

Treehouse Preschool & Transitional Kindergarten

**Staff Profile
2020-2021**

**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

I am blessed to be serving as the Treehouse Board Chair. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve Treehouse in this leadership role. As a ministry of First Covenant Church (FCC) Oakland, Treehouse Preschool and TK is a unique and magical place. I know because I was a Treehouse parent! My oldest daughter and son attended Treehouse from 2001 - 2004. In fact, my son was part of the inaugural Little Angel's class in 2003. I still remember how happy he was every morning to go to "school" like his big sister. My daughter, with love and encouragement from her teachers, grew in confidence and made lifelong friends.

Professionally, I have worked in the technology industry for the past 30 years. I have a bachelor's degree from University of Arizona and a master's degree from USF.

My husband Richard and I became members of FCC in 1997. Our family soon grew to five when we were blessed with Haley, Connor and Audrey. Haley is an Advertising major at SJSU and Connor and Audrey are attending Redwood Christian High School this fall. My husband served as a deacon and currently leads the ushering ministry. You may have seen my children serving as counselors at Kid's Camp over the years. I have taught Pre-K Sunday School and served on the Treehouse Board on two inconsecutive terms.

On behalf of the Treehouse Board, we thank you for entrusting Treehouse with your precious child as he or she begins a lifelong journey of learning both intellectually and emotionally. Know that we are committed to praying and supporting our Director Jan and the entire staff in this coming academic year.

Blessings,

Helen Tang

Treehouse Board Chair

Treehouse Board Members:

- Jessica Avalos, Finance
- Terry Chinn, Member-at-large
- Danny Fitelson, Pastor of Children & Family (*former Treehouse parent*)
- Joe Lorencz, FCC Christian Education Representative
- Jan Nienu, Treehouse Director

Treehouse Director



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 want you to know that your children are in good hands and it is my prayer that your stay at Treehouse will be a pleasant experience for 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 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.

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.

This year will be a year of survival as we all continue to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. We appreciate your patience as we work together to support one another.

Please know that I am available to support you in any way I am needed. Feel free to stop by, call or email me. We will have a wonderful year together. May the Lord bless you and your family.

Office Administrator



Denise Bannister

Welcome to Treehouse! For ten years I have had the pleasure of working with these wonderful women as we all do our part in caring for and teaching your children.

I grew up in Nebraska, earned a degree in Business, and then moved to California. I've been married to my husband Kimo for 35 years. We have 4 children ranging in age from 24-32 years, and a one year old granddaughter. We are excited to watch the growing up process all over again!

In the same way I have guided my children, we hope to help you guide yours 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.

*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



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



Heather Robertson

I am very excited to be returning to Treehouse Preschool for another year!

In 2014 I graduated from UC Irvine with a bachelor's degree in psychology and social behavior. After serving for one year as an intern, I taught in the Pre-K room for one year before moving to the Little Angels. This will be my fourth year teaching in the Little Angels' class and I look forward to seeing what God has in store for us!

I am a Treehouse Preschool alumna and First Covenant Church has been my home for as long as I can remember. This preschool and church community instilled in me a steadfast love for Christ at a young age. I started at FCC Kids Camp as a camper and eventually became part of the staff. The last few summers I have had the incredible opportunity to be the Kid's Camp Director. Kid's Camp has only emphasized my love for working with young children and being a Christian role model in their lives.

In my spare time, I am an avid reader, dancer, and singer. I love to sing with my worship team because music is my favorite way to express my love and praise for Christ. I also volunteer with the FCC High School group as an adult leader. It is an honor to witness God's work through the youth and to see how He is helping them grow in their faith.

I am so blessed to be able to work in a school that does God's work and to walk and worship alongside fellow believers. I cannot wait to see what this upcoming year has in store!

Little Angels Teacher



Taiko Roskothen

I am excited to be a member of the Treehouse staff for my third 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 Head Teacher



Beverly Martin

I count it an honor and a privilege to serve you and your children. I was born and raised in San Francisco and I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at an early age. I've been married for 35 years to Stan Martin, Pastor of Holy Ground Christian Center. We have two beautiful children, Crystal (31 years) and Jordan (27 years), both of whom are the apple of my eye under God's direction.

