



**Jesse Arreguín**  
Councilmember, District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR  
February 24, 2009

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Jesse Arreguín  
Subject: Proclamation Declaring February 28, 2009 as Walden Center and School Day in the City of Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a proclamation declaring February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 "Walden Center & School" Day in the City of Berkeley in recognition of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, celebrating five decades of creative teaching and joyful learning through arts and education at the corner of Dwight Way and McKinley St. in the heart of Berkeley.

BACKGROUND:

The Peace Sign is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and it's fitting that the Walden Center and School in Berkeley turns 50 this year too. Walden was founded as a K-6 school in 1958 by a small collective of families who came to know one another when the husbands and fathers were imprisoned together as Conscientious Objectors and conscription opponents during WWII. The school was originally intended to be called "The Pacifist Anarchist Dayschool" and continues to be run as a collective to this day.

Among other things, the founding families considered the terrifying bomb raid drills their children experienced at public schools to be unacceptable. They sought to create a school community modeled after the Thoreau's 'Walden': a place apart, where each child was respected as an individual, and freedom of expression was a core value cultivated in students, teachers and parents alike. The founding families built much of the school as it exists today with their own hands. They were involved in social activism, protesting, the communist and pacifist movements and a rich array of artistic endeavors --all of which inform the classes and community spirit of the school today.

Decades before such concepts were commonly familiar, Walden's guiding philosophies centered on environmental and social sustainability, diversity, and the value of learning through play. As they have for the past 50 years, students do not receive grades, but go on to achieve academically, personally and professionally -- with many noted artists and writers among them. New York Times Bestselling Author, Anna Godbersen, famed Berkeley artist Miles Karpilow, and the family of

political commentator George Lakoff are just a few of the folks who count themselves members of Walden's remarkable community.

Parents at Walden have always been actively involved, and agree to perform a certain number of volunteer work hours to help run the school and keep the cost of tuition reasonable. Many teachers and numerous families have been part of the Walden community for generations, and though the few surviving founders are approaching their nineties, they continue to be feisty, sharp and opinionated matriarchs of the community they created at a time when their vision was considered radical. And, just as they have for the five preceding decades, Walden students still play barefoot across a campus surrounded by foliage that continues to grow and thrive like the peaceful, playful oasis of the school it shelters.

To commemorate Walden's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the school community will be hosting a Gala and Auction Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the Gaia Theater in Downtown Berkeley.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None

CONTACT PERSON:

Jesse Arreguín, Councilmember, District 4

981-7140

Attachments:

1. Proclamation

**Proclaiming February 28, 2009 “Walden Center and School Day” in the City of Berkeley**

WHEREAS, the Walden Center and School has been a creative and progressive child-centered educational community, in the heart of the City of Berkeley for fifty years; and

WHEREAS, Walden was founded in the spirit of collective endeavor, community activism, freedom of expression, and respect for each child as an individual; and

WHEREAS, Committed and concerned progressive thinking local families began Walden as an alternative to traditional educational settings then in existence, despite being perceived as radical, and devoted their collective skills and resources to its creation in 1958; and

WHEREAS, As the only collective school still existing in Berkeley, Walden’s founding vision has been sustained and nurtured through an evolving collective of founders, teachers, families and friends to achieve five vibrant decades of inclusion, diversity, creativity, activism and ecology to create a culture of education that is now an acclaimed model for small school best practices the world over; and

WHEREAS, The Walden community has joyfully and creatively educated over one thousand k-6 grade East Bay children, and includes distinguished writers, visual and performing artists, educators, professionals, academics and civic leaders among many alumni citizens who have shared in the Walden family over these years; and

WHEREAS, The Walden Center & School will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the City of Berkeley that it hereby proclaims February 28, 2009 as “Walden Center & School Day” in the City of Berkeley in recognition of the Walden community’s fifty years of creative teaching and joyful learning.

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Mayor Tom Bates

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Councilmember Linda Maio

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Councilmember Darryl Moore

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Councilmember Max Anderson

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Councilmember Jesse Arreguin

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Councilmember Laurie Capitelli

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Councilmember Susan Wengraf

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Councilmember Kriss Worthington

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Councilmember Gordon Wozniak

