

Message from Superintendent Dr. Joel T. DiBartolomeo

We have so much for which to be proud of in the Owen J. Roberts School District. Our students perform significantly above state averages in achievement tests and they are well prepared when transitioning into the career or college of their choice. We are also well known for the many gifted artists, musicians and athletes who enrich our schools and community. The success of the Owen J. Roberts School District is directly related to the vibrant partnerships we have established among our committed and excellent staff, active parents, and supportive and generous community members. Many of the stories you will read about in this edition of the Advocate are made possible by the good work we do together on behalf of our students.

As a District, we believe in the unlimited potential of our students and expect each of them to achieve at high

levels academically and socially, and to make wellness a priority in their lives. The District's educational plan, Reaching New Heights: A Framework for Universal Success, is founded on the belief that every student, parent, staff member, teacher and administrator should find success in our schools. And all residents should find satisfaction and pride in the quality of the educational experience taking place in the District. For these reasons we make every effort to engage all members of the OJR community to make certain that the needs of our students and residents are accommodated through our many programs and facilities we make available.

The hopes and dreams of our students have no limit and we focus each day on helping them realize the full extent of their ability. The Reaching New Heights plan demands that we make five key commitments to ensure that

we reach our goal of becoming a 21st Century World Class School District. These commitments are our shared responsibility. They unite us in our primary mission as a District, which is to provide excellent educational opportunities to our students while taking full advantage of the resources we have available to us.

As we move into the second half of this school year, we will be listening carefully to how we can continue to improve and better serve all members of the Owen J. Roberts School District community. We trust that you will make the following commitments with us:

1. We commit to being responsible for all students in our District.
2. We commit to becoming the best we can be.
3. We commit to maintaining high standards for student and adult work.
4. We commit to putting our kids first and not make excuses for things we cannot control.
5. We commit to Universal Success.



March is Middle Level Education Month

The month of March has been designated National Middle Level Education Month. This annual recognition of middle level education provides us with a special opportunity to focus

the attention of our community and the nation on a very special time in the educational careers of children. The Owen J. Roberts Middle School is proud of its efforts to work with

students during this exciting, but often challenging time in their development and maturation.

This month is set aside to remind us why it is so important that middle level students strive to expand and sharpen academic skills. The habits that students develop during their young adolescent years follow them for quite some time. Beyond academics, middle school students expand other skill sets as well. Leaving the days of solid structure behind—one teacher, one cubby, and one class of kids—middle schoolers have the opportunity to branch out with new friends, activities and academic challenges like lab sciences and more abstract math. "Exploration is integral for students of this age," said Principal Dr. Robert Salladino. He explains that middle school is a perfect time for adolescents to try out many different things, test skills and check interests that can develop as they grow.

Middle school students also require a highly supportive environment," commented Dr. Salladino, explaining that a supportive environment is important at home and at school. "Sometimes it seems that our children want us to

disappear during this age," he added, "but they really do need family and parents to be involved." Involved parents should continue to ask questions about what their child is learning in school and to attend school functions to demonstrate interest and concern for their child's success.

Every member of our Owen J. Roberts Middle School community feels a great sense of the pride in the work done by and on behalf of our students. The word PRIDE has emerged as a key element of the vision and mission at the Owen J. Roberts Middle School. Through collaborative efforts of students, teachers, and administrators, the newly-crafted and focused vision is:

- Promoting a caring environment
- Responsible for our learning
- Interacting collaboratively
- Devoted to challenging our minds
- Excellence in all that we do

All efforts at the Owen J. Roberts Middle School are aligned with these concepts and principles.

OJR Students Chosen for District 12 Band



Congratulations to (back row L-R): Hali Strickler (junior), Kristin Jannotti (sophomore), Amanda Ficca (sophomore), Aaron Taylor (senior), (front row L-R) Megan Sutter (junior), and Kelsey Fries (junior) for their musical accomplishment!

Bonjour. Guten Tag. Hola. Salve.

Last year West Vincent Elementary School students traveled to foreign lands through language with the help of Owen J. Roberts High School foreign language students. The collaborative program was so successful, that West Vincent Elementary School PTA decided to continue it this year.

As parent volunteer Mrs. Jean Gessl explains, the Foreign Language Club runs after school for eight weeks. During this time, high school students travel to West Vincent Elementary School to teach 45 minute classes in French, German, Latin, and Spanish. During the lessons the students learn simple conversational expressions, ordering in a restaurant, and discussing school-related activities.

