

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Good News About Neighborhood Schools, Inc. Vol. 23, Issue 2 * Spring 2025

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Tracy & Angel Pimentel

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grad Project Night
Thursday, May 22nd
6:30pm
Forest Hills Covenant Church

Graduation
Friday, June 6th
6:30pm
Forest Hills Covenant Church

Last Day of School
Boolie Day Celebration
Friday, June 13th
Forest Hills Covenant Church



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Rooted in Love: Founders Party in Photos and Stories

by Tricia Morrow, Co-Director



The Founders Party was a tremendous gift! It provided space and time to share hugs, swap memories, and reconnect with folks who love NS. The honorees - Joyce Mallory, Tricia and Scott Morrow, Donna DeVaughn, Shari Feibel, Jai Underhill, and Drew Curtis - are grateful to the planners and hosts who helped us celebrate our respective tenures at NS. Special thanks to Johnny Blazes and veteran NS teacher/leader Lisa Nam for joining with Alum Parents Lynn Girton, Keeran Hariprasad, and Gloria Valentin to plan a delightful party with delicious food. We appreciated being roasted by NS Alums Maya Getter, Nolan Gillman, Woody Mott, and Rory Sargent and NS Alum Parents Zainab Shuaib, Steve Yakutis, and Eleanor Chin. Extra thanks to NS teachers Haeli, Jovielle, Seth, Malena, Laurie, Paige, and Adlin for their help with decorations and making NS a great place to learn and work. We are ever so grateful to Tracy Pimentel, NS Director, who inspires and encourages us each day.

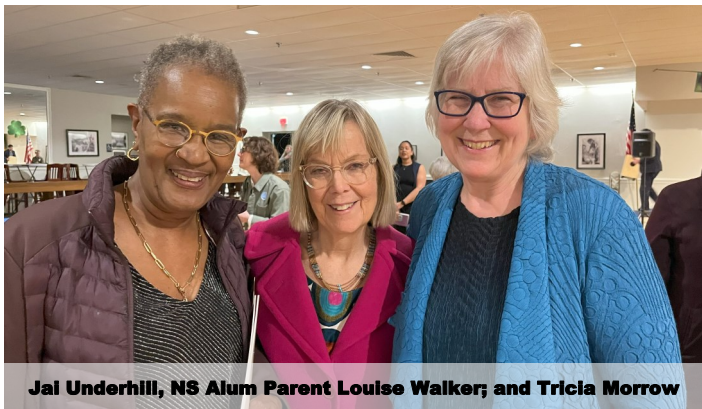
And now, enjoy photos from the Founders Party and listen to Tricia tell tales about how our lives as Founders are interwoven and rooted in love!

In 1982, I interviewed for a teaching position in JP and during a tour, I briefly met **Joyce Mallory**. Within seconds, she grasped my arm and implored, "We need you here." She got me. I watched Joyce and **Donna DeVaughn** teach during my first year and decided I wanted to learn and become more like them.

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Rooted in Love: Founders Party in Photos and Stories

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Jal Underhill, NS Alum Parent Louise Walker, and Tricia Morrow

Seeds were planted. **Scott Morrow** and I spent a lot of time with Joyce and **John Mallory** and their sons during those pre-NS years. We witnessed how their faith and lifework with families formed lasting relationships. We learned how they consulted schools as a side hustle, rode motorcycles, and led Sunday services at Concord State Prison. They were interesting folks!

An unexpected loss of most of our jobs in the spring of 1986 provided an opportunity to think outside of the box. Jared Mallory (age 8) and some friends (including current Board Chair, **Aba Taylor**) needed a school for the fall, and the Mallorys were gaining access to space at 34 Peter Parley Road. We (Donna, Joyce, John, Tricia, and Scott) desired to create a less institutional school than what we had previously known. We envisioned a school small enough to know everyone very well, where teachers could adjust to how kids learn, and where the freedom to explore family stories, learn hard history, investigate neighborhoods, follow curiosities, and create musical performance would keep things humming.

Scott offered the name Neighborhood School (and his ability to earn money elsewhere for a few years) and off he went to work as an accountant. Donna offered to help kids love reading, writing, and coming to school. Joyce offered commitment to families and her expertise with learning differences. I offered a desire to learn how to manage a school and John offered mentoring and financial support to keep the school from debt. Fortunately, **Aba's** parents (and a few others) trusted enough to offer us their children and support our dream of a school. Joyce remembers Labor Day, 1986, the day before we were scheduled to open, when we met in the kitchen at 34 Peter Parley Road. We had imagined enrolling thirty children, but we had seven. Should we open? Those commitments from seven families were based on need, and we decided yes, let's give it a go for the year.

