



Newsletter

Spring & Summer 2025

The mission of Corvallis Waldorf School is to educate independent thinkers who meet life with courage and respond with initiative and creativity to the needs of the world and their fellow human beings.



Quarterly Newsletter

Spring&Summer 2025



A Note from the Executive Council

As we conclude the 32nd school year in our school’s history, we reflect on our journey with deep appreciation—and look ahead to many more years to come. Over these three decades, each year has been marked by its own accomplishments and challenges, contributing meaningfully to our continued growth. The 2024–2025 school year has been no exception.

This spring, we welcomed prospective families to campus during Open House, offering a glimpse into the heart of our educational approach. In May, we celebrated one of our most memorable school days: Grandparents and Special Friends Day coincided with our annual May Day celebration. The morning was filled with joy and connection as grandparents and special friends joined us on campus. In the afternoon, students and faculty led the beloved May Faire, lovingly organized by the Community Council. The day concluded with garden tours and plant sales hosted by our Agricultural Arts Program. With clear skies and warm sunshine, the energy on campus was radiant—full of connection, celebration, and the vitality of spring.

Class plays were another seasonal highlight, with many grades showcasing their artistic collaboration and storytelling. Teachers and students alike dedicated themselves to these performances, sharing their hard work and creativity with classmates and families. The dramatic arts remain an essential part of our curriculum, nurturing presence, confidence, and teamwork.

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Among the many enriching field trips this spring, the eighth-grade's weeklong backpacking adventure to the Olympic Peninsula in Washington stood out. The journey began with a train ride to Seattle and continued with challenging hikes and nights spent camping under the stars—and, at times, clouds. Students forged deeper friendships and experienced the power of nature in a truly unforgettable way.

In a bittersweet and beautiful moment, we bid farewell to our graduating eighth-grade class as they embark on the next stage of their journey. Surrounded by family, friends, and teachers, our 16 graduates marked the end of their time at Corvallis Waldorf School with reflection, appreciation, and a deep sense of connection. At the other end of the school journey, our annual Kindergarten Flyway Ceremony was a joyful and tender celebration. It honored our youngest students as they prepare to step into the Grades and begin a new chapter. Both ceremonies reminded us of the meaningful transitions that happen throughout the years at CWS.

As the school year winds down, we reflect with gratitude on a vibrant and fulfilling year. From the rich festivals and seasonal celebrations to the academic achievements and milestones, our community has come together time and again in meaningful ways. Early in the year, we celebrated the completion of the modular building project, which added four new classrooms for our upper grades. Our Annual Giving campaign raised \$85,000 in support of operational costs—an accomplishment made possible by the generosity of our community.

We thank each of you—families, faculty, staff, and volunteers—for helping to create such a dynamic and nurturing environment.

We now look forward to the summer months and to returning in the fall with renewed energy and bold ambitions.

In gratitude,
The Executive Council





WALDORF PEDAGOGY

The Art of Handwork

The Waldorf Handwork and Fiber Arts program offers a rich, hands-on experience that nurtures a child's development in thinking, feeling, and willing—an integration of head, heart, and hands. Through purposeful work with natural materials like wool, cotton, linen, and silk, students develop fine motor skills, creativity, and emotional intelligence while forming a deep connection to the natural world. These carefully chosen fibers not only bring beauty and sustainability into the classroom, but also inspire reverence for craftsmanship and the harmony between nature and art.

More than just a practical skill, handwork in the Waldorf tradition is a bridge between academic learning and creative expression. The process of making by hand supports cognitive development, improves concentration, and strengthens problem-solving and spatial awareness. Through activities grounded in rhythm, pattern, and tactile experience, students build strong neural pathways while benefiting from the therapeutic and meditative qualities of fiber arts.



PHOTOS BY RACHEL PERELLA

Within this program, students are encouraged to work with care and patience, developing perseverance and attention to detail. Handwork projects are often integrated with the main lesson curriculum, enriching subjects like geometry, storytelling, history, and environmental studies. As they complete each project, students experience a sense of pride and accomplishment, gaining not only practical skills but also a lasting appreciation for beauty, sustainability, and the joy of creating. In doing so, they forge meaningful connections—with their work, with one another, and with the world around them.

GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY



We are filled with gratitude for the nearly 90 grandparents and special friends who joined us on campus for this heartwarming day. Their presence brought joy and meaning to our students, who were so proud to share their classrooms, learning spaces, and daily rhythms with them.



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Melanie Sorenson

Melanie's journey into teaching began in high school, where she volunteered with an outreach program to teach science lessons at elementary schools. As an undergraduate at Oregon State University, she studied Environmental Science and Oceanography, with a minor in music, and considered careers in both marine science and education.

She took exploratory education courses and volunteered in classrooms across Corvallis. A pivotal two-week internship with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute—complete with three days of seasickness at sea—ultimately steered her toward teaching. She returned to OSU to earn a Master's degree in Science and Math Education and found her passion working with middle schoolers during student teaching placements in Salem, Corvallis, and Philomath.

