

## ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

### Dear Denver Waldorf Alumni, Former Students, Family & Friends,

I'm excited to be greeting you in the first official Denver Waldorf School Alumni Association newsletter. Since January 2013, a dedicated group of individuals has worked to craft an initial plan for reaching out to former students and their families.

DWS has evolved beautifully in many ways over the past 39 years: enrollment is now at an all-time high, now with more than sixty students in the high school. We have impressive leadership in our faculty and board of trustees.

We are celebrating 10 successful years at the current campus in Congress Park and are about to launch a capital campaign for the purpose of building a new Gymnasium/ Festival Hall, as well as making significant improvements to the existing building and grounds. Needless to say these improvements would enhance every aspect of education for the students and community at large.

You and your families are a treasured part of our heritage. Imagine the thousands of students (and families) who spent some or all of their K-12 education at DWS! We embrace this opportunity to reconnect with you.

While other Facebook forums and connections may already exist within classes, we feel that an established Alumni Association will be more comprehensive and consistent with communications and activities. We'll keep you informed about the new gym, special events, faculty news, sports calendars, educational information and much more.

Reciprocally, we will serve as a clearinghouse for information about your activities, accomplishments and milestones. Be sure to fill out the [Alumni Contact Form](#) on our website with your current information, and visit our [Alumni Facebook](#) page to connect online. Please also pass this information and invitation on to family members and classmates who may not be on our list. We look forward to hearing from you!

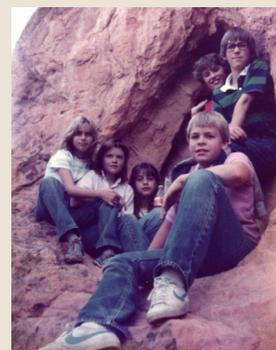
**With warmest regards,**

**Deborah Cornelius  
Denver Waldorf School Alumni Association**

### November 2013

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- Welcome Letter from Deborah Cornelius
- DWS Alums Set Sail: Ariel & Rachele Elich Launch *One World*
- Alumni Profile: Peter Ragonetti
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#### UPCOMING EVENTS

[Colorado Gives Day](#)  
Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2013

[39th Annual Holiday Fair](#)  
Saturday, Dec. 7, 2013

[Senior Class Play](#)  
Thursday, Mar. 6th, 2014  
Saturday, Mar. 8th, 2014

[Senior Project Presentations](#)  
Thursday, May 15, 2014  
Saturday, May 17, 2014

# DWS Alums Set Sail:

## ARIEL & RACHELE ELICH LAUNCH ONE WORLD



My name is Ariel Elich and I graduated from The Denver Waldorf School in 2007. I went on to study Photography at the Art Institute of Colorado. After college I found myself a little lost, not really knowing what I wanted to do with my new skills and education.

I knew I wanted to travel and I had the money to keep me abroad for quite some time, but I also knew I didn't just want to blow all my money on traveling for a year and then be back to square one when I came back.

One night around a campfire, my sister Rachele (also Waldorf Alumni - Class of '02) and I were reminiscing about a childhood dream we had of sailing around the world. It hit us then that this was actually a dream we still harbored in our hearts.

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*“I like to think that without my Waldorf education I would not have had the courage, creativity and wit to pull this all off.”*

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We decided that we wanted to buy a boat, or at least look into it. Sounds crazy right? It was a crazy idea and we knew it! But we went ahead and started crunching some numbers to see if this was really something we could turn into a business. Low and behold the numbers worked out.

### A "Synchronicity of Destinies"

The next hurdle was to find that "perfect boat" that we had been dreaming of all these years. At first the search for our boat seemed bleak. We found lots of nice boats that were way out of our price range, and the ones that were in our price range were junk barely afloat! Then (to quote a wise man) in a "synchronicity of destinies," we stumbled across One World, a beautiful, affordable, 64-foot Brigantine Schooner. It was love at first sight. From that moment, our world became One World.

Three very short months later we had sold most of our worldly possessions and moved out of the country to Panama (where the boat was at the time we bought it).

We worked between Panama and Columbia for about a year and a half, taking backpackers between the two countries and through some very picturesque islands in Panama, it was good work and good money but alas our wandering hearts were ready for a new adventure!



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## ONE WORLD, *CONTINUED*

On December 17th, 2012 we set out from Columbia and sailed 2,500 nautical miles across the Caribbean sea all the way to Florida. It was one adventure after the next! Now the boat is in Florida having regular maintenance done before we set out for the Yucatan Peninsula and Roatan, Honduras.