Tuition from a handful of families didn't provide enough for salaries, so Donna, after setting up the reading and language arts curriculum, took a job at another school but we were lucky to have her lead Level two and support readers in all levels for many years. It was my turn for a side hustle, providing 1-800 telephone support to schools around the country who were using management software John Mallory had written. When the NS phone rang, it might be a parent reporting strep throat or a flustered school secretary in Nashville trying to reboot her MS-DOS machine. Necessity is the mother of invention!

Word spread, thanks to our sidewalk serenades, and we were close to break-even in year three and ready to hire a colleague.



Scott Morrow and NS Parent Linda Marc-Clerisme



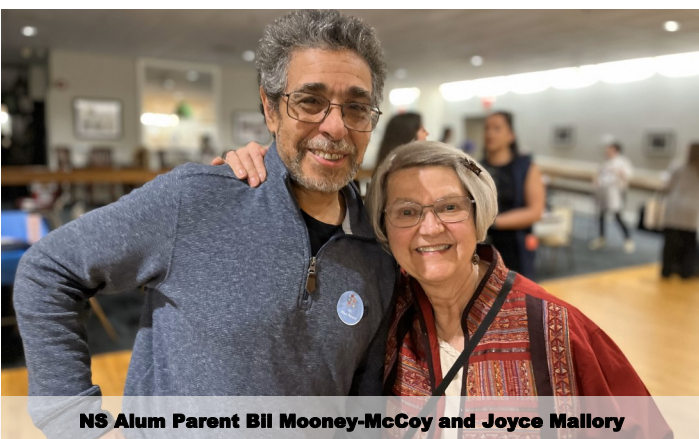
NS Alum Parents Emily Haber and Fran Price with Shari Feibel



Donna DeV Vaughn and NS Alum Alliyah Muhammad

We chose well when we chose **Shari Feibel**. Shari joined us in 1989 in response to an ad in the Globe, and she's taught at and supported NS ever since. She caught kids' interest with engineering and creating projects (more hot glue!), she brought Joyce coffee, she built friendships with families, and she helped young people learn to solve problems and handle feelings - over and over. We remember Shari's dedication to Level Two and partnership with Rachel and Scott in Franklin Park in 2020-21. Thank you for your faithfulness and creativity, Shari.

John and a business associate died in an accident in 1990. We closed school for three days to grieve. NS parents and students loved Joyce and her sons in palpable ways and showed up for one another and NS teachers. Johnny and I read a selection from The Velveteen Rabbit at the funeral. Did we feel like going on? No, we were broken-hearted. But Joyce needed a paycheck, kids needed their school, and thankfully Shari and Level One teacher Nicky Pierce were willing to shoulder an extra load while I tried to sell John's computer company and support clients.



NS Alum Parent Bill Mooney-McCoy and Joyce Mallory

Parent musicians, rather than Joyce, led the Winter Concert that year. Playground structures were built. A network of supporters from near and far joined us and we chose life together one step at a time. By July 1991, the computer business faded, Joyce completed her Masters in Special Education, and I planted both feet as teacher/director. That is until Scott and I became parents in 1994 and the NS community became our extended family. Hiring Kaye Scherer to lead Level One while I became a parent proved invaluable. Kaye mentored Tracy Pimentel in the ways of Level One years later.

Jai Underhill and "her Scott" joined NS as parents in the early 90's. When their daughter Emma was ready to leave NS, Jai wasn't, and thankfully staying meant she joined creative forces with Lisa Masotta to teach art wherever we gave her space. Space shifted from tiny classrooms, to Covenant, to Eliot School, and finally to the back room at 35 Peter Parley when L4 space opened in 2001. Oh, and Jai led art classes on Zoom, on the lawn at Showa, and in Franklin Park during outdoor school in 2020-2021. Have art wagon, will travel! Need professional quality costumes for the biennial play? Jai tirelessly led costume crews for NS plays spanning decades. Your generosity is astounding, Jai, including teaching tap dance to Level Four this year. We are so fortunate that you and Scott trusted us with your wild and wonderful four year old and stayed the course.

NS went through Level Three until 1999. Parents who wanted a 5th/6th grade option were the driving force in founding Level Four. Those parents helped find the space and a teacher. Who knew that a teacher with multi-age upper elementary experience lived a few blocks away and was hoping to work closer to home as a new parent?

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Drew Curtis and NS Alum Murray Hershkowitz

Drew Curtis joined NS in the fall of 1999 to teach seven students, and set off on a nomadic journey each day for a year and a half to a classroom at Covenant Church until space at 35 Peter Parley was permitted by the City. Phew! Thankfully his collegial relationships with Josh Abrams, Lisa Masotta, Jai, Shari, Kaye, and Joyce rooted and anchored his “founding on the go” experience. Creator of rituals like Grad Project and Grad Trip and curriculum that included Fastplants, Mesopotamian Feast, and Barter Day, Drew designed deep learning for Level Four. Drew, your work as stage manager, first during plays and since the Pandemic to the whole school as Operations Manager, allowed focus on succession planning and together we ushered in Tracy as Director. Thank you, Drew.

