

SERVING SONOMA VALLEY SINCE 1879

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ROBBI PENGELLY / INDEX-TRIBUNE

Amee Alioto (center), dance and special education teacher at Adele Harrison Middle School, gathers in the multipurpose room on Wednesday, May 10 with cast members from the production of "Shrek Junior."

## A professional take on 'Shrek Junior'

Adele musical benefits from dance instructors, enhanced sets and costumes

By DANIEL JOHNSON  
INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

*This is part of an on-going series that explores Classroom Grants provided by the Sonoma Valley Education Foundation.*

Originally scheduled for April 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic, Adele Harrison Middle School's production of "Shrek Junior" will finally take the stage this week, with some exciting theatrical enhancements.

The musical adaptation of the animated film "Shrek" — set for Thursday and Friday, May 19 and 19 — will include brand-new costumes and set designs that breathe added life into the catchy musical numbers, lively dance routines and irreverent humor.

Twenty students also received professional instruction during workshops at the Tremaine Dance Convention at The Westin St. Francis San Francisco in Union Square on May 6 and 7.

"It was inspiring to see the students challenge themselves in each class and push themselves beyond their comfort zone," Adele teacher Amee Alioto said. "They participated in a dance scholarship audition and met other dancers from across the country. Seeing them dance their hearts out in each and every



Students Ellie Miller (Donkey), Maddie Edwards (Fiona) and Mary Miller (Shrek) during a rehearsal of "Shrek Junior" at Adele Harrison Middle School.

### 'SHREK JUNIOR' PERFORMANCES AT ADELE HARRISON MIDDLE SCHOOL

"Shrek Junior" is a buoyant, family-friendly musical in which a grumpy ogre sets out on a journey to save a princess. Along the way, he learns the importance of friendship and acceptance.

**Dates and times:** Thursday and Friday, May 19, at 6:30 p.m.

**Place:** Adele Harrison Middle School multipurpose room, 1150 Broadway in Sonoma

**Admission:** There will be no admission charge, but donations will be accepted at the door.

**More information:** Contact the school's office at 707-935-6080.

class was so inspiring, and once again reaffirmed the importance of dance education. I could not be prouder of my students!"

The students' participation was made possible by a \$1,000 Classroom Grant from the Sonoma Valley Education Foundation.

"Believing this would be a transformative experience for my dance students, I was eager to provide this opportunity for them to further their dance education in a setting that brings together some of the best dance instructors in the industry," Alioto said.

Her hope was to introduce the dancers to a convention setting that provided a focused, fast and intensive learning environment where dancers could refine their technique, improve their performance skills and gain new insights into dance styles and genres.

"The intention was for the students to see how dance exists in the bigger world, try new things and most importantly, have fun," Alioto said.

Additionally, the theatrical materials — which include costuming pieces for the ensemble and actors as well as props and paint for set designs — were purchased with a \$991 grant from the education foundation. Ellen Gruenhagen, who is codirecting the musical with Alioto, applied for the grant.

"Our program is not funded by the district," Gruenhagen said. "We look for every opportunity to be funded. In the past, we often pieced together costumes. Often, they were less than exciting. Having the opportunity to purchase costuming and set design materials has made our actors excited and happy with their character's look."

Seventh-grader Isabella Holman, who plays Mama Bear, is excited to dance in the show in her new costume.

"It helps put everything together and make it a better show," she said.

Gruenhagen said that 43 students will participate in the production, not only as actors and dancers, but also as crew members running the lighting, sound and backstage activities. Mario Alioto and Reina Gibbs — who were scheduled to play lead parts in the postponed 2020 musical and are now juniors at Sonoma Valley High School — volunteered to help with the 2023 production.

Before she retired in December, Gruenhagen taught drama classes off and on while also serving as a teacher, a language arts department head and

an English language development teacher at Adele Harrison and Altimira middle schools for 29 years.

Alioto has taught dance and academic support classes at the two schools for the past 23 years and has received formal training in tap, jazz, hip-hop, modern, tumbling and musical theater throughout the Bay Area.

Her dance students at Adele Harrison were immersed in a nearly nonstop whirlwind of activity for seven hours a day earlier this month while taking classes in hip-hop, jazz, ballet, tap and contemporary dance as well as musical theater from esteemed instructors and choreographers.

