

# Madison Exploratory



# School



# THE LITTLE SCHOOL

Written by Molly Merry  
Illustrated by Madison Exploratory Students  
2009

**Dedicated to the many**

**students**

**parents**

**teachers**

**support staff**

**administrators**

**and**

**community members**

**that have made Madison Exploratory School possible!**



Once upon a time there was a little school.

It was well built of brick and was  
snuggled against the mountains and near a river in a quiet town in  
Colorado.

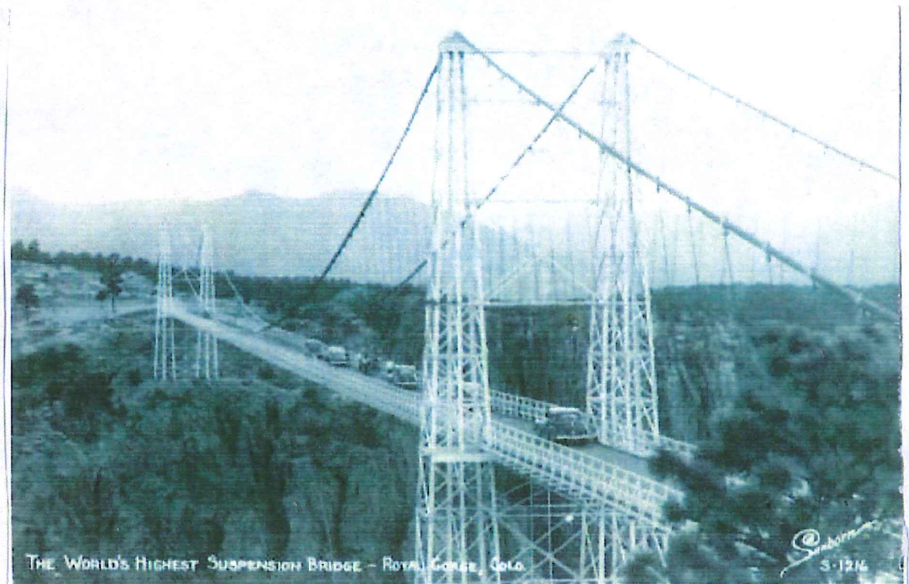
The school's name was Madison. Madison had shiny wood floors,  
beautiful wooden doors and big windows to let in the sunshine.

504—Main Street, Looking West, Canon City, Colorado



On U. S. 50, Transcontinental Highway at the Entrance of the Royal Gorge

0818-N



THE WORLD'S HIGHEST SUSPENSION BRIDGE - ROYAL GORGE, COLO.

3-1216







When Madison was built in 1924 the people in the neighborhood thought of how their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren would be learning, playing, and making friends.



Madison: A school, a home.



Madison was very happy on the corner of East Douglas and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Canon City, Colorado. Through the years, as the trees in the neighborhood grew tall, Madison watched all the children who came to school learn to read, write, do their arithmetic, sing, and make beautiful art. The best part of each day was watching them play, laugh, and run on the playground at recess with all their friends.





