



Photograph by Nathan Padgett from Albany

## Grateful for a Great Fall

As we enter into the winter months together, we want to celebrate the semester with our Tilden at Home newsletter. We have weathered the storm for months now together with the understanding that we have a continued way to go. Despite the adversities we have all experienced in these unpredictable times, the Tilden community has come together in support of our students, teachers, parents, and staff. We are amazed at how resilient our students are.

Despite the challenges that many young people have faced in the time of Covid-19, Tilden students have transitioned smoothly to online learning and continue to thrive and maintain positive connections with their teachers and peers. Our Leadership club under the direction of the Walnut Creek Humanities Department Head, Lolo Villagomez, has done a stellar job of uniting our student/teacher community across campuses with outreach media messages, online social events, and more. Our teachers continue to come together as a cross campus community weekly for a morning professional development session under the direction of Dr. Rebecca Hawley, Director of Special Education and Admissions. During these sessions teachers explore topics such as best practices while working remotely, learning differences

Get an exclusive appreciation of Tilden students' photography and art highlights (continued on pg.6)

and applied practice, social/emotional development in teens and young adults during shelter in place/remote instruction, and teacher self care to name a few. Our administration team has gone above and beyond to ensure that our platforms are effectively operating, communication with parents, students, and teachers is intact, and act as the backbone for daily operations.

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### Take a look inside Tilden's dazzling community, events, holiday cheer and more!

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## Teacher Feature: **Bee Schlotz**



In a time of home offices and remote teaching, Tilden's very own Bee Schlotz gives us a look into the balance

between teaching and parenting. As our resident Learning Specialist, Bee has an in-depth understanding as to the challenges facing many of our students now that their world has become increasingly two-dimensional. When asked what seems to be the greatest change for students that has taken place in her 9+ years of teaching at Tilden, it appears to all boil down to routines. Whether it is for her own children or her students, the simple lack of rituals and routines associated with attending class in person has left a hole needing to be filled. Her family has found success in having routines take the place of the pomp and circumstance of heading out to school. Anything from the music they enjoy to the video games they

can play when they complete school work is all built into a routine. As a teacher, she aims to address this by establishing a set time with her students where they are able to feel seen, understood, and supported to take risks on their journey of growth. Bee's ability to balance the demands of parenting in this virtual world while also providing incredible growth opportunities to our students is one of the many reasons Tilden is beyond lucky to have her as part of our staff.

## Student Spotlight: **Finn Horn**



When asked to describe Finn Horn in a series of adjectives, only verbs come to mind: transforming, reflecting, life-

changing. This Tilden Albany Senior is ever-evolving in his quest to understand the world around him. Finn Horn can capture your attention in a conversation with the way he views the world. Whether you are having a conversation about philosophy or parkour, he has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge that illuminates every conversation. He smiles as he tells me a story about an AP Physics question regarding the amount of resistance on a falling brick and a falling feather. The right answer could seem obvious, but to Finn, he immediately begins imagining a house sized feather and a pinky-sized brick and makes his multiple choice selection. He laughs as he tells me, "I know I'll get it wrong

but I'll answer it anyways." This way of thinking is how Finn views the world. Nothing is set in stone as we are all evolving in our path of becoming something else. As a learner, Finn has been able to continue on his journey by excelling in his advanced courses while also pursuing his passions of art and philosophy. Finn's goal is to create a world that is both pleasing to be in and to look at, but that also makes sense. He believes that in order to accomplish this, we must disassemble systems of convention and ascribe systems that make sense. This can be seen in Finn's own approach to his life and way of learning.