Although there were stressful times in the process, Alioto said the students are excited to learn new moves, and that the experience provided them with more motivation to keep dancing.

"I loved experiencing different types of dances," said seventh-grader Stella Albertazzi. "This was a great team-building experience. I could ask others in the group how to do things or help me remember moves."

Maya Borchardt, also a seventh-grade student, added, "It was inspiring to be in an environment where people love dancing."

Gail Chadwin, director of development for The Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, emphasized the importance providing the students with hands-on training.

"Students had the opportunity to participate in a variety of dance classes taught directly by industry professionals — something that they likely would not be able to experience without this grant," she said. "We knew that it would be an inspirational and transformative weekend."

She also voiced support for school art programs in general.

"Over the years, most school-based art programs have unfortunately seen deep cuts to their budgets," Chadwin said. "However, arts education is an important part of students' educational experience. We are pleased to be able to support dance and other performing arts programs at Sonoma Valley Unified School District through Classroom Grants and other programs."

Gruenhagen said that theater arts programs offer a unique outlet for students to express themselves creatively.

"This can be especially important for students who may not excel in traditional academic subjects," she said. "Participating in theater, theater productions and dance requires students to work closely as a team. They learn communication skills, to trust one another and to work toward a common goal. Theater is also a great place for second-language learners to authentically learn and experience English."

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We regret that we cannot accept handwritten notices or take submissions by phone.

# Life Tributes

### IN THIS SECTION

ERICKSEN, Dorothy  
WEBB, Mary

### Mary Webb

November 10, 1932 - April 9, 2023

Mary passed away peacefully at home after battling dementia for the last few years. She was born in Gravenhurst, Ontario, Canada to parents George and Ruth Panter.

Mary received her Nursing Degree from the University of Toronto, and her Diploma in Nursing Education from Western University, London, Ontario. She worked for ten years as an RN in Canada, then moved to California in 1962. Mary worked at Franklin Hospital in San Francisco (Davies Medical Center) as the Intensive Care Unit Nursing Supervisor for ten years, where she met her husband, Eugene Webb, MD. Their son, Richard, was born in San Francisco in 1972. In 1974 the family moved to Sonoma along with her stepson, Eugene Webb Jr. She spent many hours volunteering at F.I.S.H. and Prestwood Elementary School, and was very involved with the community. She also greatly enjoyed playing with her grandchildren, gardening, knitting and reading.

Mary was predeceased by



her husband, Eugene Webb in 1994, her sister, Pat Simpson and brother Albert (Bud) Panter, and her step-daughter Barbara Webb Rother. She leaves behind her son, Richard, step-children Carolyn Webb Wagner and Eugene Webb, Jr. and many adored grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and great-grandchildren.

Donations in her name would be appreciated to F.I.S.H. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date.



Duggan's Mission Chapel  
(707)996-3655  
Duggansmissionchapel.com

### Dorothy Ericksen

December 4, 1930 - April 19, 2023

Our beloved mom and grandma Dorothy passed away April 19, 2023. Dorothy was born to parents Ross and Isabel Hooper in San Francisco, CA, on December 4, 1930. She was raised by her Grandma Davis in Marin. Dorothy was a 1948 graduate of San Rafael High School, where she met her husband Walt. They married on January 7, 1950, in Carmel, CA and went on to have four boys who they also raised in San Rafael. They moved to Sonoma in 1970, where Dorothy had several businesses-The Stripper, Casa de Segunde and The Top Drawer. She loved thrifting, gardening, cooking, camping, skiing and was the queen of garage sales. Most important for her was her family, in which she was a true matriarch. She was feisty and had a great sense of dry wit, and referred to herself as "brutally frank".

She was preceded in death



by her husband Walt, sons Chris and Kirk, and sister Leone. She is survived by sons Lindsey, Gene and daughter-in-law Lori, grandchildren Shannon (Sasha), Tyler (Jesse), Ayla and Austin and great-grandchildren Matt, Charlotte, Harley, and Ellie, niece Jean Epperson and family. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Sonoma Garden Park. The family is holding a private celebration of life.