



# SANTA ROSA HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Winter, 2026

Vol.39

Issue 1

*The mission of the Santa Rosa High School Foundation is to serve as a charitable organization to unite Santa Rosa High School alumni, parents, faculty, staff and interested community members in order to provide financial support for SRHS programs and students, and to preserve and document the history and traditions of SRHS.*

## **SANTA ROSA CITY SCHOOL'S BUDGET PROBLEMS WILL ONCE AGAIN HIT SRHS**

By Don Cambou

Last school year, with plenty of long, often contentious, public meetings, and other parallel dramas, the Santa Rosa City Schools (SRCS) Board of Directors decided to firmly address the deepening fiscal hole the District found itself in. It would close two District elementary schools, and two middle schools, and leave its five high schools open starting in the 2025 – 2026 school year. (During one period last year, SRHS, and the other four District high schools were all considered for possible closure.) Santa Rosa High and Montgomery High would house the two middle schools' students on their campuses this school year. Both high schools would become 7 through 12 grade high schools starting in the 2026 -- 2027 school year. Further savings would come through eliminating over 100 teacher and staff positions throughout the District.

It wasn't enough. Even with similar school closures and the creation of two more 7 through 12 grade high schools, Piner and Elsie Allen, projected for the 2026 – 2027 school year, the cuts wouldn't be sufficient.

Flash forward to the present. Because the cuts weren't large enough, the SRCS District finds itself in a situation similar to last year's. The seven member SRCS Board is currently six, since one director resigned this January. She was one of five of the board's seven members who started their terms later than the end of 2023. The remaining members are now ready to make another round of deep cuts. Hopefully, this next set of painful cuts will truly pull the District out of the red. If not, the District risks falling into state receivership, in which a state official without any extensive knowledge of Santa Rosa City Schools would take over the

*Continued on page 3*

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## **STUDENTS STRIKE—ALMOST**

by Mike Daniels

The campus anxiety we see today certainly isn't the first time Santa Rosa High has seen drastic change. In the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Santa Rosa High students realized the necessity of sacrificing their world to the war effort. But that realization didn't sit well. With dizzying speed, they watched their extracurricular world evaporate.

Travel was curtailed, budgets were slashed, dances and other social activities were eliminated.

In what seemed to hurt the most, sports were cancelled—even the North Bay League was sent on vacation. It seemed all the activities that made high school worthwhile were destroyed. A sizeable number of the student body soon reacted and rocked the Santa Rosa educational establishment with an event the city had never seen before. They threatened to strike.

Campus energy was harnessed because of the sports hiatus and increased as word spread that

*Continued on page 4*



Mary Orsborn Beseda  
President

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Mary Orsborn Beseda '74

It has been a busy 1st six months for the SRHS Foundation Board. We started the year welcoming new 7th, 8th and 9th graders to the campus!

The Foundation has two upcoming events. The 29th Annual Polenta Feed is Friday, April 24, 2026. Tickets went on sale January 15th to Foundation

Members, and open to the public on March 1st. It promises to be a fun evening with California Senator Mike McGuire as our Auctioneer! Call the Pandy Line at 707-571-7747 to reserve your tickets or go to our website at [www.srhsf.org](http://www.srhsf.org) for additional information.

We also have a team headed by Alana Kelly and John Codding organizing the 25th Annual Golf Tournament on Friday, June 19, 2026, at the Bennett Valley Golf Course. The tournament was last held in 2019. For additional information and registration/underwriting form, please go to our website at [www.srhsf.org](http://www.srhsf.org) or contact the team at [golf@srhsf.org](mailto:golf@srhsf.org) or call the Pandy Line at 707-571-7747.

The End of Year Campaign was successful with ONE THOUSAND PANTHERS exceeding \$700K, on our way to obtaining the goal of \$1,000,000.00. The earnings from this unrestricted endowment go to Panther Projects. This couldn't be done without the generosity of our members and supporters! We also gained a new funded Scholarship, the William '59 and Gayle '61 Robotham Scholarship!

This past month we voted in a new Board Member, Carol Langford Daniels from the Class of 1985! We look forward to Carol's continued support of the Foundation.

The SRHS Foundation also held a Lobster Dinner for 20 people, hosted by David Brown & Carol Daniels. They both bid on dinners for 10 at last year's Polenta Dinner and requested the dinners be made jointly at the home of David Brown. The dinner was a lot of fun and a huge success. (see pictures)

Funds that the Foundation received from SchoolsRule Sonoma County, a collaboration with the Sonoma County Office of Education, will be utilized to send 225 eighth graders to the Exploratorium in San Francisco. SchoolsRule requested the funds be utilized for a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) project. The 8th Grade Class didn't have normal Science classrooms in DeSoto Hall this year, as the science classrooms were not adequately supplied with the necessary tools. Retrofitting will occur over the summer of 2026. So, when Ms. Blessing

came to the Panther Project Fund meeting in December, we felt her request was perfect for the SchoolsRule funding! There will be pictures to follow of the students and their experience at the Exploratorium.

