

# **Treehouse Preschool & Transitional Kindergarten**



## **Staff Profile 2022-2023**

**4000 Redwood Rd  
Oakland, CA 94619  
(510) 531-0320**

# 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

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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 7<sup>th</sup> grade. 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:

- Danny Fitelson, Pastor of Children & Family (*former Treehouse parent*)
- Victoria Hartsock, FCC Christian Education Representative
- Jan Nienu, Treehouse Director
- Joe Lorencz
- Tim Shiau

## *Treehouse Director*

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***Jan E. Nienu***

It is a privilege for me to be your director. My husband and I worship here at First Covenant Church and I have served as the Director of Treehouse since October of 1997.

I look forward to working with you and your family.

I started my journey as an early childhood educator many years ago as a Sunday school teacher. I pursued my Bachelor's degree at Patten University in Oakland, received my Master's from Golden Gate Seminary 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 Credentialing. In addition, I served as a CORPS advisor for Alameda County of Education. I am currently a professional growth advisor to the early childhood educators in Alameda County and continue to mentor teachers and directors in the Bay Area.

On weekends I enjoy gardening, cooking and going for long hikes. My favorite hiking places include the Napa River, Mt. Tam, Redwood Park, Lake Chabot and the Sierras. Being in nature and exploring all the beautiful wildflowers is truly relaxing. I also enjoy travelling all over the world. My newest adventure is being grandma to Makaio. He was born in December of 2020 and is a delight to spend time with.

I recently published a biography entitled *The First Naga Educated in the United States*. You can check it out on Amazon to see what it's all about. You will be blessed.

Please know that I am available to support you in any way I am needed. Feel free to stop by, call or email me. It is my prayer that your stay at Treehouse will be a pleasant experience for your family.

## Office Manager

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***Calista Burnama***

Welcome to Treehouse! This is my first year working alongside these wonderful teachers and students. A fun fact is that my siblings and I are all alumnus of Treehouse and my mom was a teacher here. It is a blessing from God for me not only work here, but to give back to the school so dear to me.

I graduated from Azusa Pacific University in May 2022 and earned a degree in Business Management with a minor in Accounting. Although I did one year of school on back home on Zoom, I am thankful for the four years I got to experience.

Before calling Azusa my second home, First Covenant Church has always been home for me. My parents even got married at this church in 1997. I have one sister who is in her last year at Westmont College and one brother who is a junior at Castro Valley High School.

In the same way this Christ-like community has guided me, we hope to help you guide your children in these early years. It's such an important time in their lives. Please be sure to stop by the office if you have any questions. We are always here to help.

God is good all the time, and all the time God is good!

*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 & Assisting Director*

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***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 my Child Development Master Teacher Credential from the State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. After three decades with these little ones, my life is still blessed each day. We have a great team to love and support your child and we are excited for the new school year.

My son is attending Northwestern University to pursue his PhD in physics.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year together with your family. If you have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed, 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 Aide*

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***Veronica Valencia***

Hello Treehouse family,

This is my first year on staff and I could not be more excited! A little bit about me is that I am a loving wife and mother of two wonderful children. I have helped a diverse amount of people at my previous job as a customer service associate. I also speak two languages, English and Spanish.

I have always been interested in working a job that helps others through respect and hard work. Early Childhood education and development has always been something I wanted to do but have never gotten a chance until now. I can only thank God for this opportunity to serve and learn.

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37, NIV)



## *Preschool Head Teacher*

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***Rhonda Jimenez***

Welcome to Preschool!

This will be my 12<sup>th</sup> 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's when I started my early childhood education classes at Merritt & Las Positas colleges. I'm currently taking classes to further my education.

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

The love I have for children has been throughout my family and I'm very lucky to follow in their footsteps, spending many hours teaching and working with kids.

It's a privilege for me to be able to share the love of Jesus with your sweet children and to work in a Christian environment with teachers who share the same faith.

I have two adult children and two beautiful granddaughters (3 years old and 10 months old). I love spending time with them and having fun!

