



# FAMILY

## All in the

### Type of Business

## West Hills Montessori School

### Relationships and Roles

This family business—serving children and families in SW Portland — began in 1950 when Patricia Hickox (mother of Nancy Hildick, grandmother of Anne Blickenstaff) started the West Hills Learning Center on Capital Highway, a day care program. Patricia’s father had been injured in a tractor accident, and she needed to find a way to support her family. She had two teens, a preschooler and a baby at that time. The teens (Nancy and her sister) pitched in to help when their mother started the Learning Center. Nancy went on to study art education, then came back to Portland to join her mother in the family business. Anne, who worked in the family business (while studying finance and accounting) during summers and vacations, joined after college.

### Greatest opportunities:

Anne feels that the experience of watching her mother and grandmother work set a standard of dedication that has informed her own approach to her work. She learned what it means to be fully present and dedicated to work. She delights in seeing multiple generations of children attending West Hills, and becoming a part of the school’s legacy.

### Challenge of working together:

Their family is proud that Nancy and Anne have carried on Patricia’s vision, and of what they’ve accomplished at West Hills Montessori. They’ve been together to celebrate the “highs” but times of challenge impact the whole family as well. They have to make an effort to keep business conversations — and the subject of Montessori — from finding a way into their personal family gatherings.



### Things learned:

Nancy says that working in a family business has allowed her to develop deeper connections, adding another dimension to the relationships with her mother and her daughter, Anne.

Anne states that growing up surrounded by people who were passionate and purposeful about their work is the main reason she veered from pursuing jobs in finance and accounting (her degree focus) after college and instead followed her heart. Remembering the joy she felt working with the children at West Hills, she changed her course and became a Montessori teacher. Anne credits her family with providing support to follow her passion.

### Common ideology/belief:

They believe in nurturing the joy of learning within, which is reflected in the school community. There’s a strong family value around education: becoming an educated person, following one’s passion, then cultivating younger generations to pursue their dreams. There’s always room for growth. Nancy loves being an elder in the business, to come and enjoy what now exists, which was first sparked by her own mother’s passion and vision.

### Single piece of advice:

Be contemporary and of service. Know what’s happening in your community—listen and watch—so that you can reach beyond where you are and participate in that bigger experience of community.



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