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Tradition lives on for longtime Moraga family

By Diane Claytor



Three generations of St. Mark's Nursery School students: Susan Grafft (right), her daughter Kingsley Frazier (middle) and Frazier's children, Clark and Marley. Photo provided

Frazier were preschoolers. "When I look at pictures of what the kids were doing 30 or 40 years ago at the school and what we're doing today, they're very much the same," Peterson said. "Children are still building things, doing a lot of outside play, getting dirty, having fun - the same things they were doing in the beginning.

"We have also always done a lot of community building," Peterson continued. "We support the larger community as well as our parent community, providing numerous opportunities to connect with one another."

Grafft's parents moved to Moraga before she was born and, in fact, her mother lives across the street from Frazier (her granddaughter). Grafft, who has spent most of her life in Moraga, had such wonderful memories of St. Mark's Nursery School that there was no question in her mind that's where she would send her three children. Frazier, who also fondly remembered her time there, did look into various options when it was time to enroll her children in preschool but still came back to St. Mark's, finding it to be the perfect fit. "Now that Marley is in TK, I can really see what an excellent job St. Mark's did in preparing her for school. Just seeing how happy she is and how much she's grown in these first few weeks of elementary school tells me that she was really ready and much of that is thanks to St. Mark's," Frazier declared.

With Marley Frazier now enrolled at Moraga's Camino Pablo Elementary School, it appears that history will continue to repeat itself; both Grafft and Frazier also attended CP - and both went on to Joaquin Moraga and Campolindo. The tradition lives on.

Two-and-a-half-year-old Clark Frazier loves playing with the wheelbarrow at St. Mark's Nursery School in Orinda; his sister, Marley, 4 and a half and a recent St. Mark's graduate, loved playing in the nursery school's lofted doll house. She came by that naturally - the doll house was a favorite of her mom, Kingsley Frazier of Moraga, when she attended St. Mark's Nursery School 25 years ago. It was also fondly remembered by her grandmother, Susan Grafft, when she and her older sister went to the very same nursery school in the mid-1960s.

Yes, that's right. Three generations of Grafft family members have loved their time at the Orinda nursery school. That's very unusual, noted the school's current director, Claire Peterson. She said last year there were three second generation families but as far as she knows, the Grafft family are the only three generations they've had in the 56 years since the school was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of St. Mark's United Methodist Church.

St. Mark's Nursery School is, in many ways, very much the same today as it was back when Grafft attended in the mid-1960s or when Frazier attended in the early '90s; yet, in other ways, it's quite different.

For many years, the nursery school only offered part-time programs for 3- and 4-year-olds; 3-year-olds attended two days a week while 4-year-olds could come three days a week. And the hours were short: only 9 a.m. to noon. Then the community began asking for full-time care and St. Mark's obliged. The school is now open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and accommodates part-time and full-time 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds.

Peterson noted that the school's basic philosophy - a child-driven, play-based curriculum in a nurturing environment designed to inspire learning, creativity and fun - is very similar to what it was when Grafft and

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