
FIRESIDE ACADEMY STAFF



Angela Landis (*Director and Teacher*)

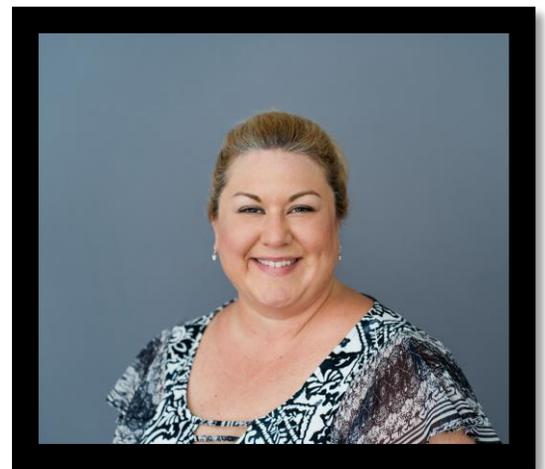
Angela was a dual major in anthropology and psychology at Temple University. She homeschooled her two children for fifteen years, and continues to teach others, both at Fireside and other settings. She is passionate about her work as a certified Wilson dyslexia tutor, and also as an English tutor for a foundation designed to empower young women high school basketball players from inner city Philadelphia as they pursue college and careers. Before children, she had worked as the operations manager for a large furniture store and in administration at various colleges, developing the organizational skills necessary to run a homeschool business. She has a great passion for all writing, social sciences and nature study, and enjoys teaching those subjects to

children, as well as sharing her knowledge of arts and crafts in enrichment classes. Her greatest delight is in watching her own children, and her beloved students, succeed. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, crafting, cooking, backpacking, and vicariously traveling through time and place with a good book.

Laura Dollenger

(Assistant Director and Teacher)

I am the proud mom of Danica ("Dani") and happy wife of Andy for 14 years. This school year marks our 5th year at Fireside and our 8th year of homeschooling. We have tried cyber and traditional and we have learned that the latter is where we thrive. Dani and I love field trips and making new friends. In my spare time, I enjoy crafting of all sorts and dreaming of Disney. In the past, I have used my college degree in Veterinary Science while working in a small animal veterinary hospital here in the Lehigh Valley. I was also a companion caregiver for the elderly in Montgomery County. I loved both jobs but feel like I am the happiest, most content and fulfilled where I am at this point in my life.



2019-2020 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS



Emily Hassler (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)

Emily Hassler has been happily homeschooling her two boys, ages 16 and 14, since preschool. This is her eleventh year at Fireside Academy. Like all homeschooling parents, she enjoys learning along with them, and from them, every day. Her enthusiasm for teaching and guiding children has grown since her homeschooling journey began.

Kathy Merlino (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)

Kathy has her degree in Elementary Education and has been a stay at home mom for 18 years. She has three children, ages 18, 16, and 11. This will be her 9th year homeschooling her children and also their 9th year as part of the Fireside Community. Her oldest daughter is heading to her first year of college in fall 2019. Kathy enjoys spending time with her family and friends, crafting, field trips, and anything related to Disney and Harry Potter.



Susan Ott (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)

Susan has her B.A. in English Education and has taught and tutored students from pre-K to college. She now homeschools her six kids (ages 16-5) and is entering her fifth year with Fireside. She and her husband John believe in giving their kids as many "hands-on" experiences as possible, from visiting museums & attending shows, to living part-time at the beach! She's an advocate for gifted education & autism awareness, an entrepreneur, a writer, a former barista, and owns her own bakery business: Doughnut Love. Susan loves good books, strong coffee, her English Bulldog Lola, creating delicious food in her kitchen, and traveling to new places.



Tammy Pagats (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)

Tammy is a mother of three who has been homeschooling for the past seven years. She has a BS in Accounting from Lehigh University and is currently working on a master's degree at Penn State University in Behavioral Sciences. In addition to caring for her home and family, she volunteers with the local Boy Scout Troop. In her free time, she enjoys long walks on local trails, weekend camping trips, and knitting.