Board Members from the SRHS Foundation continue to attend the SR City Schools Board

meetings to stay informed on the progress of the SR City Schools budget shortfall. Recently it was announced that 100+ jobs would be eliminated from the District. And in the 2026/27 school year, Steele Lane Elementary School will be closed and 420 students will be transferred to other elementary schools within the District. Also, Comstock Middle School will be closed and those students transferred to the Piner High School campus. A new building is currently being built at Piner High School to accommodate the incoming students. This was all part of decisions made in 2025.

The SRHS Foundation Board would like to thank our members and supporters for their continued support of the Foundation and our Mission!

**"Once a Panther, Always a Panther"**



Board members and friends as dinner servers



Lobster Dinner for twenty. Hosted by David Brown '80 and Carol Daniels '85

### SRHS Foundation Directors

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Monica Baldenegro '95                          | Carol Langford Daniels '85                                      |
| Mary Orsborn Beseda '74<br>President           | Veronica Stoops Haas '69<br>Art Horner, Retired SRHS<br>Teacher |
| David Brown '80                                | Alana Kelly '78 Vice<br>President                               |
| Mike Bucchianeri '71                           | Rhonda Rehm Loop '73<br>Treasurer                               |
| Don Cambou '64<br>Newsletter Editor            | Brian Mecchi '77<br>Corresponding<br>Secretary                  |
| John Codding '82                               | Tony Negri, Retired SRHS<br>Principal                           |
| Tina Chiotti-Stewart '85                       | Nadine Wiggins<br>Smedshammer '59                               |
| Paddy Robotham Coreris<br>'66 Secretary        | Ilona Mayer Williams '64  |
| * Mike Daniels '59                             |   |
| * Donna Dennes Doyle '67                       |   |
| Kristine Erken, Former<br>SRHS Counselor       |   |
| Paulette Guaspari Gomes<br>'68 Ass't Treasurer |   |

*\* Founding Director*

District’s duties, and make whatever cuts seem necessary for the District to remain solvent. It’s a possibility almost no participants, including the state, want.

There is a budget gap of \$3 million this school year, and \$26 million next year that must be closed. So, again, the District plans to eliminate more than 100 teacher, staff, administrative, and District positions. Counselors, therapists, and wellness coaches will probably take a proportionately bigger hit. Final decisions will be made before mid-March, since teachers must be contractually notified by March 15 if they might be laid off. Still, “final” is somewhat of a relative term, since a teacher notified for possible termination may later find his or her position secure. We spoke with Lisa August Hulme, Interim District Superintendent and previous Associate Superintendent of Business Services, about the situation. She believes that those school board proposed cuts, coupled with last school year’s cuts, and a onetime intra-District funds transfer of \$19.9 million will cover all the budget shortfalls for this school year and next school year. She says the \$19.9 million is not a loan, so it won’t need to be repaid. And since the savings from over 200 eliminated positions in two years are savings that will reappear year after year, she sees falling into state receivership as highly unlikely. She doesn’t foresee another round of huge cuts looming beyond those now proposed for next year.

These painful cuts are the result of previous school board members ignoring or minimalizing several converging problems. They include rising operational costs, the end of one time funds designed to help districts through the Covid pandemic, transfers to out of district, private, and charter schools, and years of declining enrollment. The loss of enrollment in Santa Rosa City

Schools is especially striking. In the 2012 – 2013 school year, the District had 15,430 students. This school year the number has fallen to around 12,000 students. The school closures and staff cuts are justified by the idea of “right sizing” – having the correct number of campuses and staff for the lower number of students.

What does all this mean for Santa Rosa High? We know that this school year saw us welcoming Santa Rosa Junior High onto the campus. DeSoto Hall became the junior high’s base. The junior high has an enrollment of around 480. SRHS has an enrollment of around 1,450. Next school year, the junior high will become a part of a 7 through 12 Santa Rosa High School. Projected student numbers are around 1700 total students. Like the rest of the schools in the district, SRHS will undergo a proportionate number of teacher, staff, and administrative cuts. And it will have fewer “sections” taught. Think of a “section” as a specific, scheduled class. ArtQuest will continue, as will Agriculture and the shop classes of wood, auto, and manufacturing.

A rumor number has 130 to 160 students on a “wait list” for admission to SRHS. If true, it is the District’s enrollment office, not the school that would make the placement decisions.

No one expects the coming transitions will be easy. Some of the District’s decisions seem to be based on best case scenarios. We asked Interim Superintendent August Hulme what she saw as the most important point that should be conveyed to our readers. She replied that the school board is committed to making the difficult decisions that will keep SRCS out of state receivership, yet still give its students a great education.

As is usually the case, the devil will be in the details.



*Photo by Todd Beseda*

a popular teacher was to be dismissed because she was married. Her husband, a US Navy Pilot, was in the Pacific, perhaps flying in combat and defending his country. To the young minds, firing Mary Frances McKinney was as unjust as it could possibly be.

