



Alumni Profiles:

What Are Our Students Doing Now?



Ariah (front left) playing with her classmates at The Playgarden Preschool.

Ariah Peters

The Playgarden Preschool

Class of 2002

Symbol: The Moon

Ariah Peters joined The Playgarden Preschool in 2001, a bright and energetic four-year-old. She enrolled in Sharon Elliot's class and was among the first group of students to attend the school at its current location in Jacksonville Beach, Fl.

Her mother, who had wanted to name Ariah *moon*, hoped she would get the moon for her symbol. When she was given the moon in her second year, it felt right and

stayed with her for the rest of her time at Seaside. Today as a Playgarden teacher, her symbol is still the moon.

After graduating Ariah's mother homeschooled her in connection with a Jacksonville homeschooling co-op. Her mother worked to create a well-rounded and creative curriculum for Ariah and her siblings.

Throughout childhood Ariah played on her family's goat farm. At age thirteen she founded her own business, making and selling goat milk soaps. After noticing the restorative benefits of goat milk on her own dry skin, Ariah felt this was something she could offer the Jacksonville community. Encouraged by her 4-H entrepreneur club she developed her own business model and secured the funding for start up costs. She named the business Sally Soaps after her goat, Sally.

Sally Soaps offered Ariah the opportunity to move beyond classroom education and learn practical applications of math and science through soap making and business. She also developed confidence in herself when interacting with people and compassion for her customers. Some of her recipes were developed to help particular customers.

While Sally Soaps started small, just a table at local Jacksonville farmers markets, it has grown into a successful online business. Her soaps are featured in stores around Jacksonville, Fl. Over the years

she has continued to expand her products, now offering lip balm, soap dishes, pet products and handcrafted washcloths.

In 2014 the Healthy Jacksonville Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition honored Arianh and Sally Soaps with a “Heart of the Community” award in the category of youth-led initiatives. Later, the mayor of Jacksonville, Alvin Brown, invited her to give a speech on her entrepreneurial work in the community.

An involved community member, Arianh uses her business as a way to interact with and educate young children in Jacksonville. She offers soap and cheese making workshops for school age children. Through these workshops she helps children learn about goats, farming, and soap making. Her workshops are hands-on and give children a tactile experience of the entire process, from milking the goat to pouring the mixture into the molds and cutting the soap. As a child the natural world was an important educational tool for Arianh and her workshops give her the chance to share her knowledge about animals with young children.



Arianh (left) at The Playgarden Preschool.

Arianh currently volunteers at the North Florida School for Special Education in Jacksonville. There she works with special needs students, ages 6-22. This wonderful school helps students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities develop important social and vocational skills necessary to have an independent life after they graduate. It also offers them diverse and exciting experiences. Part of that curriculum is Arianh’s workshops. She visits the school to lead soap making classes and give the students a chance to meet her goats. Arianh feels that this chance to give back to these students is one of the most rewarding elements of her work with Sally Soaps.

While continuing to operate Sally Soaps and to volunteer regularly, at sixteen, Arianh returned to The Playgarden as a teacher’s assistant. Today she is vital part of The Playgarden family. She is devoted to helping the children learn and develop through the exploration of art, science, and play. Arianh hopes to continue studying the Lifeways philosophy and perhaps one day become a full-fledged teacher. She also wishes to pursue work in the natural healing arts. The Playgarden is thrilled to have an alumni among their teachers, especially one that is go eager to encourage the children to find every wonder in the world.