

## **2020-2021 Teacher Bios**



### **Barnett, Jenn**

Jenn Terfinko-Barnett has been homeschooling since 2017. She holds a BA in Sociology from Bloomsburg University where she also minored in English with a concentration in Racial and Ethnic Minorities. Jenn also holds an MA in Sociology from Lehigh University. Professionally, Jenn has worked in the nonprofit and for profit sectors, as well as in higher education. All of those experiences have shaped her eclectic homeschool style. Jenn believes a child learns best when they can experience what they are learning; any subject can be taught through a game or hands on project! In her spare time Jenn enjoys music, crafting, being a Girl Scout, and traveling with her family!



### **Beier, Katrina**

Katrina Beier has a passion for all things music. She has been playing piano for over 34 years and violin for 4 and a half years. She also sings and plays guitar and ukulele. She has had music training at Moravian College and Elim Bible Institute. She has played in bands, churches, schools, weddings, college, and theater productions. She currently serves as a leader on her church worship team. She teaches private piano, ukulele, and violin lessons and has taught elementary and preschool music classes. She encourages her students to learn to read music, but also to be able to improv and play by ear. Katrina is also thrilled to be teaching Howarts at Fireside this year again, because "HOGWARTS IS MY HOME!" Katrina has been enjoying homeschooling her 3 kids for over 7 years. She also is a birth doula and owner of SideKicks Doula Services. When she's not at work or busy with her family or her

instruments, she enjoys being in nature, gardening, crocheting, reading, and talking to her dog, cat, and chickens.



### **Bender, Joanna**

My name is Joanna Bender and I have been homeschooling my 6-year-old son AJ for two years. I received my Bachelor's Degree in Education from Kutztown University and am currently pursuing my M.Ed. through Walden University. I have taught as a preschool and kindergarten teacher for eight years and worked as a preschool director for four years. I love seeing little minds grow and develop as they take in and ask questions about the world around them. In addition to teaching at Fireside, I work as an educational consultant for early learning centers, and teach in the children's

program at my church in Allentown. When I am not working, I enjoy playing in an adult soccer league, and spending time with my husband Tony and our son AJ. We love camping, four wheeling at our cabin, and snowmobiling in upstate New York.



## **Berenty, Brandi**

I am the proud momma of three very athletic kids, Shelby is 23, Dillon 19, and Kaitlyn 13. My husband Andy and I have been married 26 years and we have homeschooled all our children for the past 15 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 6th year at Fireside and we have looked forward to Tuesdays with friends that now feel like family.



## **Cooke, Alex**

Alex is a home school mama to her two children: Grace (13) and Ben (8). Originally from Long Island, NY, Alex fell in love with Pennsylvania after attending Kutztown University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Art Education. It was “something to fall back on” as she pursued a career in stand-up comedy for the next 15 years. It was when she switched gears and was a fitness instructor for 6 years where she discovered her true passion: inspiring others to live a healthy, chemical free life. She now runs a home based business educating and empowering other moms to be champions of health for their families. “For me, creating art has always been my “happy place”.



## **DePiero, Kristie (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)**

Kristie has been homeschooling her two boys, ages 12 and 14, for 8 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.



### **Dollenger, Laura (*Assistant and Teacher*)**

I am a Lehigh Valley native, born and raised in Bethlehem. I am the proud mom of Danica and happy wife of Andy. This school year marks our 5th year at Fireside, my 3rd year as the assistant director 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. My college degree is in Veterinary Science and I had the pleasure of working at a small animal veterinary hospital here in the Lehigh Valley for 10 years. After getting married and moving to Montgomery county, where I worked as a companion caregiver, Andy and I moved back to the Lehigh Valley to begin our family. I have loved all the hats that I have worn in the past, but I feel that I am the happiest,

most content and fulfilled where I am at this point in my life.



### **Fowler, Christopher**

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 13 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.



### **Girven, Caralee**

Caralee Girven (Cara) 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 spent her professional career as a technical writer for several software companies. She has been sewing since she was young, but really started to put her talent to work in 2013 when she opened her Etsy shop, Early Bird Stitches. She is part of the testing team for several indie bag designers and also enjoys her work at Dorney Park as part of the Entertainment team (wardrobe and costumes).



## **Grimmett, Chelsea**

Chelsea Grimmert is a mom of two (4 and 5 years old) and is passionate about home education and keeping the wonder and magic of childhood. She believes strongly in the inquisitiveness of children and finds joy in watching them learn and discover their place in this world. This is Chelsea's second year at Fireside, and like so many others, fell in love with the community immediately. On her downtime, Chelsea is an avid reader and enjoys handicrafts.