The very conservative educational power base did hire unmarried women but they understood they couldn't marry until they were granted tenure. McKinney therefore tried to keep her marriage secret. The conservative board couldn't understand or accept that, nor could it do so about the making of buttons and signs expressing outrage over the loss of sports and the impending teacher dismissal. Talk of unrest and a possible walkout rattled the administration.

Principal T.H. Battelle communicated regularly with Superintendent Lloyd Wood. Official policy, they decided would be simply to wait, reasoning the unrest would soon pass. It didn't. By late March a strike of classes was set for April 10.

It rained on April 10 but that didn't stop a sizeable number of students and their signs from milling about in front of the main building at noon. In one notable incident Battelle and a student tussled over control of a sign, the student getting bonked on the head with the sign.

Superintendent Wood was alerted and came to campus. He called the students into the auditorium where he tried to explain matters. The students weren't satisfied but agreed to send a committee to the next board meeting to discuss the situation.

A student victory of sorts resulted at the meeting. The board agreed to reinstate the spring sports program but deferred action on the McKinney dismissal. McKinney acted before the board could and submitted a letter of resignation.

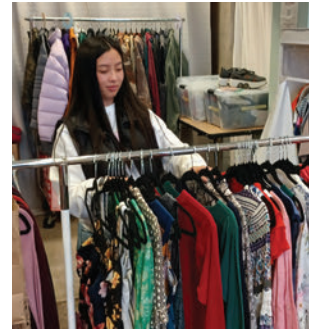
The strike movement collapsed and SRHS student life returned to a sort of normalcy.

The 1942 fuss about a married teacher might seem unjustified from today's perspective. Times were different in those provincial days in Santa Rosa. It wasn't until the dramatic increase in public school enrollment by the baby boomers of post-World War II that a relaxation of the marriage requirement allowed young unmarried women to teach. Lots of students needed lots of teachers.

## THE PANTHER CLOSET: A GREAT IDEA TURNS INTO A NEW REALITY

By Don Cambou

In these difficult financial times for the Santa Rosa City School District, you can often hear that teachers and counselors "are good at making something out of nothing." That's what Wellness Coach Tiffany Welch, Wellness Coordinator and Therapist Ashley Wood, and Therapist Allie Olivo have done with the Panther Closet. Using part of a small SRHS Foundation grant for bins, hangers



Wellness Coach Tiffany Welch Checks Panther Closet Inventory

and snacks, they have created a service that provides clothing and hygiene products for students who can benefit from those items. The Closet supplies are housed in a small part of the Wellness Center's offices – a space that was previously a teacher's lounge

On December 10, 2025, they hosted their first event in the school's multipurpose room. They were open before school, during lunch break, and after school. An impressive 266 students attended the event and walked away with up to six items apiece, including two personal hygiene items. Tiffany Welch overheard one senior remark that the Panther Closet was "the best thing the school has done in the last four years."

Welch got the idea from Analy High's Clothes Closet. She presented the idea to Ashley Wood, and they were off and running. They began accepting clothes and hygiene products in late October of last year. The goods came from parents, teachers and staff, Foundation members, and even other students.

Welch says they plan to have another school wide event soon. They may even begin to do events monthly. **If you'd like to help, they're looking for gently used or new items such as women's and men's bottoms, tops, sweaters, jackets, shoes and new socks. Hygiene needs are for deodorant, lotion, body wash, shampoo, conditioner, floss, make up, chap sticks, and more. Call Tiffany Welch at 707-890-3850 ext. 52131, or email her at [tvergarawelch@srcs.k12.ca.us](mailto:tvergarawelch@srcs.k12.ca.us) to find out more about the Closet and how to donate.**

The Wellness staff, like so many SRCS counselors, are in a kind of limbo right now, awaiting word about whether their positions will extend into the next school year. But Welch makes it clear that whatever the future brings, they are all committed to the survival of the Panther Closet.

# TEE TIME FOR THE SRHS FOUNDATION 25TH GOLF TOURNAMENT

By Don Cambou

The SRHS Foundation's last golf tournament was in 2019. Some of you reading this probably attended as golfers or dinner guests. Twenty three yearly tournaments had preceded it. Foundation founding member Doug Pavese '58 created and chaired those tournaments at the Oakmont Golf Club. Former Foundation member Sue Bolt's tireless efforts acquired items for the live auctions, silent auctions, and raffles from 2007 to 2017 that took place at the post tournament dinners.

Now, the Foundation is looking forward to hosting its 25th tournament on Friday, June 19 at the Bennett Valley Golf Course. Alana Kelly '78, Foundation V.P, and John Coddling '82, Foundation board member, are co-chairs for the new tournament. They are both golfers. They're currently at work enlisting golfers and sponsors for this new event. (See advertisement on this page.) Already, they have several tee sponsors, and many items for the silent and live auctions and raffle. But they'd be the first to admit that they've still got a long way to go. After all, there are 18 holes!

