



# ADVOCATE

The newsletter of the Owen J. Roberts School District



## A Time of Reflection and Appreciation as Seniors Prepare to Graduate

BY LILY KLENK, OJR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

Graduation is coming up for Owen J. Roberts High School. On June 9th the seniors will be saying their final goodbyes to their teachers, administrators and fellow students. Many seniors have mixed opinions on graduation, emotions ranging from relief to sadness to a bittersweet feeling most graduates feel.

Despite the wide array of emotions, Owen J. Roberts students leave high school feeling ready and prepared for college.

Owen J. Roberts has been a home for all of these seniors and many can recall the good moments with their teachers. The help and guidance these teachers provide is incomparable. The teachers at OJR are dedicated to helping every student, even if they have not had that student for a while, their doors are always open! Many students share the sentiment that their teachers have "pushed [them] to become the person [they] are today."

Many of these students stay connected to these teachers throughout their high school career. Teachers that seniors had freshman year will come to graduation and cheer the loudest. Owen J. Roberts truly helps every student try to find something they are passionate about, hoping to prepare them for college.

Owen J. Roberts includes teachers that are passionate and knowledgeable about their subject, they offer classes that help students discover their interests. Personally, I discovered my passion through my elective classes and with the help of a very passionate teacher.

Our district offers electives in numerous subjects - including genetics, art, ceramics, ecology, horticulture, animal studies, culinary arts, interior design and more. Taking these electives helps seniors narrow down their passion, and specified courses allow all students to find something they're truly invested in.



Owen J. Roberts prepares you to be the absolute best student you can be. Many seniors leave here feeling ready for college. However, leaving friends and home is never easy. Juniors are already dreading leaving their friends. Katie Ladd says, "the realization that most of [her] closest friends could be strangers again someday is hitting [her] really hard" but she knows "this is a big step in [her] life."

Our schools provide not only a great education, also an amazing place to meet people. With our district sprawling to five elementary schools, then combining to form one middle school and one high school, you can have lifelong friends here. You can meet your best friend in elementary school then continue to be friends throughout high school. However, it is also encouraged to step

out of your comfort zone.

The district offers many sports that students love to partake in! Currently track and lacrosse are in season, as well as baseball and softball. Playing sports with other students is described as having an "instant family." Katie Arcara shares that she "cannot wait to start [her] new journey at college but [she is] also really sad to leave [her] underclassmen behind." During a senior's final season they will have a senior night. It is typically the last home game of the season (however it can vary).

Senior nights are very extravagant, everyone goes all out for their seniors. Decorating gyms and fields to the nines. The seniors say an emotional goodbye to their team family, most of these nights end with everyone in tears.

However it is important to note that not only sports, but also numerous clubs and other activities help bring students together. Presidents of clubs are typically seniors, they are so important in guiding the club and helping the underclassmen out. The theater kids are also an extremely close knit group. As well as stage crew and band, these clubs run year round, so the members do become very close. However, while most seniors say a heavy-hearted goodbye, their impact will not be forgotten.

Owen J. Roberts students are known leaders who will leave an impact on whatever they set their minds to. We're "Owen J. all the way!"

# OJRMS Ushers in the Spring Season with Sports and Music

The Owen J. Roberts Middle School band shared their amazing talent with the community during their spring concert, held on May 16. Students also performed with their fellow musicians from the high school during a special joint concert on May 9. Highlights from these performances, and many more, can be viewed on OJR's YouTube channel - [https://youtube.com/@OJR\\_SchoolDistrict](https://youtube.com/@OJR_SchoolDistrict).

In April, we celebrated our outstanding OJR middle school students with breakfast and some beautiful statements written by their teachers in their nominations. We are so thankful for all the work, honor, dedication, and spirit these Wildcats bring to OJRMS!



## North Coventry Holds Spring Events; Bids Farewell to Retiring Team Members

On May 6, the PTO hosted our 2nd Annual Spring Fest. The day featured games, prizes, basket raffles, food trucks and more. It was a tremendous success raising money for the PTO which gets turned right back to the students and staff. Thank you for all who volunteered and for all who attended the event.