“It is a wonderful opportunity for the high school students,” World Language Department Chairperson Ms. Adrienne Andrés commented. “In addition to being responsible for preparing lessons and ancillary materials, they are practicing the basics of their second language.”

Both the high school and elementary school students also benefit from



OJR High School senior Erica Walters works with West Vincent Elementary students during a Foreign Language Club lesson.

the mentoring relationships that are formed during their time together. Senior Erica Walters says of her experience, “Teaching for the Foreign Language Club is a lot of fun; the kids

pick up the language very quickly and love to use it. My friends and I really enjoy creating lesson plans and playing games with the younger kids and seeing how they respond to it all. It’s also nice to see the younger students

develop an interest in a language that we already love.” Erica continues, “The program is also great because it allows the high school students to get creative. A lot of the language students hope to teach one day, and teaching at West Vincent is an excellent experience.”

The success of the West Vincent Elementary School’s Foreign Language Club is due to the hard work of many people. Mrs. Gessl coordinates the parent volunteers who provide an adult presence in each of the classrooms. WVES principal Mrs. Barbara Guy continues to be an enthusiastic advocate. The administrative staff of WVES, Mrs. Diane Banks and Mrs. Julie Bragg, assist in ensuring that the program runs smoothly. Owen J. Roberts High School principal Dr. Richard Marchini, World Language Department Chairperson Ms. Adrienne Andrés, and the faculty liaisons for each language, Ms. Natalie Smith (French), Ms. Lindsay Corl (German), and Mrs. Karin Suzadail (Latin), and Mrs. Kimberly Nagy (Spanish) all contribute to the success of this program.

After-school Program helps Students Reach for the Stars

East Coventry Elementary School is offering a new and exciting after-school program called R.E.A.C.H. (Resource for Enriching Afterschool Children’s Haven). The program is designed to offer academic enrichment and target academic skills through highly motivating student experiences in a positive environment. The first project is movie-making, which leaders hope will help to facilitate interactions between peers with different backgrounds. Future sessions will include horticulture, wellness activities and robotics. The program runs with the efforts of many District staff and community volunteers. For example, a mini-grant from the OJR Education Foundation is supporting Eagle Scout Mark Wolff in his project to construct a greenhouse in the outdoor garden classroom. The greenhouse will allow the R.E.A.C.H. group to support local food pantries with fresh, nutritious food which they will help plant, grow and deliver.

“I am excited about the program,” stated Principal Todd Oswald. “It synthesizes all the finest qualities and best practices of an after-school program: opportunity, enrichment, connections, rigor and engagement.”

A new service-learning grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education will provide resources to encourage students to solve problems in their own community.

What Do the Following Have in Common?

Music Camp, art camp, drama clubs, gardening materials, concerts, leveled classroom library books, playground equipment, books for literature circles, Content Area Reading Books for Professional Development, Mosaic Madness, Reading Olympics, science library, The Character Café, Twenty-First Century Literacy Skills project, Positive Social Skills for All program, eBooks and Smart Tools, History Day Club, Accounting Monopoly, Courtyard Ecosystem Pond, Outdoor Weather Station, Reading Karaoke Style, Artists in Residence, Tile Mosaic, projectors, video cameras, GPS and Legos for physics classes? These are just some of the programs and materials provided for students through the OJR Education Foundation Mini-Grant Program since 2007. The goal of the mini grant program is to encourage excellence among students and faculty by providing funding for innovative activities that complement the basic classroom operation.

Contributions from individuals and businesses, in addition to funds raised through a variety of initiatives, make all of this possible.

The application for grants for the 2011-2012 school year and additional information about the OJR Education Foundation is available at www.ojref.org.

Robotics Clubs are All the Rage at OJR



Robotics clubs started last year at the Owen J. Roberts High School with the formation of FIRST Team 3123, which competed at the FIRST Robotics Competition with a 120 pound robot named “The Judge”. The team had a fantastic rookie year winning the Washington, D.C. Regional Competition and then moving on to the World Championship held at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. This year, the team will defend their title in Washington, D.C. and will also compete locally at the Philadelphia competition. As a result of this team’s success, a Robotics class is being offered as an elective in the high school this next school year.

This year, robotics teams are starting elsewhere in the District as well. With strong support from Superintendent Dr. Joel T. DiBartolomeo, and Tech Teacher Mr. Giannone as their coach, FIRST Lego League (FLL) Team 7833 was started at the middle school and finished 10th in their regional rookie outing.

FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Team 4185 The Silver Soldiers, sponsored by OJREF, was also founded this year. This team is made of 8th to 12th graders and competes during the FIRST Robotics Competition off-season. They won the Rockwell Collins Innovate award at the SEPA Regional Competition and are moving on to the PA state finals. Working with the school administration and principals, the vision is to enable the creation of an FLL team or FTC team at all OJR schools within the near future.

Still Listening as District Future is Planned

A feasibility study is underway led by architect Mr. Jeff Chambers who meets regularly with a steering committee made up of representatives from each of the District's seven townships, regional planners, parents, residents, staff and administration. A town hall was held on February 3 where about 45 people gathered to speak out about their hopes and expectations for future District facilities. Information is still being gathered by way of survey and an interactive web page, <http://feasibility.ojrsd.com>. At this website, the PowerPoint presentation that was presented at the town hall meeting and the tabulated results from the meeting can also be found. Recommendations for long-term planning will be presented to the Board of Directors on behalf of the community by June.

Cancer Awareness Banquet 2011

On April 10, 2011, the Owen J. Roberts High School Student Council will sponsor an informational fundraising banquet on cancer prevention, treatment and research. Ms. Lynn Doyle of Comcast's "It's Your Call With Lynn Doyle" will be the special guest speaker along with physicians from Pottstown Memorial Medical Center. The program will be held in the Owen J. Roberts High School auditorium at 5:00 p.m. and will be followed by a dinner served by Maggiano's Little Italy. All funds raised benefit Great Guys Group (greatguys.org), a non-profit dedicated to helping local families affected by cancer. Ticket cost is \$15 for students, \$25 for adults, and \$20 for seniors. Reservations may be made by email to Benita Holden at beholden@ojrsd.com.

Advancing Science Through Community Collaboration

Getting kids excited about science, engineering and other technical fields is a national priority and there is nothing like connection to authentic problem solving to ignite a young mind. Hoping to encourage budding scientists, East Coventry Elementary School takes a unique approach to the classic science fair through a partnership with pharmaceutical firm TetraLogic. TetraLogic scientists visit the school to help students formulate experiments and then return as judges. The partnership, recently featured in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, may help give East Coventry Elementary School the highest science fair participation rate of all of Owen J. Roberts' elementary centers.

At the middle and high school levels, teachers and students benefit from the support of Science in Motion (SIM) through Ursinus College. SIM, a science outreach program, provides students with hands-on modern science and technology training. "It gives students a glimpse of what they can expect (from a science career)," offered Mr. Ron Faust, program director. SIM has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness to improve classroom science test scores by engaging students with high-tech equipment that a school could never afford and curriculum-based experiential discovery. In addition, colleges have been able to experience higher enrollments in the sciences by offering the program. The program is highly cost-effective because expert scientists and advanced lab equipment are shared by many schools.



An AP Biology student works on a bacteriology problem which comprises the identification, classification and characterization of bacterial species. Thanks to Science in Motion, students learn to use powerful microscopes, gram-stain, and work under sterile controlled conditions solving real world problems.

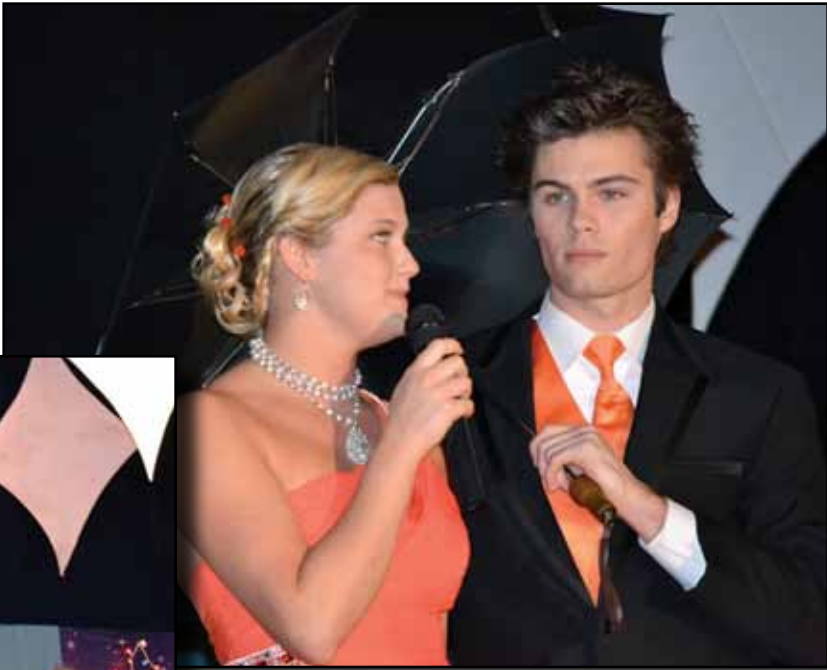
Fashion Show 2011: Sparks Fly!



