WELCOME BACK, POST OAK COMMUNITY!
Many thanks to outgoing members of the Board of Trustees:

Rakesh Agrawal, Brett Busby, Katie Orr,
as well as past Board Chair Melissa Coleman,
who became an emeritus trustee.

Get to know our new members in this month’s Board Brief from Board Chair Manolo Sanchez on page 7.

POPA Welcome Dinner
Tuesday, October 10, 2017 | 6:30–9:30 p.m.
Pre-reception at 6:00 p.m. for new parents, faculty, board, and room parents.
Cohen House, Rice University
6100 Main Street #2, Houston, TX 77005
Visit the link on our website to RSVP for this community-wide event.

On the Cover
Primary students are filling the gym with a gentle hum and the joy of learning.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for updates, photos, and more:

www.facebook.com/thepostoakschool and Instagram.com/postoakschool/
and twitter.com/postoakschool
and twitter.com/postoakhs

2017–2018
Post Oak
Board of Trustees

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I had prepared a different article for the first Post newsletter issue of the 2017–18 school year. However, as all of us have experienced, the last few weeks have thrown original plans up in the air. We were looking forward to starting this year “construction-free,” but that was before Harvey paid us a visit.

Post Oak’s story the past few weeks echoes the stories we have heard throughout Houston. It is a story of courage, resilience, compassion, generosity, community, and the power of togetherness. All of this was evident at the Bissonnet Campus as we dealt with our flooded building, remediation, restoration, and relocation to start classes again for our younger students. Everyone came together to reopen the doors for the children. The Post Oak community also made sure to take care of our families who lost so much—homes, cars, and belongings. You helped them find temporary housing, cleaned out their homes, fed them, brought them clothes, gave them cars, and watched their children while they tried to re-group. We were connected, we were together, and we were strong.

My lesson in leadership was a profound one during this time. As I felt the reverberations that Harvey had on the Post Oak community—503 students, 365 families, 100 staff members—there were moments that were simply overwhelming. Early on in this process, I was razor-focused on solutions and strategies for moving forward, knowing that everyone was counting on me. There was a bell curve to this experience, and at its peak, when I thought I might break, I realized that I was forgetting a basic Montessori lesson: ask for help. It was easy to give help—to see a need and to rush to those reaching towards me. It took a much longer time for me to say, “I need help.”

This is a wonderful part of a Montessori classroom—the permission, the expectation, the freedom to not have to have all the answers, to not have to do it all by yourself, to be able to look around and say, “Look at all these people in my community who can help me.” Many of us grew up in a school culture where no one wanted to be wrong, or make a mistake. It was taboo, embarrassing, and felt like failure. That culture was pervasive when I began teaching at a traditional school in Chicago, where a colleague said to me, “Never let them know you’ve made a mistake.” That was a lot of pressure.

When I became a Montessori teacher, at first, I approached teaching with this same mindset. In the Montessori training, we were told that our job was to inspire learning, give presentations, and “bring the universe to the child who was interested in everything.” There it was again, the pressure to know everything. In time, I learned that teachers don’t do it alone. In fact, the students were going to do most of it themselves.

Montessori students ask questions, engage in a project or a piece of work, use all their energies, and eventually, like all of us, they get stuck. They know that their peers, their teachers, their parents are resources for help. These students are not afraid to not know something and ask for help. They know they can count on others, and that this is foundational to a Montessori community.

In the midst of the devastation, changes to plans, interruptions to school, and all the construction, we continue to find lessons that Harvey has provided. We can be grateful for the reminder of the power of asking for help. Contrary to old beliefs, it’s not a sign of weakness, but rather one of strength. We are immensely grateful for the help we received. Thank you to our entire Post Oak community for answering the call. •
by Sydney ♦ High School Student

From April 15 to May 7, my dad and I went on an around-the-world trip/competition called the Global Scavenger Hunt. Ten teams of two completed scavenges in 12 countries. We had no prior idea of the destinations and were not allowed to use phones or the internet for any competitive advantage—no Google, no TripAdvisor, nothing!

Teams included another daddy-daughter duo, retired couples, long-time friends, and even complete strangers. Travelers were lawyers, nurses, physicians, professors, Hollywood studio execs, movie actresses, and of course, a belly dancing teacher.

When we arrived in a new country, the amazing husband-wife organizers handed out booklets with 10 to 500 scavenges. Each scavenger was something you had to learn, see, or do, usually requiring the help of locals. The harder the scavenger, the higher the points, with no way to do them all.

Some examples of scavenges: Take four modes of public transportation in Bangkok; ride a bike to a specific countryside windmill in the Netherlands; swim in a remote hot spring in Iceland; find the oldest Portuguese temple in Macau. Most of them seemed insane at first, but once we finished them, we thought, “That wasn’t so hard,” as we were covered in sweat and bug bites, or freezing, and always exhausted.

In Vietnam, we had to find and ride a water buffalo. Riding buffaloes seemed crazy, even to locals. Doing this involved off-roading to a remote village and convincing a herder to allow us to do this. Using hand gestures. At night.