*Madison First Grade  
May, 1954*



*Madison Second Grade Class 1954-55*





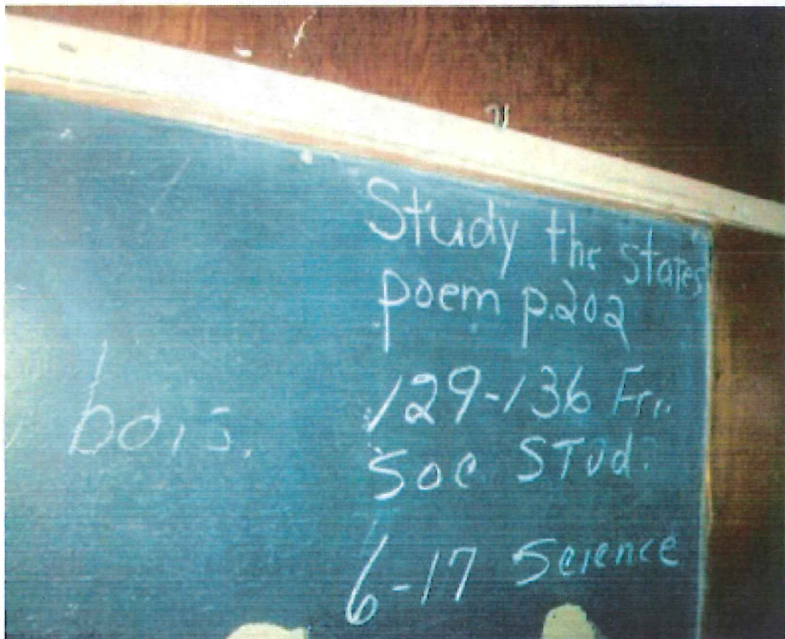
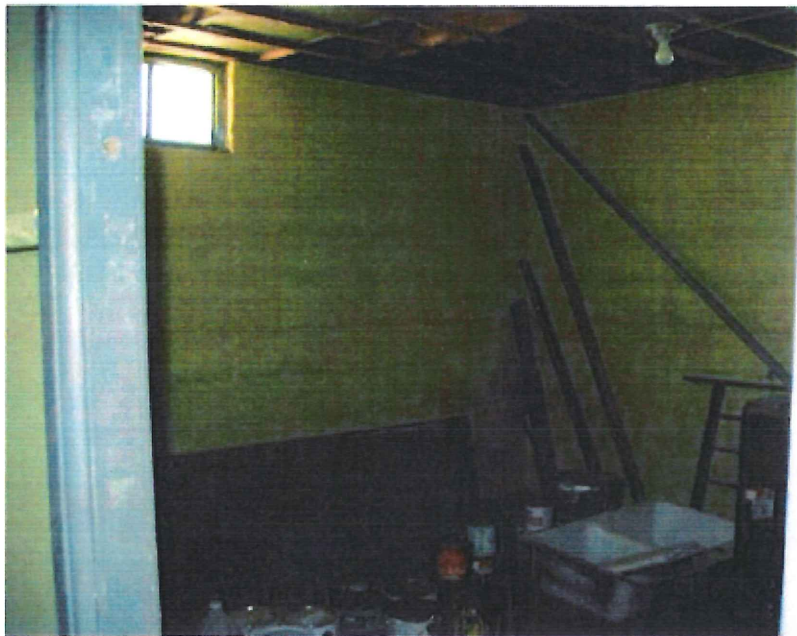
COUNT AND FAIRIES PLAY 1926





1st GRADE BAND 1926





After forty-six years, in 1970, the Superintendent of Schools decided that a few bigger schools around town would be better, Madison was no longer a school, but was used as a workshop and a paint shop for the school district. This was a sad time for Madison and it began to look old and beat up. Walls were torn out, doors were taken off the hinges and lost, and the floors became covered with dirt, sawdust, and paint. The windows were broken and then covered up so the beautiful sunshine disappeared and it was dark inside. No children played outside, there was no laughter or singing anymore. Other old buildings were dragged in and put on the playground where the children had once played.