Sarah Wagenheim (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)

Sarah is a homeschool mother of two creative children (ages 9 and 10) and is entering her seventh year as a Fireside Academy member. She has a BS in Graphic Design and Advertising with a minor in Religious Studies from Moravian College. Sarah is in design mode 24/7 whether that's designing corporate logos, building stage props from nothing, or refurbishing an old chair. She and her family are always involved in some form of creative outlet, from studio art to coding to theater to dance. She finds her happy place in her art studio, loves to dress in any kind of costume, is an entrepreneur with her husband on various ventures, loves theater and art history, rocked it as a cancer mom for her daughter Phoebe, advocates for and rescues animals, wants a pet sloth so badly she cries when she sees them, drinks black coffee, is on her way to a black belt in karate, and wishes she lived at the beach. Her hobbies are designing anything and everything, being creative with her kids, helping with Fireside, loving on her many cats, and traveling with her family on vacations... specifically, vacations at the beach.



2019-2020 FIRESIDE ACADEMY TEACHERS

Beier, Katrina

Katrina Beier has a passion for all things music. She has been playing piano for over 30 years and also plays fiddle, ukulele, and guitar. She has played in bands, churches, schools, weddings, college, and theater productions. She currently leads worship at her church. Katrina also teaches private piano, ukulele, and violin lessons, where she encourages her students to learn to read music, but also to be able to improv, play by ear, and write their own songs. Katrina has been enjoying homeschooling her 3 kids for 7 years. In previous years, she taught "Musical Theory and Fun" at Fireside as well as "Hogwarts for Homeschoolers." She is a birth doula and is owner of SideKicks Doula Services. When she's not at work or busy with her family, writing songs, or playing her instruments, she enjoys being in nature, gardening, reading, and talking to her dogs and chickens.



Berenty, Brandi

I am the proud momma of three very athletic kids, Shelby is 22, Dillon 18, and Kaitlyn 12. My husband Andy and I have been married 25 years and we have homeschooled all our children for the past 14 years. We love to spend a lot of time outdoors, on the beach, hiking, at Spartan races, and camping. We are very involved in high adventure Scouting. This will be our 5th year at Fireside and we have looked forward to Tuesdays with friends that now feel like family.

Berenty, Dillon

Champlain, Amy

Amy Champlain grew up in Colorado and lived in California until moving with her family to Pennsylvania in April 2016. A domestic goddess since her first son was born and a proud homeschooling mama of two boys for the last 5 years. My first job was at Rainbow Children's Center as a preschool teacher and daycare assistant. It was such a fun and rewarding job experiencing the world through the eyes of a child. I have been blessed to continue this adventure educating my boys. I look forward to exploring the world with friends at Fireside.



DePiero, Kristie

Kristie has been homeschooling her two boys, ages 11 and 13, for 7 years. Her homeschooling philosophy is Waldorf inspired, but she considers their homeschool eclectic. She has a degree in Agronomy and Environmental Science from Delaware Valley University and works as a consultant in addition to homeschooling. Any extra free time is spent watching her boys on the ballfield.

Dunn, Danika

Danika Dunn managed to graduate magna cum laude from Brigham Young University with a one-year-old in tow. After completing her BS in dietetics, she worked part-time in hospitals and had a private practice for a while, before devoting all of her time to being in the home. She now has five young kids with loads of energy and audacious ideas. She has homeschooled various combinations of her children for the past four years and loves it! She is very active in her church community, and in her limited spare time she enjoys yoga, beekeeping, making lists, and dreaming about homesteading.



Fowler, Chris

Chris has been involved in education for over 20 years after completing a certificate in teaching English as a Foreign Language. He's been homeschooling his children and helping tutor relatives in Costa Rica for 12 years. His proudest sporting moments are intramural basketball champion, Swarthmore College, 1996-7, Monterey Peninsula Soccer League champion, 2004 & 2005 with the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and first in several 5k's where no one faster than he showed up. He has completed 4 marathons, with a PR of 3:25, and hundreds of races over 30 years of running.



Garner, Erin

Erin Garner has been homeschooling for 7 years. Her husband, Brett, and she have 3 girls (11, 9, and 7) and one boy (2). Erin loves to play games, be silly, read books, and watch movies in her occasional spare time. She also teaches a religion course to High School students that attend her local church every morning at 6am.

Girven, Caralee

Caralee Girven has been homeschooling her son from the start, and they have been a Fireside Family since the 2017-2018 school year. She has a degree in English Literature and has spent her professional career as a technical writer for several software companies. She has been sewing since she was young, but took her craft to the next level in 2013 when she opened her Etsy shop, Early Bird Stitches. She is a brand ambassador for two indie clothing pattern companies and a fabric company, and she is part of the testing team for several indie bag designers as well.



Hanson, Jenny

Jenny spent much of her life in North Dakota and Minnesota before moving to New Jersey 3 years ago. She studied Political Science in college, worked as a radio morning show host, and taught dance to ages 3-13 for over 15 years. This is her 8th year of homeschooling her three children.