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## Teacher Feature: **Susana Maltez**



Susana grew up in Fremont, California after moving at the age of 5 from El Salvador with her parents and younger

brother. She spoke Spanish and later learned Italian in high school and French in college. She loved art and played the violin from the age of 11. Math wasn't Susana's favorite subject when she was growing up. Her grandfather helped her when she was young and when she reached high school, he enrolled her in math at the Community college during the summer to supplement her high school math courses. With the importance of education at the forefront of her childhood, Susana became a true Renaissance Woman. Gifted in the arts, science, psychology, math and language, there is little that Susana cannot do! In high school Susana was a runner and qualified for NCS in Cross country and in the 3200-meter

Track and Field for State. When she started college, she was interested in art and pre-med but later switched to studying biochemistry and physics. During college, Susana worked as a physics and math tutor at Los Medanos College for STEM majors and as a private tutor to middle and high school students. She earned her degree in Earth Science from UC Santa Cruz. Susana taught herself to play the piano in college and she continues to run, hike and draw in her spare time. Susana discovered teaching much like she discovered science and mathematics.

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## Student Spotlight: **Jack Ahearn**



Walnut Creek Senior Jack Ahearn started at Tilden as a middle school student. He was quiet and cautious but once

engaged in a topic, his capacity for learning quickly became apparent. Jack describes himself as a shy, soft-spoken, solitary, nervous kid. But through Tilden and the support of his family, Jack has developed lifelong friendships and a deep understanding of who he is, how he learns and what he is still working to improve. Tilden not only gave Jack the opportunity to develop his academic and social skills, it also gave him time and the flexibility to pursue outside interests. When Jack gets interested in something, you can guarantee that he will become an expert on whatever it is! He researched fishing, continued to practice drawing (one of his many interests), and experimented with learning to play

the guitar and the piano. Then in the 10th grade, he really became committed to his music. His teacher, Dennis, was a big inspiration to Jack. When he showed Jack "A Portrait in Jazz," it made him want to learn more and that was when music became his focus and practicing became a desire rather than a chore. Jack has a wise and caring soul and has always wanted to make an impact on others. When he discovered the piano this became his avenue to connect with those around him; a way for him to create positivity.

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# Events

## Halloween

While Halloween looked a little different for everyone this year, Tilden Prep students still found ways to get together from afar to celebrate. Evya Smyth, Walnut Creek 6th grader, showed off her creativity and artistic skills with her handmade *Nightmare Before Christmas* costume and won the student costume contest. The always creative Heather Feeney brought home the title of teacher costume contest winner with her Cruella de Vil costume. The Halloween festivities were capped off with a virtual trivia contest for staff and students. The sibling duo of Ella and Shaun Sobel showed off their knowledge by dominating the contest. Thank you to all the staff and students who participated in the Halloween festivities this year.



Heather Feeney, winner from Walnut Creek teacher costume contest.



Evya Smyth, winner from Walnut Creek student costume contest.



Alex Seitz, winner from Albany teacher costume contest.

## Thanksgiving

The Walnut Creek campus had its annual gratitude lunch on Friday, November 20th over Zoom. Although the Tilden community was unable to meet in person like in previous years, students, teachers and administrators alike were able to learn about the Leadership club and participate in Thanksgiving trivia. The event was mc'd by Hayden Pozzi and Brandon Beck of the Walnut Creek Leadership Club and Nancy Ruiz, the Head of School for the Walnut Creek campus. A good time was had by all, and students and staff alike searched the nooks and crannies of their minds trying to answer timed questions regarding Thanksgiving food trivia, practices, and culture.

*"Even though the gratitude lunch was held online, everyone still had a good time and it was probably my favorite event to host."*  
- Hayden Pozzi

In these challenging times, it is important to not forget the little things like getting together, sharing laughs, and having fun in a community.

*"What are we grateful for?"*

Scan this QR code to get an exclusive look into our Tilden Gratitude Wall online!



# Senior Shoutout

Senior year is an exciting time. Reflections and imaginings all mixed up together. Transcripts and applications, gap years, and further planning characterize the lives of so many high school students each year, and our senior class is no different. Tilden seniors have been hard at work preparing for what's next on their educational journeys, and they're planning some impressive next steps!

We've been hearing about life plans and new academic interests. We've been exploring alternative options for an after high school journey alongside discussions of which college, community college or university might be the best fit. In meetings with parents and seniors, the Heads of Schools have been exploring options and reviewing timelines, and the magic and excitement of senior year at Tilden is palpable – the confidence and conviction of the seniors has blown us away.

