



# The Frostig Center Focus

Exceptional Children,  
Exceptional Education

Issue 12, April 2020

## DR. ROBERTA GOLDBERG ANNOUNCES HER RETIREMENT

During her 40-year career at The Frostig Center, Dr. Roberta Goldberg established the Clinical Department at Frostig School in Pasadena, created the Consultation & Education Department to train teachers, and helped lead the research that ultimately produced the Success Attributes. Roberta's contributions to The Frostig Center clearly will endure long after she retires in June.

"I have enjoyed a rich and varied career here at Frostig. It's why I stayed so long!" Roberta said. "There was a lot of room for being creative and developing ideas."

Roberta is the last member of the Frostig staff who worked with Dr. Marianne Frostig, who she described as "magical" with children and famously hard on staff.

Dr. Frostig hired Roberta in 1981, four years after she

earned doctorates in developmental psychology and school psychology from the University of Minnesota. Frostig School had just moved from West Los Angeles to its current Pasadena home, and Roberta's assignment

was to build a new on-site Clinical Department to conduct assessments, intake and services for students.

Within a few years she joined the team investigating how former Frostig students were faring in life. The researchers conducted extensive interviews with young adults who had left Frostig School approximately 10 years earlier. The data revealed that 60% of the young adults were struggling in life.

"The question was why," Roberta recalled. "The quantitative data—socioeconomic status, school record, IQ—did not

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*Dr. Roberta Goldberg made significant contributions to the education of children with learning differences during her long and illustrious career at The Frostig Center.*

## A Message from Executive Director Dean Conklin

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting every aspect of American life and requiring all of us to be nimble and flexible in our responses to this rapidly evolving situation. Every decision we make at The Frostig Center is guided by our commitment to protecting the health and wellness of our students and staff.

Frostig School and Frostig School West shifted to online learning on March 17. With just a few days notice, our outstanding teachers developed the tools and lesson plans to support distance learning. Our teachers are committed to preserving the structure of the school day and giving students the academic, social and emotional support they deserve.

Our clinical staff is maintaining its full schedule of services by connecting with students through Google Meet and other online tools. Like our teachers, the clinicians are grateful for the positivity, creativity and flexibility of our students and families.

Following the recommendation of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Education, we informed our parents that Frostig School and Frostig School West will continue with distance learning at least until May 5, and possibly longer.



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# Dr. Goldberg Retires

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explain the differences. We had to go back to the interviews and listen carefully to the stories they told us."

Dr. Bennett Ross, executive director of The Frostig Center at the time of the study, credits Roberta with identifying the commonalities between people who were successful and those who were not.

"Roberta was a big thinker," he said. "She knew how to take discrete pieces of data and put them together in a meaningful way. She was this whirlwind creative genius who found truth when it was ephemeral."

Roberta and her research colleagues spent several years poring over the data and conducting additional interviews. Eventually they identified six factors that accounted for positive outcomes—self-awareness, persistence, support networks, coping strategies, goal setting and pro-activity. These are the Success Attributes that are an integral part of the Frostig experience.

For the last 20 years Roberta

has led the Consultation and Education (C&E) Department.

"Dr. Frostig always said the best thing we can do for children with learning disabilities is to educate the community about who they really are. They aren't just trying to be naughty. They have issues that prevent them from being able to access school," Roberta said.



*Roberta, shown in Tanzania in 2019, attended conferences around the world to share The Frostig Center's research.*

The C&E team has trained thousands of teachers over the years to better serve struggling learners. Those teachers in turn have improved the educational experience for countless children.



*Roberta stands on the empty lot that later became The Frostig Center.*

Executive Director Dean Conklin learned of The Frostig Center through the C&E Dept. While he was superintendent of Walnut Valley Unified School District, Roberta's team conducted workshops for his teachers.

"Roberta explained the mission of The Frostig Center to me," Dean recalled. "Since I came to Frostig (in 2013) Roberta has gone out of her way to support me and to provide insight into the core beliefs of Frostig."

"Roberta has been a tremendous ambassador for Frostig," Dean said. "Her contributions to Frostig cannot be overstated. We will miss her energy and commitment to this place."

## A Message from the Executive Director

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The Consultation & Education staff, which provides professional development to teachers at local schools, is in touch with clients and providing support for teachers as they implement online learning.

Frostig staff, began working from home on March 19, the same day Gov. Gavin Newsom issued his statewide stay at home order. The staff remains available to answer questions and concerns. You may find a directory of staff emails at [www.frostig.org](http://www.frostig.org).

We have postponed the Brews and Bites fundraiser that was set for April 25 and are hopeful we will be able to reschedule this fun

event this Fall. We will all welcome the day we can gather again in large groups and celebrate one another.

We look forward to the moment our students return to our campuses and fill the hallways with their youthful exuberance.

The Frostig community is strong and resilient. We will come through this challenge stronger than ever.

A blue ink signature of Dean Conklin.

## It's Easy to Make a Difference...



Help Frostig School continue to serve children with learning differences during these uncertain times.

**DONATE ONLINE**  
**[www.frostig.org/donate](http://www.frostig.org/donate)**

FROSTIG ACCEPTS CREDIT CARDS, CASH AND CHECKS AS WELL AS GIFTS OF STOCK



# THE SPOTLIGHT

## Frostig Grad Turns Challenges to Strengths

Brendan Finnegan loves the ocean, fishing and a good adventure. He put it all together when he landed a job as a deckhand aboard a sport fishing boat based in San Diego.