Alana Menta starts the show in a stunning hi-lo effect dress that screams glamour.

Approximately 60 high school juniors and seniors created electric sparks as they whirled, danced and entertained a packed auditorium modeling the latest in formal wear at the 9th annual Prom Fashion Show. The audience included people of all ages who seemed to enjoy the occasional teen antics as much as the feast of formal wear. Fashion trends for 2011 offer plenty of options for young prom-goers, from sequins to feathers to layers and layers of patterns and fresh-punch color. Sherbet-tinted ties and vests keep guys right in step with the gals who have plenty of choices of dress lengths as well. The fashion show directly supports the PTSA (Parent Teacher Student Association)-sponsored Post Prom Party, a safe time for teens to come together and have an amazing alcohol- and drug-free celebration at the high school after the prom. Owen J. Roberts is appreciative of the many community partners who support these events as well as the intense dedication of parents and teachers.

Much appreciation to Mrs. Sue Dutton, show director for eight years, who officially announced her resignation at the event.



Duet by Jasmine Dutton and Brad Solomon.



Nicholas Bartelmo and Michaela Rosato play a little air guitar to inspire the crowd.

Dust Off Your Boots

What began four years ago as a unique fundraiser, has grown into a District-wide community celebration bringing local restaurants, school administrators and teachers, alumni and community residents together for an evening of entertainment. The Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation's annual Chili Cook-off not only raises much needed funds for education enrichment programs, but involves the entire Owen J. Roberts School District community.

Student artwork is used throughout the event venue and can even turn into auction prizes. Staff throughout the District created 'theme baskets' for the auction and many volunteers helped with the preparations and during the event. Judges and guests voted on their favorite chili. There were twelve competitors from ten local restaurants.

Save the date for this year's Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation's 4th Annual Chili Cook-Off will be held on Saturday, November 5, 2011 at French Creek Golf Club.

There are many ways to help with this fundraiser which directly enhances learning at Owen J. Roberts. Contact Dr. Kathleen M. Hocker at khocker@ojref.org or 610-469-5333.

The OJR Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible.



OJR Ed Foundation President Tim Hopper (left) congratulates Dr. DiBartolomeo (right) on the hot auction win of the cook-off donkey mascot, later named "Sylvester" after a children's book, "Sylvester and the Magic Pebble" by William Steig.

First Friendly Face of the School Day

In our rural school district, most children are transported to and from school in a bus. Climbing those tall steps onto the vehicle, children are greeted by their first friendly face of their school day. Making their presence even more significant, school bus drivers are also the final school contact at the end of the day. That circumstance, coupled with the fact that nationally most bullying is reported to happen on the playground or school bus, puts drivers in a perfect position to act as responders to incidents of concern.

On February 18, Gross Bus drivers for Owen J. Roberts School District took part in the Olweus Bully Prevention program. More than 120 drivers received the tools to report and respond to situations that may constitute bullying. "It is important to realize that bullying is defined as repeated malicious behavior over time," instructed certified Peaceful Schools, Olweus trainer and Springfield Township transportation director, Mr. Wayne Johnston. "We can't think we will eliminate bullying," Mr. Johnston, a 28 year transportation vet continued, "that just isn't going to happen. But you can become more aware." He confirmed that on a 72-passenger bus, drivers won't see everything, but they can teach kids to come to them with problems.

The Olweus Bully Prevention program, a blueprint for violence prevention, was first implemented at OJR Middle School. Many strategies are used at the school to promote pro-social behavior (and discourage anti-social behavior). Having kids understand what bullying behavior is and empowering them to report bullying to an adult at school and at home are hallmarks of the program. Students are also taught to include other students who are easily left out. Olweus strategies are now used universally in the District. All schools have a bully reporting system in place and now that friendly face driving the bus represents another person in the community to support efforts for kids to treat each other with kindness. Gross Bus Company paid the salaries of the bus drivers to take the conference and the District paid the presenter fee. "It is a great partnership," said Mrs. Gail Gola, OJR transportation coordinator.