One might have thought that distance learning could put a damper on things, but we've found the opposite. Our seniors have amazed us with their thoughtful engagement and open-minded approach to the process. On both the Walnut Creek and Albany campuses, our seniors have not only embraced their

own journeys, but have also embraced their role as seniors at Tilden. Through leadership clubs, holiday parties, and generally working with Tilden faculty and staff on supporting the Tilden community and culture while we're all at home, Tilden seniors are showing us the kind of leadership they'll be bringing into the world. As their teachers, mentors, and friends, we couldn't be more excited.

Yes, there is still work to do. Applications need to be completed. Essays have to be written, as well as teacher recommendations. Decisions have to be made, likely revisited and made again as senior year gets under way. But we are encouraged by the quality of character of each of our seniors. And we know this year and this senior class in particular is going to be one for the history books. Throughout the year, we'll be spotlighting seniors and the senior program so that we can all celebrate with them and share in the excitement. And while we can't wish our seniors well in person, we know we speak for the entire Tilden community in wishing all of our seniors (and all of our students) only good things – may you go from success to success and continue to make us proud.



## Finn Horn

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Finn has taken the onus of control in his education after leaving his previous conventional high school and currently is on track to graduate early. As a school, we couldn't be more proud of Finn's accomplishments and can't wait to see the world he helps build.

## Jack Ahearn

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Jack is driven by the idea that someday he might be able to communicate things that even words can't describe through his music. Jack is humble and describes his gift as nothing out of the ordinary but others certainly do not agree! Not surprisingly, Jack is planning to pursue a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies. He has not decided if he will take a gap year or go straight to college but he does know that either path will involve music. Whatever his path ends up being, Jack is an amazing person who makes an impact on all who know him.

# Tilden At Home

Tilden at home is a project to bring us together as a community by sharing a snapshot of our school lives at home. What we're eating for our lunches, which pet watches over us, where we're learning and what we're working on. In other words, we are sharing a peek into everything special and unique about each of our Tilden's at Home. Here is a brief look into our recent submissions!



Photograph by William (Bulky) Smith from Walnut Creek

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Moreover, under the direction of Dr. Hawley, a parent support group for parents of students with learning differences is now being offered to existing and prospective parents twice a month. Having a protected time to come together to share our experiences parenting a teen with learning differences during shelter in place has been invaluable. Additionally, Tilden now offers a Conversations in Education series in which guest speakers present monthly on topics such as Parenting during Shelter in Place, Navigating the IEP and 504 system, Dyslexia and testing, and more.

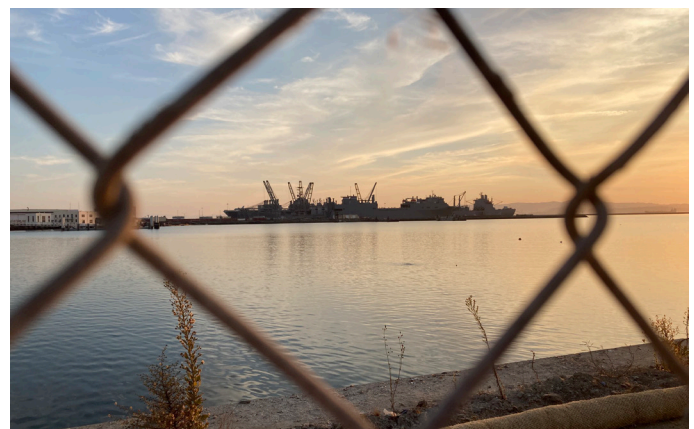
Although we can't be together after the holiday season we remain connected through all the work that our teachers, staff, students, and parents have put forth thus far to make Tilden what it is even during trying times. We all look forward to our return to campus!



Drawing by Ella Sobel from Walnut Creek



Painting by Ford Andrews from Albany



Photograph by Nathan Padgette from Albany

# Make a Difference Day

## Unity in Community

Ingrid Zimmerman, Walnut Creek Junior, made a difference on two fronts, political and non-political. She made get-out-the-vote calls for a local candidate, then assembled snack boxes at Meals on Wheels.



