

Treehouse Preschool & Transitional Kindergarten



Staff Profile 2025-2026

***Updated December 2025**

**4000 Redwood Rd
Oakland, CA 94619
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I Believe in Children

I believe in children – little ones, big ones,
chubby and thin ones.
There is faith in their eyes, love in their touch,
hope in their attitude

I thrill with them at life's joys,
run with them through tall grasses,
bow with them in worship,
and hold them close in tragedy.

I believe in children – the fragile dream of yesterday,
life's radiant reality today,
and the vibrant stuff of tomorrow

Yes I believe in children, for wherever I go,
to the mountain village,
industrial center or open country,
I find yesterday's children who were nurtured
in the things of Christ at work
in the building of the kingdom of God.

Author unknown

Treehouse Board

Treehouse was our first choice in preschools when my wife, Frances, and I were looking for a school for our son. We wanted a preschool that would share and demonstrate God's love and plant the seeds of Jesus Christ. Through his years at Treehouse, we saw those seeds being watered and nourished to create a foundation for his faith today.

Our son, Aidyn, is now in high school. During his young, formative years, he made some lasting friendships at Treehouse. He still sees some of his Treehouse friends at First Covenant Church's Kids Camp and his closest friend at his middle school is a friend he met at Treehouse.

We have been attending First Covenant Church since 2006. I have served on FCC's Deacon Board, the Finance Board, as well as Church Boards of churches we used to attend. I currently work as a project manager at Kaiser Permanente's Division of Research. Previously I worked in software development in the aerospace industry and at a couple management-consulting firms. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and a Master of Science Degree in Computer Engineering.

I serve on the Treehouse Board to give back to the preschool that our son greatly benefited from and to support Director Jan. We support the mission and vision of Treehouse and desire to see more children experience the love of Christ through Director Jan, Treehouse teachers, and each staff member.

Blessings,

Terry Chinn

Treehouse Board Chair

Treehouse Board Members:

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- Victoria Hartsock, FCC Christian Education Representative
- Jan Nienu, Treehouse Director
- Joe Lorencz
- Tim Shiau
- Catherine Luce

Treehouse Director



Jan Nienu

I have served as the director of First Covenant Treehouse Preschool since 1997. It is a privilege for me to be at Treehouse and I look forward to working with you.

I started my journey as an early childhood educator many years ago teaching Sunday School children at Christian Cathedral in Oakland and at the First Baptist Church in Richmond, California. While attending school, I also worked part time at various preschools to gain experience. I was blessed with great mentors who showed me the ropes to becoming a successful educator. I received my Bachelors from Patten University, in Oakland, a Master's Degree in education from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley and a Doctorate of Education in Organization and Leadership from the University of San Francisco.

I have my Program Director's Credential from the State of California Commission on Teacher's Credentialing. In addition, I served as a CORPS advisor for Alameda County of Education. I currently serve as a professional Growth Advisor to the early childhood educators in Alameda County and continue to mentor teachers and directors in the Bay Area.

My Hobbies include travelling, hiking, cooking and gardening. I am also a grandma which gives me tremendous happiness. I am a published author with two books available on Amazon. The books are: The first Naga educated in the United States and The Immense Cost of the Naga Struggle from British Rule to Statehood. Another book published with limited edition is "Straight from the Heart" which documented the funny things children have said during my ministry with the children.

Treehouse teachers are loving, caring and dedicated to this profession. Thank you for giving us the privilege to teach/guide your precious little ones as they receive an excellent foundation spiritually, academically, socially and emotionally at Treehouse. Teaching the children to love Jesus is the most important thing which will help them to be successful in life. They will learn to "Seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33 (NIV).

I am available to support you in any way I can. Feel free to email me or stop by my office. It is my prayer that your time at Treehouse will be a blessed one for your family.

Office Manager



Kayla Sancada

Hello! This will be my third year serving at Treehouse. Thank you for all your patience and support. I am excited to serve for many years to come.

I graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor's in Sociology and Minor in Education. I spent 3 years teaching at a private school in SF. Along with teaching I was a class aide, the school librarian, and much more. During the pandemic, I moved from SF to Oakland and I spent a year as a K-5th grade substitute teacher. Two years ago, I worked at Corpus Christi as an Instructional aide for 1st grade.

Recently, I finished additional schooling and received my Certificate in Accounting. I have a cat named Macchiato, who is currently enjoying her old and golden years. In my spare time, I enjoy riding my bike and mountain bike at the parks and trails around the Bay Area. I love all things Pokémon - games, merchandise, etc. I also enjoy baking, and watercolor painting.

