

Congratulations to the Class of 2011

“When We Call Your Name”

On the warm evening of June 10, with the sun piercing the western sky above the stands, 372 students moved in red and white succession along the pathway from the High School building into the stadium for the 56th annual commencement exercises.

Superintendent Dr. Joel DiBartolomeo encouraged graduates to be mindful and in the moment, “When your name is called to walk across this stage, soak it in, let it linger, create an enduring image for yourself. For when we call your name, we are not simply moving through a list of names that begins with James Wolfe and ends with Todd White so that you can walk orderly and have your picture taken. When we call your name, we will be adding it to the echo of those names called in this place for 55 years now and which continue to resonate

around the world and are heard again each time their owner is taken back to a high school memory.”



The class of 2011 has many memories of which they may recall. “We have been on a journey...we have all left our unique imprint on one another,” said Student Executive Council President Julia Sbatt.

Using Facebook, Keynote Speaker, Professor Rebecca Leuchak, Director of Art History at Roger Williams University, collected memories and advice from her 1974 classmates to share with graduates. “Your successes are our successes,” she explained through the collective wisdom of her class highlighting that “we are all interconnected” and as the graduates go forth what they will need is to know “how to be a friend and love the people around them.”

In the spirit of that interconnection,

School Board President John Stone reminded graduates that they “continued a rich tradition of excellence” at Owen J. Roberts. Valedictorian James Wolfe pointed out the class could also be distinctive and “create our own brand of excellence.”

The excitement and promise of what may be achieved was reverberated by Valedictorian Catherine Henry, who proclaimed, “We now possess the freedom to forge our own path in the world... We are young, free and bursting with opportunity.”

The class of 2011 will have many

chances to exercise their youthful spirit. Mr. Stone shared some of the exciting challenges the class may have the opportunity to solve including those around energy and water, encouraging, “we are confident you can and will rise to these challenges.”

Sending the class forth with earned confidence, Dr. DiBartolomeo reminded, “When we call your name it is not simply to give you a diploma, but an Owen J. Roberts diploma that comes with a set of tools that has given you the capacity to make this community and the world a better place and the responsibility to do so.”



Photos by Janice Houck

Message from Superintendent Dr. Joel T. DiBartolomeo

Now that the 2010-2011 school year has ended, I would like to thank each member of the Owen J. Roberts school community for the support you have offered to our school district. There has yet to be a day since I became Superintendent that I do not encounter someone in the community who wants to share her or his passion about building on the tradition of excellence we have established for our students. Together we have made our mission, “Inspiring Each Student for Success Today and Greatness Tomorrow,” a reality for each child this past year.

The primary mission of a school district is to prepare students successfully for the world beyond high school graduation. Over the years, this “world

beyond” has changed and with it too have the skill and knowledge demands for post-secondary success. The implications for a strong and vibrant school district like our own include the requirement that we engage in continuous improvement. That is why each year, to ensure that our graduates leave us confident in their own abilities, we review our curriculum and learn new ways to instruct more effectively.

Success in today’s world requires a “World Class” diploma. Such a standard includes not only a well-balanced academic foundation, but the acquisition of a set of qualities that can only be learned beyond the four walls of our schools. These traits are attained as young people observe the

adult members of their school district take active roles in youth and community development. We model for our children when we are coaching sports teams, sponsoring clubs, organizing volunteer efforts and when we are actively engaged in their educational, moral and spiritual development. In the Owen J. Roberts school community, as they watch and participate in the many activities available to them, our students learn that the demonstration of such traits as being kind, empathetic, cooperative, generous, humble and responsible are the norm. If one values living in an inclusive and nurturing community, these virtues are essential to success in the 21st Century. The quality of the community in



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Cultivating Community

Gardens in the Owen J. Roberts school district were featured in the June 2011 issue of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association Bulletin Magazine. School gardens allowed Owen J. Roberts students to grow their own future by providing an enhanced academic curriculum, a value for wholesome foods, and by cultivating civic involvement.

Throughout the district, school gardens have a reach far beyond the classroom. A Learn and Serve America Grant has helped to stimulate community service learning at East Coventry Elementary School by supporting an after-school project called Nourish. The Nourish Program empowers participating 3-6 grade students to help solve the community issues of hunger and poor nutrition by growing and delivering garden vegetables to area food pantries. Students have tangibly learned about vermiculture, composting, and cooking and are working together to build a stronger community through grassroots citizen engagement.



Before the end of the school year, gardens in the Owen J. Roberts School District produced enough food for two food pantry distributions. In late May, ten huge bags of leafy greens and radishes were delivered to the North Coventry Food Pantry by the Middle School and West Vincent Elementary School.

On June 8, Middle School students harvested another eight pounds of lettuce, one pound of kale, one pound of spinach, and over four pounds of collard greens. Gardens at North Coventry, East Vincent, and French Creek Elementary Schools are also gleaned fresh produce.

“Our families are so happy to get fresh food that costs so much in the grocery store,”

said Ginny Wade, volunteer North Coventry Food Pantry coordinator. The effort is a collaboration of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community volunteers all working toward a resilient community.

Elementary Students Test Their Speed

Mr. Eric Wentzel, Owen J. Roberts High School varsity track coach, along with his track team, staff, and parents, held a series of four open track meets for all students in grades K-6 this spring. Students were able to experience the thrill of running in the stadium for personal times. An average of 50-60 children attended each meet and had a blast testing their personal running prowess. Mr. Wentzel hopes to provide the series again next May.