Spring is the season for field trips! First graders recently visited the zoo. Students in 5th and 6th grade are heading to Warwick park, on separate days. Students in 3rd and 4th grade will visit Crystal Cave which is a typical 3rd grade trip, but since our current fourth graders didn't get to experience this trip last year, their teachers decided to schedule a trip for them.

This June, the NCES community will say farewell and good luck to three beloved teachers as they retire. Ms. Lori Scheib, has taught for 35 years in the primary grades, all here at North Coventry. She has been a constant supporter of school and community activities and has been spotted on the sidelines of football games and at nearly all PTO events. Ms. Sue Grashof has been North Coventry's counselor since the building opened! She leaves behind big shoes to be filled. Our third retiree is Ms. Sally Lipkowitz, our speech and language therapist who has worked with countless students over the years helping with "th" blends and general speech needs. Thanks to Sally's work, more NC students are pronouncing their words correctly and have confidence in their speaking skills.



## East Coventry Staff Give Presentation About Building Positive School Culture

Are you ready for a "team huddle"? How about a "deep dive"? Or better yet, do you want to hit a "grand slam"? These ideas were part of a presentation that three staff members from East Coventry Elementary School were asked to present in April at the Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8 in Altoona.

Mrs. Paula Jackson (IST), Mrs. Adria Creswell (Academic Coach), and Dr. Todd Oswald (Principal) presented to a group of 50 educators from the Altoona area on the importance of building a positive school climate. Based on research that states that a positive school culture impacts student achievement, the three staff members drew on the structure of East Coventry in order to highlight the impact culture can have on a school.

The effort to develop such a culture at East Coventry is collective in that all staff members help to contribute to the environment of the school. The presentation emphasized that at East Coventry there are many teacher leaders who contribute to establishing and maintaining the school's positive culture. The positive culture helps to retain quality staff members by enhancing morale and ultimately impacting the students.



# High School Enjoys Victory; Bonds of Friendship

The four-seed Girls' Softball Team defeated Upper Perk to capture the team's first PAC title since 2009! Our softball team also visited the Coventry Little League's Challenger baseball practice to share some tips and their love for the sport!

Between January and May, horticulture students planted seedlings and plugs as they learned about cultivating and propagating different varieties. The community is invited to view a brief video showcasing their work by visiting <https://youtu.be/YB6Se5wWnM0>.

May 12 was a perfect day to come together as a school community and host a Special Olympics event at our school. Hundreds of students enjoyed fun athletic events and the shared sense of school pride as we came together as Wildcats! Video highlights can be viewed online at <https://youtu.be/LgAKdzmp854>.

Students from Best Buddies Club had a great time dancing the night away at the Buddy Ball on May 6th! Special thanks to Sonia Willenbrock, Cristin Burke, John Burke, Ana Burke, Sheri Ballezzi and Kelli Chermak for volunteering their time on a Saturday



# West Vincent Enjoys Concerts, Poetry and More

Students shared their amazing talents at the annual spring concert, held on May 10.

Students demonstrated their creativity and writing skills with a poetry recital on March 31. A big round of applause (or snaps) to OJR's poets laureate.

Congratulations to Jaideep Krishna Gollapalli and his team S2STEM of Garnet Valley PA won 2nd place in First Lego League Delaware State Championship.



# East Vincent Students Win Big; Showcase Art

East Vincent welcomed Dr. Recess who presented assemblies for Grades K-3 and Grades 4-6. The students were taught new, developmentally appropriate games and activities to play at recess, with the goal that more students choose to become active and engaged during their time outside each day. The students had a blast at recess playing the games they learned!

Students and staff at East Vincent participated in the Spring Concert preview. Members of the East Vincent Chorus, Band, and Strings ensembles performed for their peers and teachers during the school day. The students showcased their amazing talent while recruiting future musicians from the primary grades. The concert made for a great way to wrap up the week as students and staff sang and clapped along with new and familiar tunes!