I look forward to another wonderful year working with you and your children. Feel free to reach out to me in the office for any questions or concerns. I am here to support you!

From the Treehouse Teachers

*Each child
who spends time
in my classroom
is a gift to me
from his or her parents.
It is my responsibility
to cherish each gift.*

From the Treehouse Teaching Staff
Adapted from Marilyn Grondel, Utah Teacher of the Year

Little Angels Head Teacher & Assistant Director



Loretta Nelson

I am looking forward to getting to know all of you as well as your children. My goal is to make sure your child enjoys learning in a safe and loving environment. What I enjoy most about teaching is watching your children learn, explore and grow in all areas.

I have earned my Early Childhood Education credits at Merritt College and Cal State- East Bay. After three decades with these little ones, I still feel that my life is blessed each day. We have a great team to love and support your child and we are excited for the new school year.

Outside of work, I love walking, listening to jazz music, and going to the movies. I am also happy to share that my son received his Ph.D. in Physics from Northwestern University in Chicago and he has been married for two years now. I am a proud mama.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year together with your family. If you have any questions or concerns, there is a notepad by the sign-in sign-out binder to write notes down. For any further questions or info, please feel free to contact the office and schedule an appointment with me.

I am here to support you in any way I am needed.

Little Angels Teacher



Vuong Takamatsu

Dear families,

I am grateful to be a part of Treehouse Preschool. Where we work as a team to love, nurture and guide our children.

I love to work with kids because they teach me to be a better person. They remind me of how amazing and exciting the world can be. This rewarding job is a field that I know God called me to.

I am currently involved in furthering my education and working on my master's degree and teaching credential. I currently have an Early Child Teacher Associate Credential.

My husband and I have a 9-year-old girl and an 10-year-old boy.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year together and getting to know you all.

Thank you.

Little Angels Teacher



Yan Li

I was born and raised in China. I graduated from Vocational and Technical College and worked as a manager for a Japanese restaurant for five years in Shenzhen, China.

I immigrated to California in 2007 and earned my childhood development credits at Merritt College. I am very grateful for the opportunity that God has provided me in order to be able to be a part of Treehouse staff.

I am a mother of triplets - two sons and one daughter who are all seventeen. I also have a younger child, an 11-year-old daughter. I love children very much, and seeing their faces when they feel happy makes me happy. I think it is very meaningful to accompany them as they grow every day.

When I am not working, I like planting fruits, vegetables, and flowers in my front yard. I also enjoy cooking for my family.

Preschool Head Teacher



Rhonda Jimenez

Welcome to Preschool! This will be my 15th year at Treehouse. Before moving into the teaching field, I worked 20 years in the office at Svenhard's Bakery. They had to relocate and that is when I started my next chapter as an early childhood educator. My studies in early childhood education at Merritt & Las Positas colleges have lead me to where I am today.

The Lord has blessed me with other opportunities to teach in the nursery and elementary Sunday school classes at my church.

I am from a family of educators and I am blessed to follow in their footsteps, in being an educator that loves, teaches and guides the children and prepares them for a successful future. I consider it a great privilege for me to be able to share the love of Jesus with your sweet children. In addition, it is an honor to work in a Christian environment, with teachers who share the same faith.

I have two adult children and two beautiful granddaughters (6 years old and 4 years old). I love spending time with them and having fun!

I am excited for the new school year and I look forward to helping your child learn and grow in all that we do throughout the year.

Preschool Teacher



Candice Lin

I was born and raised in Taiwan. I completed my Bachelor's degree in International Trading Business and worked in the business industry for 15 years before moving to the United States.

I immigrated to California in 2010 and earned my Early Childhood Education credits at Merritt College. I joined Treehouse as a teacher in 2017. Both of my daughters graduated from Treehouse.

It is a blessing to work with the Treehouse staff and serve the Lord at Treehouse. I look forward to a great year with your little ones.

I would like to share one of my favorite verses from the Bible:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Blessings to you all.

Preschool Teacher



Betty He

Hi! My name is Betty He.

This is my second year at Treehouse, and I am very happy to join the loving family of Treehouse Preschool.

I was born and raised in China. My family and I immigrated to this beautiful country in 2017. After coming to the United States, I studied English at Laney College and early childhood education at Merritt College. I worked with children under 5 years old for 2 years at a non-profit organization in the community. I also taught Chinese to children in the after-school kindergarten class at the Chinese Cultural Center.

I feel motivated to keep pursuing early childhood education. It gives me great joy to see the growth in the many children I work with every day.

