymnasium with a bunch of other parents. The evening consisted of lists, slide shows and pamphlets detailing the 101 things that our almost-five-year-old son should be able to do in order to be “ready” to enter the system. I was immediately overwhelmed and anxious and

at the same time underwhelmed. This was more about what Max could do and less about who he was and what he could be.

We decided Max should visit Upland Hills School and spend a day with the youngest Group. At the time Holly MacMahon was teaching that group — and she also just happens to be Max’s Grammy and my mom. It was her last year teaching full-time at the school. We knew this could be an amazing experience for all of us,

but Jason and I needed to be sure that we were making the decision to send Max to Upland because it was the right environment for him, not because we had both attended the school in the Eighties, or because my mom would be his first teacher. We knew it would require being in the car for almost 2 hours a day and sending him there would require a major sacrifice on all of our parts.

We discovered that what we would be sacrificing was insignificant when

focus was to protect the person Max was becoming.

We are now in our fifth year as a family at Upland. I consider all of us enrolled as students there. As parents, we are afforded the opportunity to make it Upland as much ours as it is our children’s. After school, the playground is always abuzz with parents talking and laughing, sharing and watching each other’s children on the big field. Most kids aren’t ready to leave school at 3:15. I am frequently

among the last to leave, and it’s usually me trying to coax the carpool gang up to the Apple Tree parking lot, not the other way around. I truly don’t see Upland as just a school. It is there for all of us to share in, to give to and to receive from.

As a family, we reevaluate every year if Upland is still the right place for us. I think it’s an important

conversation to have as a family. One of the reasons we keep returning is that the community is so free of judgment. There are so many easy opportunities for parents to be criticized, for children to be scrutinized. Upland’s families are there to lift one another up. I was aware of that even as a student. I always felt safe to be myself — what a gift! That is what we want for our two children, for them to feel safe, which is to feel free.



Ben, Jason, Erin and Max Hammond.

compared to what we would be gaining in return. What sealed the deal in our decision-making process was the light that radiated from Max when he was visiting. He was filled with such energy and enthusiasm. The school’s staff takes such great care in fostering exactly what we cherish about Max. We wanted him to be able to continue being this little sprite of a guy. We knew that he was bright and was capable; that reading and writing, math and shoe-tying would come. Our main

FUNd Community — Staci Brodeur

Community is...an auction! Not everyone sees community in an auction, but after serving as Upland Hills School's auction coordinator for the past six years, I sometimes see the world a bit differently.

The auction is the only annual major fundraiser at Upland Hills. Its proceeds are directly applied to the annual fiscal budget, helping to keep tuition affordable for many. The families and friends of Upland Hills put on this FUNdraiser to share an evening with each other and celebrate the traditions that make UHS unique, all while raising bottom-line dollars. It is a night of the people, for the people, by the people.

Of course, the paragraph above could describe most schools' auctions, yet I think ours is more unique than that. For me, it's about relationships between families currently enrolled and formerly enrolled, community members and friends of our school. Each of these groups plays a role in creating this diverse event and the community that is Upland Hills.

It's easy to see how and why current families are part of this community event. The funds raised impact their tuition. Additionally, they are directly asked to obtain items and be part of the evening by serving in a variety of volunteer positions. And there are other more subtle ways it helps grow community. The auction core committee meets monthly, from November to March, to plan out the details. (FYI, we are currently looking for people who want to be part of the committee!) These meetings have become not only a way to make the auction better, but have become nights out where we share a meal and become better acquainted, and often form lasting friendships in the process. We've even had the good fortune of having some parents continue on the core committee *after* their child moved on to high school. During the volunteer events, which include exciting things like stuffing invitations or packing baskets, we work side by side to accomplish a goal but learn about each other in the process. I've discovered we

are a richly diverse community — I've met some amazing people who have their children enrolled here!

Former parents often attend the auction. Their dedication to UHS is always inspiring to me and I love to hear stories of their children's time at UHS and how their children are succeeding. Many of these parents were involved in specific building projects at the school, or helped teach or were on the auction committee itself. They tell me that we have it made at the current MSU auction venue, since we no longer have to set up the pavilion at Oakland University, bring in all the chairs and tables and then take them down again!

The community members and friends of our school are probably the most diverse group to create the eclectic evening. There are some businesses who always donate items. Many of these donors have never set foot on our campus and they still support our mission. Many others attend our auction and give even more by being willing bidders. The willing bidder part is huge in making the night a success!

I've learned that the auction is often a great way to share Upland Hills with people who might not otherwise know who or what we are. Over the years we've invited many friends whose children attend other schools, public and private. I've invited friends whose children are adults. I've invited friends who've never had children. They come because they know how much we love the school, but they leave feeling a bit connected too. In fact, many of them ask to attend again and have referred students to our school because of their evening with us. This is the ripple in the pond that carries us out far and wide.

The 2014 auction, scheduled for Saturday, March 22, is aptly titled "The Power of Love." The power of love has brought Upland Hills through these past four decades. The power of community will help us celebrate this 42nd year with Phil as Director. The power of both will carry Upland Hills through another four decades. Join us and see how FUNd Community can be!

Be a part of the
Power of Love Auction
Saturday | March 22, 2014
MSU Management Education Center | Troy

By **raising funds** that **support** our budget
we can continue to **grow** in the

Power of Love
and help keep UHS tuition **affordable.**

Support UHS by bringing guests, acquiring auction items, and helping with the event.

To get involved, contact Staci at auction@uplandhills.org



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Contact terry@uplandhills.org for more information.

Go to our website www.uplandhills.org for Upland Hills School news.



Annual Giving/3D Campaign

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible donation to Upland Hills School's 3D Campaign and/or Annual Giving.

My contribution to the Annual Giving Fund is in the amount of:
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