East Vincent students participated in a Read-A-Thon sponsored by the East Vincent PTA. Readers met the challenge by consuming as many books as they could, while raising money in support of future activities and needs of the school! Classes competed for prizes, and the winners will enjoy a movie on Dr. Smith before the school year is out!



# French Creek Teacher Wins Citadel Heart of Learning Award!

Our French Creek Reading Olympics team came away from the competition with 44 total points earning them a red ribbon. It was a total team effort and FC is so proud of everyone's hard work!

The OJR School Board and district leaders visited French Creek Elementary School this spring to see the OJR STEAM program in action! Our students enjoyed learning about odd and even numbers, and programming robots as part of a fun activity to reinforce what they learned.

Mrs. Krista Troutman, beloved second grade teacher at French Creek Elementary School, won the Citadel Heart of Learning Award! The announcement of the award came during a special, surprise assembly attended by Mrs. Troutman's family, friends and colleagues, in addition to all French Creek students! Congratulations to Mrs. Troutman for this truly well-deserved honor!



# OJR's "Super Reader" Provides Fun, Innovative Way to Engage Students

Our youngest readers are donning capes and detective hats, showing their perseverance and determination for being "Super Readers" and "Word Detectives." As part of the Owen J. Roberts English Language Arts kindergarten and first grade curriculum, teachers tap into the power of play to help students imagine themselves as readers at a critical time in their reading development.

Kindergartners are learning to be super readers with a visit from OJR's "Super Reader," who helps students learn some emergent reading skills, such as: pointer power, slider power, sound power, and reread power. Recognizing that superheroes never give up in times of trouble, our readers learn that when we face trouble in our books we too can use super reading powers.

First graders build on those super reading powers in a follow-up unit of study on becoming word detectives. Students are assigned a top secret mission from the Super-Secret Detective Agency (SSDA) each day of the unit, learning to solve words with the following skills: paying attention to the beginning of the word, looking out for vowel teams, using parts of words you know, watching out for unusual words, and noticing and stopping to solve problems with words. One first grader wrote, "I learned the word 'ridiculous.' I broke down the word to figure [sic] out the sounds." Students earn their official word detective certificates as a culminating celebration, distributed by the Chief Detective of the SSDA himself!

Both units bring together research on how students develop as readers with phonics and the importance of using play for engaging students in learning to read. Using the power of play ultimately serves to transform our students into the kind of reader they imagine themselves to be, and learning about the reading process at the same time. All in fun and joyful ways!



# OJR Education Foundation Celebrates Success; Invites New Partnerships

Have your children come home eager to talk about the Lego Spike Kits they used to create carnival rides and fast pass lanes during STEAM class? Maybe they were excited about the wobble stools or white board tables that they have been using in their classrooms. Perhaps your middle schoolers mentioned the awesome Ball Maze or portable lap desks they have used? All of these and more have been provided by the OJR Education Foundation (OJREF) this school year!

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that operates independently from the school district and is organized and governed by a group of dedicated volunteers. The foundation's goal is to raise funds to provide teacher grants for innovative educational programs in the schools. So far this year, OJREF has awarded 17 grants totaling over \$23,000. These grants provide educational, cultural, and wellness initiatives that enrich the students' learning. The foundation works with the school administrators to ensure that the teacher submitted grants represent a fundamental advance in the manner in which curricula is taught.

OJREF makes all of this possible by? We partner with philanthropic individuals in the community who are parents, neighbors, grandparents, teachers, and alumni who make tax-deductible donations to the Foundation. We team up with businesses interested in sponsoring programs and those participating in the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. In addition, we run fundraising events such as our annual Fall Farm Fest, Dine and Donates at local restaurants, Comedy Nights, and the Amazing Raise.

We are currently offering two fundraising opportunities for families to acknowledge students and key individuals in the school district. First are the engraved bricks for the Legacy Walkway that leads to the stadium complex. The bricks are the perfect gift for graduating seniors and a very special way to commemorate a favorite teacher, event, or class. A donation of \$75 purchases a brick engraved with your message for a lasting tribute.

