

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning *forward*

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

When Jasper started to outgrow his preschool, there was only one school we considered—Sierra Canyon. As long-time Chatsworth residents, with a sister who attended SC, we knew this was where we wanted Jasper to begin his educational journey. From the moment we joined the community, we felt embraced. That sense of belonging has only grown stronger every year.

Music quickly became a defining part of Jasper's Sierra Canyon experience. With a family background in the arts, we hoped to nurture his musical side early. Thanks to the encouragement of Dr. Deutsch and her team, Jasper began cello lessons in Pre-K and joined the Introduction to Strings group class. Today, through hard work in and out of school, he has advanced to the Upper Strings ensemble. He now plays cello and piano and performs confidently on big stages, whether with his classmates on campus or at Universal Studios. Jasper's love for the arts deepened last summer when he joined Ms. Steinhart's musical theater camp, performing in a grade school adaptation of *Wicked*. He rehearsed his lines, practiced choreography, and sang joyfully and confidently. That experience sparked a new passion—choir—which he begged to join before the school year began. With the support of the dedicated faculty, Jasper joined the choir, and he now proudly considers singing another “instrument” in his growing repertoire. Watching him discover new outlets for creativity has been one of our greatest joys as parents.

For us, Sierra Canyon's commitment to the arts is deeply personal. As a Fine Arts major who became a Pediatric Neurologist, I know firsthand the profound impact of music and the arts on brain development. The foundation being built at Sierra Canyon—through Strings, Choir, Visual Arts, Dance, and beyond—gives our children the tools to excel artistically and grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Jasper has already told us he hopes to be a “lifer” at Sierra Canyon, and we are grateful he will continue to learn and thrive in a community where the arts are valued alongside academics and athletics. In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will be reaching out personally with a follow-up email, inviting you to take part in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Derek Verley and Meeryo Choe

Jasper '37

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning forward

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

When we first considered Sierra Canyon for our son Teddy, we were drawn in by the warmth of the community. Allan had experienced that warmth himself 30 years ago as a Sierra Canyon elementary student, but the question remained: Would it be worth the drive from Sherman Oaks? Of course, we cared about academics, but what mattered most was finding a place where our children could grow into kind, thoughtful people.

At first, we wondered if the School might feel too sporty, but as soon as Teddy started, that worry disappeared as we watched Sierra Canyon expand its focus on the arts. With the opening of the Kardashian Jenner Pavilion, a whole new world opened for him. It became more than a program; it became a community. Whether standing on stage or sitting in the audience cheering for friends, the arts gave Teddy an outlet to explore what he loves and a space to belong. One moment we will never forget was seeing him perform at a Friday assembly, previewing *The Wizard of Oz*. In those two minutes of "If I Only Had a Brain," we saw something shift. His confidence lit up the room, his pride was unmistakable, and his peers and teachers rallied behind him. In that moment, he had found "his thing"—and we had the privilege of watching a fearless version of him emerge.

That is why the Everest Family Center for the Arts feels so meaningful. Sierra Canyon recognizes that every child deserves the chance to discover their voice, whether it's through music, theater, or visual art. Investing in the arts means investing in that spark—that moment when a child realizes who they are and what they can do. As parents, our greatest hope is to equip our children with the tools to thrive and the joy of discovering who they are.

Giving beyond tuition and volunteering is not always easy, but for us, this feels tangible. We know this Center will become the place where we will see our children on stage, behind an instrument, or in a costume—moments we will carry with us forever. In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will be reaching out personally with a follow-up email, inviting you to take part in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Allan and Jill Rice

Teddy '35

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning forward

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

Before attending Sierra Canyon, we were deeply involved and happy at our previous school—I even served as PA President and thought we would be there forever. But as our son grew into a full-fledged athlete, we realized he needed a place to support his academic and athletic aspirations, especially his love of football. With its rigorous academics and strong athletic program, Sierra Canyon felt like a natural fit.

We initially applied for both our son and daughter as a formality rather than an interest for her. She loved her old school and was hesitant about moving. After visiting Sierra, her perspective changed: first curiosity, then excitement, and finally certainty. By the time admissions decisions were released, she eagerly awaited the answer. When we told her she had been accepted, she cried happy tears. Now both children are thriving. Our son is proud to be part of the football and tennis teams and continues to excel academically. Our daughter has found her passion in the arts—choir, violin, and musical theater—and is thrilled to be part of the upcoming *Shrek* musical. When asked if she regretted switching schools, she responded immediately: "No! I love Sierra. It's my home."

As a family, we have been welcomed from the start. We knew Sierra's academics and athletics were top-notch, but we have been equally inspired by the School's devotion to the arts. Our children have found a balance of academics, athletics, and artistic expression—but more importantly, a true sense of belonging. We will never forget our son's first football game, or our daughter's excitement at being cast as Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*. These moments reflect what Sierra does so well: creating a well-rounded education while building friendships, kindness, and confidence. From Peak Week to visual and performing arts to community traditions like Family Fun Day and Homecoming, Sierra Canyon truly delivers on what other schools promise but rarely succeed.

The Everest Family Center for the Arts will be a shining example of that commitment, giving every child even more opportunities to discover their voice and passion. In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will be sending a follow-up email inviting you to participate in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Nicholas D'Ambra and Jim Baklayan
Charlotte '33 and Ben '27

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning forward

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

When we began the school search, we toured more than two dozen public and private schools—yes, we even had a spreadsheet. Sierra Canyon quickly rose to the top for three reasons: a beautiful and secure campus, a rigorous and balanced curriculum, and a genuine commitment to the arts and world languages starting early. Those were non-negotiables for us, and since day one, our children have been known, challenged, and supported. The School manages that rare balance of high expectations and genuine care. It is where curiosity is celebrated, effort is valued, and kids come home tired—in the best possible way.