She went on to teach 7th grade integrated science in Salem for many years before stepping away from the classroom to focus on parenting and music. Even then, she continued teaching through private flute and piano lessons, as well as math tutoring. In 2018, she joined Corvallis Waldorf School as the Middle School Math Specialist, and later that same year, became the flute instructor at Linn-Benton Community College.

At Corvallis Waldorf, she provides individual and small-group math tutoring and currently teaches an accelerated 7th-grade math section. Next year, she looks forward to teaching Algebra I to the 8th grade. This year has been a particularly fulfilling chapter in her teaching career—she describes it as the most rewarding yet and is already excited for the year ahead.

She is passionate about developing her own curriculum, carefully aligning it with national and state standards while drawing from a variety of educational sources. The school's small class sizes allow her to implement collaborative learning and hands-on investigations, and she emphasizes student voice in shaping the curriculum. With a deep respect for her students' innate wisdom and creativity, she is able to tailor instruction to meet each learner's individual needs. Waldorf students bring curiosity, wonder, and joy to each lesson—along with a delightful dose of middle school silliness.

When students were asked to describe her anonymously, the responses revealed just how impactful her teaching is. They described her as patient, open-minded, and someone who truly listens. Her creative, engaging teaching style and frequent “cross-curricular asides” keep students interested and inspired.

They appreciate being given the time and space to explore ideas and discover solutions on their own. It's clear that she has cultivated a learning environment where students feel supported, challenged, and excited to learn—making her a treasured member of the Corvallis Waldorf School community.

I really feel like I have the best job, and these students are such cool people! The support I feel from the entire staff and the parents makes this a wonderful place to teach.



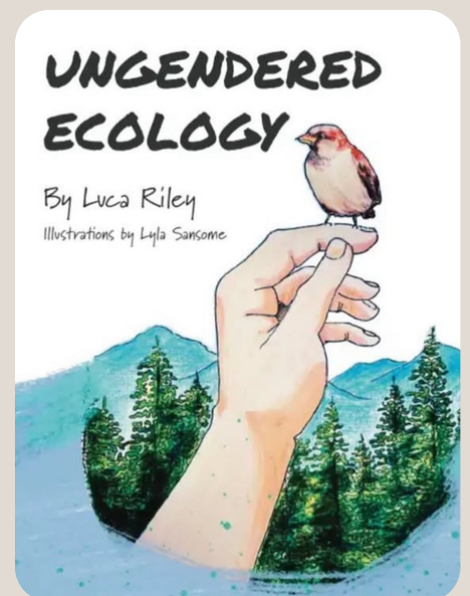
ALUMNI PROFILE



An alumni of class of 2024, Luca joined the Waldorf School community in kindergarten, where he found an environment that nurtured both curiosity and creativity. Surrounded by a close-knit and supportive community, Luca was able to explore personal expression from an early age—discovering a love of writing in Grade 4 through the creation of a first story. That moment marked the beginning of a deep and enduring connection to storytelling. Over the years, this passion evolved into a powerful means of self-discovery and advocacy, including poems, stories, and free writes that explored identity, emotion, and the complexity of human experience.

In 8th grade, Luca's capstone project merged with broader themes inspired by philosophy, ecology, and social norms. Building from this project, Luca authored *Ungendered Ecology*, which explores how we can allow the natural world to help us begin letting go of the gender binary. Guided by godmother, mentor, and author Darcy Ottey, and inspired by his father's poetry, Luca brought these ideas to life in a published book now available at Grassroots Books in downtown Corvallis.

Looking ahead, Luca carries forward the confidence and creativity nurtured during his Waldorf journey. Whether in writing, theater, or new pursuits, he has gratitude for the school's holistic approach for encouraging authenticity and boldness. To younger students, Luca offers this advice: "Follow your heart—especially for your 8th grade project, but also in life. Don't be afraid to do something big." With a strong sense of self and a deep well of inspiration, Luca steps forward ready to continue shaping the world through thoughtful, creative expression.



DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INVITATION

The CWS Board of Trustees relies on committees—composed of staff, board members, and community experts—to support its work. These groups report monthly to the Board and submit recommendations for Board approval. Each committee operates under a Board-approved mandate.



The Development Committee is one such group. Each September, it invites prospective new members to its meeting. The Board assigns the committee specific projects for part or all of the school year. When new initiatives begin, the committee re-forms and welcomes additional members.

In recent years, the Development Committee has contributed to the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, campus site planning, Chickadee play yard improvements, and a campus-wide plant inventory. In the coming year, it will continue this work while also supporting grant writing, community outreach and engagement, and volunteer-led campus beautification efforts. . Being a part of the development committee is a way to offer a limited volunteer commitment to the school but have a direct impact on school planning and development.

In August 2025, the committee will revise its mandate based on Board goals for 2025-2026 and submit it for approval. The September meeting will be open to new members. The committee meets monthly, with tasks assigned between meetings. Meetings include working group updates, decision-making, and occasional breakout sessions. Recommendations are submitted to the Board for review.



If you have useful skills for this work and are interested in participating next school year—or have questions—please contact Julie Christianson, Development Committee Chair, at jchristianson@corvalliswaldorfschool.org.



ONE CHILDHOOD.



*Live
it
well.*

