



Holden High School Annual Report

2012 - 2013

OVER 40 YEARS OF INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

Highlights @ Holden for 2012-2013

We are delighted to report that two students graduated in January and five in June 2013, **one of whom received was accepted to Evergreen University with a merit scholarship.** The remaining graduates are either working productively or attending community college.

It is inspiring to see the transformation that time at Holden brings to these young adults who graduate from Holden with academic confidence and intellectual curiosity, the ability to advocate for themselves, a strong sense of community, a passion for learning, and solid plans for their futures.

2012 saw a three-weekend run of Roberto Aguirre Sacasa's *The Muckle Man*, a dark family/ sci-fi drama featuring seven students.

Carlos Murillo's *A Human Interest Story (or the Gory Details and All)*, staged in April 2013, **featured eight students in an avant-garde examination of America's obsession with voyeurism.** This production reached new levels of sophistication in terms of using multi-media techniques for Holden's drama program.

Staff changes: In fall 2012, Jenn Payne completed her training and officially became a Co-Director. We also brought on a new academic instructor, Orinda resident Katie Montgomery, who teaches Algebra, Chemistry, US Studies (the History of Jazz), English: Metaphor and Meaning, College Empowerment, and a graphic novel appreciation course.

In August 2012, we took the entire school on our maiden canoe trip to start off the year. We took to the water again in May when a large group of students took part in **our first ever white water rafting trip** which was a huge success.



We are proud to say that **Holden now offers 3 lab sciences: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.** In addition, we now offer teacher supported online Spanish classes.



A Message from the Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dear Friends of Holden,

My name is Harry Wittenberg and I am the President of the Board of Trustees of Holden High School. I have been on the Board since 2007 for one main reason – to support a school that literally works miracles.

For many, seeing a miracle is believing in it, and I testify that I have seen it. I've seen it with my son Max, a former student who, before coming to Holden was directionless, hated school, and was on a path to a very difficult and hapless life. And then he came to Holden, where in two years time, he was transformed into someone who loved learning and developed the self-confidence to face his future. Today, he is an independent, productive, and very happy young adult who is making his way in the world doing just what he wants to do.

And speaking of miracles, Holden had some of its own in the past two years. When I wrote the annual letter two years ago, we were all a bit nervous about how the economy was going to affect parents' abilities to have their kids attend Holden. I can proudly say that **we had a banner year in 2012-13!** We had more students than we have had in some time, all grades were covered, and we received substantially more inquiries than in the past.

How did this happen? I believe it was the convergence of the energy, courage, and determination of Holden's staff. Everything they do is so focused on the school and the students that, to them, it's business as usual.

But to the Board and me, they are truly working miracles. We have the best visibility to potential parents and students than we've ever had by investing in our online presence. Once parents become aware of our school, they find out that **we are WASC accredited**, which gives them the confidence that their kids can move on to a wide variety of colleges. Then they find out about Holden's focus on counseling, student centered curriculum, emotional support, and small class sizes. Adding to those small miracles, **we were also able to increase our space** by the incredible generosity of Frank Baldwin, Minister, the Sewing Club, and other parishioners of the Orinda Community Church.

But these years were not without their challenges, the main one being the retirement of Joel Weber, the Director who has been with Holden for almost 40 years. We could not imagine how the school would be the same without him. But through careful planning, long notice, and Joel's constant assurance, the staff is ready and able to deliver on Holden's promise. **We did have a wonderful celebration for Joel that was at the scale of his amazing contributions.** We will miss him dearly (he has agreed to serve on the Advisory Board, so thankfully his guidance will continue to support Holden for a while).

Now my focus is towards you, dear



reader and supporter. Even though we've realized some great successes this year, Holden could not be what it is without you. **Whether you are a parent, board member, contributor, or just cheerleader, Holden needs you more than ever.** So please, find any and every way you can to contribute to making more miracles happen. And this year, whatever you give, dig deeper because the rewards are tremendous, for you personally, and for our school.

Harry Wittenberg

"And then he came to Holden, where in two years time, he was transformed into someone who loved learning and developed the self-confidence to face his future."

Internships: Helping the Community, Preparing for the Future



Preparing students for their futures is a key piece of what happens at Holden.

The Transition/College Counseling Program ensures that each student has a concrete plan when he or she leaves Holden. Internships and/or community volunteering are central to every student's Holden experience. This past year, Holden students interned at a wide variety of places including the Exploratorium in San Francisco and the Lake Merritt Boating Center in Oakland.

David MacDannald, now a senior at Holden, worked as a volunteer intern for 4 hours each week during the past school year at The Crucible, a nonprofit industrial/fire arts and education organization in West Oakland. David's keen

interest in blacksmithing turned into a paid summer internship working with 12 – 15-year-olds at the Crucible's Fired Up Youth Camp. In addition to learning advanced blacksmithing skills, David learned about teaching and working with kids. "I learned that kids need different teaching styles. Kids need to learn by trying, making mistakes and then giving it another try in a different way." Once he's 18, David plans to apply for a Teaching Assistant position at The Crucible. David's longer term plans include studying to become a mechanical engineer.

David MacDannald, Holden senior, instructs a class in blacksmithing at The Crucible in Oakland.

Other volunteer and paid internships that Holden students completed during the 2012-13 school year:

Keenan- Camp Counselor, Berkeley Parks and Recreation

Nikaela- Pickles Preschool

Noah and Millie - Camp Counselors for Orinda Parks and Recreation

Dash - Kennel Attendant at Wunderbar Kennel

Terin- Recreation Aid, Lake Merritt Boating Center

Austin - The Exploratorium

Sarah- Hospice Thrift Store

Thank you to our Supporters!

Without your generosity, Holden High School could not help teenagers through the challenges of the high school years. Together, we are changing lives and giving students the opportunity to flourish in a supportive environment.



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"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

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Holden High School: 40+ Years of Non-traditional Education



Students participating in Transition Program Field trip to apply for jobs.

For over 40 years, Holden has been a safe haven for non-traditional learners.

We are a great fit for:

- Unique teens that need a school to fit them instead of vice versa
- Students who have developed a negative relationship to school or learning
- Students who want to go to college but who aren't thriving in high pressure environments
- Teens who need a safe environment because they have been bullied or have not found acceptance
- Students with mild to moderate learning issues

Please spread the word about Holden and all it has to offer. School tours can be scheduled by phone or on-line.

Please call us at 925-254-0199 or visit our website at holdenhigh.org.