

# *Cultivating Belonging*



**REDWOODCITY**  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



### Mission

RCEF’s mission is to increase the academic performance of underserved K-8 public school students in Redwood City.

### Approach

Our goal for educational equity involves eliminating barriers to student well-being and success. We are committed to prioritizing support for three schools rich in potential and resilience. These schools serve a disproportionate number of students experiencing homelessness, foster care, language barriers, and economic hardship. While most schools within the Redwood City School District have Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) that can fundraise between \$100K and \$700K annually, these schools have no PTOs to raise funds for critical unmet needs. RCEF sees a tremendous opportunity to cultivate community support and resources to meet these schools’ vital needs.

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1600+ STUDENTS

benefited from our programs  
in the 2023-2024 school year

17 VOLUNTEER

board of directors

\$321 INVESTED

on average per Hoover, Garfield, and Taft  
student for the 2023-2024 school year

41 YEARS

of service since the Redwood City Education  
Foundation’s inception

### A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Alana Ballon



Florence Ortiz



### Dear Friends and Supporters,

This past year, our mission was to foster a sense of belonging for every student in Redwood City by building strong partnerships with district families, community organizations, and financial supporters who share our vision. These collaborations, combined with the efforts of our dedicated staff and board, enabled us to support our three schools – Hoover, Garfield, and Taft – by providing mental health services, academic support, and enrichment opportunities to over 1,600 students.

For the first time, RCEF held two districtwide events in addition to our financial support of the schools. The RCEF Equity Summit brought together over 75 students and parents from Redwood City to connect and learn from each other. We were inspired by the students’ creativity and engagement on identity and inclusion topics. And were encouraged by the support of local businesses sponsors. Our TK/Kinder Fair attracted over 100 families and showcased school leaders from across the district, allowing incoming families to learn about our campuses and community resources, including a coupon book from local businesses!

We are grateful to the Redwood City Rotary Club, which created an incredible Wine Walk event that engaged over 20 downtown businesses and drew over 300 people

to support RCEF! We are also thankful for establishing RCEF’s inaugural Advisory Board, which has enlisted subject matter experts from various fields to offer strategic input and guidance, fostering a sense of community and encouraging continued engagement.

As we start the new school year, we thank Sara Alexander for her exceptional leadership as Executive Director over the past two years. Her dedication has driven our initiatives and led to lasting positive impact. As she transitions to a new role as a full-time mental health counselor in the community, she will continue to serve on our Advisory Board, enriching our investment in our students.

This year, for the first time since 2019, we’ve outlined a vision for supporting students with the greatest needs across all our schools. We’re excited to share our expansion plans for 2024-2025 and beyond, showing the potential for significant achievements in the future.

With Gratitude,

*Alana K Ballon* *Florence Ortiz*

Alana Ballon, *Board President*  
Florence Ortiz, *Interim Director*



# SUPPORT FOR TARGET SCHOOLS

RCEF uses an equity-based approach to grantmaking, empowering families and school leaders to shape funding priorities. We cultivate programs based on each school’s unique needs, aligning them with RCEF’s priorities of nurturing students’ holistic well-being and fostering personal and academic success.

## Student Wellness

### Bilingual Mental Health Counseling with One Life Counseling

In its fourth year, this initiative provided crucial support by offering bilingual therapy in schools and breaking down barriers related to transportation, financial constraints, and linguistic differences. The program promoted social-emotional awareness, facilitated prevention and intervention programs, and maintained regular communication between schools and families to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

#### COUNSELING FACTS IN THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR:

##### 3 COUNSELORS

contracted through One Life Counseling

##### 30 HOURS

of counseling provided per week per counselor

##### 30+ LESSONS

focusing on social-emotional learning were conducted

##### 990 K-8 STUDENTS

sought and received counseling services



#### Garfield Community School

*“Working at Garfield was a beautiful experience! I have always dreamed of working at a place where I can connect culturally. I’m so grateful to use my native language and connect with the Garfield community. We had so many changes occur this school year; it was a great learning experience. Our community was able to adapt to the changes effortlessly, and it shows the strength that Garfield has.”*