Career Palooza



The round-robin approach to career counseling has been highly successful for Owen J. Roberts High School students. The approach facilitates a face-to-face interaction between students and adults working in different careers. Each student gets a chance to meet with several adults who work in different industries. Each student is given ample time to exchange information and discuss careers with the adult.

There are many benefits of this round-robin approach. First, it relieves participants from the stress of introductions, because attendees are all there for a common purpose.

Because of the time limits of each conversation, students can avoid having to find a way to gracefully bow out of a conversation. Students also remain engaged throughout the day, because of the small-group nature of each meeting.

Owen J. Roberts High School has been very fortunate to have several alumni participate in career counseling representing a variety of career fields. This year's event focused on careers in Art and Engineering. Fourteen engineers and ten artists met with students at the event. Students and staff are extremely grateful to the volunteers who shared their time and expertise with students in this meaningful way.

Farm Day

On May 25, all district kindergarten students had the opportunity to take on the role of “farmer” at a special Farm Day held at Owen J. Roberts High School. More than 100 high school agriculture students worked with their teacher, Mrs. Julie Taney, to provide hands-on activities that included harvesting, animal care, and taking goods to market. The children learned how much water a cow drinks each day and how grain is made into flour.

Each of these activities helped students appreciate the food cycle and how whole foods play a part in keeping us healthy. This education fits with the national strategy to decrease future health care costs by focusing on preventing illness with a good diet and proper exercise.

The event was filmed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to be incorporated in a documentary that demonstrates best practices in nutrition education. Farm Day was funded by the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation as part of their commitment to improving the health of our future generation.

High school students will be sharing the “Farmer for the Day” display with the greater community at the Kimberton Community Fair July 26 and 28.



Legacy Pathway

By Mrs. Barbara Guy

I remember my first “graduation walk” to the stadium. I was invited to join the Owen J. Roberts High School Band as an incoming ninth-grade student to play flute during graduation. I skipped down the steps and along the walk as I chatted with friends. We arrived early so that we would be ready for the seniors’ procession. Back then stadium seating was limited, and the band played music prior to the graduation procession.

A few years later I made that procession as a graduate in a white gown and cap as my band friends played Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance.” Our graduating class was smaller than those of today, so all of the graduates sat on the south side of the stage. Otherwise, the commencement ceremonies have remained much the same.

Over the years, I have made this same walk to graduation often. I walked to the stadium for the graduations of my younger brothers, for family friends, and for the many students with whom I wanted to celebrate this important milestone. The walk became even more emotional when I attended the graduation of my daughter; wearing yet another hat as I walked down those steps.



My son’s graduation was held at Ursinus College because the stadium, the fields, and the legacy walk were under construction. It was a lovely and meaningful graduation, but I missed “the walk.” The following year I once again attended graduation and found the three special bricks I had purchased from the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation to commemorate the graduations of my daughter, son, and myself. I felt goose bumps as I made the walk.

As I am retiring, the procession to the 2011 graduation ceremony with my Owen J. Roberts educational family was my last. Walking down the steps and across the bricks, I encountered the familiar goose bumps along with a new sensation; a feeling of exhilaration for forthcoming graduates and the bricks that will pave that familiar walkway in the future.

The Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation offers an opportunity to celebrate your graduating senior or another special person with an engraved OJR Legacy brick permanently placed on the commemorative walkway leading the stadium complex. Christine McCormick did so for her children, noting, “One day my kids can return to their alma mater and take the brick walk with their kids and show them their name and graduation year.” Bricks can be ordered at www.ojref.org.

Summer Science Learning Fun

By Heidi Lehmann,
hlehmann@ojrsd.com

Taking a break from school? ...that doesn’t mean learning has to stop! Our region is rich with opportunities for exploration, recreation and enrichment year-round; however, the summer months are especially fun for families and friends. The following list describes activities that are adult-friendly and can be enjoyed by multi-age groups of children!

The DaVinci Science Center shows visitors both young and young-at-heart how much fun science can be with more than 200 hands-on exhibits. In one day, a visitor can put on a doctor’s coat and treat a virtual patient, check the radar and do a weather forecast like the pros on television, take a whirl on the GyroSphere, get up close and personal with creepy, crawly bugs and insects, crawl through a pitch black tunnel, create an impression in a shadow room, make a robot dinosaur dance, look deep into the universe, and transport a toddler into an oversized world of fun.

<http://www.davincisciencecenter.org>

Green Valleys Association (GVA) nature camps encourage children’s natural curiosity of the outdoors by engaging them in fun and educational activities. The summer camp experience is a balance of structured free play with exploration to aid children in building social and life skills such as communication, teamwork, and self-confidence.

<http://www.greenvalleys.org/summer-camp.html>

Geocaching is a real-world outdoor treasure hunting game. Players try to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, using GPS-enabled devices and then share their experiences online.

<http://www.geocaching.com/guide/default.aspx>

Since 1934, Hawk Mountain has introduced people of all ages to the phenomenon of hawk migration and the Appalachian region. Today, both raptors and the Appalachian ecosystem continue to be a central component of education programs.