House-Cooke, Alex

Alex is a homeschool mom to her two children Grace (12), Benjamin (6), and is a native Long Islander who graduated from Kutztown University with a BS in Art Education. After graduation, Alex had a short stint as a day care worker but then hit the road and spent the next 20+ years of her life performing stand-up comedy professionally at comedy clubs and colleges across the country. Dealing with tough crowds and hecklers made the transition to being a mom easy on many levels. Six years in the fitness industry led Alex to discover her latest passion: educating others on chemical free living. When she's not teaching classes on essential oils and empowering others to take charge of their own health, Alex is happy reading a good book, belting out music from musicals, or thinking of ways to embarrass her kids by being a "goofy mom". She's happy to be getting back

to teaching what she actually went to college for and finds creating art relaxing and an "escape into the imagination and vacation from the stress and seriousness of everyday life!"

Jarcynzski, Cori

Cori is a mother of two--Madelyn, age 11, and Braden, age 6. She has been homeschooling her children for 6 years. This will be her 5th year at Fireside, 4th year teaching here. She earned her BA in Business/Marketing from Muhlenberg College, and worked for an educational company for 12 years guiding students through the admissions process of higher education. She loves anything food-related, from taking cooking classes, cooking with friends and her kids, and loves to travel---mostly to try new and different foods/restaurants.





King, Jessica

I am a proud homeschool Mom to Adrienne and Tommy. We are a blended family with 5 kids, however 3 are now adults. For the past 2 years we have enjoyed a homeschool lifestyle where we can focus on individual interests and strengths. My background is that I have always enjoyed teaching. From playing teacher when I was 10, volunteering to teach grade 1/2 Sunday School in High School and then as a student at Ursinus College I was teaching Spanish at the local Chesterbrook Academies as a traveling language teacher. I spent 2 years in the world of International Business using my Spanish skills , but knew in my heart, teaching was where I was supposed to be. I taught Spanish for 8 years, and Art for 2, at the Renaissance Academy Charter School before staying at home to raise our gaggle of kids. It's a blessing to me that my husband was homeschooled during his family's time in the Mission

Field of Africa, and so he is super supportive and makes this whole crazy thing possible by working hard and helping it all take shape. We started a homestead in 2015 when we moved from Chester County to Hellertown, PA and we raise many different kinds of vegetables and animals which provide ample opportunities to augment our homeschool journey.

Knowles, Maia

I am a homeschooling mom of 4. I have been homeschooling for over 10 years. I have been married to my husband, Nate for 18 years. I have my BS in Elementary and Early Childhood Education from Millersville University, I am certified to teach birth – 8th grade in PA. I have taught pre-school, kindergarten, and third grade before having children and becoming a homeschooling mom. I enjoy watching my children play multiply sports and hiking with my family. I also enjoy playing and teaching tennis. I have played tennis since I was 5 years old and played in college. All of my children also enjoy playing tennis. I coach USTA junior team tennis teams and captain my women's USTA team. My whole family is very involved in the sport of tennis and the love of the game. This will be our third year at Fireside and I am looking forward to teaching!



Kuhlken, Naomi

Naomi has been homeschooling her three children, ages 14, 13, and 6, since day one and this will be her second year at Fireside. She is a self-taught photographer and has been working as a professional wedding and portrait photographer for more than ten years, the last eight with her own company, Kuhlken Photographers. She is grateful for the ability to guide children in exploring and following their passions. Her other identities include animal lover, passionate hockey mom, and lover of all things travel.



LaChance, Paul

Paul LaChance, PhD is a former college professor in Theology, now adjunct at NCC. He maintains a private counseling practice in Easton. He has been homeschooling with his two children for 6 years; their homeschooling philosophy focuses on self-directed learning motivated by the children's natural curiosity and supported by parent modeling and guided practice. He enjoys learning new things along with his children and spending as much time as possible outdoors.

Lozinger, GarriAnn

Garri Ann Lozinger is a mother of five, ages 20-7. She has been homeschooling her children for ten years. Before homeschooling, she taught kindergarten art, volunteered at her children's elementary school and volunteered at a local Pregnancy Crisis Center. When she is not shuttling children, she enjoys scrapbooking, crafting, and fitness.



Martin, Tami

Tami is a mother of 2 energetic kids. She has been homeschooling for five years. She has been married to her husband Kyle for 14 years. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening and reading.

