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St. Mark's Nursery School Turns 50

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Students from the early days at St. Mark's Nursery School listen intently to their teacher. Photo Provided

St. Mark's Nursery School currently has one director, three teachers, and enrolls 50 students each year at the site, many of whom are children of past alumni. The school is planning a 50th Anniversary Alumni Ice Cream Social from 2 to 4 p.m. September 30.

"The community embraced our school and our dedicated staff," Wickland wrote. "To be a small part of this wonderful history was a great honor."

In 1962, a small group of parents formed a committee interested in starting a nursery school at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Orinda and requested a \$2,000 loan from a church member to get the school started. Since then approximately 1,500 children have graduated from St. Mark's Nursery School.

The school was launched with one director, one teacher and 20 students after many volunteers donated their time, installed a play yard and stocked inside cabinets with necessary supplies, said St. Mark's original director Irene Wickland in a letter discussing the history of the school.

"Our nursery school immediately went off the chart," Wickland wrote. "Additional families were soon pleading with us to take on more children and staff. Coincidentally St. Mark's Church was making plans for an educational building to be added. Since I was a member of the church, I was asked to be on the design and building committee. Having worked with many schools and visiting many others, my head was bursting with ideas that had proven themselves successful at other schools. Our building committee and the architect found these ideas much to their liking and so our beautiful school developed."

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