<http://www.hawkmountain.org/>

Recreational kayaking at French Creek and Marsh Creek Lake offer families scenic picnic opportunities to enjoy a day at the lake. Equipment can be rented by the day or hour for local explorations of our watershed and ecosystems.

<http://www.marshcreeklake.com/>

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/frenchcreek.aspx>

Since 1965, Lake Tobias Wildlife Park has been fascinating patrons with its wild, exotic animals and adventure-seeking safari tours. Nestled in the quiet countryside, Lake Tobias resounds with the sights and sounds of the jungles and grasslands of six continents. Animals, reptiles and birds from around the world can be found here

<http://www.laketobias.com/>

If you would like additional suggestions for summer science fun at home please visit our district curriculum web page at <http://www.ojrsd.com> or email me at hlehmann@ojrsd.com. I have a resource file for scavenger hunts, tree identifications, spider web classifications, rock collections, reading suggestions and much more!

Red, White & Blue



Red, White & Blue Revue — First grade students at North Coventry Elementary School entertained parents and fellow students with songs and tributes to Old Glory on Flag Day. North Coventry Supervisor Mr. Spencer Claypool and County Commissioner Mr. Ryan Costello both addressed the audience about the importance of civic responsibility.

An Electrifying Lesson



Mrs. Palumbo’s East Coventry Kindergarten class listens to Mr. Fabian Robinson, Application Developer, PJM Interconnection LLC, as he demonstrates how electricity works and shows them a miniature version of a power plant. Each student was very excited to receive a hard hat.

Spotlight on the Class of 2011

"In our District, we recognize that inside every student is the greatest story ever to be told. It is our work as a school community to help each child develop their story so that they are ready to tell it to the world when they graduate."

-Superintendent Dr. Joel DiBartolomeo

Last month, 372 seniors graduated from Owen J. Roberts High School, eager to begin the journey toward their next goal. Each student has left a distinct footprint and will forge a unique path. Below is a glimpse of the stories of some recent graduates who pursued a variety of interests while in school.



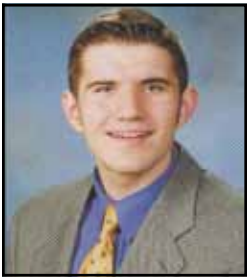
Alex Galambos thought about how he would remember Owen J. Roberts High School. "I imagine having collective memories," he commented. "I will remember opening the auditorium doors, smelling the theatre, and feeling safe in that place. It will be a little sad not to go back to that haven." Opportunities to perform gave Alex great pleasure. He was a member of 7-ups, Owen J. Roberts High School's Show Choir, and enjoyed acting as well as singing. One of Alex's favorite high school memories was a competitive Shakespeare Festival where he was awarded "Most Riveting Actor" for his portrayal of Richard III. Alex is heading to Bowling Green State University in the fall and hopes to continue to pursue acting as an extracurricular activity.



Craig Hacker is planning to attend Temple University to study Media Arts and is excited to have two friends heading in the same destination. Craig was well known among peers for the art of stage performance but mentioned, "I have moved away from acting and have become much more interested in producing." After testing the waters, Craig he found he loves working behind the scenes to make things happen. He has derived a great deal of happiness from building stage sets, burning the midnight oil on the award-winning high school year book, and later producing short films. As much as he enjoyed supporting others, he also felt embraced by his classmates, "Our class is unique for the way we support individuals," Craig offered, "I can't imagine wanting to be at any other school."



Taylor Kelly played tennis and softball for Owen J. Roberts High School. She was a member of Key Club, Letterman's Club, National Honor Society and Foreign Language National Honor Society. Taylor feels strongly connected to the North Coventry Elementary School where she attended, and continues to volunteer there at community activities. Her senior year, Taylor participated in the Allied Health program and worked a hospital rotation that brought her invaluable experience to shadow healthcare professionals in the emergency room, operating room and other departments. She will attend DeSales University in the fall to pursue a career in medicine.



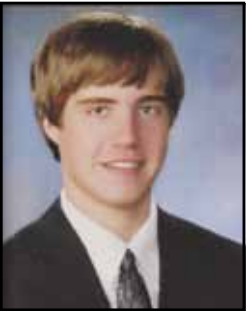
Michael Giongo has an analytical mind and loves to calculate. In academics he loved delving into complex problems and participating in hands-on labs in biology, chemistry and physics. "If I can't make a decent living by offering solutions to problems then I am not sure I can feel fulfilled," he shared, explaining that he will head to Ursinus College to study math and engineering. Mike is an avid Wildcat sports fan who thrived on what he called a "major renaissance in power." Mike's philosophy is to look for the good in everybody and his advice to underclassmen is "take it to the limit and give it all you've got."



Elissa Cook, Valedictorian, felt supported to try new things each year she was in high school. In her final year of school, she participated in the fall play for the first time and continued to meet new friends. "It made high school more fun to continually branch out and meet others," Elissa commented. Elissa played field hockey all four years and lacrosse for three years. She was the senior class events coordinator, yearbook editor and active member in many clubs including Key and Letterman's. One of her proudest high school accomplishments was starting a Recycling Club, which she hopes will continue to grow. Elissa will attend Cornell in the fall where she dreams of blending her passion for science and for people into a career.