- Andrea Molina, School-based Therapist at Garfield

#### Hoover Community School

*“Supporting elementary and middle school students [has allowed me to] create a safe and supportive environment where students feel heard and understood, helping them develop coping skills, improve emotional regulation, and build stronger relationships. My experience at Hoover has reinforced my passion for school-based therapy...”*

- Alexandra Rodriguez, School-based Therapist at Hoover

#### Taft Community School

*“I have had the privilege of working closely with newcomer students, and it has been incredibly fulfilling to see how integrating my native language, Spanish, and Latino culture has supported them. Watching these students navigate and adjust to their new environment with increasing confidence and resilience has truly warmed my soul... I am immensely proud of our students’ progress and the supportive community we have built together.”*

- Esmeralda Alcala, School-based Therapist at Taft

### Behavioral Specialist & Positive School Culture

RCEF funded a Behavioral Specialist at Hoover School to help maintain a safe student environment. Ms. Nally, a certified special education teacher, worked directly with 25 students in 6 high-need classrooms, helping the students overcome challenging behaviors and mental health needs.

*“When working with Ms. Nally, she will help me identify what is going on for me. Sometimes, she will help me figure out what is wrong and what is stopping me from doing my work. She is supportive.”*  
- 7th Grade Student, Hoover Community School

Ms. Nally collaborated with counselors and Hoover’s leadership team to enhance the implementation of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. She oversaw the weekly Husky Mart, where students traded Golden Paw Tickets for incentive items.

*“The Husky Golden Paw Awards have been an invaluable tool in affirming student behavior that aligns with our school’s core values of being safe, respectful, and responsible.”*  
- 2nd Grade Teacher, Hoover Community School

*“When the students know the Mart is coming, they get excited to take the collection of paw awards they have earned and shop. It’s an incentive program that is working because once I give one student a paw award, others automatically start stepping up.”*  
- Kindergarten Teacher, Hoover Community School



The Husky Chill Zone, introduced in September 2024, also provided students with a safe space to relax and manage their emotions. Since its launch, the Chill Zone has had 150 student visits, with students typically spending 10-15 minutes there before returning to class. 90% of students reported feeling better after using the Chill Zone.

*“I like that the Chill Zone is stress-free. If I’m down, I go there to take a break, and then I feel motivated to go back to class.”*  
- 8th Grade Student, Hoover Community School

The combined efforts have significantly improved students’ emotional regulation, participation in school activities, and sense of community. The Husky Mart and Golden Paw Tickets have promoted positive behavior and student responsibility. Ms. Nally’s SEL initiatives have enhanced social-emotional skills, promoting a more peaceful school environment and supporting academic success.





# Academic Support

## Math & English Language Academies with College Advising Prep

While the program was intended to increase math literacy, number skills, and problem-solving skills for students who are 2-3 years below grade level in math, the program has developed a great reputation that many students proactively reached out to the community school coordinator, teachers, and the principal requesting to be added to a Reading or Math Academy group. Students saw that when they ask for help, they get it, as the program expanded to include all students interested in receiving support. After 6-10 months of participation in the College Advising Preparatory (CAP) learning academies, students exhibited at least one year's grade-level growth in their academic skills.

### COLLEGE ADVISING PREP FACTS:

#### 70 STUDENTS

in 3rd-5th and 8th grade received math support each week for 2 hours

#### 50 STUDENTS

in 3rd-5th grade received reading/literacy support each week for 2 hours

#### 5 STUDENTS

were seen 1:1 for 50 minutes each week

#### 25 STUDENTS

in 2nd-5th grade participated in the CAP spelling bee

#### 4 QUARTERLY LITERARY MAGAZINES

of Garfield student work including photo essays, paragraphs, excerpts, and poems were published and distributed to staff and students