After work, I like to read books, cook and listen to classical music I also like to do art with my children. I have two daughters, one is 14 years old and the other is 5 years old.

Thank you for your support. I look forward to spending many wonderful years at Treehouse.

Preschool Teacher



Fairy Yang

Hi! My name is Fairy Yang. I was born in North Carolina and moved to California when I was 12 years old. Moving to California showed me the path to a career in supporting children.

Currently, I am in school for Early Childhood Education, and I attend Diablo Valley College.

Outside of work and school, I do a lot of baking, running, and hiking. I am so proud and blessed to be a part of the Treehouse family. I look forward to supporting and bonding with you and your children.

Pre-Kindergarten Head Teacher



Jenna Banks

Hello Families of Treehouse!

My name is Jenna Banks. This is my 10th year teaching at Treehouse. I attended San Jose State University and majored in Theater Arts. I continued my education and completed courses for a Master Teacher's Permit from the State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

I love being part of the Treehouse community. I feel so blessed to work at a school that not only cultivates each students' education and curiosity but also nurtures and encourages a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is amazing to be a part of a group of educators who willingly and enthusiastically teach and guide students on their spiritual journey and growth.

My husband, Andre and I have three sweet and silly little boys. Jaxon is 12 and is in 7th grade, Jraeko is 11 and is in 5th grade, and our newest addition is Andre III, is now 1 years old! Both Jaxon and Jraeko are Treehouse graduates!

I hope to get to know all of you throughout the school year! Thank you for letting me teach your amazing children!

Blessings, Peace & God's Love

Pre-K Teacher



Lorena Torres

My name is Lorena Torres. I am very excited that God has given me this opportunity to work here at Treehouse for 20 years.

I am looking forward to getting to know your beautiful children. I am the Spanish teacher in this class. I have enjoyed watching the children embrace the Spanish language with so much enthusiasm. They are quick learners and they continue to amaze me with their language acquisition year after year. It is a joy for me to be with your children.

I am blessed to have raised five incredible awesome children who are now young adults. I praise the Lord for my blessings. I love spending time with them. We enjoy camping, road trips and watching movies.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year with the TK class.

Pre-K Teacher



Natalie Wynne

I am very excited to be working as a teacher at Treehouse for another year! I graduated from California State University, Monterey Bay in 2019, with a Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies. I am thrilled to be working in the Pre-K classroom again!

I have always loved working with children and feel blessed that I have known since a young age that I wanted to be a preschool teacher. I am very grateful to be teaching your children at Treehouse.

I look forward to getting to know you and your children, and I am excited to see what this year has in store for all of us.

Transitional Kindergarten Head Teacher



Jill Velasco Gilmete

My name is Jill Velasco Gilmete and I have served at Treehouse for 23 years. It has been a fun and exciting adventure. Treehouse is such a joyful place to learn, make new friends, sing Bible songs and most of all learn about God and the love He has for us all.

Since I was a little girl I have wanted to be a teacher. My mother and many others in my family are all teachers. I would help my mother set up her classroom in the summer to get ready for the new school year, which to me was a lot of fun. After high school, I attended Chabot College and Merritt College for my early childhood education to follow the family tradition of educators.

I spend most of my free time hiking on some great trails, swimming and visiting with my family. I also spend as much time as I can with my four great nephews. They are so amazing!

I have been a member of Trinity Lutheran Church since I was a little girl. I can still remember attending Bible camp during the summer and going with the youth group to see the play "Annie". I have many fond memories growing up at Trinity. I am very proud to say that my family was part of the first members that began the church!

I look forward to another year of working with your beautiful children!

Transitional Kindergarten Teacher



Taiko Roskothen

I am truly grateful to be a member of the Treehouse staff. This will be my eighth year of teaching at Treehouse. I was born, raised in Tokyo, Japan, and earned my bachelor's degree in art from a university in Tokyo. After living in Germany for six years, I moved to California.

Although I did work for 10 years as a goldsmith, much of my work experience has been in the preschool setting. I started attending First Covenant Church in 2010 and asked Jesus into my heart a few years later.

In 2016, I completed my Early Childhood Education units at Contra Costa College. Not having children of my own filled my heart with sadness and disappointment for many years, but I am filled with joy for the opportunity to work here at Treehouse with these little ones.

I am truly thankful to be here at Treehouse with you all as my extended family. I thank God our Father for you and your children every day. I will serve your children with all my heart, as unto the Lord.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” (Colossians 3:23 NIV)

Substitute Teacher



Carmen Bethke

Greetings! I am teacher Carmen and I am a retired teacher of Treehouse.