The golf tournament will fill a special need for the Foundation, just as it had in the past: ready cash. While the Foundation now supervises over eight million dollars, most of that money is in its permanent endowment, funding over 56 specific scholarships totaling \$130,000 last school year alone. That means the principal is never touched. Only endowment earnings are used to fund those scholarships. Therefore the scholarships exist "in perpetuity." Foundation Directed Funds work the same way. Their endowment earnings fund specific purposes.

In some cases, their principal is available as well. But again, the money must go to fund specific objectives – hence the name "Directed Funds."

But the Foundation also must have money to support teacher, staff, and student needs that are not scholarships or directed funds and that arise during each school year. That's where the Panther Project Fund or "PPF" comes in. Last school year alone the PPF awarded over \$110,000 in grants to SRHS teachers and staff. All the *net profit* from the new golf tournament, as well as the yearly Polenta Feed, and earnings from One Thousand Panthers Unrestricted Endowment, plus the SRHS Foundation Unrestricted Endowment, along with earnings from seven directed funds principals, will go directly into the PPF, and will be readily available to fund grants.

So if you're a golfer and want to have a great time while supporting current needs of SRHS teachers and staff, or if you'd like to participate in the tournament sponsorship, please call [707-571-7747](tel:707-571-7747) or email [golf@srhsf.org](mailto:golf@srhsf.org) now to claim your place in the reborn SRHS Foundation Golf Tournament.

**SANTA ROSA HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION**

**25TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**FRIDAY JUNE 19, 2026 1PM SHOTGUN**

**BENNETT VALLEY GOLF COURSE**  
3330 YULUPA AVE SANTA ROSA

**PRICE**

- Foursome \$760
- Single \$200 player
- Dinner Only \$75

Included:-  
18 hole Golf Tournament - 4 person Scramble  
Driving Range Balls  
Box Lunch  
Drinks on the course  
Buffet Dinner at Iron & Vine (No Host Bar)

**SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE!**

## SRHS CLASS OF 1966 60TH REUNION

**SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2026 — 5-9PM**  
Iron & Vine Restaurant at  
Bennett Valley Golf Course

**Buffet Dinner & the Social Activity of the Year**  
for SRHS Class of '66 grads and  
their significant others

**\$75 per person by May 1st**  
Early in March, details will be snail  
mailed or emailed to those for whom  
we have email addresses.

**A few committee members:**  
Bruce ([brewster927@yahoo.com](mailto:brewster927@yahoo.com)),  
Betty ([bourdens3@aol.com](mailto:bourdens3@aol.com))  
Dona ([donagodwin@att.net](mailto:donagodwin@att.net)), Leigh  
([leighheyer@yahoo.com](mailto:leighheyer@yahoo.com))  
Paddy ([yayapaddy@sonic.net](mailto:yayapaddy@sonic.net))

# CONTRIBUTIONS & MEMBERSHIP NEWS

By Paulette Guaspari Gomes '68 & Brian Mecchi '77

## WINTER 2026

For the period November 2025 through January 2026 the Foundation welcomed 8 new members and 30 renewing members. Membership dues total \$1,320.00 for this period. Total active membership in the Foundation now stands at 724. We continue to actively contact members regarding upcoming renewals.

The following Foundation members and friends made contributions in addition to membership dues:

Kim Carpenter Agrella '77	Ted Grosman '60	Steve '60/Elaine Olson
Allen Barbieri '59	Larry/Pat Hartley '62	Ann Poulson '50
Joe/Dianne Clendenin - Friends	Clarke Holland '70	Jean Schulz - Friend
Michael/Lynn Davis – Parents	Bill Marioni - Friend	Jim Streeeter '76
Peter/Anastacia Duarte - Parents	Jim McKee '77	Mark Tennyson - Friend
Kendace Fallentine – Friend	Gwen Nicholson Neary '65	Paul/Cheryl Tennyson - Friends
William Firestone '64	Stephen Olsen '61	Richard/Annette Wilber – Friends

## NEW MEMBERSHIP

Becky Blessing - Staff	Kate Grogan '92/Robert Eastman	Marsha Dixon McGill '71
Amanda Carroll Cabrera 2007	Minona Heaviland - Parent	Noah Owens 2011
Richard Codding '55	Dan/Iris Levitis – Parents	

## ORGANIZATION DONATIONS

Benevity

BBGF-PG&E

Escrip/Oliver's Market

Sports Basement



## MEMORIAL & SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

You may send the SRHSF a contribution in the name of a deceased Panther, or in the names of a specific living person, department, group need, or scholarship fund.