I am so happy to work with your children as we discover new and exciting things in our classroom.

## *Preschool Teacher*

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***Natalie Wynne***

I am very excited to be working as a teacher at Treehouse for a fourth year! I graduated from California State University, Monterey Bay in 2019, with a bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies. Since the summer of 2017, I have served as an intern, mostly working in the Preschool and Pre-K classrooms. I am excited to be working in the preschool 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, and I thank God for calling me to work with children. I look forward to getting to know you and your children, and am excited to see what this year has in store!

## *Preschool Teacher*

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***Taiko Roskothen***

I am excited to be a member of the Treehouse staff for my fifth year. I was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan and earned a 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 this opportunity to work in early childhood education has brought me tremendous joy!

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 working for the Lord.

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

## *Preschool Teacher*

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***Vuong Takamatsu***

Dear families,

I am grateful to be a part of Treehouse Preschool. It is important to me that we work as a team. You are the expert on your child and all children are different. As caretakers, you have the most important job in the world! So, let's work together.

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 wants me to serve. Therefore, I am currently seeking my master teaching credential.

I am a mother of a 6-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy, as well as a wife of a loving husband. I am also a preschool teacher and a part time student. I love to eat ice cream with my family. My favorite flavor is coconut. I also enjoy watching my kids play judo, basketball, and soccer. I met my husband while he was volunteering in Vietnam. We got married. I left my family and country to live in the US almost 12 years now. I felt lost and did not know where to start for my life, but I am thankful that God lead me into this field to use me as His tool for His Kingdom. He has been using Treehouse Preschool to mold me to be a center director for my free hometown preschool in the future.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year together and being a part of your family. Thank you and see you all.

## *Pre-Kindergarten Head Teacher*

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***Jenna Banks***

Hello Families of Treehouse!

My name is Jenna Banks. This is my 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

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's 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 been married for 10 years. We have two sweet and silly little boys. Jaxon is 9 and will be in 4th grade. Jraeko is 8 and will be in 2nd grade. Both are Treehouse graduates!

In my spare time (which is usually only after the boys go to bed and the laundry is done!), I like to do arts and crafts and to knit.

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-Kindergarten Teacher*

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***Candice Lin***

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

I came 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 have graduated from Treehouse.

It is a blessing to work with the Treehouse staff and serve Treehouse families. I look forward to having fun with your lovely children.

“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, always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-8)

Blessings to you all.

## *Pre-Kindergarten Teacher*

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***Carmen Bethke***

Hello everyone!

During the past year, I've had the pleasure of subbing at Treehouse while enjoying the retirement lifestyle. It's a privilege to be back on board again at Treehouse. I look forward to working with the children, families, and the Treehouse staff.

Here at Treehouse Preschool, I've enjoyed working with all the different teachers, mainly Teacher Blenda who has shared a wealth of knowledge when it comes to teaching and caring for the different age groups. More about my background is that I have my Bachelor's degree from Patten University and my Early Childhood certificate from Merritt College in Early Childhood Education.

At my church, I am currently involved in helping with the Kid's Church (ages 5-13). In my spare time, I enjoy reading and taking strolls in the Redwoods. Most of all since the pandemic, I joined a Zoom prayer group which meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, where we pray for the needs of people and our communities.

I look forward to having a great year with the children and families of Treehouse. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your child's most formative school years.

God bless you.



## *Transitional Kindergarten Head Teacher*

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***Jill Velasco Gilmete***

My name is Jill Velasco Gilmete and I've been at Treehouse for 19 years this fall! It has been a fun and exciting adventure. I am so glad to have this blessing continue as a co-teacher. 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. After high school I attended Chabot College for my early childhood education so I could continue the education tradition.

I spend most of my free time exercising on some great trails, swimming or visiting with my family. I also spend as much time as I can with my 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 chapter that began the church!

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



## *Transitional Kindergarten Teacher*

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***Lorena Torres***

My name is Lorena Torres. I am very excited that God has given me this opportunity to work here at Treehouse for 17 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. 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.

# *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

