

Treehouse Preschool & Transitional Kindergarten

**Staff Profile
2019-2020**

**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.

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 eight 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 34 years. We have 4 children ranging in age from 23-31 years. In June we became grandparents for the first time. Wow, what an adventure! 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 the University of California, Irvine with a bachelor's degree in psychology and social behavior. After serving for one year as an intern, mostly in the Little Angels class, I taught one year in the Pre-K classroom before moving back to Little Angels. This will be my third year teaching in the Little Angels room and I look forward to seeing what God has in store for us!

Treehouse has a very special place in my heart. My siblings and I all attended Treehouse. It is such a blessing to be back in the environment I grew up in.

First Covenant Church has been my home for as long as I can remember. A steadfast love for Christ was instilled in me at a young age. I started at FCC Kids Camp as a camper and eventually became a counselor, intern, and assistant director. This past summer I 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 the worship team because music is my favorite way to express my love and praise for Christ. I also have been volunteering with the FCC High School group for the past two years and worked with the Middle School youth group three years before that. It is unbelievable to witness God's work through the youth and to see how He is helping them grow in their faith.

I love having the opportunity to work in a school that shares the same faith that means the world to me. I am so blessed to be able to work and worship among 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 second 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. (Colossians 3:23)

Little Angels Teacher



Natalie Wynne

I am very excited to be working at Treehouse Preschool, and for the first time as an official teacher! 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 thrilled to begin working in the Little Angels 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!

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 34 years to Stan Martin, Pastor of Holy Ground Christian Center. We have two beautiful children, Crystal (29 years) and Jordan (25 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 being 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



Jenna Banks

Hello Families of Treehouse!

My name is Jenna Banks and I have been teaching at Treehouse for four years. 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 seven years. We have two sweet and silly little boys. Jaxon is six and will be starting 1st grade. Jraeko, five, will be in the TK Class.

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 also like to coordinate parties. My soon to be sister-in-law and I are hoping to start our own event planning business.

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

Preschool Teacher



Jill Velasco Gilmete

My name is Jill Velasco Gilmete and I've been at Treehouse for 16 years this fall! It has been a fun and exciting adventure. I am so glad to have this blessing continue. 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!

Preschool Teacher



Rhonda Jimenez

Welcome to Preschool!

This will be my 9th 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.

My husband Rich and I have been married for 26 years and have two adult children, Anthony (24) and Danielle (22).

Some of the things I enjoy are walking my dogs, listening to music, going to Disneyland and now I am a new grandma! I absolutely adore holding my granddaughter Alayah.

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

Pre-K Head Teacher



Rina Woodfin

Hello! My name is Rina Woodfin and I am the head teacher for the Pre-K 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 Pre-K 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. The oldest two are away in college and the youngest is in middle 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.

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Candice Lin

I was born and grew up in Taiwan, earned my degree in International Trading Business and worked in the business industry for 15 years. In 2004 I met my future husband Chris on a plane (how exciting!) and in 2010 we moved to California. I then earned my Early Childhood Education credits at Merritt College.

Treehouse hired me as a substitute in 2017 when my oldest, Carissa, was in preschool here. I'm so excited to be going full time this year with my youngest, Chloe entering the Pre-K. This opportunity is an exciting journey in my life and I'm looking forward to working with the wonderful staff and serving Treehouse families.

I am very grateful to be able to work in a Christian environment. I look forward to having fun with your lovely children.

Blessings to you all.

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Diana Mitchell

I am excited to be starting my third full year at Treehouse and I feel truly blessed to be able to continue working with the teachers and staff here.

My husband and I live in Oakland with our two boys ages 11 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.

I earned my 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!

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher



Wina Pangemanan

Hello Treehouse parents! My name is Erwina, but please call me “Wina”. I will be serving as your teacher in the Pre-K class. Seventeen years ago I taught Pre-K and K-Prep, and worked in the admin office for administrative support at Treehouse Preschool. I am excited to be back again! Working with children is truly a calling from God. My experience in teaching includes raising my own children, teaching children & youth Sunday school, summer Camp Craft Director and being a youth counselor at my church. I studied Business Administration at Saint Mary’s College and have completed my required Early Childhood Education units from Merritt College.

My husband and I are first generation Indonesian-Americans. We met in middle school in Indonesia and graduated from the same high school. We have resided in California since 1991. Our beloved children Calista (20) and Sydney (18) are in college and Ansel Jacob (13) is an 8th grader. We also have a 4 year old Beagle hound named Hunter Sargent.

All of our children graduated from Treehouse, from the Little Angels class all the way to Kindergarten! My husband and I have been members of First Covenant Church for over 23 years.

In my spare time... or WHEN I have spare time, I take long walks and hikes with Hunter and attempt to finish a book read. I love baking, cooking, and doing DIY projects. I love drinking both coffee and (green) tea.

I look forward to this year at Pre-K class and to what God has in store for your children at Treehouse!

Pre-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 Pre-K class.

Transitional Kindergarten Head Teacher



Blenda Soto-Yung

Greetings! Welcome to our 2019-20 school year! I am Teacher Blenda, or Ms. B for short. I teach the TK class. It is always an honor and a privilege to be a part of this amazing school nestled amongst the giant oak trees! As you enter each classroom, may you sense the love and passion from the teachers who never tire of teaching the returning students as well as the new ones. Treehouse has been around for many years and will likely continue to be around because of the dedicated teachers and the hard working staff! My hope is that your experience at Treehouse will be joyful and memorable!

I received my BA degree in Early Childhood Development at Bethany University, pursued my Teaching Credential from Patten University after a few years and then obtained my Program Director's Credential from the State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. I've always wanted to be a teacher. I'm thankful that God granted my heart's desire as an educator and put me at Treehouse! I've been teaching with this wonderful crew for over 10 years! Every year is a new beginning for me and I look forward to helping the students have fun while learning! I can't help but reflect on how many times I've made an impact in the lives of the children at Treehouse. I continue to have joy as I teach and count it a blessing to be a part of this caring staff!

As for my life outside the school, I enjoy spending time with my two teens! My older daughter Lauren will be a rising Freshman at Vassar College in New York this fall!! It will not be an emptiness yet for me as I continue to enjoy my time with my younger daughter who is a rising Junior at Justin Siena High School in Napa.

As always, I look forward to having a great year with the students and parents in the TK class! Please don't hesitate to see me for any concerns regarding your child.

Blessings to your family!!

Transitional Kindergarten Teacher



Carmen Bethke

I have been working in this class with Teacher Blenda for almost 13 years. 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, taking strolls in the Redwoods, going to the movies and spending time with my precious grandkids!

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

God Bless you.

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 Treehouse parent, Marielle Hayes

Marielle Hayes Photography