We now offer space on the boat for as long as a person would like to stay with us. We keep our prices affordable because, after all, we started this whole thing so we could travel and see the world and share that experience with like-minded adventurous people.

### **DWS Education: The greatest gift**

Our ultimate goal is to make a complete circumnavigation of the world and we plan to cross the Pacific Ocean in the next year or so. It has been an amazing experience so far and I like to think that without my Waldorf education I would not have had the courage, creativity and wit to pull this all off.

My hat is off to everyone at The Denver Waldorf School and I give a big thanks for the greatest gift I have ever received: My education.

You can check out our website at [www.sailingoneworld.com](http://www.sailingoneworld.com), where you can find links to our Facebook page, blog and lots of photos!

My photography website is currently under construction but should be finished in the near future at [www.ariellelich.com](http://www.ariellelich.com). ✨



## GET SOCIAL

Have you liked our [Alumni Association Facebook page?](#)

Share photos and find old friends online, and get the latest updates on events, Waldorf news and more.



## Alumni Profile: Peter Ragonetti



By Ben Drotar, Development Director

When industrial designer Peter Ragonetti was in high school, he didn't have a computer at home. In college, Peter still designed and prepared his artwork by hand. "Designing on computers just started during his last couple of years of college," his mother, Marcia Ragonetti notes.

These days, Peter is Design Director of Kikkerland Design, Inc., a large design firm in New York City, and credits the arts-integrated curriculum at DWS for his career choice. "As an Industrial Designer I have designed and built furniture and models, and have a full understanding of manufacturing and craftsmanship and the product marketplace.

"Since I graduated from Pratt in 2004, many of my own designs have come to market and have been patented. Currently I am responsible for overseeing the launching over 300 new products a year."

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*"Out of all the things I've designed and can attribute my name to, the one item I cherish most is the wooden spoon I made in Mr. Baker's class"*

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Some of Peter's designs can be seen on [his website](#), and in [this video](#) from the Pratt Institute. "I continue to see the influence that Mrs. Jaehnig and DWS has on me. I try to incorporate the beauty of nature and the world around me."

Despite his impressive professional achievements in design, Peter's most treasured creation is a humble one. "Out of all of the things I've designed and can attribute my name to, the one item I cherish most is the wooden spoon I made in Mr. Baker's woodworking class. It's currently displayed on my mantel. When I was a student you had to finish a mallet and spoon and then you could make anything you wanted. Most people made a project each semester. In four years, I made a mallet and a spoon – but it is a very nice spoon," he notes.

### Choosing Waldorf

As a young boy, Peter had struggled with undiagnosed attention deficit disorder (ADD) in Kindergarten through 4th Grade, and was not sure about his ability to succeed in school or even his willingness to try.

Peter's mother Marcia, a mezzo-soprano with Opera Colorado, was convinced that the style of teaching and learning at The Denver Waldorf School would better fit Peter's needs. "I learned about the school from Joan Condon, rest her soul. Joan was my very influential English teacher at Cherry Creek High [and a founder of DWS] and we kept in touch."

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## RAGONETTI, *CONTINUED*

Peter's father Tom, a race car driver, wasn't so sure about the school. "I first felt that Waldorf was perhaps a little strange, too soft and whifty. I was not certain that knitting and eurythmy were useful, but that all changed nearly the moment I spoke with Mrs. Ina Jaehnig.

"She was the most clear-thinking educator I had ever spoken to. I knew that this was the right place for Peter. Ina is an incredible person and the best thing that ever happened to Peter Ragonetti," Tom says.

It didn't take long for both of his parents to see that they had made the correct decision. Peter began to thrive and flourish. Marcia said, "In retrospect it would have been great to have Peter start at Denver Waldorf when he was in First Grade, but the school has proven to be the right choice. It was pivotal for Peter, even if it was just for 4 years."

### **Influential Teachers, Challenging Roles**

Marcia recalls, "After Ina accepted him into her class, she told me that he was not done yet. I didn't quite understand the full meaning of what she was trying to say at the time, but now I do.

"Ina knew that it was too early to judge him or any child, that it was her duty to continue to fill them up, allow them to take it in, and trust that they will eventually take all that they have learned and in their own time, bloom. Ina took the banner from me and was Peter's cheerleader."

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### **SHARE YOUR STORY**

Where has life taken you since your time at The Denver Waldorf School?

We'd love to hear about your personal and professional adventures!

Please send in your stories and photos, and connect with the Alumni community.