I worked at Treehouse for 17 years and then retired. For the past two year, I have had the pleasure of subbing at Treehouse for while enjoying the retirement lifestyle. It is a privilege and a joy to be back on board again this year. I look forward to working with the students and parents of Treehouse.

Now a little more about my background, I have a BA from Patten University and my Certificate from Merritt College in Early Childhood Development. I want to give thanks especially to Teacher Blenda, who was a Teacher here at Treehouse. She mentored me and shared a wealth of information when it comes to teaching and caring for the different age group children.

Currently, I am teaching Kids Sunday School at my church, ages 5-13. In my spare time, I enjoy bike riding and taking strolls in the beautiful Oakland Redwoods. When COVID hit I joined a zoom prayer group, where we pray to a gracious God who answers our prayers for Treehouse and the needs of our communities.

As always, I look forward to having a great year with the students and parents of Treehouse! Thank you for allowing me to be part of your child most us formative years at school. God bless.

Substitute Teacher



Mei Zhao

My name is Meichan Zhao. Please call me Teacher Mei.

I am from China, and in China, I was a Kindergarten teacher. I'm especially grateful to my past parents for their boundless support and encouragement during my growth, which helped me improve and become a better early childhood educator.

After coming to the United States, I have continued to study early childhood education. I am currently earning my Early Childhood Education credits at Merritt College.

I am very thankful to God for giving me the opportunity to substitute at Treehouse, where I have met an outstanding and passionate team of staff and lovely children. The teachers help prepare each child for a successful future with their love and patience, enabling the children to develop better in all domains of their growth.

Outside of work, I really enjoy listening to music, hiking, taking leisurely walks, reading books, and spending time with my family.

I am happy to serve your child with love and care.

Substitute Teacher



Kika Grupe

Hi, I am Teacher Kika.

I was born and raised in Germany where I earned a BA in Banking and Management and worked in a large regional bank for a few years.

In 1993, I moved with my family to California. We settled on the Peninsula where my husband worked in a postdoctoral fellowship program that recruited him after his doctorate in chemistry.

I started my career as an Early Childhood Educator in 1997 after finishing my necessary college credits at Canada College in Redwood City. Since then I have worked as a class room lead-teacher, afternoon-program manager and preschool director at different preschools including: Peninsula Covenant Church Preschool, The Nurtury at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church and Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church Preschool.

I am semi-retired for a few years but love to help at Treehouse as a substitute when needed.

I have three adult children, two boys and a girl and live with my husband outside the Briones Regional Park. We share the small "A&K Light House Ranch" with our dog, (Zoe), three cats (Frodo, Samwise & Arwen), three sheep (Daisy, Rosy Cotton & Elanor) and two horses (Eowyn & Aragon).

I am still passionate about teaching young children by helping them discover their abilities and interests. It is my greatest joy to watch them grow into the people God has created them to be.

Substitute Teacher



Diana Mitchell

Hello! My name is Diana Mitchell and I am grateful to be able to substitute again this year.

I started working part time at Treehouse in 2017, but took a break in 2021 to help care for family and started subbing again in the Spring of 2024. I enjoy being with and getting to know all the children while also supporting the teachers in any way I can.

I received my BA in Liberal Studies as well as my teaching credential from Chico State. After college I moved to the Bay Area and taught elementary school in Antioch for 6 years. After getting married and having my first son I decided to stay home to raise a family. My long love of Treehouse started when my oldest son was in the Little Angels class in 2008.

Both my boys who are now 18 and 16 graduated from Treehouse Preschool and then attended St. Theresa Elementary school. My 18 year old just started his freshman year at University of Colorado at Boulder and my 16 year old is a junior at De La Salle High School.

I look forward to meeting you and your children throughout the year.

Substitute Teachers



Rebecca Diamond

Hello! My name is Rebecca Diamond. I previously served at Treehouse as a teacher before I had my two beautiful sons.

I received my early childhood education credits from Chabot College. I worked as a teacher at Little Pilgrim Preschool in Oakland. I also worked as a tutor consultant for Laurel Elementary school in Oakland, and was a nanny for a number of years.

I love working with little children and working at Treehouse. Whenever I am able, I come back to substitute for Treehouse to support the children and staff.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, cooking, and hiking.

I look forward to one day returning as a teacher at Treehouse.

Other Substitute Teachers

Janee Gilkerson

Mari Johnston

100 Years from Now

One Hundred years from now

It will not matter

What my bank account was

The type of house I lived in

Or the kind of car I drove

But the world may be different

Because, I was important in the life of a Child