Julia Sbat came to Owen J. Roberts her sophomore year. A natural leader, she became student body president and the captain of the varsity girls basketball team. She was grateful to have the experience of serving as student delegate on the school board. A defining moment for Julia was seeing student government as a "window for change; a way to reach out and do things for others." She found that she really liked coordinating activities and causes, running several successful Pennies for Patients programs and arranging the first annual Community Cancer Awareness Banquet to educate the public and raised money for local families struggling with the financial strains of cancer. Julia worked each day after school to help pay for her expenses to attend St. Joseph's University.



Christopher Trevoy believed in studying hard and loved Advance Placement and accelerated courses, appreciating the fact he could take two years of chemistry. He will study Chemical Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. He noted that participating in robotics helped give him real-world experience in science, technology, engineering, and math.



Maggie Swahl loves entertaining and has thrived on stage at Owen J. Roberts as well as in local community theatres. Although accepted to the prestigious Tisch School of the Arts, Maggie decided to attend another of the nation's elite musical theatre schools, Penn State School of Theatre. Maggie will continue to train in acting, dance, music, musical theater and general education. In fact, she is considering a double major by pursuing another interest in history and law. Maggie believes her academic studies at Owen J. have prepared, supported and pushed her beyond where she believed she could go.



One may wonder where he found the time, but valedictorian **James Wolfe** seemed to do it all with ease. He excelled at a full range of rigorous academia, played violin and golfed to regional ranks with Owen J. Roberts. He also enjoyed acting and practicing language studies. Jimmy will attend Georgetown University where he hopes to study internationally. He described a strong sense of pride about his class. "Students in the class of 2011 are extremely involved and well-rounded playing multiple sports and actively participating in various clubs. Kids have awesome college resumes and are getting into colleges that nobody else has been accepted to—and not just a few, a lot." Jimmy mentioned how his peers would share their talents on behalf of the community, offering to entertain at various functions such as the art show. "Maybe Owen J. Roberts doesn't have a town center, but it feels like the high school could be the acropolis of the community," he noted.



Alexandra Mannix served on the Youth Advisory Board for French and Pickering Creek Land Trust. She also helped with Habitat for Humanity and The Iron Trail Bike Tour. She was described by teachers as "a wonderful advocate for all kids". Alex thrived on diversity and appreciated that Owen J. Roberts fostered multiformity. "Students here rallied for one another by attending all kinds of events—not just traditional sports," said Alex. She also appreciated community support for student efforts as demonstrated with sell-out attendance of musicals, plays, concerts and athletic competitions.



Kara Czekai was Vice President of the state organization of DECA, which prepares young people for business enterprise. Her violin talent won her Concert Master First Chair for the Reading Symphony Youth Orchestra. She credits both her dad and Mr. Garmin for instilling a love of chemistry and will go on to study Chemical Engineering at the University of Rochester.



Vincent Miller seemed to wear a constant smile and was always looking for a way to help out. As a volunteer swim coach, he helped teach four to ten-year-olds the rudimentary elements of water safety. He will swim for Bethany College and hopes to eventually earn a Ph.D. in Marine Biology. “If I didn’t move to Owen J., I would have never known how much I love to swim,” Vince shared.



George Christopher Fogwell, Jr. fully credits the Naval Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (NJROTC) for his development of self-reliance, leadership skills and respect for the U.S. Navy and its role in supporting national objectives. In addition to NJROTC, Chris became a pilot, attended advance summer courses and participated in a summer sailing academy. These experiences prepared Chris for Virginia Tech and he plans to graduate a Naval Officer. Some of his fondest high school memories are those of cross country and track and the friends he made on those teams.



Jesse Miller played varsity basketball for Owen J. He was president of 4-H for nine years was on the Chester County Junior Executive Committee for the Junior Holstein Association. When his parents diversified their farm by starting a cheese business, he saw an opportunity to use whey (a by-product of cheese-making) to feed and raise pigs and sell premium pork products. He is funding his Cornell education in Animal Sciences and business through self-directed marketing.