### DIRECTED: ATHLETIC DEPT.

Jack Guenza '52

### DIRECTED: BASEBALL PROGRAM

Scott Beseda '72  
Dan Kelly '59

### DIRECTED: FOOTBALL PROGRAM

Dan Lightfoot '66

### DIRECTED: MUSIC DEPT.

Bruce/Connie Kinnison - Parents  
Jim Nelson '61

### DIRECTED: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Suzanne Griewe Smith '65

### DIRECTED: TRACK AND FIELD

Mike Daniels '59

### ARLENE WILLIAMS ALKIRE '59

James Laier, Jr. '58

### ROBERT "BOB" BERETTA '61

Debbie Jalli Martini '61

### LORRAINE BAKER CANEVARI DIRECTED: GIRLS BASKETBALL

Carol Canevari Tinney '64

### KENNETH CHAMBERS '66

Carol Chambers Richardson '62

### MARY CORDRAY '49

Ann McGinley - Friend

**DIRECTED: CROSS COUNTRY**

Ballo Family – Parents/2012

**FRANCIS DE MARCO ‘49**

Roseanne DeMarco Brandon - Friend

**CARMAN SILVERSHIELD FORMWAY ‘49**

Dennis/Linda Cerini ‘66 Arthur  
Rick/Paulette Guaspari Gomes ‘68  
Ann McGinley – Friend  
Karen Skelgaard Petersen ‘72  
Mike/Dawn Arthur Post - Friends  
Lorne ‘49/Janice Kaelin ‘52 Swanets

**MICHAEL “MIKE” GRACE ‘65**

Gina Lucchesi ‘89  
Karen Skelgaard Petersen ‘72  
Mark ‘67/Cathy Trione

**MICHAEL GUTZMAN ‘71 DIRECTED:  
AGRICULTURE DEPT.**

Bill Rehm ‘70

**IN HONOR OF MR. HORNER FOR HELPING  
REPLACE MY CLASS OF 2015 YEARBOOK  
THAT BURNED UP IN THE TUBBS FIRE**

Sabrina Skelly - 2015

**RICHARD A. HUNTER ‘49**

Marilyn Hunter ‘52

**SHIRLEY ANN SHERRILL HURLEY ‘58**

James Laier, Jr. ‘58

**GARY LEIGHY ‘58**

James Laier, Jr. ‘58

**JO ANN HEMBREE MAC DONALD ‘56**

Darlene McCullough Bath ‘56  
Bolt Family – Parents  
Donna Dennes Doyle ‘67  
Rick/Paulette Guaspari Gomes ‘68  
Mike Grace Foundation  
Carol Hoadley Guanella ‘56  
James Laier, Jr. ‘58  
Debbie Jalli Martini ‘61  
Karen Skelgaard Petersen ‘72  
Bill/Marilyn Kane Ward – Friends  
Lee/Ilona Mayer ‘64 Williams

**JOAN FINLEY MC CUE ‘55**

Martha Comstock Keegan ‘47  
Joanne Weise Tyler ‘86

**BRUCE MECCHI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

Brian Mecchi ‘77  
Yvonne Papeman – Friend

**DEAN R. MORI ‘82 – (MY SON)**

Linda Joost Mori ‘61

**JACK MURPHY DIRECTED: MUSIC DEPT.**

Anthony Martin ‘64

**JERROLD PETERSON ‘60**

Patricia Sutton Clinton ‘60

**JERRY PRICKET ‘58**

James Laier, Jr. ‘58

**RAYMOND RASMUSSEN ‘61 (BROTHER)  
DIRECTED: AGRICULTURE DEPT.**

Elaine Rasmussen Thompson ‘58

**RENEWABLE ENERGY/GREENHOUSE GAS  
REDUCTION SCHOLARSHIP**

Don Cambou ‘64  
Rebecca Evert – Friend

**LARRY WEESE ‘64**

Don Cambou ‘64

**BERTA WIGGINS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

Oren/Nadine Wiggins ‘59 Smedshammer

**ROBERT “BOBBY” YATES ‘64 DIRECTED:  
BASEBALL PROGRAM**

Janice Yates

**In Memoriam Winter ‘26**

Gary Delleperre	Faculty
Carman Silvershield Formway	1949
Lily Rose Rubattino Fridley	1949
William Kingsbury	1954
Diane Thompson	1954
Leonard Read	1955
Merilee Peterson Doyle Cortez	1958
Linda Riccitti Temple	1958
Robert Barton	1959
P. Michael Coon	1964
Richard Strobino	1966
Craig Stella	1970
Michael Gutzman	1971
Gary James	1971
Loretta Haub Rosas	1971
Susan Ringheimer	1976
Jason Windus	1990
Kevin Bley	2000

# JOINT CHOIRS RISE ABOVE CITY SCHOOLS PROBLEMS

By Marla Tusa, SRHS Choir Director

It was a powerful evening of music, remembrance, and shared purpose. The William Barclay (SRHS Choir Director 1952-1965) Memorial Scholarship Concert, held on January 29, 2026 in the Santa Rosa High School Auditorium brought together Santa Rosa City High Schools choirs. Choirs from Maria Carrillo, Montgomery, Piner, SRHS and Elsie Allen (Mariachi) joined in a meaningful collaboration, filling the space with sound that reflected both excellence and unity.