Send your updates to [develop@denverwaldorf.org](mailto:develop@denverwaldorf.org)





## RAGONETTI, *CONTINUED*

Peter has done just as Ina predicted: he bloomed while at DWS, he bloomed in high school and college and now is continuing to bloom in his career and his recent marriage. "I credit the strength and understanding that Ina gave to him and us. It opened our eyes as parents and we're thankful," Marcia adds.

Reflecting on his experiences in fifth through eighth grade at DWS, Peter says, "I'm not certain if it was any one thing that made the difference; I think it was everything put together. It was the dedication and love that Mrs. Jaehnig put towards me and the rest of the class, it was the curriculum and how it was presented."

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*"I continue to see the influence that Mrs. Jaehnig and DWS had on me. I try to incorporate the beauty of nature and the world around me."*

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### **PASS IT ON >**

Know someone who might want to read this newsletter?

Please pass it on — and help us reunite with our Alumni community!

Peter had learned how to read at a young age but felt no real interest in it. The challenge for him was not actually reading, it was focusing on the content.

"I would get so distracted that I wouldn't be able to remember what I read or actually learn from it. That is where having information presented by Mrs. Jaehnig in the home room environment was so beneficial. I could relax and listen rather than force myself to focus and the information sank in much deeper. Those ideas and stories lived in me and helped with my comprehension, which then made reading fun."

As a boy, Peter was initially skeptical about eurythmy, but from his perspective as an adult, it was essential to helping him manage his ADD. "I was a very energetic young boy, but when I went to eurythmy class, it relaxed me and gave me an opportunity to be within myself while still moving. Eurythmy was better than being prescribed Ritalin. It was pretty amazing. I certainly do hope that The Denver Waldorf School still teaches eurythmy."

I assured Peter that not only does the school still teach eurythmy, we continue to emphasize the value of this coursework for current and future students. As part of our long-range Campus Master Plan, we are looking to build a room specifically designed for the class.

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## SIGN UP & CONNECT

Please visit the [Alumni Page](#) of The Denver Waldorf School website to fill out your **Alumni Contact Form**.

Just a few bits of information will help us know how to stay in touch with you with all the special updates and events for Alumni.



## RAGONETTI, *CONTINUED*

Peter's mother Marcia reflects that she sometimes questioned the school's teachings, but was always amazed by the results. "Peter joined a class in 5th grade that had been together and knew each other for years. They were a pretty tight bunch. Ina cast Peter as the lead role for the class play Perseus. I thought she was nuts; being a performer myself in Opera, I just didn't see Peter doing this.

"Other kids with more experience wanted it and were probably more of an appropriate choice for the role. But in the end, Ina set out to put him outside of his comfort zone. Playing Perseus was not a gift for Peter, but a responsibility. He had to hold the class up in playing this part and Peter understood that and did it well."

Peter left DWS after 8th Grade to attend a charter high school that was very self-directed. "In my high school, I essentially chose my path as to what classes I would do. This was a fairly easy concept after working on and creating my own textbooks and main lesson books at The Denver Waldorf School. I already had all the tools I needed to think, act independently and prioritize," he recalls.

### Life After Waldorf

In May of this year, Peter got married in Brooklyn, NY. His wife tells him that she wishes she'd had the opportunity to attend a Waldorf School. She also has A.D.D. and struggled in a traditional education setting, and hopes their future children will attend a Waldorf School in New York City. (Peter, your kids are always welcome at DWS!) One of Peter's DWS classmates, Claire Boswell, is now a teacher at the Brooklyn Waldorf School.

Peter and his wife already value the Waldorf approach to education. "I can see even before having children that there are so many things that Waldorf is doing that are so relevant today. Kids have access to so much technology everywhere else, so not having the technology in the classroom is beneficial. Having to do things on your own and solve problems without the aid of technology is healthy and helpful in understanding the world," he explains.

The Denver Waldorf School made an impact on the entire Ragonetti family. Peter's father Tom believes that DWS helped to shape the man Peter has become. Peter himself recalls his four years at The Denver Waldorf School as being the first time he could see what he was capable of and what was possible for him to achieve.

Marcia adds, "The biggest gift that Waldorf gives to students is making them unafraid to go out into the big wide world. They want to be out in the big world and when they finally go, they are grounded and they are not afraid. Peter certainly benefited and we're thankful."

As our conversation ended, Peter mentioned he was headed to Massachusetts, his wife's home state, to go fishing for the weekend. "I enjoy fishing. It is an opportunity to get away and see the truth and beauty of nature. I guess there's a bit of Waldorf influence there as well."





# Tis the Season to Volunteer

## FOR THE 39TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY FAIR

By Kimberly Martin, Holiday Fair Coordinator

Looking to reconnect with The Denver Waldorf School community? The Holiday Fair is a perfect place to start. It expresses the essence of the Waldorf education in a festive, celebratory way.