*"We are seeing students who couldn't read at the start of their time with us now being able to put together sounds and form sentences. They can read longer words. One student didn't know his numbers when we started with him two years ago, and now he is doing multiplication problems and arrays and fractions. Even third graders are doing more complicated three-digit by one-digit multiplication. It's incredible to see how much they've grown."*

- Layla Ouk, CAP Executive Director

## Phonics and Language Curriculum

Phonics is crucial for children as it lays the foundation for effective reading and spelling. This Garfield School program aimed to improve student literacy and reading skills using phonics-based reading materials from FlyLeaf Publishing. These books provided systematic support and are aligned with the California Reading & Literature Project (CRLP) system, focusing on various phonics patterns and multisyllabic words for grades K-5. Teachers used these books for targeted small-group instruction and independent reading sessions, allowing students to practice reading and decoding skills.

## Literacy Retention with Project READ

This program supported Garfield 4th-5th graders who were 1-2 years below grade level in reading comprehension and vocabulary. It provided a fun environment for practicing reading skills with tutors from the Redwood City Public Library, leading to all students advancing in reading levels. The program promoted a love for reading and helped students develop confidence, contributing to their academic success and personal growth.

## Reading Intervention Specialist

70% of students who received support advanced one level in their reading skills. The bilingual reading intervention specialist at Taft School supported 1st-5th graders needing extra help with reading. Over the 2023-24 school year, this teacher conducted more than 100, 30-minute sessions. Many parents appreciated the positive growth and requested that their children continue participating. The school promoted reading in parent newsletters and provided books for summer reading.

## Community Tutoring with Healthy Cities Tutoring

Healthy Cities Tutoring brought community tutors to Taft School to improve academic success, increase engagement, and boost self-esteem for students. 12 teens from Boys & Girls' Club of the Peninsula Keystone Club, Menlo School, and Girls Middle School trained to tutor students, focusing on helping them become proficient in English. The sessions included interactive aloud, partner reading, English Language Development (ELD) activities, and group games. The community tutors supported English learners, fostering a sense of belonging and creating meaningful connections, enhancing academic performance, and promoting active participation in the classroom.

*"We start our sessions by reviewing the basic math skills with card games or multiplication bingo [which] helped my student visualize homework problems, especially when adding fractions and calculating the volume of a box. My favorite part of working with my student is seeing her face light up when she understands a new math concept and [can] complete the homework with confidence."*

- Volunteer Tutor, Healthy Cities Tutoring



# Thriving Communities

## Back-to-School Supplies

During the Maze Days kickoff to the 2023-2024 school year, Hoover students eagerly received backpacks filled with essential school supplies. This annual event sets the tone for a successful academic year. It fosters community and preparedness among students as they embark on their educational journey at Hoover School.

## Family Partnership Activities

For RCEF and Garfield School, our families are a vital part of the community, and families must see themselves as partners with the schools in their children's education and development. Through various engagement strategies, parent participation at the School Site Council (SSC), English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), and Cafecito has grown over the last three years. Parents welcome and look forward to being involved in their children's education.

The goal of family partnership activities was to build literacy and math skills, explore visual and performing arts, and promote family learning. Garfield's Literacy Night included a literacy presentation, read-aloud sessions, guidelines for student comprehension, a book overview, and student engagement activities with prizes. 470 Garfield students in TK-8th grade received Scholastic bilingual book kits, totaling 3,760 books distributed. The event was well received, demonstrating the community's interest in more events with take-home resources and practical strategies for families.





# ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RCEF is dedicated to fostering belonging through community action. This year, we have focused on breaking down divisions and promoting a unified community in Redwood City. We aim to strengthen our schools and empower the community by celebrating diversity and removing barriers to opportunities.

## RCEF Equity Summit

### A Family Discussion on Diverse Identities and Inclusive Communities

The annual RCEF Equity Summit raises awareness about educational equity and inspires actionable steps toward making a difference. This March, we brought together students and families from all the RCSD schools for a day of reflection and action at the CZI Community Space. Participants engaged in bilingual discussions and diverse activities to foster community strength. There were sensory rooms and activities for all abilities to ensure inclusivity. We extend heartfelt thanks to our generous donors who supported this event.