Brendan (Class of '13) spent much of the last two years trolling the waters off San Clemente Island and Ensenada, Mexico. A skilled fisherman thanks to summers spent in Newport Beach, Brendan helped passengers reel in yellow tail, yellow fin and the powerful Pacific blue fin tuna. For extra thrills, he worked on great white shark cage diving excursions to Mexico's Guadalupe Island.

Naturally, Brendan took a dive himself. "It was eerie in the cage," he said. "At first there was nothing but darkness. Then suddenly a shark comes up from the deep right towards me at full speed and breeches out of the water. It was a rush!"

Brendan, 25, started working for Islander Charters shortly after graduating from Northern Arizona University in December 2017. He majored in parks and recreation management with an emphasis on outdoor education. "College was tough," Brendan said, especially his

first two years while he searched for the right major. With his parents' unflagging support, perseverance, and a new willingness to accept his learning differences, Brendan succeeded.

"When I was younger I was always

comparing myself to others and wishing I could be them and not have to deal with learning problems," said Brendan, who has dyslexia and ADHD. "That changed in college. My learning disabilities are part of who I am, and I finally embraced that."

Brendan came to Frostig in elementary school and stayed through graduation. He was dual enrolled at Frostig and Maranatha High School throughout high school. He has fond memories of Frostig and is profoundly grateful to his educational therapist, Marilyn Nerenberg. "If it was not for Marilyn and my mom, I would not be where I am today," he said.

Brendan is pursuing new adventures and opportunities in Pasadena. In January he started working for a small company that specializes in refurbishing vintage cars. He loves working with his hands and learning new skills.

"Having learning differences and having to grind through the difficult challenges from a young age has made me who I am," he said. "If you give me a problem I'm going to find the best way for me to break through the problem."



Brendan helped reel in the catch while working on a charter boat.

## Leonardo da Vinci: a Genius Driven to Distraction

King's College London

Leonardo da Vinci produced some of the world's most iconic art, but historical accounts show that he struggled to complete his works. Five hundred years after his death, a King's College London researcher suggests the best explanation for Leonardo's inability to finish projects is that the great artist may have had Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In an article in the journal *Brain*, Professor Marco Catani draws on historical accounts of Leonardo's work practices and behavior to support his hypothesis. "I am confident that ADHD is the most convincing and scientifically

plausible hypothesis to explain Leonardo's difficulty in finishing his works," Catani said. "Historical records show Leonardo spent excessive time planning projects but lacked perseverance. ADHD could explain aspects of Leonardo's temperament and his strange mercurial genius."

Perhaps the most distinctive and yet disruptive side of Leonardo's mind was his voracious curiosity, which both propelled his creativity and also distracted him. Professor Catani suggests ADHD can have positive effects, for example mind-wandering can fuel creativity and originality. However, the same traits can be a hindrance when interest shifts to something else.



"I hope that the case of Leonardo shows that ADHD is not linked to low IQ or lack of creativity but rather the difficulty of capitalizing on natural talents," Professor Catani said. "I hope that Leonardo's legacy can help us to change some of the stigma around ADHD."

## LEADERSHIP

Board Chair:  
Phyllis Kochavi  
Executive Director:  
Dean Conklin, Ed.D.

Development Director:  
Yuki Jimbo

Editor:  
Joan Goulding

e-mail: [joan.g@frostig.org](mailto:joan.g@frostig.org)

## MISSION STATEMENT

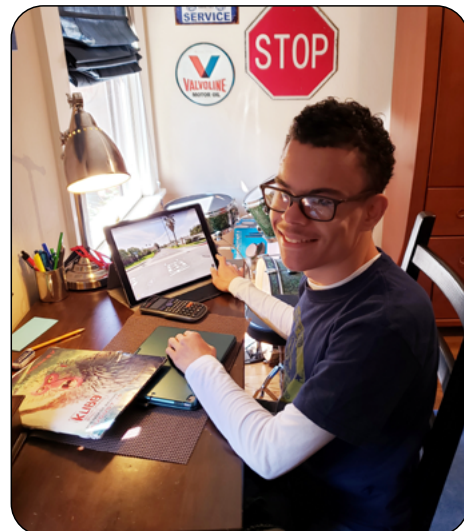
The Frostig Center is dedicated to helping children with learning disabilities reach their full potential through an integrated approach of research, professional development and consultation, and the Frostig School.



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## Frostig Staff, Students Connect Online

Frostig School and Frostig School West made the shift to online learning with all the creativity and positivity that we have come to expect from our teachers and students. With the rapid spread of the coronavirus, teachers had just a few days to prepare for a new way of teaching and learning. Students have made their own adjustments, starting with finding the best spot in the house for school. Everyone at Frostig looks forward to the day they return to our classrooms!



## In Memoriam

Mary Oi, a clinical social worker who laid the foundation for two of The Frostig Center's most important and enduring practices, died earlier this year.



Ms. Oi joined The Frostig Center in 1964 and led the Clinical Department for some 20 years.

As clinical director, Ms. Oi established the importance of addressing the needs of the whole child and organizing teachers, therapists and parents to work as an interdisciplinary team.

"What I learned most from Mary was the importance of sharing ideas and perspectives with the teachers and other professionals, as well as with parents, said Bruce Hirsch, who worked for Ms. Oi and later became clinical director. "Her legacy lives on at each admissions conference, team meeting, and parent conference at Frostig."