Second, we are providing Staff Tributes as a wonderful way to honor a teacher or staff member who has made a difference in a child or family's lives. Every day OJR teachers and staff members go above and beyond for our children. As the year comes to a close, the month of May is the perfect time to celebrate their dedication and surprise them with Staff Tribute certificates.

Show your Wildcat pride and support the Education Foundation with a donation for a Legacy Brick or Staff Tribute. Together we can make a difference and provide amazing learning opportunities for the students and reward creative initiatives of educators in the OJR school district.

## OJREF GRANT AWARDS 2022-23

✓ \$350 - WV - Story Walk	✓ \$300 -MS - Creative Writing Author Visit
✓ \$250 - NC - Flexible Seating Wobble Seats	✓ \$300 - WV - Wiggle Wobble Chair Feet
✓ \$800 - HS - Hybrid PE iPads	✓ \$2000 - HS - Young Adult Literature for ELL
✓ \$620 - EC - Classroom Aquarium Kits	✓ \$11,500 - Elem. STEAM - Lego Spike Kits
✓ \$419 - MS - MazeRun Ball Maze	✓ \$500 - WV - Bouncy Bands for Desks
✓ \$2800 - MS - EVO Ozobot Kits	✓ \$240- WV - Chair Bands
✓ \$218 - MS - Portable Lap Desks	✓ \$700 - HS - Intro to Beekeeping materials



### Showcase your DEDICATION and PRIDE in the OJR School District and its history!

Become a permanent part of the OJR commemorative walkway by purchasing a Legacy Brick for a tax-deductible contribution of \$75. Recognize moments and memories for family, friends, and community members who have made a difference in our schools.

- A perfect gift for a graduating senior
- Honor an OJR student or employee
- Order a brick for your family
- Honor OJR alumni
- Buy a brick as a lasting memorial for a loved one
- Remember a class or reunion
- Honor an OJR volunteer
- Pay tribute to a director or coach
- Remember a special achievement or event



## Want to Learn More about the OJR Education Foundation?



### Scan the QR Code

# Superintendent's Notebook

It feels like only yesterday that we welcomed students back to another exciting year at Owen J. Roberts School District. And yet, it's almost hard to believe that we are in the final weeks of the 2022-2023 school year!

This is a busy time for students and families in our district. Seniors are getting ready to graduate and begin the next chapter of their lives – be it college, career, military or another exciting adventure. Underclassmen are gearing up for another year at OJR High School and contemplating their future paths. Meanwhile, sixth and eighth grade students are preparing to respectively ascend to our secondary education programs at the middle school and high school.

However, before we officially kickoff the summer I want to personally thank all of our families and our students for an amazing school year. In the past 9 months we've had the opportunity to come together as a community and enjoy many of the school activities we've had to postpone or modify in recent years. From performances and sporting events to academic milestones, our students' hard work was rewarded with accomplishments and experiences that they will take with them for the rest of their lives. We are honored that our families allowed us to be a part of those happy memories.

I also want to thank our amazing teachers, staff, and administrators for their tireless service to our community's children. Every day in our classrooms, our team enriches young lives and provides a quality education to our students. We are incredibly fortunate to have an amazing collection of talent in OJR. On countless occasions I've seen our professional and support staff go above and beyond to ensure our students are supported and thriving academically in the classroom. I am proud to work alongside all of you.

In this issue of the Advocate newsletter, we'll share some of our highlights from the past several months – including our students sharing their talents with the community, awards our staff has earned, and some great photos of the special moments we enjoy on a regular basis in our classrooms.

As we wrap up this school year, I want to emphasize my appreciation for what we've been able to accomplish this year as partners in K-12 education. Together we've continued to address the evolving needs of our students, had critical conversations about our goals and strategies, focused on re-establishing our shared sense of community identity, and laid the groundwork for future success.

Thank you for supporting Owen J. Roberts School District. Have a wonderful summer, and we look forward to an exciting new school year in August!

Sincerely,

Dr. Will Stout  
Superintendent



Owen J. Roberts School District

Inspiring Each Student for Success Today and Greatness Tomorrow

Summer 2023 Edition

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