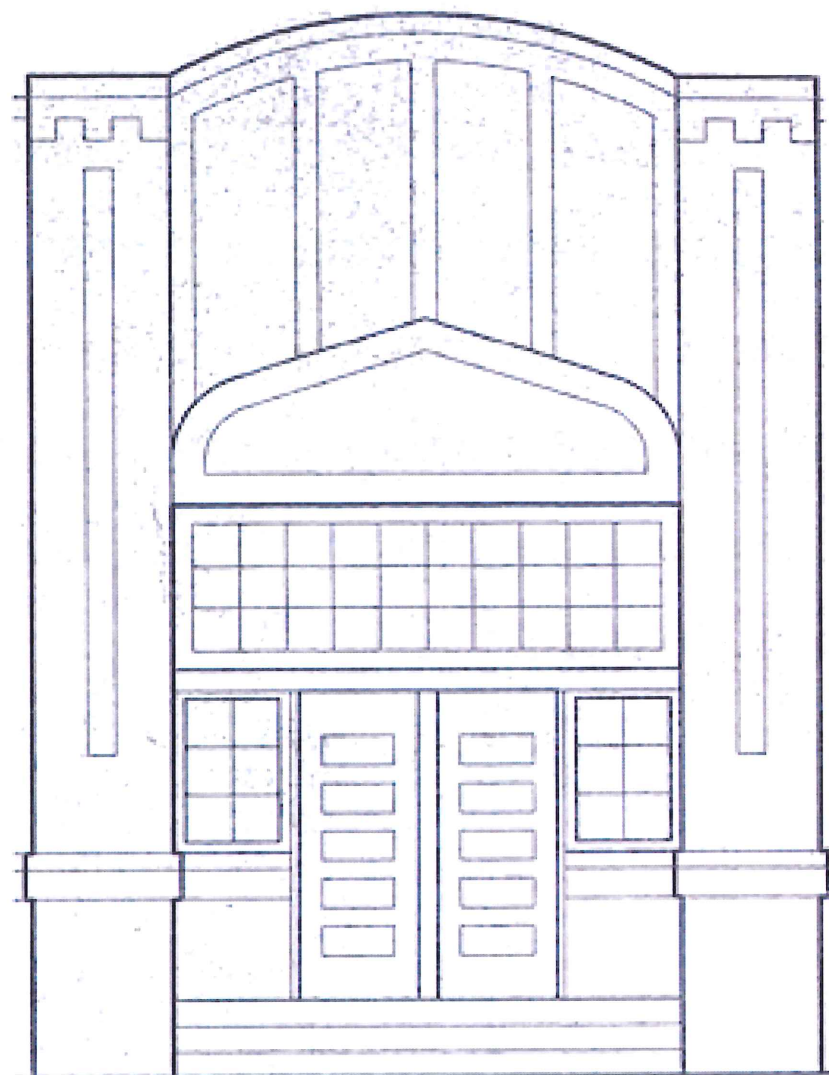
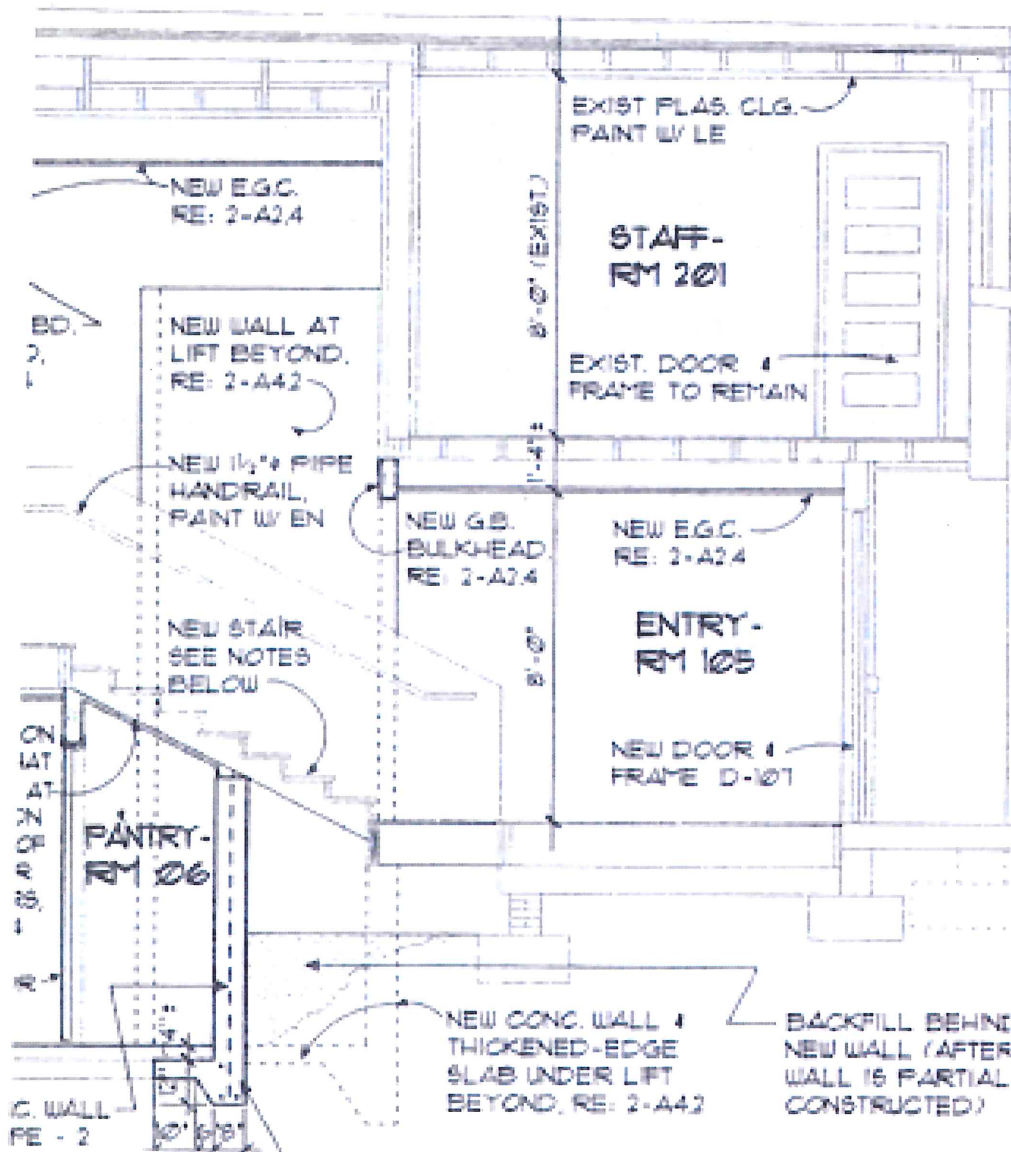