*Choirs from all Santa Rosa City School District high schools rehearsing together*

During the daytime clinic, each choir sang individually with guest conductor Paul Head (class of 1981) for 45 minutes. The choirs had lunch together, then Head led an all choir rehearsal from one to three pm, before the evening concert.

Head spoke to the deeper significance of the event, noting that “nobody would dare argue with the ideologies of joy, beauty, inspiration, and artistry,” and that the concert was a living example of how choral music builds community

and hope in uncertain times. The evening also honored former SRHS choir director Dan Earl (SRHS Choir Director 1977-2005), whose decades-long impact on students extended far beyond notes and rhythms. Head reflected that Earl

taught young musicians not just how to sing, but how to be human—committed to beauty, community, and purpose.

MC and SRHS alum Kyle Thompson (1989) echoed that sentiment, saying, “Having our choirs come together like this reminds us that we are stronger when we sing as one community.”

Through shared song and shared history, the William Barclay Memorial Scholarship Concert affirmed the lasting power of choral music at Santa Rosa High School and the enduring influence of educators like Dan Earl. You can watch the concert on the SRHS YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/@santarosahighschool9385/streams>

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## HOW MR. PANTHER 2019 DEALS WITH FAME

By Kristine Erken

This could be a “Where Are They Now?” article but if you are one of the 800,000 people who follow this Santa Rosa High School alumni on social media, you can actually know where he is now. Lars Gummer, also known as Mr. Panther 2019, graduated from SRHS and the ArtQuest program as a dancer in that same year. While he was there, I was his school counselor and as a current SRHS Foundation Board member, I agreed to reach out to Lars so I can share this amazing young man’s journey.

Lars had a plan. He was going to graduate from SRHS, move to L.A. and make a living as a dancer. Covid changed all that. In 2020, Lars moved back home to Santa Rosa and started making clever dancing videos in the family kitchen. One of those videos hit pay dirt and people started watching Lars’ homemade videos on Tik Tok—a social media platform where people often post short videos of various topics. As his viewers increased, Lars was able to quit his day job and make a living posting videos sharing his everyday life as a dancer. He became a product promoter and lifestyle

influencer on social media. This is a real job with real income. Is having 800,000 followers intimidating? “It fuels me knowing that what I’m creating will be picked up by that many people, if it does well. Obviously I should just keep doing what I’m doing.”



*Influencer Lars Gummer (2019) promoting Poppi Soda*

Social media can be a tough platform where many critics and bullies target others online. I asked Lars how he handles this and he said, “I think growing up gay just kind of prepared me for online bullying. I know hate comes from insecurity so I don’t want to fuel this fire.” It’s clear when you talk with Lars that his successes far outweigh any petty distractors. We took a quick trip back to his time at Santa Rosa High School and I asked him what he would say to himself if he could talk to “high school” Lars. After some thought, he said, “People are going to support you all over the world. Just leave it at that and then wisp away.”

# MRS. ARENA: A TRIBUTE

By Tina Chiotti-Stewart

A single teacher's influence can shape not just academic achievement but a student's self-belief. This story highlights how one educator transformed my journey.

I still vividly remember my first day of the second half of my sophomore year.

When it was time to choose electives, my counselor gave me a choice—metal shop or sewing. My first thought was "neither," yet I landed in Mrs. Arena's sewing class. On the first day, I sat in the back of the room with arms folded, utterly unimpressed.

Our initial project was a cap-sleeved, button-up cotton shirt with a generous six-week deadline. To my own surprise, I finished it in just one week. My second project, a pencil skirt with a kick pleat, also had a six-week timeline, and again, I completed it within a week.

One day, Mrs. Arena approached and asked, "Why are you resisting this?" I looked up and admitted, "I don't know. This is amazing." That moment changed everything. My third project, a fully lined dolman-sleeved jacket with a rolled collar, took the full six weeks, and her consistent patience was remarkable. We both sensed a connection, even as we kept our relationship professional. Her spirited laugh and the clarity of her instructions still inspire me.

Mrs. Arena mentored me for the next three years, and it was so much more than a sewing class. It was a life class—teaching me to deal with mistakes, fix them, and then wear the resulting "outfit" confidently, knowing no one would notice. These skills have stayed with me throughout my life.

At the start of my senior year, with most of my close friends already graduated, I told Mrs. Arena I was thinking of taking the early exit exam to leave school and work more. Immediately and firmly, she replied, "Nope. You're going to take your essential classes, fill your electives with my classes; obviously, you'll get an A, and graduate.

I had become a skilled seamstress, drafting patterns from scratch to fit my body and guiding other students to learn this valuable craft.

She urged me to take junior college classes and told me I'd one day run a business, stressing that graduating was non-negotiable and even mentioned that I might earn a Doyle scholarship.

I trusted her advice, stayed in class, graduated proudly in 1985, and got a Doyle scholarship.