## **Hassler, Emily (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)**

Emily Hassler has been happily homeschooling her two boys, ages 17 and 15, since preschool. This is her twelfth 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.



## **Humphreys, Lynn**

Hello! I am Lynn Humphreys and this will be our first year at Fireside and we are looking forward to it! I am a nurse by profession and work at Lehigh Valley in case management. I have been home schooling for 14 years and have taught a form of the writing program I hope to share with you for 4 years. Kalyn, my youngest and my only daughter, will be a 9th grader at Fireside this year. We live in Jim Thorpe, PA and love the outdoors and animals! We have 2 dogs, 2 cats, 6 chickens, and a gerbil!



### **Landis, Angela (*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 academic tutor with refugee teens from Afghanistan, Ghana, and Rwanda through Bethany Christian Ministries. 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 business. She has a great passion for all English, social sciences and nature study, and continues to enrich her own education through continuing ed classes at local colleges. Her greatest delight is in watching her own children, and her beloved students, succeed. In her free

time, she enjoys gardening, crafting, cooking, museum hopping, and vicariously traveling through time and place with a good book.



### **Martin, Tami**

Tami is a mother of 2 energetic kids. She has been homeschooling for six years. She has been married to her husband Kyle for 15 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 9 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.



## Morris, Liz

Liz Morris is a former teacher turned Homeschool Momma. She has a A.A. in Early Childhood Education and a B.A. in Elementary Education and Art History. Her work experience includes being a Preschool Teacher, a 1 st and 2 nd grade Teacher, a Preschool Creative Movement Teacher, and a Family Mentor at a Cyber Charter School. Liz's favorite job has been as a Homeschool Momma for a total of 8 years between her daughter (a High School Senior) and her son (an 8 th grader who attends Fireside). She has a passion for teaching in a purposeful but fun, creative, and interactive style. In her free time, she loves being outside gardening, hiking in the woods and visiting her extended family at the Jersey Shore. This November, she will be celebrating 20 years of marriage to her sweet husband.



## Ott, Susan

Susan has her B.A. in English Education and has been homeschooling her six kids for the past six years. In her past life, she taught High School English, Creative Writing, and Theatre, as well as tutored High School and College students. Her family is in their sixth year at Fireside, where she developed a comprehensive Culinary Arts program as well as taught beginner's Theatre. Susan's approach to learning is eclectic, recognizing that one size does not fit all, and every student needs the room to explore a subject according to his or her own strengths. When she's not teaching, Susan enjoys reading, cooking, baking, logic puzzles, game

nights & movie nights with her family, lazy days at the beach, and cuddling with her English Bulldog, Lola.



## Pagats, Tammy

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.



## Wagenheim, Kenn

Kenn Wagenheim is a serial entrepreneur, long time coder of 30+ years, all-around online guru, and video gaming enthusiast. He has been a homeschool dad and member of Fireside for 8 years, has two mostly wonderful children, and a fantastically awesome wife. His hobbies are playing video games with his son Jack, sleeping in until noon, coding everything from apps to websites to software, and supporting his lovely wife who so graciously wrote this bio.



### **Wagenheim, Sarah (*Advisory Council Member and Teacher*)**

Sarah is a homeschool mother of two creative children (ages 10 and 12) and is entering her eighth 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.



### **Weiss, Adam**

Adam was a Chemistry major at Cedarville University with a goal to move on to higher education as a teacher. He earned his degree before going on to work in the chemistry field for several years before changing gears and working as a teacher and counselor in South America for a mission organization there. He and his wife, Becky, have been homeschooling their girls for over 10 years and he helps out with all things math and science at home. During the summer he enjoys days at the beach with the family and Iron Pigs baseball!



### **Weiss, Becky**

Becky has been a homeschooling mom for over 11 years to her girls ages 14, 12, and 7. This is her family's 4th year at Fireside and they think it's been the BEST homeschooling decision to date! She received a B.S. 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 serves at her church, teaches ESL to Chinese students online, and supports her husband in his home-based business.



## **Widmer, Jeff**

Jeff has been working in software development for over 20 years. Jeff has an engineering degree from Rutgers University. Jeff and his wife Jill live in Flemington and homeschool their four children. Jeff enjoys learning new concepts and currently hosts a weekly stream on Twitch.tv where he live codes while learning new programming concepts and sharing his experience and knowledge with others. In addition to Jeff's love of software architecture and development, he also enjoys home improvement including renovating their Flemington home.



## **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 5th and 8th. This will be her 4th year at Fireside and 3rd year teaching. Vanessa has been a part time swim instructor at Swim in Zone for the past 8 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 5 years. She has been an advocate for animal adoption and has fostered/rescued dogs for the past 20 years. When she is not teaching or working, she is running her girls to their dance lessons. 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.