Just when Madison was at its worst, it saw a glimpse of a different future. One day, the buildings outside on the playground had children in them. Madison could watch and see that those children were going to school in those other buildings. Children were back on the playground playing! Madison was happy for the first time in many years.



Not long after the children returned, people came to Madison and began to talk and make plans. Then the cleaning began. Children would be coming back to the building and there would be learning inside the building again! The workers treated Madison with great care, cleaning up and fixing up and bringing back all the beauty that was there in 1924.





BLUEPRINTS FOR THE 'NEW' OLD SCHOOL



The floors were polished.

The windows were given new shiny glass.

The doors were re-built and hung.

The walls were replaced and painted.

New stairs were added.

The basement was cleaned up and new lights made it light and bright.

Then the children came! Madison was happy once again.

# MADISON School



Art Smart

Music Smart

Nature Smart

People Smart

Sport Smart

Math Smart

Together we can make a difference



But the school wasn't finished yet. The children helped choose new toys for the playground. A parking lot was added for the teachers. New bushes and grass were planted. Madison even got a new name Madison Exploratory School. The new name was added because now the children at Madison learned not just from books and teachers, they learned by doing projects and exploring subjects and ideas that interested them. The old building was new in many ways.

# Madison Exploratory School



[www.madisonexploratory.org](http://www.madisonexploratory.org)  
202 E. Douglas St. Canon City, CO 81212 719-276-6140



## *The mission of Madison Exploratory School . . .*

*. . . is to guide students in reaching their greatest potential by providing learning experiences which honor and challenge individual learning styles and intelligences.*



Because the children and their families loved Madison Exploratory School, they decided to add something extra special. For three years the children worked to raise money to build an outdoor 'room'. This new room was for eating lunch, making art, working on projects, putting on plays and performances, and sometimes having a party.





Today, Madison is eighty-five years old. It is a happy place where children learn and grow as a community, where they have friends and teachers who love them, and where they can learn in lots of different ways, exploring their world and themselves.







