

she had pulled together a group of about 10 local parents hoping to build a day school designed to challenge and inspire adolescent girls. Their individual values varied. One wanted to emphasize art. Others were more concerned about technology and math skills. But they agreed on a common foundation: a student population as racially and economically diverse as Oakland itself, a challenging curriculum, a creative, highly interactive atmosphere, lots of hands-on activities.

To start, they looked at a few other girls' schools in northern California, including two about an hour to the south in Silicon Valley. They toured the prestigious Castilleja School in Palo Alto, which has been educating girls for nearly a century (see "Sister Schools," page 83). They borrowed an 80-page business plan from The Girls' Middle School in Mountain View, another fledgling institution that would open its doors in 1998. They began seeking a suitable site. And, after much debate, they settled on a name: honoring Julia Morgan, a pioneering architect who, among other achievements, reconstructed San Fran-

cisco's Fairmont Hotel after the 1906 earthquake and designed William Randolph Hearst's castle-like estate at San Simeon.

That founding group included, among others, a lawyer, a social worker, an artist, and a nonprofit employee—but, initially, nobody with educational credentials and no wealthy philanthropists. "A lot of times

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with a project like this, you have one person with a vision and a lot of money," DeBare says, laughing. "We had a lot of people with a vision and *no* money."

A consultant told them they needed anywhere from \$500,000 to \$15 million to start a small private school, so DeBare expected the effort would require years, maybe even a decade, of planning and fundraising. But other parents—some of whom had already overheard their young

daughters denigrating their own math skills or athletic abilities—wanted to move much faster so that their girls could enroll when they reached the right age.

Group members aggressively sought foundation grants and corporate donations of everything from cash to furniture. Individuals, including many successful women, contributed as well. DeBare's

mother-in-law and a Colorado man with a granddaughter in the area each donated \$10,000. By the time the school opened in September 1999, the group had collected \$144,000—a long way from the rock-bottom minimum they had thought they needed, but enough to rent space at a local Catholic college, hire director Ann Clarke, a long-time middle-school administrator, and open their doors to their first group of 35 sixth-graders.

That number stunned the founders, who thought they'd be lucky to enroll 20 students in the first year. "Remember, we were recruiting kids for a school that didn't exist," says DeBare, who had by then left her newspaper job to develop the school and write a book on the 200-year history of its predecessors. "There were no teachers for them to meet, no classes for them to visit, no site for them to visit. It was a leap of faith on their part."

Enrollment continued to exceed expectations. Plans called for 55 students in the second year and 70 in the third. But by September 2000, the school had 91 students; the next year, with all three grades in place, there were 134. Applications have outnumbered available slots ever since.

That's consistent with the bigger picture DeBare documented in her book. After decades of decline caused largely by competition from coed institutions, all-girls education took off again in the 1990s. More than 30 new elementary and secondary girls' schools have opened in the past decade in locations from Harlem to Seattle, many emphasizing math, science, technology, and leadership skills. Today, more than 45,000 students attend such schools, ac-

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Arts First also features an excerpt from an on-stage conversation between actor John Lithgow '67, the force behind the festival, and international filmmaker Mira Nair '79. Nair, whose works include *Monsoon Wedding*, *Salaam Bombay*, and *Mississippi Masala*, received the ninth annual Harvard Arts Medal at the 2003 festival. Included on the video as well is *Who's That Banging on the Piano?* a 1979 documentary describing the origins of the Council for the Arts at Harvard and Radcliffe.

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