

# ROOTS And Branches

By MAIJA YASUI

## Young people and the art of guidance

**T**HE WINTER HOLIDAY SEASON has been a blur of Nutcracker practices and performances, charity fund raisers, shopping for gifts and food, cooking and cleaning. Add to that all the family meals and holiday visitors and my five weeks of vacation was overflowing with the basic elements of happiness, sharing, caring and service with loved ones.



While the Nutcracker is a holiday tradition in many communities, it is one we have become intimately involved with through our granddaughter Kendra's love of ballet. She has performed each year since she started at the dance academy over nine years ago when she was not yet in school. It has been a struggle getting her from the "country" to town for

lessons, but the joy on her face as she grew through each performance was worth the multiple car trips, dance practices and performances. Her goal as she came of "age" was to win the coveted part of Clara. This was an exceptionally challenging goal, given the competitiveness of the role, but entirely of her own volition.

Kendra was not a natural dancer in the beginning, having to overcome the obstacles of a body type influenced by Finnish and German genes and scoliosis of the spine. But hundreds of hours of practice with dedicated dance instructors, a true love of ballet inspired by her beautiful mentor Kayla Walker, and Kendra's own dedication and strong work ethic overcame all these barriers.

Who am I to complain about the eternity of Nutcracker performances I have witnessed over the last nine years, the hard auditorium seats and long lines that somehow turn hundreds of little girls and a handful of boys into accomplished performers. I would be negligent not to mention the service element of the Nutcracker, the thousands of cans of food collected each year and the tremendous financial support for the food bank that the performances generate.



Submitted photo  
**KENDRA WILKINS** with a friend at the 2014 Nutcracker.

Personally, ballet has given our granddaughter the grace of a dancer, the inner beauty of a woman who can reach seemingly unattainable goals, and the love of an art form that complements her passion for reading and writing. I watched the Nutcracker through tears of joy as I felt my little "Bendra Boo" transform into an accomplished young woman, able to overcome whatever curve balls life may throw at her, and thrive in the process.

I was fortunate to share a similar experience this year with our oldest granddaughter, Katie Scarborough. Chalk two up for 2014 benchmarks. What started as just another requirement for graduation transformed a quiet young woman into a public speaker, an accomplished fund raiser, and a believer in service and the Joy of Art. Katie was one of the lucky students, able to experience the full benefit of the Extended Application project, to engage in a "significant learning experience that enables students to connect their current academic program to their context in real life situations"

It started typically enough, with a few delays at the beginning, asking grandma for help with project ideas as one of the first deadlines approached. But her parents (and teacher) encouraged her to branch out from asking family members and to meet others in the community. I was able to connect Katie with Susan Frost, the marketing and foundation director of Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital. Katie really clicked working with Susan. She was able to share with a stranger her interest in art, and her desire to do something for one of her first mentors, Peggy Dills Kelter. Art and the caring attention that Kelter had given a struggling little introverted second grader helped Katie find her way. She had not forgotten the kindness or the power of art in transforming her life.

With the support of several caring mentors, including Rob Norton who served as the auctioneer for the event, Katie put on an art auction. She had to face some unexpected challenges along the way. After the event was advertised, art work selected from Hood River Valley High School students, a venue at the high school secured, and an auctioneer scheduled, Mother Nature forced the auctions cancellation. For once Katie wasn't hoping for a snow day. The event had to be rescheduled, and with the holidays coming there were few venues available and even fewer students and parents not committed to other projects or events. Katie was able to reschedule the event before the holiday break by moving the venue to Mid Valley Elementary School thanks to the generosity of Principal Dennis McCauley. While attendance was low, Katie, supported by a handful of other art students, carried off the auction with the self-confidence of a professional event coordinator.

Rob Norton helped make the experience even more meaningful, teaching the students how to highlight their art work and really "market" it. He had them assist at spotters for the auction and showed them how the price of an auction item could increase when students shared how much work they had put into a piece, or what they were expressing in its creation.