# Madison Exploratory School loves its children and the children love Madison Exploratory School

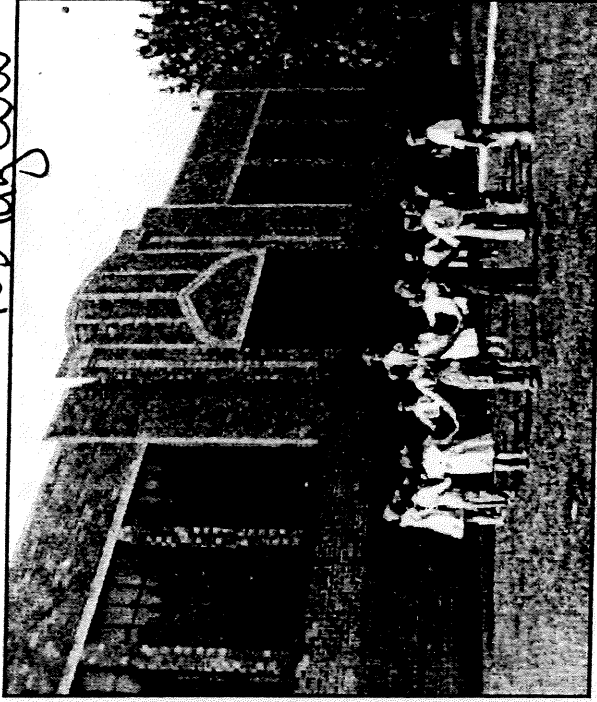


Centennial Park Mural Project—2008

**A SALUTE TO  
WESTERN**

16 Aug 2000

*Take a quick glimpse at  
our past and a stroll down  
these streets today*



**Madison School  
202 E. Douglas Ave.**

One of the oldest surviving school buildings in the Cañon City area is the Madison School at the corner of East Douglas Avenue and South Second Street. A new Cañon City High School and the Madison School were built in 1924 to meet the needs of a growing community, according to records at the Local History Center. The middle school was built at 12<sup>th</sup> and Main streets and is now the Cañon City Middle School. Madison School was placed on the State Register of Historic Properties in 1996.

The architectural style of the Madison School was Art Modern or Art Deco with a flat roof broken by a stepped front entrance and a chimney on the east corner of the building. It was constructed of the best quality common brick and polychromatic pressed brick made by the Jewett Brick Co. The yellow face brick is accentuated by single courses of cream brick to give the building a distinctive look. The two-story building has four classrooms on the first floor, an office on the second floor and a basement with storage areas and heating plant. In later years, the basement was expanded to include restrooms and a lunchroom. Art classes were held in the basement. Large metal-framed windows in the building gave ample lighting for the four classrooms and the central hallway. The initial cost of construction was around \$20,000 when it was completed and dedicated in December 1924.

**Madison School**

When it was opened for classes in January 1925, it served grade levels 1 through 4. Teachers were paid \$95 to \$125 a month in the early years of its existence, according to newspaper accounts. Helen Pauls spent her entire teaching career at Madison School. She was the principal and a teacher at the school when she retired. By 1958, the school district added prefab schoolrooms adjacent to the building. In 1962, there were only two grades, 1 and 2, attending the school. It was closed in 1970 and converted to a school maintenance shop in 1977.

In 1996, it was returned to duty as a schoolhouse as the Madison Exploratory School. Canon City Re-1 School District received a \$75,000 grant in 1992 to begin the program to provide a school for students and teachers who returned to the site. The students and teachers welcomed the school in modular classrooms beside the old school house. After expending \$300,000 to remodel the building, students moved into it in the fall of 1996. The basement now has a kitchenette, which is used for special cooking projects and a music and band room. The school has enough space for 75 students and the modular units have been moved to another site. The school serves students in grades 3 through 6. There are plans to expand it to include grades 1 through 6.

Record Staff Writer John Lemons wrote this column based on records in the Local History Center of the Cañon City Public Library, Madison School and Daily Record files. The photo is from the Local History Center files.

The original construction costs for Madison School in 1924 was \$20,000. The renovation costs in 1996 were \$350,000. Part of the construction costs came from a Colorado Historic Society Grant. Madison Exploratory School is on the State Historic List.

From 1924-1970 approximately 950 students attended and learned at Madison School

From 1992-2009 approximately 500 students have attended and learned at Exploratory School/ Madison Exploratory School

The original construction costs for Madison in 1924 was \$20,000. The renovation costs in 1996 were \$350,000. Part of the construction costs came from a Colorado Historic Society grant. Madison Exploratory School is honored to be on the State Historic Register.

The Madison Exploratory School concept began in 1992 when Molly Merry wrote a grant for start-up funding through the Colorado Department of Education Schools of Choice program. The program began with thirty students in one classroom as a school within a school at Lincoln Elementary. The next two years, two more classrooms were added and the program moved to modular buildings at the Madison School site at 202 E. Douglas. In 1996 Canon City Schools began renovation of the old building to house the Exploratory program. The original purpose of Exploratory School was to provide a learning environment for students who needed more diverse approaches to learning, hands-on learning opportunities, and ongoing relationship support with their teachers and peers. These original concepts have continued to be the backbone of Madison Exploratory School as it has evolved in response to identified needs of students and ongoing innovation in the field of education and learning.

Madison Exploratory programs and philosophy include:

- Personal responsibility/ Choice Theory

- Traditional instruction balanced with innovative learning opportunities

- Project Based Learning / individual and group

- Multiple Intelligences Labs/Learning Styles Theory

- Multi-age environment—first through sixth grade

- Accessing community resources for learning

- Parent Training/Involvement

Madison Exploratory School is an example of the ability to house a non-traditional educational design in an historic traditionally designed building. All it takes is creative adaptation, teacher commitment, and dedicated leadership.