## Food Drive Donations

In honor of supporting our local communities, Tilden participated in a food drive to support the Contra Costa County Food Bank. Over 190,000 people a month turn to the food bank of Contra Costa and Solano. For physical drop off donations, a barrel was set outside the Walnut Creek Tilden campus and a virtual food drive was hosted for those who participated at a distance. We encourage our Tilden community to fight hunger and provide food for others this holiday season.



## Susana Maltez

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Susana didn't plan to be a teacher but when she tried it, she found that her own background in school gave her great foundational skills and teaching came very naturally to her and she finds great rewards in seeing her students succeed. She uses her strengths to her advantage when working with students: her patience and understanding of students' struggles help her to make a connection with students and to be creative with their learning until they master a concept. Susana started at Tilden in 2017 and discovered that the 1:1 teaching allows her to find her students' strengths and weaknesses and helps them

to become better students. She thinks this format is very versatile and provides a student with the opportunity to be successful. While always calm and collected at school, outside of the classroom Susana is an adrenaline junky. She enjoys white water rafting, zip lining, and skydiving. She thinks that you need to live your life to the fullest and if she was to pass on advice to her students, it would be to not grow up too fast. Enjoy the moment and "Never regard your study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn the liberating beauty of the intellect for your own personal joy and for the profit of the community to which your later work will belong" - Albert Einstein. Despite always

having a full teaching load, Susana finds time to enjoy life! She is an avid reader, hikes regularly, goes to the beach almost every week with her three dogs and has run the Mt. Diablo Summit twice. At home, you will be surprised to find how many pets she has: seven love birds, three dogs and a tortoise which are usually all free to roam around the house! In the future, Susana would like to go to medical or graduate school and feels that all of her time with Tilden is preparing her well for the transition.

# TildenPrep | Alumni

## Alumnus Feature: **Alexander Beck**



When I was a student at Tilden (Class of 2019), I was enamored with history, a subject that has intrigued me since early childhood. Tilden's unique learning environment allowed me to explore my areas of interest with unparalleled depth and flexibility while preparing me for the rigorous coursework required in college.

As a sophomore history major at UC Berkeley, my fascination with all facets of history continues to grow, and I look forward to working on my senior thesis. I am fortunate to be at Cal, home to one of the world's best history departments with a vast collection of primary source documents and artifacts. Although the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted my freshman year, I enjoyed living on campus, attending in-person classes, meeting new friends, and being part of the Berkeley community. Those invaluable experiences provided the foundation I needed to adapt to the new normal of remote instruction. As a Tourette Association of America (TAA) Youth Ambassador during high school, I advocated for those with neurological tic disorders, an activity I placed on hold while transitioning to Cal. Next year, I will train to become a TAA Rising Leader and continue my advocacy work, including lob-

bying congressional offices locally and on Capitol Hill. Before attending Tilden, I was frustrated by school counselors and teachers who suggested that advanced classes were beyond my capabilities and strongly advised me to avoid AP and honors courses. My first day at Tilden (second semester of ninth grade) was an inflection point that changed my life, personally and academically. I am forever grateful for Tilden and for my phenomenal teachers, who helped me overcome learning differences and gave me the confidence to pursue my academic dreams.

## Upcoming Events:



Scan this QR code to access the latest about our Tilden events!

**Spirit Week:** Monday-Thursday, February 8-11, 2021

**St. Patrick's Day:** Wednesday, March 17, 2021

**Spring Break:** Monday-Friday, April 5-9, 2021

**Earth Day:** Thursday, April 22, 2021

**Teacher Appreciation Day:** Tuesday, May 4, 2021

**Graduation Ceremony:** TBD First Week of June, 2021



**TILDEN PREPARATORY SCHOOL**  
ALBANY, WALNUT CREEK

Scan our QR code to learn more and register your student at Tilden!

