

## **Honoring Our 2019 Retirees**

During the June 3 regular meeting, the Board honored five retirees for their distinguished service to Orinda Union School District: Connie Boero (OIS Clerk), Tricia Newhart (DR Teacher), Ray Szeliga (OUSD Electrician), Kathy Williams (OUSD Accountant), and Jennifer Woodman (OUSD Director of Student Services). These outstanding employees have contributed a combined 102 years of service to students, staff, and parents in Orinda. Read below to learn more about these retirees and the important contributions each has made to OUSD.

### **Connie Boero, Attendance Clerk at Orinda Intermediate School**

Connie Boero started working for OUSD as an Instructional Assistant at Del Rey in 1995. In 1998, she was hired as the Attendance Clerk at OIS, and she remained at the middle school until her retirement. While overseeing student attendance was her primary responsibility at OIS, Connie wore many other hats. She served as the face of OIS by meeting and greeting everyone in the front office, assisted with substitute teachers, provided first aid and comfort to students, and trained the OIS student office aides, to name just a few of her responsibilities. Connie is perhaps best known for making the OIS office a warm and welcoming place for all.

According to Connie, being the Attendance Clerk at OIS never felt like work because the OIS staff and students were always gracious, friendly, and fun. She will greatly miss the youth and energy of the students. She credits them with keeping her young in her thinking and outlook on life. Connie's future plans include joining her husband in his recent retirement, taking on new hobbies, perhaps volunteering, and traveling, mostly to see her three sons in Chico, Oregon, and New York. The OIS staff, parents, and students will definitely miss seeing Connie Boero's cheerful face at OIS next year, and they wish her all the best in her retirement.

### **Tricia Newhart, Teacher at Del Rey Elementary School**

For about three decades, Tricia Newhart devoted herself to teaching and supporting children in our schools. Tricia taught at all four elementary schools and at OIS! Her positions included speech therapist, kindergarten, first, second, and fourth grade teacher, literacy coach, and mentor to beginning teachers. Tricia's fondest memories of her time in OUSD are woven into the fabric of each day - the wonder in the eyes of children learning to read, how they sometimes call her Mom by mistake and then giggle, watching tentative students find their voice, and the privilege of witnessing amazing teaching in the classes of so many talented teachers.

When asked what she will miss about OUSD, Tricia noted that she will miss the energy of the children, the support of the parents, and the friendship of colleagues. During her retirement Tricia plans to work with animals, enjoy time with friends and family, travel, and be the best new Grandmother she can! The entire Del Rey community thanks Tricia Newhart for making an incredible difference in the lives of countless children and colleagues through her expert teaching and patient, loving support.

**Ray Szeliga, Electrician for OUSD**

For 27½ years, Ray Szeliga dedicated himself to being the District's electrician. In that capacity, Ray was responsible for maintaining all of the HVAC, security, fire alarm, school bell, clock, and PA systems. He spent over thirty years in electronics, so he developed strong expertise that helped him troubleshoot the wide array of electrical challenges that occur in schools. Ray likes to say that he kept everybody in OUSD warm in winter and cool in the summer.

When Ray reflects on his time in OUSD, he considers that he was part of a family that pulled together to provide a better, safer environment for our students. He will miss the many friends he made over the years and will do his best to stay in touch. During his retirement, Ray dreams of going on an Alaskan cruise and hopes to convince his daughter to go with him. Other than that, he looks forward to relaxing and to not having an alarm wake him up early on weekdays. We wish Ray Szeliga all the best in this next chapter and look forward to seeing his pictures from that upcoming Alaskan cruise!

**Kathy Williams, Accountant for OUSD**

Kathy Williams devoted 20½ years to OUSD before retiring late last month. She started in the District as an account clerk, later became senior account clerk, and finally was promoted to accountant, a position she held for several years. When the school sites had a business-related question, Kathy was always the go-to person. She was a leader who was willing to tackle any situation that needed attention, and she always maintained a professional and positive attitude.

During Kathy's time in OUSD, she developed many friendships with colleagues. She considered her OUSD coworkers to be some of the most wonderful and hardest working people she has ever met. Kathy looks forward to spending time with her six grandchildren, reading more, and sleeping in! She was a role model and an exemplary employee in the OUSD District Office, and she will be greatly missed.

**Jennifer Woodman, Director of Student Services for OUSD**

In 2014, OUSD was incredibly fortunate to hire Jennifer Woodman as the Director of Special Services and Personnel. In that position, she was tasked with oversight of both special education/student services and human resources. Prior to joining OUSD, Jen served as a Special Education Local Plan Area program specialist for the Acalanes Attendance Area, including Orinda Union, Moraga, Lafayette, Walnut Creek, and Acalanes Union High School Districts.

When she reflects on her time in OUSD, Jen remembers the collaboration with so many dedicated and caring professionals within the District and her positive interactions with the many providers and agencies that partner with OUSD to support students with special needs. Jen found her job to be varied, challenging, interesting, and creative. She truly loved working with parents and educators to support students.

During retirement Jen looks forward to being a grandmother to her first grandchild, traveling, being outdoors, and worrying less. OUSD was fortunate to have such a high caliber educator and person serving as a District leader. We know that Jen will enjoy retirement to the fullest, and we thank her for the innumerable ways she contributed to our District.



Pictured from L to R: Ray Szeliga, Connie Boero, Tricia Newhart, Jen Woodman, and Kathy Williams