## Lights, camera, action: Madison goes behind the lens

Local school filmed for documentary on rehabilitation projects

*Debbie Bell*  
*The Daily Record*

Wooden floorboards creaked Tuesday as students moved from one classroom to another in an old Cañon City school building — and each small step was caught on film.

There was a whole lot of learning going on at Madison Exploratory School throughout the day despite a film crew capturing every move. Classes proceeded as normal, although teachers took a few minutes to talk to the team from Eagle Ridge Media of Golden while their students worked diligently in the background.

Madison was one of only six school buildings in the entire state of Colorado chosen to be featured in an upcoming documentary about successful school rehabilitation projects, sponsored by Colorado Preservation Inc.

“We want to raise awareness of what you can do with historic structures,” said Ashley Bushey, Historic School Survey Intern with CPI, a nonprofit, statewide historic preservation organization. “We hope to inspire new ideas.”

Built in 1924, Madison was closed in 1970 and re-opened with new vitality in 1996 as an exploratory school after extensive renovations fueled by a \$100,000 grant from CPI. Principal Molly Merry, who has been with the exploratory program since its inception in 1992, watched the video crew with satisfaction — she wrote the original CPI grant application for the funding.

“This is just amazing,” Merry said. “Madison is such a fine example of a successful project. It is traditional architecture that is housing a very non-traditional program. They function together beautifully.”



**Lisa Davis talks to a filming crew from Eagle Ridge Media on Tuesday at Madison Exploratory School. Davis teaches technology and the gifted and talented program in the 85-year-old building.**

*Debbie Bell/Daily Record*

Merry said staff and students alike love the structure.

"It feels very homey," she said. "There is a sense of comfort here, a sense of real belonging."

Everyone involved with the documentary project felt that sense of hospitality.

"It's easy to see these kids are inspired," said Lyman Smith, Eagle Ridge Director of Production. "There is a strong community here; you have to give credit to Molly and the teachers. They are all clearly engaged."

Smith said Madison students are happy, healthy, smart and interested in their school, values that will be illustrated in the documentary.

"This is such a great place," he said. "It's perfect for our general theme — the intangibles, a place where working, learning and teaching are all happening in such a historic space. You get a real sense of the legacy here."

Eagle Ridge also is filming the other five schools that will be featured in the final product, including a former high school in Durango that now is an administration building, an elementary school in Wiley now used as a community building, and East High School in Denver, which continues to be used for its original purpose.

"We tried to get a representational sample of the type of buildings, age and geography," Bushey said.

Colorado Preservation Inc. is the glue that binds the structures together, since the organization provided grant money for renovation and historic preservation of each.

"We are focusing on successful school rehabilitation projects," Smith said. "Different stories, different schools. Not all are functioning as schools now, but we're focusing on how the communities came together to save the space."

The project began with a CPI survey of every school building across the state of Colorado owned by a district. More than 3,000 buildings were narrowed down to 500 or 600 historical structures, a list that was filtered down to only six — including Madison.

Merry said she was overwhelmed with the inclusion.

"It came out of the blue," Merry said. "We were thrilled, so honored. We want other people to see not only the building, but what is going on inside."

When completed, the documentary will be distributed on DVD to every school district in the state. Although dates are uncertain, the film also will premiere on Rocky Mountain PBS.

Madison is a school of choice that honors and challenges individual learning styles and intelligences. Three and a half full-time teachers and additional support personnel serve 71 first- through fifth-graders at 202 E. Douglas St.

"This is such a great use of the facility," Bushey said. "It's so inspiring to see as an outsider."

## Illustrators for this project:

Lisa Davis (School Logo Designer)	Front Cover
Jonah Hale	Page 2
Beth Newey	Page 4
Niki Swanson	Page 12
Sarah Jackson	Page 14
Gwen Rockey	Page 14
Star Fabrizio	Page 18
Elizabeth Gamache (Webpage)	Page 20
Andrew Scudder	Page 22
Malynn Kindell	Page 22
Krystal Wyatt (Mural Coordinator/Photographer)	Page 24-25
Kandi Hamilton	Back Cover

# The Little School