Both of our children have flourished through Sierra Canyon's arts programs. They each play the cello, an instrument that has taught them patience, discipline, and resilience. Miranda, a passionate dancer, has found joy performing on both the Lower and Upper Campuses, while Nathan's creativity shines in his love for painting and drawing. He is also eager to explore his artistic side through new mediums—like joining the Upper Campus ESports team, where design and strategy come together. For both of them, the arts have instilled confidence and a deeper appreciation for learning through creativity.

We believe deeply in Sierra Canyon's investment in the arts, and the Everest Family Center for the Arts is essential to that vision. As someone who attended a high school without a theater or auditorium, Matt knows firsthand how the absence of space limits creativity and confidence. It provides room for practice, performance, and possibility. Creativity and critical thinking will set our children apart in an age shaped by technology and AI, as the arts teach collaboration, communication, interpretation, and innovation. As the digital world blurs what's "real," the visual and performing arts remind us of what's authentic—people sharing breath, silence, and applause. The Everest Family Center for the Arts will be the heartbeat of campus—a space where students can take risks, find their voice, and learn the lifelong art of presenting their ideas confidently.

We support the Annual Fund and the Everest Family Center for the Arts Campaign. The Annual Fund powers the daily magic—extraordinary teachers, programs, and opportunities—while the Everest Center builds the literal and figurative stage where that magic can grow. In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will send a follow-up email inviting you to participate in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Matt and Trina Finton

Miranda '31 and Nathan '35

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning *forward*

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

When we chose Sierra Canyon for our daughter, we knew it was the kind of environment an ambitious young artist needs to succeed—filled with spirit, opportunity, and teachers who believe in their students. From the very beginning, her uniqueness was not only recognized but celebrated. Her teachers consistently encouraged her to take risks, explore new ideas, and step beyond her comfort zone. That constant support gave her the courage to dream boldly, and it ultimately helped her achieve her longtime goal of attending NYU. Today, she is thriving at the university she always imagined for herself, and we know Sierra Canyon played a profound role in making that dream a reality.

At the same time, Sierra Canyon has been just as impactful for our younger child, whose interests lie outside the arts. He has embraced the School's academic rigor and found great success in athletics, discovering his own strengths and passions with the same encouragement and support that guided his sister. For us, this balance—seeing two children with very different paths both thrive in the same community—underscores what makes Sierra Canyon so extraordinary. It is a place that nurtures every student, whether their stage is a theater, a classroom, or an athletic field.

This is why the Everest Family Center for the Arts is such an exciting step forward. It will give students like our daughter even more opportunities to grow and express themselves, while the Annual Fund continues to strengthen academics, athletics, and all the programs that support well-rounded excellence. Together, they ensure that Sierra Canyon remains a place where every child can discover their passion, build confidence, and prepare for a future filled with possibility.

In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will be sending a follow-up email inviting you to participate in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Everest Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Rainbow Luo and Ressie Huang
Zavier '28 and Becky '25

SIERRACANYONSCHOOL

Learning *forward*

October, 2025

The Sierra Canyon Annual Fund Cabinet

Chair

Shayne LaChapelle

Grades Pre-K –1 Co-Chairs

Derek Verley and

Meeryo Choe

Grades 2-4 Co-Chairs

Allan and Jill Rice

Grades 5-6 Co-Chairs

Jim Baklayan and

Nicholas D'Ambra

Grades 7-8 Co-Chairs

Matt and Trina Finton

Grade 9-10 Co-Chairs

Rainbow Luo and

Ressie Huang

Grades 11-12 Co-Chairs

Slava Gofnung and

Marwa Kilani

From the beginning, we believed that raising well-rounded children was the key to raising successful ones. For our boys, that meant finding balance—music and art lessons alongside team sports, creativity paired with discipline. When we discovered Sierra Canyon, what struck us most was the wealth of opportunities awaiting them. Here was a school that didn't ask students to choose between academics, athletics, or the arts but encouraged them to pursue each with passion and purpose.

That promise has been fully realized for our sons, Aiden and Dean. Having been at Sierra Canyon since Pre-K, they have grown up surrounded by a community that has nurtured them every step of the way. To see them as “lifers” now preparing for college is a reminder of the profound impact a Sierra Canyon education has when it spans a child’s entire journey. With the tremendous support of Sierra Canyon's specialists and faculty, they have participated in countless productions and exhibits and earned recognition on larger stages—winning the Gold Key Scholastic Art Award and earning honors at national film festivals like the All-American High School Film Festival. These experiences have done more than showcase their talents; they have inspired their future. Today, both boys are pursuing their dreams of studying the arts at the university level—a path made possible by the encouragement and guidance they received at SC.

Sierra Canyon offers something truly exceptional. It is a place where community runs deep, academics are rigorous, athletics are celebrated, and the arts are nurtured with equal devotion. This is why the Everest Family Center for the Arts is so exciting. It represents Sierra Canyon's commitment to elevating every child's voice and passion—whether on stage, on the field, in the studio, or in the classroom. Together with the Annual Fund, this campaign ensures that our students have every opportunity to discover who they are and where their talents will take them. And as parents, we can think of no greater gift than to see our children thrive in all aspects of their lives.

In the coming weeks, Jaime Armendariz or Stephanie Rubin will be sending a follow-up email inviting you to participate in this important initiative. By giving to both the Annual Fund and the Everest Center for the Arts, we are investing not just in programs and buildings, but in the limitless potential of every Sierra Canyon student.

Slava and Marwa Gofnung

Dean '26 and Aiden '26