Parent attendees unanimously desired more district-wide family events, with 70% gaining new insights about their children. Among students, 91% enjoyed and fully participated in the activities, with 96% valuing the opportunity to learn from and connect with peers from different backgrounds. The summit highlighted the importance of creating welcoming environments for all, reflecting our commitment to nurturing inclusive communities where everyone feels valued and respected.

## Wine Walk

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Redwood City, we proudly hosted our inaugural Wine Walk, garnering over 300 participants for an evening of community, friendship, and support for education. Held in downtown Redwood City, the event featured local cuisine paired with exquisite wines from 18 participating businesses, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with laughter and camaraderie.

Participants enjoyed reconnecting with old friends and making new acquaintances, all while supporting RCEF’s mission to enhance educational opportunities for our students. The Wine Walk celebrated our community’s spirit and diversity and raised critical awareness and funds for our educational initiatives. It exemplified our shared belief in the transformative power of education and the strength of community support.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all participants, donors, and sponsors whose generosity and enthusiasm made the Wine Walk a resounding success. Your support enables us to continue fostering educational excellence and building a thriving community in Redwood City.

## TK/Kinder Resource Fair

The first TK/Kinder Resource Fair in May aimed to introduce parents to the district and RCEF. During the two afternoon sessions, over 100 future RCSD parents gathered to meet each other, ask questions of their prospective school principals and PTO leaders, and learn about RCEF’s collaborative efforts with the City and School District.

Attendees also received informational packets and a coupon booklet featuring many Redwood City businesses and recreational opportunities. We sincerely appreciate the local businesses who generously contributed coupons for the booklet. The fair highlighted our commitment to creating an inclusive community where all students can thrive and all families feel welcome and supported.

## Community Presence

We collaborate with school leaders through initiatives including Cafecitos (Coffee with the Principals), the English Learner Advisory Committee, and the School Site Council. Additionally, we support community events such as the Winter Kermes, Literacy Night, and Day of the Child. RCEF is an active member of the North Fair Oaks/Redwood City Community Collaboration for Children’s Success (CCCS) Neighborhood Action Team, prioritizing equity and inclusivity for all residents.

## Collaborative Alliances

We sincerely appreciate the organizations that supported RCEF this year in advancing our mission to foster equitable learning environments in Redwood City.

Our partnerships with schools including **Adelante-Selby, North Star Academy, Roy Cloud,** and **Orion Alternative School** strengthen our efforts to enhance educational opportunities and address the diverse needs of our community through auctions, events, PTO meetings, and donations.

We started the school year with a Pizza Fundraiser at **State of Mind Pizzeria**. Many parents from the district came together for pizza and a good time. We also partnered with **Sports Basement of Redwood City** to offer discounts to our RCSD families and community members, supporting valuable programs for local students.

Special thanks to the **Rotary Club of Redwood City** for organizing the Wine Walk and demonstrating their dedication to community service and philanthropy. This aligns with our mission to improve educational outcomes and promote community well-being through collaborative initiatives.

We thank **Emerald Lake Country Club** for supporting our auction, which benefits our schools and underscores their commitment to fostering a sense of belonging among members and the local community.