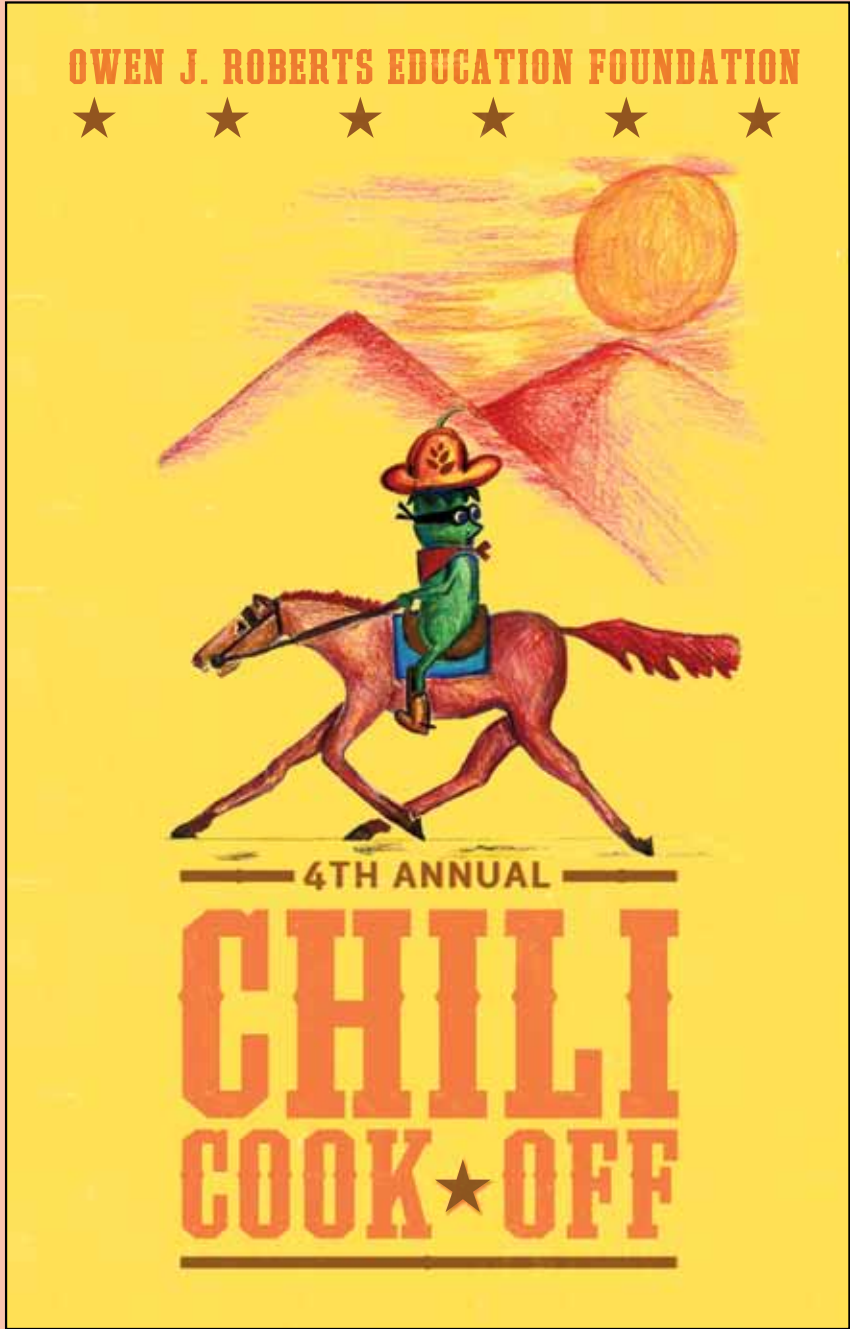


Drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies just before graduation day, **Timothy Ponto** excelled in basketball and baseball. As a pitcher, he was heavily scouted by the MBA and felt that the attention was “just an honor.” Tim felt cared for at Owen J. Roberts and is proud of his school and his class. He carries enormous confidence that he will continue succeeding academically as he begins at St. Joseph’s University in the fall. Tim feels that the academic challenges of high school have helped him hone above-average study skills. Tim thrives on baseball and said he would “love if it works out that I can get paid for what I love to do.”

Owen J. Roberts Alma Mater

FAR ABOVE THE VALLEY GREEN,
ROBERTS HIGH SCHOOL CAN BE SEEN
WITH ITS COLORS RED AND WHITE,
SIGNIFYING TRUTH AND RIGHT.
JUSTICE ROBERTS, MAN OF FAME,
THIS OUR HERITAGE AND NAME,
GAVEL, LEDGER, WE RECALL,
HOLDING MEMORIES FOR ALL.
ROBERTS HIGH TO THEE WE RAISE
ALMA MATER, HYMN OF PRAISE
FOR OUR TEACHERS, HONOR DUE;
FOR OUR STUDENTS, TRIED AND TRUE;
FOR OUR FRIENDS WITHIN THESE WALLS
FOR THESE HALLOWED ROOMS AND HALLS;
KNOWLEDGE FOR EACH SEEKING MIND;
AND RESPECT FOR ALL MANKIND.
IN TIMES OF TOIL AND GLADNESS TOO,
THROUGH ALL TIME WE’LL E’ER BE TRUE.
GRATEFUL FOR EACH FRUITFUL YEAR.
WE HAVE SPENT WITH CLASSMATES DEAR,
CHERISHED MEMORIES EVERMORE
TILL OUR HIGH SCHOOL DAYS ARE O’ER
FAITHFUL, LOYAL, ALWAYS TRUE,
WE WILL PLEDGE OUR TRUST TO YOU.

SAVE THE DATE!



Each year the Ed Foundation sponsors a poster contest to advertise the chili cook-off. ‘The Chile Bandit’ by artist Tess Cremer is the winner this year.

JOIN US AT THE 4TH ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF
NOVEMBER 5TH AT FRENCH CREEK GOLF CLUB.
FOR DETAILS VISIT WWW.OJREF.ORG

OJREF Provides Learning Tools

Students taking Family and Consumer Science courses are benefiting from technology that makes instruction more effective and efficient. Elaine Wentzel, Family and Consumer Science Department Chair, said the iPod technology provided by an Education Foundation mini-grant enables her to prerecord the steps of a process that allows students to watch it in their labs as they are working. This technology along with a document camera can project the smallest item onto a screen in front of the room via a laptop so that all students in the room could see what is taking place without crowding around the instructor.



According to Ms. Wentzel, in some cases it is too time consuming to demonstrate an entire process before having students practice it, such as making a double crust apple pie. This ability to see details of demonstrations or samples of materials up close is helpful in other areas of FCS such as textiles in Fashion, floor plan drawings in Interior Decorating as well as other subjects such as Agriculture and Science classes.