In Sri Lanka, we had to climb Adam’s Peak (the holiest site in Sri Lanka) and be at the top before sunrise. That meant we were up at 1:30 a.m. to climb the seven kilometers to the top by 5:00 a.m. This was by far the hardest physical scavenger of them all. About 3km into the 5km of steep stairs I thought I was going to cry. But seeing that sunrise at the top made the whole climb worth it.

In Egypt, we had to “be invited to a local’s house for dinner.” We met Mohammed at a family art store, who insisted his mom was the best cook. He invited us to his home in a rural village behind the military border where foreigners aren’t allowed. This village was very different than what I am used to. Our tuk-tuk driver was 12, and an eight-year-old boy drove a donkey carriage. It seemed odd to me that boys this young were already working like this. For almost everyone in the village, my dad and I were the first westerners they had ever seen. The only English they knew was “Hello” and “I love you.” As we walked around the village, a parade of children followed us yelling those two phrases—they were all so young and adorable!

I have so many more stories! The trip was a once in a lifetime experience FOR SURE, and something I appreciate more and more every day that goes by! And my resume now says “2017 World’s Greatest Traveler.”

If you would like to see the video I presented to the high school: click this link, or go to YouTube and search “Global Scavenger Hunt 2017.”
Gratitude Abounds

Leave it to a hurricane and flood waters to reaffirm and remind us of the strength and spirit of the Post Oak Community. With deep gratitude, we thank all of you who lent a hand, swung a hammer, lugged boxes and furniture, or brought snacks to keep everyone’s spirits up. There was so much work to do in the days after Harvey; everyone did what they could, and ALL OF IT MATTERED. When POPA Co-Chair Nicole Pedersen set up a three-day donation drive for the city at our middle school, the constant flow of people dropping off items and helping to pack and load the items was nothing short of astonishing. 10% of Post Oak families flooded; those homes needed muscle to rip out sheetrock and flooring, and Post Oak volunteers responded with hammers and crowbars in hand. Recommendations were given for places to stay, contractors, builders, and the location for the last dehumidifiers in town.

Post Oak parent Carlie Yoo kept parents well connected on a Post Oak Facebook group along with setting up much-needed meal trains. As the plan emerged for our displaced classrooms, administration asked for volunteers, and the response was so great we had to turn people away.

A variety of organizations also offered needed support. Our good neighbor, Episcopal High School’s Head of School Ned Smith, didn’t hesitate to offer classroom space to our Elementary students. “Just tell us what you need,” Ned responded to Maura Joyce. Sarah Moudry of Studio June was also ready to provide the ideal space for our Full Day YCC students. And while staff was trying to get things back on track, Jacqueline Kenneally of Artmix, along with the Rosenstrach family, offered perfect venues to provide daily care for staff children.

“We have a car if someone needs it.”
“I’ll call families in that class to check in.”
“We have storage space to offer!”
“I’ll be there tomorrow at noon to move furniture!”
“I can look after students at home until we start up again!”
“We have a casita if that is helpful to someone.”

It was! Each offer was helpful, truly appreciated, and just another example of people taking care of each other. I love this community.

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director

Austin Montessori School volunteers help set up the Primary classrooms in the gym.
Welcome to Post Oak

Post Oak welcomes Murad Mahmood to the Business Office team. Murad will be taking Alicia Mouton’s role as the AP/AR Specialist. He has a bachelor’s in economics and a master’s in business administration, along with extensive experience in financial accounting. Murad is also a Post Oak parent, father of [redacted] in YCC, and husband of Anita Taj Mahmood, a lead teacher for Lower Elementary.

Shopping=Giving

Tea Collection has a great deal on children’s clothing during their School Days event from Oct. 9 to 16. Get free shipping (6 to 10 business days), 15% off your order, AND Tea will donate 15% of the order total to our school! teacollection.com/

But that’s not all! Whether buying groceries at Randalls, or gifts and school supplies at Target, your purchases can benefit Post Oak. Grandparents, alumni, and friends are all welcome to participate in the programs. We truly appreciate all your support. Happy shopping! 


High School Admission Open House

Tues., Oct. 3 at 7 p.m.
1010 Autrey Street

Join us and bring or tell a friend!

SAVE THE DATE FOR

The Post Oak Sing

Wednesday, December 20
6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

A night of community and chorus!

All students...all parents...all faculty...together.
By Manolo Sanchez, Post Oak Parent, Board Chair

As our two campuses welcome 503 "learners" from 365 families, The Post Oak School’s Board of Trustees is busy gearing up for a year of strategic planning. After the graduation of our first class of High School seniors, the renovation of the Bissonnet Campus, and the successful transition of the head of school, it is time to define the key priorities of the Post Oak community for the coming years.