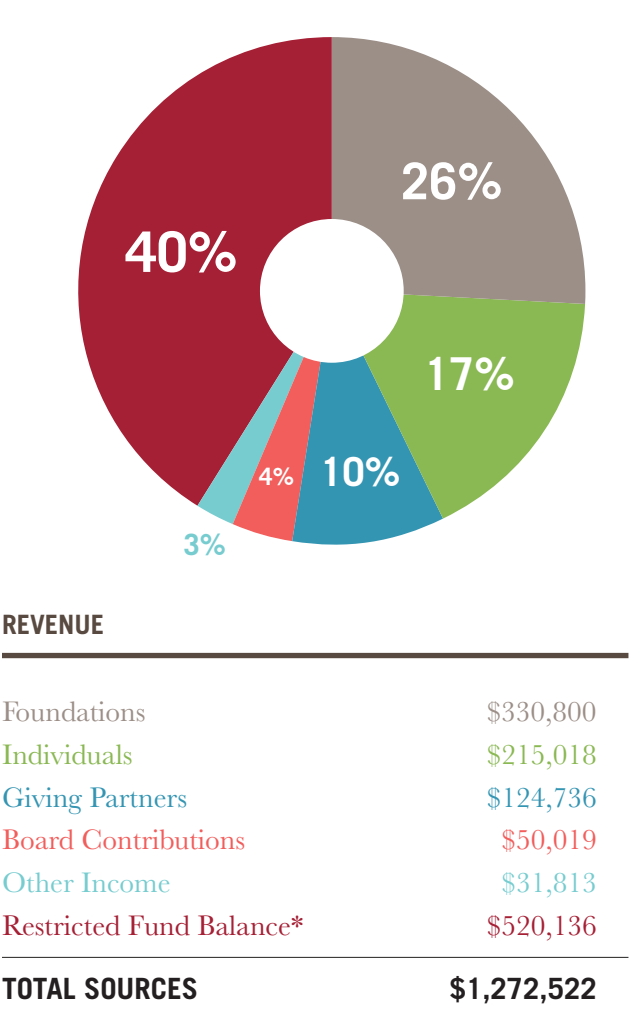
Thanks to the support of the **Redwood City School District**, RCEF hosted two new events this year. We anticipate continuing these two community events – one to welcome incoming TK and kindergarten families and one that brings together families from across the district for personal reflection and discussion.



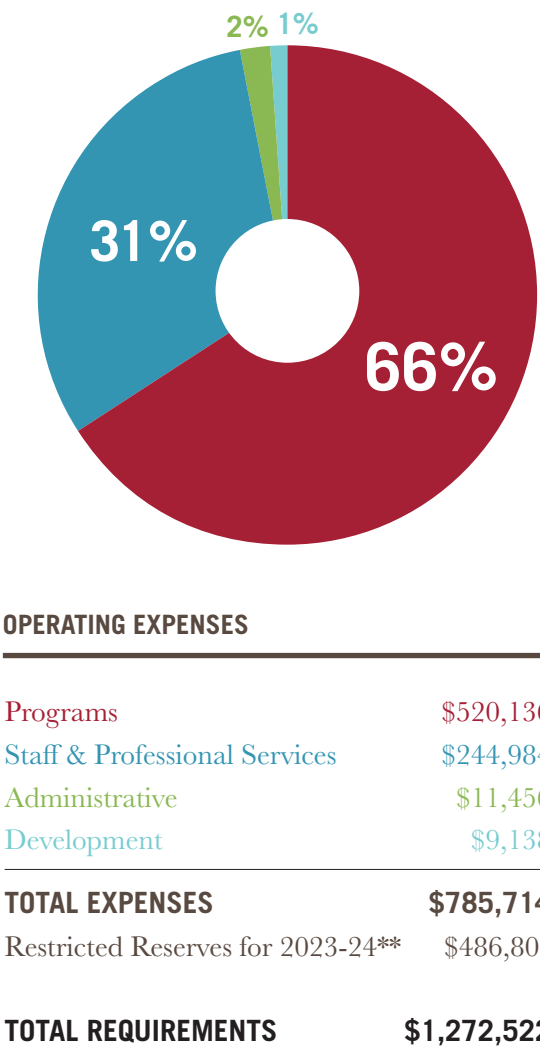


# FINANCIALS

We prioritize transparency regarding the Redwood City Education Foundation’s financial performance. We thank our donors for their ongoing support in providing educational opportunities and bridging resource gaps for our student’s education.



\* Restricted program funding from 2021-2022 for 2022-2023 programs.



\*\* Carry over amount to fund programs in 2024-2025 school year.