This technology is especially helpful for vision impaired students and others with special learning needs. Lessons or parts of lessons can be repeated as many times as needed. Many FCS standards are addressed via this technology. An additional benefit is that students who have missed class for various reasons (absence, illness, assembly, college visitation, etc.) can access the demonstrations or direct instruction and perhaps even download it to their personal iPod. Lessons can also be made available via the website for parent and community use.

Owen J. Roberts High School Students Reign Supreme Taking First at Odyssey of the Mind Worlds

A team of seven students from the Owen J. Roberts High School earned first-place honors at the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, bringing the title of Problem Solving Champion back home to Pottstown. Kelsey Dielman, Andrew Rajtik, Stephen Dallas, Brittany Simmons, Cassidy Hart, Zach Matarazzo, and Collin Sager competed in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals from May 27th through May 31st. Approximately 50 teams from across our country and from as far away as India competed to match wits at the world's largest problem-solving competition.

To prepare for the competition students choose from one of five problems early in the season and perfect their solutions through the course of the year. Owen J. High School students have traditionally gravitated toward structural engineering. This year's dilemma required that the team design and construct a balsa wood and glue structure that stood at least eight inches tall and weighed no more than eighteen grams. The structure needed to be built of multiple pieces that could be quickly hinged together so that the parts could be folded into one weight-bearing device. Once folded, weights are placed on top of the tower until the device reaches its failing point.



This year's Owen J. Robert's high school team set a new Pennsylvania state record for weight held in an Odyssey of the Mind competition with a balsa wood structure that supported a staggering 1,390 pounds. In May, the team traveled to the University of Maryland where they seized the world championship title, defeating last year's champion, Shanghai University from Shanghai, China. The team's coach, Mr. Christopher Palochak, has been training Odyssey students for nineteen years.

"In my nineteen years of coaching I have never had such a hard working group of students," commented Mr. Palochak. "Owen J. Roberts produces some fine students and strong problem solvers. I have had the honor to work with some very talented children but this group is amazing! Not only are they bright, but the team refuses to be outworked by anyone. The amount of effort they put into preparing for this year's competitions is staggering! The entire Owen J. community should take great pride in the accomplishments of these students. Because of the

hard work of these kids, the Owen J. Roberts School District is well known in Odyssey circles and throughout the world. Through the years our kids have built quite a reputation."

Mr. Palochak also mentioned the support from local businesses including Bentley Systems based in Exton and Diamond Credit Union in Pottstown, PA. "Both of these businesses have stepped up and made generous donations to insure our students and their families can continue to stretch their minds and compete on the world stage. The costs of traveling to these competitions can become burdensome for families. I have to give a big thank you to both of these organizations for stepping up and helping our students!"

The world title brought home by our high school students is not the first for the Owen J. District. In 1999 at team from Vincent Elementary School took first place at the University of Tennessee and two years ago seven students from West Vincent Elementary won the world title while competing at Iowa State University. Now, our high school can add an Odyssey of the Mind Championship to its rich academic history. "With the wealth of cerebral talent our school district produces, one would guess there are more world titles in our future," said Mr. Palochak.

Message from the Superintendent

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which education is taking place makes the difference between a local diploma and a World Class education.

Our District is rich with success. This past year Owen J. Roberts students have done everything from win an Odyssey of the Mind World Title to performing the National Anthem to a sellout crowd at Citizen's Bank Park. Some of the most remarkable accomplishments during the 2010-2011 school year follow:

- The District received the highest safety and security rating ever given by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force (SEPA RTF) with scores 20% above the five-county school averages in a recent Safe Schools Workgroup School Security Assessment project.
- Many top musical achievements were bestowed including prestigious Pennsylvania All-State Band and Chorus Qualifiers.
- Five Odyssey of the Mind Teams: High School, Middle School, East Vincent, French Creek and North Coventry, won state titles and qualified for World Competition where the High School Team won the title of World Champion.
- The Philadelphia Judges Award was granted to the High School Robotics Team, who with adult volunteers, helped to spawn three other teams in the District in just one year.

- Seven DECA students (DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe) won awards at the Pennsylvania Career Development Conference and competed at the International Career Development Conference where three became finalists.
- Owen J. Roberts film-making students dazzled the region by winning three awards at the Greenfield Youth Film Festival and nominations in nine out of ten categories at the 4500 Digital Video Contest winning Best Sound, Best Line of Dialogue and Best Directing.
- State and national recognition for wellness practices including "Best Practice" and "Award of Excellence" were given by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, the Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network and the National Council on Foundations.
- The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), nominated Karin Suzadail, Owen J. Roberts High School Latin teacher, for the NEA Foundation's Award for Teaching Excellence. Mrs. Krista Venza, Middle School Teacher won the PSEA Leadership in

Strings Camp for Elementary Students

The music department of the Owen J. Roberts School District supported by the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation and Friends of the Arts held a two-week string music summer camp. The camp was geared towards increasing the skill level of beginning and intermediate string players in a focused setting.



There were activities involving music theory, small group instruction and full orchestra rehearsal. Mr. Clifford Hall captured the hearts of young musicians with this year's rock and roll orchestra theme. The camp culminated in a community concert held at the end of the session.