*Mrs. Casey Arena, SRHS teacher 1985*

The moment I graduated, she reached out and told me I was no longer to call her "Mrs. Arena" but to call her "Casey."

What began as a classroom connection became a lifelong friendship.

When I became engaged in 1988, I asked her to be in my wedding. She playfully replied that she was too old, but suggested her daughter, Ashley, could be my flower girl. I'm so glad she was. Casey, her husband, son, and daughter were all present at my wedding to my husband, Curtis, and we are still happily married.

I am so grateful that we are able to share meals, walks, and memories as often as we do. Our friendship has flourished over the years. It continues to grow. And I did indeed run a business. Several, in fact.

This story stands as a testament to the difference one teacher can make—by recognizing strengths, offering guidance, and fostering self-belief that lasts a lifetime.

## ATTEND SRHS IN THE '50S? DECADE REUNION PLANNED

Currently in the planning stages is a reunion for the Santa Rosa High Classes of 1950-59. This first of a kind event in the 150-plus years of SRHS is scheduled for **August 8 at Finley Park on the corner of West College Avenue and Stony Point Road in Santa Rosa.**

The brainchild of Ed Canevari, Class of 1957, the reunion will bring together Panthers from ten years of the time in which Santa Rosa high schoolers attended the only high school in town—with the exception of the 1959 class, the year Montgomery High opened.

Graduates are urged to watch their mailboxes for a flyer. The organizing committee at this point seats one member from each class who has the responsibility of contacting their classmates. To help in that task the SRHS Foundation has made available its list of members from the ten-year period.

Ten years worth of graduates can plan to enjoy wonderful and nostalgic comradery, food and drink. Spouses and guests are encouraged to attend also.

**For more information, contact Dick Coddling, telephone 208-640-3614**



# ONE THOUSAND PANTHERS

*Donations fiscal year 2025/2026 ■ January 31, 2025*  
*Thank you for your generous donations!*

Larry Weese 1964 (37)

Anonymous #581 (19)

Art and Andi Gambini (18)

Art Gambini 1968 and Andi, In Memory of Larry Sani 1937 (3)

Art Gambini 1968 and Andi, In Memory of Steve Orsborn (1)

Art Gambini 1968 and Andi and Kevin 2001, In Memory of Rae Gambini 1937 (11)

Art Gambini 1968 and Andi, In Memory of Dan Bianchini 1969 (1)

Robert 1958 and Marci Tarleton 1967 Jenkins (4)

Mark 1967 and Cathy Trione (9)

Donna Dennes Doyle 1967

Shawn Brumbaugh 1985 and Jennifer Richardson Brumbaugh 1986 (1)

Eric Pierce 1965 (3)

Richard Bastoni 1957 (4)

Bill & Suzie Simas Friedman 1966 (9)

Lu Butcher Kistner 1957 (1)

Kathleen Smith 1967 In Memory of Ron Westlund '61

Frank Kibbish Jr 1970

Alana Kelly 1978 (15)

Daniel McMahon in Loving Memory of Pam Griffin McMahon 1967 (4)

Mike & Louise Liewald 1970 (2)

Bruce & Debra Agee Burton, Parents in honor of Rachel Burton '98 &

Scott Burton 2008 (1)

Tad Shapiro 1973

Rick 1967 & Rocky Call (1)

Todd 1973 & Mary Orsborn 1974

Beseda in Memory of the three Albany Drive BFF's Alma DeMaria Orsborn 1943, Aileen Michetti Bianchini 1943 & Norma Rochetti Malone 1941

Reed & Jean Wang Walker 1994

James G Laier Jr 1958 (5)

Chuck Garvey MD 1964 in Memory of Larry Weese '64

Jack 1966 & Stacey Orme (3)

Mike Bucchianeri 1971

Rick 1968 & Paulette Guaspari 1968 Gomes

Stephanie Lowry Nacouzi 1977 (2)

Jim Streeter 1976

Bonnie Panizzera 1963 (4)

David C 1969 & Kathleen E Faris (3)

JoAnne "Jodi" Formway 1969, Janice Formway Morrissey 1972, Vernon

Formway 1976, & Nancy Formway Birch 1978 in Memory of Carmen

Eleanor Silvershield Formway 1949

Arthur 1996 & Mindy Chung (3)

Gerald L. Grey 1958 (7)

Linda Olson Cornell 1969 (2)

*NOTE: After each donor's name, the number in the parenthesis (x) represents the number of additional donations these generous donors have given to the OTP Program, above the original \$1,000 donation.*

ONE THOUSAND PANTHERS is a campaign in progress to enrich the SRHSF Endowment Fund by utilizing \$1,000 donations by 1000 Panther supporters to reach a goal of \$1 million. Proceeds are allocated to student needs at SRHS through the Panther Project Fund of the SRHS Foundation. The campaign began in 2011 and will continue until the goal is met.