# GIVING PARTNERS

We are grateful for the investment of our RCEF Giving Partners, whose generous contributions help foster an inclusive environment where every student and family in Redwood City can thrive. We are honored to collaborate with partners dedicated to fostering equity and prosperity in our community.

INTERESTED  
IN PARTNERING  
WITH US?  
[www.tinyurl.com/  
Partner-with-RCEF](http://www.tinyurl.com/Partner-with-RCEF)

\$50,000 +



**Skyline Foundation**  
The Skyline Foundation champions educational equity for students from low-income backgrounds striving to access college education. They partner with RCEF to support three community schools with the greatest need. They believe education is a pathway for children to succeed and become productive members of society.



**Sobrato**  
We are excited to welcome Sobrato as RCEF’s newest giving partner. Their support aims to create a more equitable educational environment, marking a significant step in expanding opportunities for students and families in our community.



**Chan Zuckerberg Initiative**  
The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) creates a fair and just future by accelerating progress in science, education, community, justice, and opportunity. Their invaluable support empowers RCEF to make significant strides towards building a more inclusive and promising tomorrow for our community.

\$25,000 +



Oracle

For over 15 years, Oracle has supported RCEF. This partnership enables RCEF to implement programs addressing educational disparities, integrating advanced technology into classrooms, and preparing students for future careers. Oracle’s grant fosters community engagement, empowering RCEF to expand outreach and promote a more inclusive educational environment.



Google.org

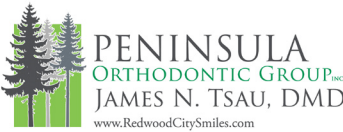
Google.org’s generous grant enables RCEF to expand its reach, implement impactful programs in local schools, provide students with essential resources, and promote educational equity, youth development, and community engagement.



Quest Foundation

Quest Foundation values mental health and education as essential for our youth. We are so grateful to Quest Foundation for providing RCEF with a challenge match that inspires our community to give generously to fund our schools’ critical mental health work.

\$10,000 +



DONORS

Your contributions strengthen our community’s educational ecosystem, fostering unity and inclusion in Redwood City. Together, we create a community where every student can thrive. Thank you for your support and dedication.

\$25,000+

Ben Packer & Aviva Weinberg  
Embarc  
Google Matching Gifts  
Google.org  
Oracle  
Quest Foundation

\$10,000+

David & Rebecca Weekly  
Heather & Adam Hopkins  
Jessica Tsang & Filip Paun  
Katie Goetz & Daniel Weaver  
Measure K Funds: County of San Mateo, District 4  
Rotary Club of Redwood City  
Scandling Family Foundation  
The Lichen Fund

\$5,000+

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Peninsula Orthodontic Group  
Sara & Josh Leslie  
Sares Regis Education and Community Foundation  
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Starship Orion PTO  
Unidos Y Adelante Selby PTO  
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Rachel Flynn & Jason Habbley  
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Skoll Foundation Matching Gift

\$1,000+

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Apple Employees (Via Benevity)  
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Bear Gulch Foundation  
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Dave & Gloria Comfort  
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Dorith & Rory Dooley  
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Ellen McNeil  
Enrique Munoz Torres & Simone Berkowitz  
Erin & Christopher Levins  
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Google Employee (Via Benenvity)  
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Ingrid Hogberg & Daniel Gilley  
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John Baker  
Joseph Vandenorth & Leon Baham  
Kaiser Permanente

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Lydia Le Page  
Marilee & Andreas Schultz  
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Mimi & Jason Turner  
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Nelson Capital Management  
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Squaglia Manufacturing Company  
Stanford Healthcare  
Stanford University  
Government Affairs  
Susanna Ricco  
The Sports Basement  
Thomas Alexander  
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Whitney & Peter Glockner-Black

\$500+

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Vesta  
Vince Kapral  
Woodside Pediatric Dentistry