- Promoting Intergroup Relations Award for her work with students in Make a Difference Day.
- Varsity athletic teams won five PAC-10 Championships: Field Hockey, Girl's Soccer, Football, Girl's Swimming and Wrestling. There was a Boy's PAC-10 Individual Golf Championship Winner and a Triple PAC-10 Track and Field Champion in High Jump, Triple Jump, and Long Jump; this individual won a District One Championship in the High Jump and Triple Jump and a PIAA State Championship in the High Jump.
- The District received a "Certificate of Excellence", the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, as well as a "Meritorious Budget Award" demonstrating our commitment to sound fiscal management practices.

Although our students are home for the summer and halls and classrooms are empty, the sounds of an exceptional school year still resonate. We can be proud of our accomplishments and carry forward the expectation of another rich and full academic year.

The Return of The Gavel, OJR’s Student Newspaper

By Rebecca Bartola, Senior, Gavel 2010-2011 Chief Editor

This year, seven editions of the Gavel were published at Owen J. Roberts High School. The Gavel is a student-run newspaper that is advised by physics teacher Mrs. Mary Marcopul-Pandya. The past school year marked the first successful production of a paper version of the newspaper in three years. The staff of the newspaper had no precedent for how to create such a publication. Anyone who had been on The Gavel’s staff three years ago, when there had last been a paper version of the newspaper, has either graduated or moved on to other activities. After a few attempts over several years to make The Gavel an entirely online publication, students printed the first true paper copy in three years in November 2010.

At the first Gavel meeting in October of 2010, Mrs. Marcopul-Pandya and a few dedicated students gathered to discuss the resurrection of the student newspaper and to elect student editors. Their vision was to make the student

newspaper informative, current, and relevant to the high school student body. For example, in order to capture the attention of some high school students, a Lolcats picture (humorous cat photos popular on the Internet) was featured on the cover of each edition.

Writers normally had one week to claim articles via e-mail or at weekly Gavel meetings, had two weeks to write the articles, and then a handful of editors had one incredibly stressful week before deadline on Thursday night to edit and tediously format dozens of articles into Microsoft Publisher. The staff of the Gavel began



Gavel logo by Emily Grablutz, class of 2012.

to keep a record of how late editors stayed at school to complete their work during the week leading up to “Publishing Friday.” At 6:30 AM on publishing day, students gathered in a copier room of the high school to print, collate, and fold about five hundred copies of the paper. Students stuffed teacher mailboxes with papers, distributed them throughout the school, and personally walked around the lunchroom to hand copies out to students. The Gavel’s editors and writers say that it was extremely rewarding and thrilling to see fellow students reading their articles throughout the school day in class-

rooms, between periods, and during lunches. Throughout the school, students would be scribbling in the answers to puzzles, reading a beautifully drawn comic strip about the school’s most famous janitor, Wayne, or reading one of a dozen articles that ranged from news on the conflict in Libya to the top fifteen best pick-up lines. Writers and editors learned to balance news with entertainment in order to attract as many student readers as possible. During the 2010-2011 school year, the staff of the newspaper published a twelve to sixteen page paper each month.

The fierce determination of the newspaper staff allowed it to thrive during its reintroduction to the high school. Weekly Gavel meetings became a place for students to bond, have fun, and enjoy doing something they loved. Members of the Gavel are confident that the newspaper will return in its paper format for the 2011-2012 school year.

Building Community at the Middle School

Since 1987 “Challenge Day” has served more than 1,000,000 youth in 400 cities. In June of 2011, Pottstown was added to that list, serving approximately 87 Owen J. Roberts Middle School youth. The vision of “Challenge Day” is that every child will live in a world where they feel safe, loved and celebrated. The program was created to address social issues



Photo by Janice Houck

such as cliques, gossip, teasing, bullying, hopelessness and stereotypes. “Challenge Day” is a catalyst for change with a goal that students will never again be able to say they didn’t know that negative judgments, thoughtless jokes, rumors or oppressive behaviors hurt people.

The day consists of many facilitated small group sessions and team-building games. In the process, students learn to take notice of diversity, choose to be kind and are encouraged to share and express their true selves. “It is our hope that the insights our students gain from Challenge Day will be carried with them for life,” offered Mrs. Victoria Morgan, Guidance Counselor and Bully Prevention Coordinator.

Laurelwood Family Fit Swim



On June 2, Owen J. families made a splash at Laurelwood Swim Club during the free annual Laurelwood Family FIT Swim, an event held in partnership with the Wellness Council that encourages the healthy activity of swimming.

Making Rounds

Leading and learning is paramount to a School District’s ability to meet the needs of all students. The expectation that each District employee continue to acquire new and better ways to engage students to meet their learning goals is a critical and ongoing process at Owen J. Roberts.



In the past, professional development occurred primarily in workshops, classrooms, and conferences. While these provide meaningful opportunities in which to acquire new skills, they sometimes fall short in building upon the collective expertise of all those involved to reach the highest levels of learning for all students, teachers, and administrators. This past year, teachers and administrators have worked together in Professional Learning Communities, in which they have explored a variety of teaching strategies. In these settings, participants collaborate to improve the educational experience for our students.

Regardless of one’s official role, the relationships in a Professional Learning Community are collaborative, not hierarchical. An assumption is that interaction with colleagues increases the likelihood that they will be open to change and create energy to work together more productively. Critical problem solving and honest feedback help build trust for the process.