Currently - we have a total of **329 donors (many with multiple donations)**

**WITH \$701,338.55 IN THE FUND**

**JOIN US!**

Call the Pandey Line (707-571-7747) or visit us online at [www.srhsf.org](http://www.srhsf.org) for assistance, or email us direct at [donations@srhsf.org](mailto:donations@srhsf.org). Donations options by cash, check, credit cards, or securities direct are accepted from individuals and groups (pooled). Donations can include pledges over 2, 4, and 5 years, employer matching funds, and marketable securities.

**CALL US!**

## 29TH ANNUAL POLENTA FEED — FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

It's that time again. The 29th Annual SRHS Foundation Polenta Feed will be held on **Friday, April 24, 2026** at the Santa Rosa Vet's Memorial Building. **The social hour begins at 5:30 pm with dinner at 7:00 pm.**

**Tickets are \$50.00 members and \$55.00 non members. ADULTS ONLY. NO REFUND.**

**Join the SRHS Foundation and get members price.**

Tickets went on sale January 15th and were available for **Foundation members only until March 1st.**

**After March 1st tickets became available to all supporters of SRHS.**

**Order tickets by calling the Pandey Line at 571-7747. We will stop selling tickets on April 15, 2026.**

Leave your name and phone number and your call will be returned by the following day.

**Dinner, live auction, silent auction, and raffle. Our Special Live Auctioneer will be California Senator Mike McGuire!**

Don't wait too long. **Once we have reached our maximum of 450 tickets sold, no more tickets will be sold.**

**In the years past, we have sold out by the First of April.**

# ARTQUEST GRAD MAKES A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO SRHS HISTORY

Michael Romero (2009) completed his SRHS studies in the ArtQuest program. The skills he learned there led him to create this delightful poster of every SRHS principal.

His interest emerged when the board of education not long ago wrestled with what schools to close because of budget problems. That interest grew as he understood that SRHS, with its century and a half of tradition and educational excellence, was considered for the chopping block.

Romero connected with retired faculty Art Horner and Mike Daniels (1959) as well as retired Associate Superintendent Doug Bower (1967), all of whom assisted in Romero's research. With the help of the SRHS Foundation, the poster was framed and SRHS agreed to hang it in the main hall along with other photographic artifacts.

The research required digging through obituaries, news articles and libraries. The photos are each in black and white to provide a sense of historical continuity.

The Foundation and SRHS are indebted to Michael Romero's efforts and dedication to the preservation and beautification of Santa Rosa's oldest and finest high school.

## SRHS PRINCIPALS 1875-2026


























 Melville Dozier 1875-1884	 Louis K. Webb 1884-1885	 Charles E. Hutton 1885-1890	 Henry C. Petray 1890-1892	 Frederic L. Burk 1892-1896	
 E. Morris Cox 1896-1909	 Charles L. Seary 1909-1912	 Dewitt Montgomery 1912-1919	 I.D. Steele 1919-1921	 E.H. Barker 1921-1923	 Gardiner W. Spring 1923-1931
 Walter C. Patchett 1931-1938	 Lloyd K. Wood 1938-1941	 Thornton H. Batelle 1941-1947	 Frederick F. Duey 1947-1970	 John J. "Jack" O Sullivan 1970-1981	 Daniel P. Thomas 1981-1985
 Robert B. "Bob" Bunting 1985-1989	 Michael C. "Mike" Panas 1989-1997	 William "Bill" Waxman 1997-2002	 Billie Sue Sion <i>Interim 2002-2003</i>		 Anton "Tony" Negri 2003-2007
 James "Jim" Goddard 2007-2009	 Billie Sue Sion <i>Interim 2009-2010</i>	 Harriet Gray <i>Interim 2010</i>	 Brad Coscarelli 2010-2018	 Kimberley Clissold Ph.D 2018-2023	
 Craig Wycoff <i>Interim 2023</i>	 Anton "Tony" Negri <i>Interim 2023</i>	 Mark Ryan Ph.D 2023-2024	 Monica Fong Ph.D <i>Interim 2024-2025</i>	 Kimberley Clissold Ph.D 2025-	

IMAGE RESEARCH AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY  
Michael F. Romero  
CLASS OF 2009  
SRHS & Artquest Alumna



HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND FACT CHECKING  
Mike Daniels, Art Horner, and Doug Bower  
CLASS OF '39, RETIRED FACULTY and CLASS OF '67.  
Retired English Teacher, History Teacher and Associate Superintendent

Image Sources: SRHS Museum, California Periodical, College of the Sequoias Library, UCLA Library Special Collection, UC Riverside California, California digital newspaper collection, University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, Sonoma County Library





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Charge my: \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_ Discover Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_
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Please return this form to: Santa Rosa High School Foundation, P.O. Box 11006, Santa Rosa, CA 95406. If you prefer, you may complete your transaction online through our website: www.srhhsf.org. For more information, please call the Pandey Line at (707) 571-SRHS (7747) OR email us at: info@srhhsf.org. Tax ID #68-0195375 (for a gift of Marketable Securities, please contact us for more information.) Remember... Once A Panther, Always a Panther!