Miller, Tori Marie

A graduate of Rutgers University, Tori Marie Miller is a mother of one and has been homeschooling for 8 years. After retiring from a career in law and public relations for a major league baseball team, she worked as an independent consultant for a major television network in their primetime television division. After the birth of her daughter, Lilah Gene, Tori took her first love of performing and playing music and became the Director of Music for Gymboree Play and Music from 2007-2013, composing songs and activities for the program. She also served on the Board of Directors for Dance Theatre of Pennsylvania. Tori is currently a private piano, vocal & acting coach to 29 students from beginners to professionals.



Maggie Stoeckle

Maggie Stoeckle is a self-professed lifelong learner and science geek. She completed her 7th year of homeschooling and graduated her daughter, Emma. Originally from Hawaii, she spent two summers on a university research vessel teaching oceanography and marine science to school children before heading off to college where she earned her degree from Michigan State University in Advertising. Professionally, she worked at a major advertising agency and then transitioned to a successful 17 year freelance career in technical writing and marketing. She is an experienced event planner who has put on countless science events as well as taught high school science and math in a co-op environment. In her free time, she enjoys reading, travelling, and spending time with her family.

Thomas, Shana

Shana was born and raised in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. She's been an artist for as long as she can remember and also an active member of the art community for many years in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. She's taught art classes, participated in many art events, and created many works of art for more than 30 years. She is married to her awesome husband Bernard and is a proud mother to five beautiful children ages 14-24, two grandchildren ages 2 and 4 years old. Her oldest son proudly served his country well for 4 years in the United States Navy, her oldest daughter is in college majoring in Neuroscience, her other two daughters are in high school, and her youngest son is 14 years old and attends Fireside Academy. She's been homeschooling for three years and enjoys being a major part of her children's education.





Vogelgesang, Barbara

Barbara has been a homeschool mom for 20 years. She has a BS in journalism from St. John's University & is a graduate of Ringling Bros. Clown College. A mom of 4 children she is also a certified public speaker and has been performing, speaking, teaching and writing for over 30 years. She is currently a teaching artist for Touchstone Theatre's Young Playwright's Lab & works as a freelance costumer & drama teacher. Barbara toured through the US, Canada and Japan with Ringling Bros and other shows. She teaches theater and circus arts for various camps and theater schools. A published author, Barbara has taught writing for homeschool and private organizations.

Weikel, Leah

Leah is the mom of 5 children (ages 12, 11, 9, 7 and 5) with another one on the way! After sending her oldest to preschool, she and her husband realized that homeschooling was the best fit for their family. They have been homeschooling for seven years now and have learned a lot along the way. Their homeschool approach is eclectic, some of which includes: crafting, reading well-written books, playing with Legos, learning math facts, and spending ample time outdoors. Leah has her undergraduate degree in English from Temple University and her M.Ed. in Secondary Education from East Stroudsburg University. She has a love/hate relationship with cooking and running, but she always loves to dance, write, and drink black coffee. Although she is no longer coordinating, she is still very involved with her local MOPS group. She and her family look forward to their second year at Fireside.



Weiss, Becky

Becky has been a homeschooling mom for over 10 years to her girls ages 13, 11, and 6. She has a BS in social work from Cedarville University and is also a certified biblical life coach. Her family spent five years working at a mission in Peru where she became fluent in Spanish and learned to make some amazing Peruvian food. Currently, she manages a life coaching business and writes study curriculum for women in ministry.

Williams, Vanessa

Vanessa Williams earned her degree in Finance from DeSales University, graduating with magna cum laude honors. She worked in the banking industry for 10 years ending as an AVP Credit Analyst/ Underwriter for the Small Business Administration. Since summer of 2011, she has been home with her children. Vanessa has two girls in grades 3rd and 6th. This will be her 2nd year at Fireside and 1st year teaching. Vanessa has been a part time swim instructor at Swim in Zone for the past 6 years and specializes in Parent/Child classes and children with fear. She has also been a volunteer teacher at her church for her kid's Prep program for the past 2 years. She has been an advocate for animal adoption and has fostered dogs for the past 20 years. Recently, she started to volunteer with Noah's Ark Rescue Project and Sanctuary (NARPS) where she processes adoption applications and fosters during the summer. When she is not teaching or working, she is running her girls to their dance lessons or competitions and loves being a dance mom. She grew up dancing since 6 years old and continues to take adult lessons. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, watching movies, swimming, being in nature, and being creative. She considers learning a lifelong experience and enjoys new opportunities to grow in knowledge.