One specific activity in which teachers and District leaders engaged this year came to be known as Focused Study Visits. This practice is based on what doctors have been doing for years or Grand Rounds. In an educational setting, a Focused Study Visit is a collaborative learning opportunity that involves the investigation of a particular teaching practice. Working together, educational practitioners identify appropriate conditions of learning and leadership practices that best support its implementation in a classroom. In the process, school leaders also reflect on those qualities of leadership that best support the work for teachers and students.

Owen J. Roberts Focus Study Visit teams are passionate about this process. Among the goals set for a Focused Study Visit is to migrate what is learned from one classroom to another or from one school to another expanding the network of positive activity. Schools receive honest and helpful feedback they can use to strengthen instructional practices.



District Calendar Highlights

2011-2012 School Calendar

Please note that the first day of school for students will be Monday, August 29, 2011. Also, as you plan your school year and vacation schedule please be aware of the new snow day make-up schedule that adds school days during spring break.

August 2011

23-25 Professional Development Day
29..... First Student Day

September 2011

2-5 No School Students/Staff

October 2011

10 Professional Development - No School
24 - Nov 4 PSSA Retesting - Grade 12 (Math, Reading, Science, & Writing)

November 2011

2..... Secondary First Quarter Ends
7 - 8 Professional Development - No School
21 - 22 Parent Conferences - 1/2 Day for Students
23 - 25 Thanksgiving Recess - No School Students/Staff
30..... Elementary First Trimester Ends

December 2011

26 - 30 Winter Recess - No School Students/Staff

January 2012

16..... District Closed
19..... Secondary Second Quarter Ends

February 2012

17..... Professional Development - No School
20..... No School Students/Staff

March 2012

5..... Elementary Second Trimester Ends
7 - 8 Parent Conferences - 1/2 Day for Students
12 - 23 PSSA Testing Grades 3-8 & 11 (Reading & Math)
26..... Secondary Third Quarter Ends

April 2012

2 - 9 Spring Recess - No School Students/Staff
16 - 20 PSSA Testing Grades 5, 8, 11 (Writing)
23 - 27 PSSA Testing Grades 4, 8, 11 (Science)

May 2012

15..... Professional Development - No School
28..... District Closed

June 2012

6 - 7 1/2 Day for Students
7..... Last Day of School - Semester & Trimester Ends
8..... Graduation/Professional Development

To view a full, printable calendar, visit www.OJRSD.com.



Mrs. Karin Suzadail, Owen J. Roberts High School Latin Teacher has been nominated by the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), for the NEA Foundation's Award for Teaching Excellence.

Congratulations to several world language students from Owen J. Roberts High School who attained national recognition for excellent performance on the 2011 National Spanish Examinations sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. Receiving "Los Honores" are Dan Bloemker, Kelsey Bright, Cassidy Hart, Megan Moorhead, Sam White, and CJ Winand, with "el Bronce" are Molly Girard, Tara Shimer, Aubrey Stuber, and the student with the highest score receiving the ranking of "la plata" is Amanda Walsh. Bryan Vélez earned the high honor of "el Bronce" in the Bilingual category.

26 enthusiastic OJR Junior Classical League (Latin Club) students competed at the PAJCL Convention at Penn State University against more than 550 Latin students from 20 schools across the state in academic, artistic, and athletic contests (a mixture of the serious and the silly). At the conclusion of the weekend, OJR-JCL walked away with the Second Place trophy for the lower (small school) division with many individual stand-out projects and performances.

39 Class of 2011 students (11% of class) scored 1300 and above on SAT combined reading and math. There was one finalist National Merit Scholar and 8 commended students. The 2011 senior class participated on 26 PAC -10 Championship teams in 13 different sports. Among these athletes are PAC 10 League MVP's, individual league champions and teams members who participated at the District and State levels.

Mary Reisenwitz was presented with a \$10,000 Scholarship for the Arts funded by The Greater Pottstown Foundation. The scholarship is awarded on merit as measured by artistic performance as displayed in an exhibit at the Gallery School and a scholarship essay.

Wildcat Athletic Highlights

Baseball, Softball, Track and Boys Lacrosse all made it to the district level playoffs!

Individual Champion in HS Boys Track & Field: Ryan Brumfield was PAC 10 Champion - High Jump, Triple Jump, Long Jump. He was District 1 champion - High Jump, Triple Jump and PIAA State champion in the High Jump (height of 6'10")



Now Accepting Nominations for OJR Wall of Fame

The Community Service Award is presented to a member of the Owen J. Roberts area who has made an extraordinary contribution to the community.

The Alumni Achievement Award is presented to a graduate of the Owen J. Roberts School District who has achieved outstanding distinction since leaving Owen J. Roberts.

Please email nominations with specific examples of community service or achievement to Mrs. Sue Weber, SWeber@ojrsd.com

East Coventry Drama Club Performs Snow White

Paula Jackson received a mini-grant from the OJR Education Foundation for the royalty and script costs so that fifth and sixth grade drama students in East Coventry Elementary School could perform Snow White. Not only did the students participate in the acting, staging, and scenery creation for the performances, but they also made the costumes!



"Magic Mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" debate Mrs. Janet Wolfe and Mrs. Lori Palmer as they portray the Disney theme during North Coventry Elementary School's annual Relay for Life drive.