We gladly welcome Alumni volunteers in three key areas of the Fair: Decking the Halls, Wreaths of Waldorf, and the High School Grill and Potato Bar.

### DECKING THE HALLS

The first weekend of Thanksgiving break, from Friday through Sunday, we spend most of the day (from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.) transforming DWS into a festive wonderland for the Holiday Fair. I am always in need of a few more creative or task-oriented volunteers. Even just an hour or two is amazingly helpful.

Fri., Nov. 22 @3-6pm: “Fluffing” (4 volunteers)

We empty the pod of the decorating supplies, distribute it into the halls of DWS and fluff the garlands and ribbon to ready for hanging over weekend.

Sat., Nov. 23 & Sun., Nov. 24 @ 10am-4pm  
Decorating Elves (12 volunteers each day)

We climb on scaffolding, hang the 100’s yards of decorated garland and the dozens of wreaths, and custom decorate a few landings and hallways. Lunch is provided, singing is optional. Any portion of the day is appreciated.

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## HOLIDAY FAIR, *CONTINUED*

### WREATHS OF WALDORF

Wreath making is truly a forgotten craft and hard to find in this mass produced world. We have a unique thing going here and Ina is the matriarch of it all. What a gift to work with her! Already, a portion of the wreath volunteers are parents of Alumni, parents of current high school students and high school students. There are also a few volunteers from families newer to DWS.

Tues., Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Fri., Dec 6<sup>th</sup> @ 5-9pm

Wreath making and decorating (6-8 volunteers each evening)

Learn how to hand tie a wreath in the DWS tradition. Toward the end of the week, join in decorating the wreaths using natural and tasteful store bought items. Ina Jaehnig's expertise enhances the richness and fun of this task. Some nights a light dinner will be provided.

Sat., Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> @ 9am – 4pm

Wreath sales, decorating

Shifts: 9-11; 10:30-12:30; 12-2: 1:30-4

(1-2 volunteers each)

The day of the Holiday Fair, volunteers assist in the pick up of pre-ordered wreaths, and with selling and decorating walk-up orders. Then everyone pitches in for the big clean up at end of day.

### HIGH SCHOOL GRILL & POTATO BAR

Run by High School students and parents, recent Alumni would feel welcomed by a group of familiar faces. It is a busy and fun way to be involved while socializing.

Sat., Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> @ 9am – 3pm

Shifts: 9-11; 10:30-12:30;

12-2: 1:30-4 (1-2 volunteers each)

Flip burgers and brats and serve beans and potatoes. With Elizabeth Harden at the helm, the fast-paced day at the grill runs smoothly and is a lot of fun for everyone. ✨



*Ready to get in the spirit of the season?*

Contact Kimberly Martin, Holiday Fair Coordinator at  
holidayfair@denverwaldorf.org or by phone at (303) 777-0531 x 129

## Help DWS Get a Bigger Piece of \$250,000

Colorado Gives Day is on December 10, 2013. First Bank has put up \$250,000 to be given away to participating non-profits as an incentive fund to increase donations given on that day.

The more donations we receive, the more of the First Bank incentive fund we get. Best of all, you don't have to wait until December 10 to make your donation, [preschedule your gift today](#).



### Take the Alumni Challenge

If you've never donated to The Denver Waldorf School before, consider a gift that is equal to \$1 for every student that was in your class the last year you attended DWS. Every dollar helps get us closer to reaching our goal of \$185,000 in donations this year.

If you have any questions, please contact Ben Drotar in the Development Office, by phone at 303-777-0531 x 107 or via email at [develop@denverwaldorf.org](mailto:develop@denverwaldorf.org). Your contribution makes a difference!



### > *Get involved*

With your help, our Alumni Association can become a thriving community of individuals who share the common bond of a Waldorf education. We welcome your ideas and participation!

#### > **Become a Class Representative**

If you're in touch with some of your former classmates, consider working together to gather contact information and stories to share with the Alumni Association.

#### > **Share Your News**

Send us information about marriages, civil unions, births, adoptions and other personal or professional news, so that our community can celebrate with you.

#### > **Volunteer at the 39th Annual Holiday Fair**

Contact Kimberly Martin at [holidayfair@denverwaldorf.org](mailto:holidayfair@denverwaldorf.org) to sign up for a number of fun and festive volunteer opportunities at DWS.

#### > **Like us on Facebook**

Just [one click](#) is all it takes to get connected with DWS Alumni through social media. See you on the web!