Like the Nutcracker, the service component that is such a game changer for students was in donating the money raised at the auction to the students at Mid Valley Elementary School. In an assembly in front of over 500 students and staff, Katie presented a check for \$546 to Peggy Dills Kelter for much needed art supplies that would foster the creativity of yet another generation of students.

Katie's Joy of Art project brought joy to our fam-

ily, in watching this quiet young lady become an accomplished public speaker, one who believed in herself and the project she had created. It brought joy to the students who will get to be inspired by art in their young lives. And it brought joy to those very special community mentors, Peggy Dills Kelter, Rob Norton and Susan Frost, who helped Katie, and hundreds of other students believe in themselves and their abilities.

We are blessed in this community to have many mentors who give the most priceless gift possible, the gift of their time to others through service. I salute you.



Submitted photo  
**ROB NORTON** auctioneer volunteer with Katie Scarborough.

## TRAVEL

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private getaway.

The next day was Christmas! After a delicious breakfast we began our float. Our Christmas included a couple of really cool side hikes to ruins and waterfalls; we even found some mango trees and enjoyed some of the delicious fruit.

Mid-way through dinner on Christmas night, our merry excursion began its morph into an epic adventure as I found myself having a sudden urge to dig a hole — the kind of hole used to bury one's normal morning routine.

I'll spare the details and will simply say that I experienced a very uncomfortable and restless night. In the morning Christie began her fight with the same symptoms that had struck me. We weren't sure if it was our breakfast, the water, the mangos or something else, but we knew that we were days away from help and in a precarious situation.

Adding to the complications, it began raining that night and the river came up to an estimated 15,000 cfs. Having few options, we packed our gear and made our way downstream. After several large rapids and more great scenery, we made it to camp and hunkered down in the rain. Christie suddenly experienced violent shivering and more vomiting as we both continued to combat the sudden illness. Observing the rain become stronger throughout the evening, our concern continued to grow. In the morning we noticed the river had come up again, this time several feet. Now we had flows near 25,000 cfs and the largest rapids were downstream.

Arriving at the first of the "big" rapids, which were supposed to be two class IV rapids, we were faced with one long and difficult class V. We managed to find a good route through the exploding whitewater and made it to the bottom safely, albeit humbled by the power.

After rounding a few corners and enjoying some large waves, we made it to Shapalmonite, the largest rapid of the trip, and the only rapid that we were told we could not portage. After spending an hour or more scouting and discussing possibilities to get through the rapid, we found ourselves uncertain of the best option. There was just so much happening in the rapid with a large hydraulic at the top on the right, several unpredictable features in the middle, crash-

ing waves throughout, and a scary hydraulic at the bottom on the left, which happened to be boxed in by rocks.

All of the water was pushing to the left into that scary hydraulic. We knew it would be a tough rapid. We knew that it would be the biggest rapid we had ever paddled. We knew that paddling this rapid with just the two of us was not an advisable move, but we didn't have another option. After taking a moment to collect ourselves, we attempted to run the rapid. After making it through the first few waves, I looked back and saw that Christie had flipped over in one of the crux sections at the top. After I passed the large hydraulic that was on the right, I looked back again to watch as Christie went into the aforementioned hydraulic upside down. Fearing the worst, I made the decision to get to shore and prepare to rescue Christie by throwing her a rope.

On my desperate scramble to shore, I noticed Christie had miraculously made her way out of the hydraulic, rolled her kayak upright, and got to shore quickly. I managed to stop my kayak in the last possible spot above the scary hydraulic that lurked at the bottom of the rapid on the left. After catching our breath, we walked back upstream to the top of the rapid and began weighing our options. After feeling the power of Shapalmonite, we knew that attempting the rapid again would be a roll of the dice. With rain beginning to fall again, we were aware that waiting for the river level to decrease was a pipe dream. We made the decision to portage.

Attempting to portage a rapid that has previously been determined to be "unportageable" is a daunting task. At first look, we thought the portage would go pretty well, but after beginning our climb out of the canyon with our 80-pound kayaks, we realized we were

## Rockford Grange looks ahead to next 100 years

The Rockford Community Grange 501 is celebrating the New Year as the renewed owners of its 92-year-old Grange Hall building.

