

My daughter, Dana Megan, and I became a part of the Gavilan Hills Academy family in 1995 when Dana was a kindergartner. She attended Gavilan Hills until 2002 and what she gained there stays with her every day.

When I first visited the school to see what it was all about, I was met by the Director, Ms. Maggie Kennedy. Her vision for the school and what it could give Dana met my expectations. We enrolled.

Dana has had the very good fortune of many special experiences through GHA. She was exposed to the Japanese language and culture in kindergarten, when she learned to count and identify primary colors in Japanese. She was exposed to music through a teacher who played many different instruments and she learned to golf, something I would never have given her. She participated in hands-on science classes, including being involved in a site “dig” right there on campus. The study tactics and organizational skills she learned during her years at GHA benefit her every day now that she is a junior in high school.

When Dana attended GHA, one day a month was set aside for “Formal Lunch”. On the appointed day, the children were expected to dress up, girls in dresses or skirts and blouses, and boys in shirts and ties. The objective of this was to learn to eat in public, use correct manners, understand table settings, learn to have meaningful conversation with others during the meal, try new foods and to be attentive while listening to a guest speaker. Dana learned how to set a formal table and serve a meal. What Dana had learned at these lunches came to light one evening when we had gone out for dinner. She sat at the table, napkin in her lap, and tasted all food brought to the table. During dinner the waitress came to compliment me on Dana’s manners and asked how old she was. I beamed from ear to ear as I told her Dana was just seven.

The Christmas season is a special memory we have of our time at GHA. It is always celebrated by collecting gifts for needy children and having those gifts presented to the Santa Clara County Firefighters by what is called The Present Parade. The firefighters arrive in their beautiful red fire trucks, share a meal with the students and parents, talk to everyone about fire safety and leave with the back of their pickup filled with gifts.

As the Parent Club President, I had the responsibility to bring the parents together once a month to keep them informed, arrange fundraisers for the school, and coordinate work weekends when parents and students worked together with GHA teachers to improve campus. We always got lots of work done on campus and enjoyed a wonderful potluck lunch afterwards. Often, older siblings, grandparents, cousins and friends would join the GHA students and parents on work weekends. My older son and his friends often got involved by trimming trees and helping in other outside projects. GHA is truly a family school.

Dana and I will be forever grateful to GHA, but especially to Ms. Maggie Kennedy for what she has given to us. GHA provided Dana with a well-rounded education during her most formative years. Now that Dana is driving, GHA is one of her favorite stops. She loves going by school to visit with Ms. Kennedy and current GHA students.

When you choose Gavilan Hills Academy, you choose to give your child a positive experience in a wonderfully nurturing learning environment. It’s a choice you will not regret.

Diana Mugno