The Board is also welcoming newly elected trustees who will volunteer their time and energy to help plan “for the benefit of the current generation of students and those generations that will follow”—as stated in the Board’s mission. The Committee on Trustees, currently chaired by Alison Wong, identifies individuals whose skills, background, and areas of expertise can contribute to the needs of the Board. This year, we are fortunate to add the following new trustees:

**Rajesh Chelapurah**, the father of a Primary and a Lower Elementary student, is the founder and president of CEERA Investments, an asset management firm. Rajesh earned his MBA in Finance at Tulane University and completed his Bachelor of Engineering at the Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS), Pilani, India. He is currently a member of the Houston Society of Financial Analysts and the CFA Institute and has been a Charter Member of TiE (The Indus Entrepreneurs), Houston Chapter.

**Rona Yoffe Sonabend**, the mother of a Primary and a Lower Elementary student, is a pediatric endocrinologist at Texas Children’s Hospital. She also serves as an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine and is the Medical Director of Clinical Systems Integration Process Improvement.

**Mark Martin**, the father of two Upper Elementary students, is president and principal broker of 2M Realty, a real estate and property management firm. He is also the CEO of the online data firm NetMass. He is the past president of EO—Houston (Entrepreneurs’ Organization). Mark is a graduate of Texas A&M.

**Erin Busby**, the mother of an Upper Elementary and a Lower Elementary student, is an attorney and appellate specialist with interest in constitutional issues faced by schools. She is an adjunct professor at The University of Texas School of Law. Formerly with Bracewell & Giuliani, she is a graduate of William and Mary (BA) and the Harvard Law School (JD).

It is my honor to serve as chair of the Board, after eight years of work as a trustee and four as chair of the Finance Committee. I very much look forward to helping steer the Board’s work for the next two years.

Post Oak’s strategic planning process will involve all of our key stakeholders: staff, students, and parents. Many of you have already contributed by completing surveys and providing thoughtful answers. Staff and trustees have done considerable work over the summer. Please expect invitations to answer surveys and participate in focus groups. We look forward to everyone’s contributions.

The Board conducted its back-to-school retreat on Friday, August 25. As we were finalizing our agenda for the evening, Trustees and school administrators rushed to their homes to brace for Hurricane Harvey’s landfall. Our discussion around the future of the school was overshadowed by the uncertainties surrounding the storm. The devastation brought by the hurricane reminds us of the need to plan in the context of unknown challenges. However, Houston’s solidarity and the united response of our community also inspires us to embrace the unique opportunities on the horizon for our innovative premier Montessori school.
From flood waters to a fresh school start and smiling faces—here’s a look at what’s happened at Post Oak last month.
Parent and Child Classes
Toilet Learning
Parent Coaching
Nanny Training

www.thestudiojune.com
5217 Bellaire Blvd
903-600-5863

drawpaintsculpt
fall/spring/summer semester art classes

classes for toddlers to teens:
year round art classes • school closure and holiday camps • summer camps • parties for any occasion • party rental space

fallsemester2017
august 22 - december 16

1 august 22 - 26
2 august 29 - september 2
3 september 5 - 9
4 september 12 - 16
5 september 19 - 23
6 september 26 - 30
7 october 3 - 7
8 october 10 - 14
9 october 17 - 21
10 october 24 - 28
11 october 31 - november 4
12 november 7 - 11
13 november 14 - 18
14 november 28 - december 2
15 december 5 - 9
16 december 12 - 18

Our thanks to Studio June and ArtMix!
NOTICE BOARD

CALENDAR CHANGES

Parenting the Love & Logic Way: date TBD
Redirecting Children’s Behavior: date TBD
NHS Induction Ceremony: 10/2
Intro to Elementary: canceled
POPA Welcome Dinner: 10/10
Elementary Open House: TBD
PSAT: 10/11
All-school photo: 10/12
FISH meetings on 10/12 & 10/13: canceled
Family Fun Day: 11/4
Montessori Journey: date TBD

An updated version of the Family Calendar is available online under Calendar ▶ School Calendar.

MY BACKPACK MOBILE APP

Parents, you can view the school directory via your Apple or Android device. Go to App Store for iPhone or Google Play store for Android, search for “My BackPack Mobile,” and install the app. The Post Oak School code is postoakschool. Use the same user name and password as My BackPack.

The Getting Started with My BackPack User Guide is found on the school’s website.

PARENT-TEACHER FALL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Conference days are October 20 and November 10. If you have not done so, please sign up at www.postoakschool.org ▶ For Parents ▶ Schedule/View a Parent-Teacher Conference and use your My BackPack login.

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PHOTOS

Oct. 16–19 at BC
YCC through Elementary

Oct. 24 at MDC
Middle & High School

OCTOBER IS ANNUAL FUND MONTH

The drive kicks off Monday, October 16.
Look for details from chairs, Nikayla and Aaron Thomas, and class captains.
Thank you for your gifts in support of the school!

ABOUT THE POST

The Post appears every first Monday of the month during the regular school year.
You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org) by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday one week prior to publication. Please direct all requests for permission to reprint articles to the communications coordinator.

The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and is accredited by both the International Baccalaureate® Programme (IBO) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

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Museum District Campus: 1010 Autrey St., Houston, TX 77006 • Tel: 832-538-1988 • Fax: 832-538-1926
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To avoid the school’s email communications arriving in your junk mail folder, please add info@postoakschool.org to your safe sender list or address book/contacts.