In 2005, due to declining membership and the need for funds to make renovations to the building, the Rockford Grange sold both the building and the land that it and the Westside Fire Department Building were located on to the Westside Fire Protection District.

The Grange retained rights to use the building for meetings and, over the past several years, the Grange was revitalized and membership and activities increased. So in late 2014, the Westside Fire District agreed to sell the building back to the Grange. The Grange now also has a 99-year lease on the land where it is located and a parking easement.

Rockford Grange meetings are held at the

Grange Building, located at 4250 Barrett Road. You can learn more about the Grange and friend it on Facebook under Rockford Grange #501. Some of the activities currently at the Grange include Folklore Society Dances from October to May on the second Saturday of the month at 7 p.m., Country Living classes on homesteading skills, and a beekeeping group. A Seed Swap is also scheduled for March.

Religious groups that regularly rent the space include the United Church of God on Saturday and the Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Sunday.

The Grange also provides an affordable place for anniversaries, birthday parties, weddings and memorial services. If you have a group that is looking for a meeting space please contact Linda Short at 541-490-9287 for more details on the Grange and rental rates.

mistaken. The soil was rocky and loose and a few hours into our portage, the sun began to beat down on us. We had grown exhausted and had run out of water. Being several hundred feet above the river level and becoming increasingly dehydrated, we didn't have any way of accessing water.

As I sat in the minimal shade behind a cactus, I decided to cut into the water bearing plant. The cactus produced zero water. Still sitting and thinking how I could rehydrate, I decided I was going to urinate on my shirt and ring the liquid into my mouth. Thankfully Christie saved me from this rash decision. She came into view from above me and exclaimed, "I found a trail over the saddle and back down to the river!" With this new knowledge we left our kayaks behind, took a few essentials, and scurried over the pass and down to the river on the other side of the canyon that we had been climbing. After filling our water bottles, twice, we trekked back up to where our kayaks were and decided to leave the boats for the night.

At this point it had become dark and we had been working on the portage for seven hours. We took all of our camping gear back down to the river where we set up camp, ate some much needed food and developed a plan to retrieve our boats in the morning.

At first light we went back up the canyon wall, over the pass and down to our kayaks. We set up a pulley system to

make hauling our kayaks easier, and within three hours we had our kayaks and all of our gear safely at the bottom of Shapalmonite.

After sharing a brief sense of relief and reflecting on our portage that required ten hours of teamwork, we happily resumed our trip downstream. With the river still at flood stage, we could hear rocks rolling on the stream bottom as we made our way through the remaining twenty kilometers of our trip, much of which contained fifteen foot tall waves. We once again experienced a sense of relief when we saw the bridge that marked the end of our river trip and the luxury of a hot shower, a warm meal, some antibiotics and, yes, a toilet!

We still had another week to enjoy Peru as more typical tourists. We visited the ancient town of Cusco, explored the ruins at Machu Picchu and walked along the beaches near Lima.

Our trip on the Rio Maranon strengthened our ever-growing love and respect for the natural world, in particular rivers. I don't know that we'll ever return to the Rio Maranon, or even Peru for that matter, but we're incredibly grateful to have had such an epic adventure that provided us with a few trying hardships, so many lasting memories and, most importantly, the endless smiles.

Like our driver exclaimed after dropping us off at the beginning of our journey, "Buena suerte!" to all you kindred spirits.

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## Volunteers in Action - Providence Community Caregivers

**Volunteer Training**  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
**Saturday, Jan. 31, 2015**

Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital

VIA-PCC offers non-medical volunteer assistance to older adults and those with chronic illness in Hood River and Klickitat Counties.

If you have an hour a week or an hour a month, you can be someone's "good neighbor."

Volunteer tasks might be taking someone to the doctor, picking up a prescription, friendly visits, grocery shopping and or other assistance.

Call to register or find out more, call 541-387-6404 or email [clare.black@providence.org](mailto:clare.black@providence.org)



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