

# Tonia!

(Lynn)

We couldn't be happier to be here to celebrate Tonia! ...and to be here today as grandparents celebrating Luci and Uri. We've been asked to say a few things about our early days -which were in the basement of Centre Congregational church.

One of my lasting memories of Hilltop in the mid 80s was a Board meeting - sitting on toddler chairs in a room in the basement of Centre Congregational church—debating whether the hourly wage for our teachers should be raised by a quarter or 35 cents. The debate centered around what parents could afford to spend which was a point shared by at least a few around that small table. It was at meetings like this...but probably more in between meetings like this... that Tonia was able to raise our consciousness to realize that

- teachers and staff were the heart of what made Hilltop special and that
- all staff should be (and most importantly feel) supported and appreciated.

We are even more (through Luci and Uri) in awe of the extraordinary experience of Hilltop - unique for each child - because of the extraordinary staff and know that all along the way, Tonia was a champion of supporting staff.

(Les)

One of the qualities that Tonia brought consistently to her leadership of Hilltop was her ability to instill confidence that we could achieve the things we wanted to do. One episode illustrates this for me.

In the early 90s, for several years, I was the treasurer of the Board. At that time, the School went to the third grade. However, we were trying to decide whether to add the fourth grade. And, as you know, the Montessori approach, which puts three grades together, to decide to add the fourth grade is then making a commitment to add the fifth and then the sixth grades.

As treasurer, I gathered various assumptions about projected expenses and income. I created several financial models for the year's budget. However, all the models showed a negative bottom line for the budget.

I presented this to the Board and we looked it over carefully—and recognized that if we made the decision to add the fourth grade, we may end up having to draw upon the very little reserve that was available at that time.

However, Tonia said we can do it. We can make the commitment, add the fourth, and succeed in getting the necessary funds somehow throughout the year. As I said, Tonia has a way of instilling confidence. So we decided to go for it. The fourth grade was added!