I worked at Bank of America for 19 years and left in 1999 to answer the call to work with children. I've never regretted it for a moment. It's such a blessing to be able to do what you love, and I love to teach children. Shortly after leaving Bank of America, I returned to college to take Early Childhood Development courses. After receiving my Child Development Associate Teacher Credential from the State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, I started teaching preschool and discovered a world full of God's wonderful children and families, families I could serve in the education of their children and with the love of Jesus Christ. I truly believe every child has a God given talent/gift that God intended them to use for His Glory.

I am a very easy going person. I love praise dancing, listening to Gospel music, and spending time with my family. To me, the family structure (loving, teaching, nurturing, trusting, supporting, worshipping, etc.) is so important for creating a healthy, balanced family.

I look forward to another great year of learning and fun-filled activities with your children. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the office and schedule an appointment with me.

In His Service and Blessings to All.

Preschool Teacher



Rhonda Jimenez

Welcome to Preschool!

This will be my 10th 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.

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 been married for 27 years and have two adult children, Anthony (25) and Danielle (23).

I am now a grandma and I absolutely adore spending time with my granddaughter Alayah who just turned 1.

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

Preschool Teacher



Natalie Wynne

I am very excited to be working as a teacher at Treehouse for a second 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. After a year in the Little Angels class I am thrilled to be back in the Preschool classroom as a full-time teacher.

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!

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Jenna Banks

Hello Families of Treehouse!

My name is Jenna Banks. I have been teaching at Treehouse for five years and this year I will be co-teaching. I attended SJSU and majored in Theater Arts.

I am so excited to be 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 eight years. We have two sweet and silly little boys. Jaxon is seven and will be in 2nd grade. Jraeko is 6 and will be starting kindergarten. 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



Jill Velasco Gilmete

My name is Jill Velasco Gilmete and I've been at Treehouse for 17 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 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 a lot of fond memories growing up at Trinity. Recently we celebrated our 75 year anniversary of when the first chapter began. I am very proud to say that my family was part of that chapter.

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

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Diana Mitchell

I am excited to be starting my fourth year at Treehouse. I feel truly blessed to be able to co-teach and continue working with the staff here.

My husband and I live in Oakland with our two boys ages 12 and 14. Both our boys attended Treehouse and from that point on I have held a special place in my heart for Treehouse. The love, nurturing and faith that Treehouse blesses our children with is a wonderful gift. Faith in Jesus Christ has always been a part of my life and I have always wanted that for my boys, who now attend St. Theresa School and De La Salle High School.

I have a bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies, earned a teaching credential from Chico State University and taught elementary school for 6 years. After my oldest son was born, I chose to stay home. I have always enjoyed working with children and now that mine are getting older, I'm happy to have the opportunity again. My boys are very athletic and most of our free time is spent attending sporting events. When we aren't at a sporting event, we enjoy golfing, bowling and watching movies together.

I look forward to a great year working with you and your children!

Transitional Kindergarten Head Teacher



Rina Woodfin

Hello! My name is Rina Woodfin and I am the head teacher for the TK class. I have over 25 years in the early childhood field and I am passionate about watching the development of young children. Each September children enter the TK class eager to learn, and over the course of the year they develop skills that become the building blocks for their social, emotional and educational success.

On a personal note, I live in Berkeley with my husband and three children. Our oldest son just graduated from college, our daughter will be a senior in college and the youngest is entering high school. In my free time you may find me baking/cooking, hosting dinners for friends and family, or reading historical and contemporary fiction. I also love to explore the world around us through travel, camping and hiking the great outdoors.

Transitional Kindergarten Teacher



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 while my oldest daughter was attending. Both of my daughters eventually 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 Cor 13:4-8

Blessings to you all.

Transitional Kindergarten 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 15 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



Treehouse Staff head shots courtesy of previous Treehouse parent, Marielle Hayes

Marielle Hayes Photography