

2017 YACA Board Candidates

Vanessa Beckett (incumbent)

My name is Vanessa Beckett, and I'm currently serving as the appointed interim YACA board Community Chair. My husband Scott and I have 3 children here at YA. My son Liam is currently in 6th grade, my daughter Ava is in 5th and youngest daughter Rhyse is in Kindergarten.

I'm personal chef and caterer by trade, but currently a stay at home mom mostly. Before I had children I worked as an administrative assistant in two different medical practices. I've always chosen career paths and volunteer roles that align with my gifts and talents. I also volunteer in my faith community as a mentor to small group of 7th grade girls, I'm a leader in 2 different women's ministries, and have served on other church committees in the past.

At Yinghua I've been a classroom coordinator for 6 of 7 years since my son started attending. In past I've been a field trip chaperone, helped pack up moon cakes at Keiffer Court, taken home English projects for distribution, folded & stuffed letters for the school office, provided staff snacks, shared a dish or two for the staff Thanksgiving meal and have been a Field Day volunteer as well. As you see I like giving back to the Yinghua community that given my children so much!

My interests related to the Yinghua community are both personal and community based. I like to getting to know and serving other parents and staff. I also want to help ensure that community building for parents and families is routine. Also I want to help make sure volunteer roles are sustainable and not too much work for any one or small group of people. My hope is that the community building work of YACA can continue to help families make personal connections, want to volunteer, and find their way in this unique school atmosphere.

I'm in the process of helping launch Yinghua's new family mentorship program called Jia Ting. We feel strongly that everyone who's new to YA should have a welcoming friend to rely on to help navigate their first year. After our last YACA meeting I've established a Classroom Coordinator Program Task Force with one staff member, 3 current CC's, and one general parent. The school is 11 years old and it's time revisit how we utilize Classroom Coordinator program and volunteers that participate in it.

There is one other area in particular that I would like to explore more with YACA, as someone who benefited personally from the generosity of others when I was a teen which made it possible for me to travel the world. I want to make sure all the 7th & 8th graders who want to go on the China or Taiwan trip can financially. Yinghua is in a great position to help all our students pursue this amazing experience. I admit this is an aspirational goal. I look forward to seeing this become reality. It's been a pleasure to serve so far. Thank you for your support, feedback, and all your volunteerism this past year!

Peter Fontaine

My daughter (Evelyn, 4th grade) has said to me that I have done "everything" when it comes to jobs. While that is not true I have worn many hats in my lifetime. From early careers like a newspaper route I eventually navigated to school bus driver, while in college, to on-sight coordinator of corporate meetings and incentive trips, and now to owning my own wine distribution company.

I am the son of an early proponent of social justice, a past Dean of St. Mark's Cathedral, who instilled in me the desire to give back to the community. I worked four summers at Camp Courage on the speech, hearing, and learning camp and have volunteered the last four years working on the Yinghua Gala.

As a person that has been involved in sales for the last 18 years I feel that I bring a unique perspective on how to incentivize people to get things done. It is hard to summarize all that you are and have to offer in a paragraph, but I would like to be a part of continuing to make Yinghua the place I am proud to have my Family be a part of.

Randi Traub Girtz

Our family became part of the Yinghua community last September when our son (one and only) was admitted into a first grade spot two weeks into the school year. We pulled him from his former school that very Friday, and by the following Monday we were a Yinghua family! A few weeks into the school term I was meeting amazing teachers and staff and so many lovely moms, dads, grandparents and care-givers while waiting in the pick-up line outside Door #2. The feeling of Yinghua community is what did, and still does, resonate most true to me. It is my most heartfelt wish to be a valuable and helpful member of the Yinghua community I've come to love and admire, and I hope you see in my background things which could contribute positively to the school and its mission.

For the past 6 years I have been a Development Assistant at The Basilica of Saint Mary and The Basilica Landmark helping raise funds for the preservation and restoration of The Basilica Church and its campus buildings. I assist the Executive Director and board in preparing for meetings, taking minutes and development prospect research. For the parish I conduct general admin support for the Development Team.

Prior to this, I spent 10 years with the Animal Humane Society in Golden Valley. My roles there were varied and numerous including development assistant (gift processing, entry, acknowledgements, record maintenance) and event support which led to my final 5 years as the Special Events Coordinator under the Special Events Manager. As Events Coordinator, I worked with MANY amazing volunteers on the Walk for Animals, Pose Your Pet with Santa, a book sale, a rummage sale, the Horse Show, Whisker Whirl and more. My most notable personal achievement was being the sole event manager overseeing a Book Sale that raised \$40K over our budgeted \$20K!

In 2014 I was also a founding member of the Columbia Heights MiniAdventures Pre-School Parent Association where we were able to introduce a new annual family event and fundraising ideas and created new connections among parents. Thank you kindly to the YACA Board and Yinghua families for your consideration of my Board Membership submission.

Julie Phillips (incumbent)

Julie Phillips, mom to current third grader Anika, has been on the YACA board for 2 years, first as the Community Chair and now as the Secretary. A transplant from the east coast 5 years ago, I am a proud Nordeaster and I love the opportunity we have here for Anika to get an immersion education at Yinghua. By day, I work at Lifetouch, the school picture company, though my real passion is in theatre as an actor/director. I have an MFA in theatre pedagogy (the art of teaching theatre), and am a core company member of Theatre Unbound, a local theatre company that focuses on telling the stories of women and girls through theatre. I am happy to stay on the board as Secretary for another term if you will have me.

Ivette Tejeda-Little

My name is Ivette Tejeda-Little. I am interested in running for a position on the YACA Board. In 2011, my family (husband, Scott and daughter, Abigail) moved from the East Coast to Minnesota. Prior to our move, I was a working mom and Vice President in Compliance at Morgan Stanley. While at Morgan Stanley I oversaw trade surveillance and sales practices. Our time in Minnesota has allowed me to be a stay-at-home mom.

Since my daughter's acceptance to Yinghua (2014) I have been an active volunteer at the school. I have had the fortune to either assist or work on the many projects that define and help sustain Yinghua; both in the class room and across the school. The Read-a-Thon, The Book Fair, Chinese New Year, The Red Envelope Campaign and Field Day...just some of the activities I have been happy to volunteer for.

My husband Scott wanted me to add that he's been a reliable member of the "Engine Room" in the Dragon Boat races 3 years in a row. He thought this was very important to mention! My commitment to the school stems from my desire to support my daughter and the community that is working hard to ensure her academic success. Thank you, and please know that regardless of any formal board position, my volunteerism won't stop