\$100+

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Richard Kowalczyk  
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Shawn Henderson  
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Nicholas & Emily Rose  
Oracle Matching  
Gifts Program  
Pamela & Ethan Swint  
Paypal Corporate Matching  
Philip & Eleni Maynard  
Phillip Spitzer  
Phuong Chi Tran  
Prentice &  
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Rachel & Marc Fernandez  
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Sara & Phat Rutherford-Quach  
Sara Asher & Daniel Dobson  
Sean Tryder  
Seaport Industrial Association  
Sharon Packer  
Simone Bender  
Thomas Vargas  
Tim & Avery Crofts  
Timothy Nevin  
Willem Koulman  
WorkRamp

UP TO \$100

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Alisa & Neil MacAvoy  
Amy & Yashar Bayani  
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Andrew Tran  
Andris Petriceks  
Anne-Marie & Dave Knokey  
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Caroline Co  
Celia Walker  
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David Lewerenz  
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Farzana Porter  
Florence Ortiz  
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Geoffroy Raby  
Gregory & Magda Hierro  
Han Jun Kim  
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Intel Foundation  
Matching Funds  
Intuitive Surgical  
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Israel Navarrete  
Jacob & Kerianna Creedon  
Jacqueline Stark  
James Fowler  
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Jason Rolland  
Jeanne Rodriguez  
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Jennifer & Camilo Oh-Perez  
Jennifer & Jean-Francois  
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Jiliane Russo Hanley  
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Kevin Truong  
Kristen Pawloski  
Larry Turner  
Laura Pickel  
Linda Merrifield  
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Manou & Beth Serres  
Marc Sasseville  
Marcia Diederich  
Maria & Jamei Reiling Reza  
Marilyn Livingston  
Mark Ankenman &  
Amanda Edmonds  
Martha Beetley  
Mary Jo O'Connor  
Matt & Aubrey Moore  
Matthew Richards  
Meghan & Ken Pirozzoli  
Melanie Tsonas  
Melissa Bowdoin  
Michael & Marilyn Lynch  
Michaela & Brian Coan  
Michele van Zuiden  
Mitch & Krissie Rice  
Nathan Price  
Pamela & John Bartfield  
Patricia Pouncey  
Phyllis Highman  
Phyllis Shepard &  
Carla Dewing  
Rakib Hasan  
Randall Wilburn  
Rebecca Matthias  
Rickey Cirimele  
Rod & Jeanne Panos  
Sanford Daniel  
Scott Jones  
Shirley Schwoerer  
Siarhei Kazakou  
Stuart Chessen  
Sue Jorgensen  
Susan Colon  
Taner & Lisa Bilir  
Theodore Blosser  
Tiffany & Kyle Anderson  
Tiffany Leones  
Valerie Turner (Troop 61910)  
Vicki Babinski  
Yalile & Muricio Barra  
Yesh & Debbie Ballon

BOARD & STAFF

Our board of directors and staff show unwavering dedication and selflessness, nurturing our mission and vision with astute leadership and strategic insight, uplifting countless lives. We are deeply grateful for their invaluable contributions and work during the 2023-2024 school year, embodying the transformative power of collective action and ensuring everyone can thrive.



**Sara Alexander**  
*Executive Director*



**Dr. John Baker**  
*RCSD Superintendent*



**Lilli Milton**  
*Homeless Prenatal Program*



**Florence Ortiz**  
*Associate Manager*



**Wei-ting Chen**  
*Stanford University  
School of Medicine*



**Jessica Osaki**  
*Google*



**Gianina Luna**  
*Bookkeeper*



**Katie Cheng**  
*Meta*



**Ben Packer**  
*Recidiviz*



**Alana Ballon**  
*RCEF President*



**Laura Chiang-Lind**  
*Stanford University*



**Mimi Turner**  
*Institute for  
Corporate Productivity*



**Jessica Tsang**  
*RCEF Vice President  
Tsang Consulting LLC*



**Rachel Cohen**  
*RCSD Parent*



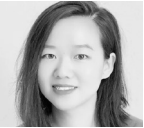
**Chelsea Vargas**  
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**Mike Bolander**  
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County of San Mateo*



**Otoniel Escobar Dancil**  
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**Christina Zhang**  
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