The Morrums moved from Dorchester to 35 Peter Parley in 1999, just in time for Michaela to begin school in Level One, for Anna to be a preschool mascot with other staff kids, and for Nick to be born. Scott’s role at NS grew to include finance, PE, Afterschool, and maintenance. His favorite year? Supporting Level Two in 2020-21 in their outdoor classroom in Franklin Park. The birth of the coyote pups left an indelible memory as well as the joy of children playing in the rain and climbing on Fallen Tree.

Of course there’s more, but that’s a taste of how the seven honorees made their way to NS and made their mark on this beloved community. Each member of that community has made their mark on us, too, as we are interwoven and rooted together in love. ❤️



Spring Has Sprung: Learning Together!



Level One students writing during Writers Galore.

LEVEL ONE

by Paige Brooks-Cook

Level One students in Writers Galore are diving into personal narratives by focusing on small, meaningful life moments. Inspired by the book, A Chair for My Mother, they practice expanding these moments with vivid details and thoughtful sequencing. Each day, students bring their stories to life, whether it's a spring break memory, a spider in bed, or the joy of buying a toy. This process strengthens their writing and builds empathy as they listen to one another's experiences. From morning meetings to snack time chats, storytelling is creating a vibrant classroom community and helping students connect through the power of shared stories.



From a pig scale at Drumlin Farm, we discovered that the entire Level Two class weighed the same as a sow!

LEVEL TWO

by Laurie Bozzi

This spring, Level Two students will explore the wilds of the NS backyard and neighborhood. We will be studying and observing the insects, arachnids, and worms in our own ecosystem! We began our study with a field trip to Drumlin Farm in which students scooped up critters from a pond and a compost pile under the guidance of an environmental educator. Using books, magnifying glasses, and bug boxes, we will be getting to know the tiny beings we share the world with. In math, Level Two will be learning about measurement, exploring ways to use both standard and unconventional methods for calculating the sizes of things. During National Poetry month (April), we explored reading and listening to poems. Now, Level 2 students will try their hands at writing them as well. We are looking forward to learning about these things and many others as well as enjoying the sunny spring weather!



Level Three-ers become budding geologists as they examine and rank opacity of rock samples with a partner.

LEVEL THREE

by Malena Castilla & Adlin Mallebranche

Level Three admired and investigated rock features in students' own collections. We discussed, compared, and contrasted specific samples to get a hands-on understanding of the various properties of rocks, including color, hardness, luster, opacity, texture, crystal structure, and size. Here, partners are sorting rocks by opacity along one axis and size along the other. We look forward to diving into the many remaining collections!

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Spring Has Sprung: Learning Together!

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LEVEL FOUR

by Lisa Nam and Haeli Warren

Level Four students wrapped up their interdisciplinary study of the Harlem Renaissance this spring, which included art, social studies, chorus, literacy and more—from a tap dancing artist-in-residence experience with former NS art teacher Jai Underhill to primary source analysis of historical events, including the Great Migration, that led to the Harlem Renaissance. Connecting how the written word was a particularly powerful tool for resistance and freedom against oppression during the Harlem Renaissance to present day, Level Four students visited Boston area bookstores, libraries, and writing centers to learn about their current work. Check out the documentary we made by visiting the “News” section of the NS website! 💙



Level Four students showcase their tap dancing skills at the Learning Fair.

Common Cents

May 31! May 31! May 31! May 31 is our “May Day” at NS...the close of our fiscal year. Do you remember our fundraising goal for the school year 2024-2025? A whopping \$340,000 matches our Fair Share Scholarship outlay. That means NS extends \$340,000 in scholarship to families and we hope to receive \$340,000 in donations to balance the books. As you might expect, scholarship needs of families increased this year and we have a scholarship waitlist for the first time.

Is it possible to raise \$140,000 by May 31 to reach our goal?! Let's do it!

All of us who love NS need to...

- Ask 3 people we know who care about inclusive, justice-centered schools to follow our lead and give a gift from the heart to NS this month!
- Consider if we are within “six degrees of separation” of wealth and someone who would be honored to become a champion of a small school that does big things with children.

- Connect that person to Tracy or Tricia!
- Become a monthly subscriber (or ask an adult alum we know and love) and make giving to NS a no-brainer!

Reach out to director@neighborhoodschooljp.org if you have a May 31 brainstorm!



NS Alum and Board Chair, Aba Taylor