Concerts Honor Black History Month

Choirs at the middle school and high school had an opportunity to work with famous African-American composer Dr. Rollo Dillworth to provide a gala community concert on January 28.

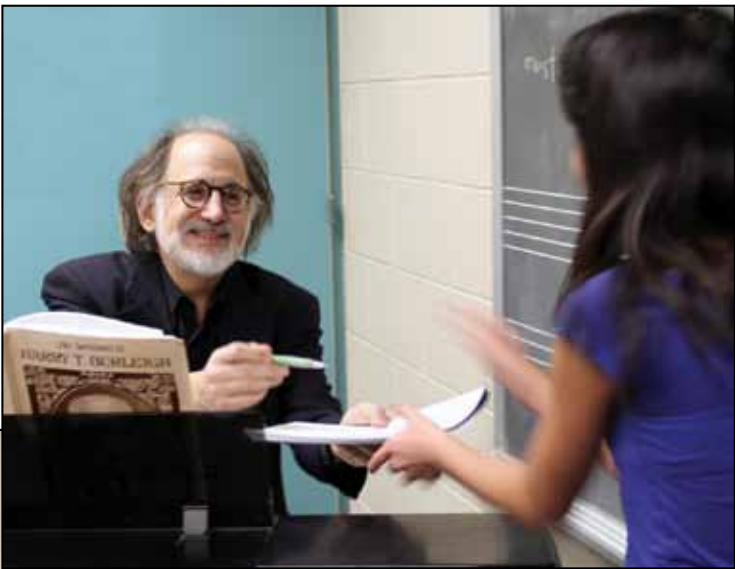
On Tuesday, February 15, elementary children at North Coventry and East Vincent elementary schools performed with internationally-acclaimed bass singer, Kevin Deas, and prominent author, Joseph Horowitz, as part of Black History Month assemblies with orchestra and music students in grades 3 – 6. Mr. Deas used his burnished sound to promote understanding of what at one time were known as "slave songs", while Horowitz explained to children the modern-day struggles of being a black opera singer.

Orchestra director, Clifford Hall, developed an interdisciplinary curriculum using music and social studies to lead students in the processes of questioning, creating, performing and reflecting on the period of American history in which spirituals were born. Students wrote their own "slave song" as part of the unit.

The entire program is an outgrowth of the National Endowment for the Humanities "Dvořák and America" Teacher-Training Institute hosted by the Pittsburgh Symphony in July 2010, where 24 teachers from across the US, including Hall, created Dvořák projects for implementation in their schools.



Kevin Deas performs 'Deep River' under teacher/conductor Clifford Hall and his elementary student orchestra.



Author Joseph Horowitz happily signs an autograph for a young musician.

Owen J. Roberts Alumni *Wildcat Spotlight*... You

When we reflect upon our high school years, our minds swell in a cacophony of memories and emotions. The first “A” or “F”, the first kiss, seeing your family in the audience to cheer and support your extracurricular activities, exams, new responsibilities and then... graduation. For everyone that has passed through the adolescent years and emerged into adulthood, the time in elementary, middle and high school form the building blocks which make us who we are today. Whether you graduated in 1956 or 2010, you are still a Wildcat. Those memories we hold are priceless and equally valuable to the future graduates of the Owen J. Roberts School District.

As Alumni Chairman of the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation, (www.ojref.org) I am most frequently asked if I can locate a particular alumnus. A robust and accurate database is the keystone of any successful alumni organization. The compilation of graduate’s contact information is an ongoing exercise. With nearly 13,000 Owen J. Roberts High School alumni, and a current database of nearly 5000, we obviously have a long way to go. This is how YOU can help. If you are a class reunion / club / event organizer, I want to speak with you. If YOU know any of the above, I want to hear from you. If YOU are the

parent, guardian, friend, or foe of an OJR alumnus, I want to hear from you. Visit ojref.org and click “contact” at the tab on top of the home page, or email me at timothyhopper@ymail.com or call (561) 654.8002.

A goal of the Wildcat Spotlight is to deliver an informative description of an OJR alumnus’ special interest, talent, or hobby including their personal insight. Additionally, the Wildcat Spotlight should help resurrect memories from ‘back in the day’ and stimulate the readers to reconnect with fellow alumni. The next installment, with the help of YOU, will do just that. Please visit the web site and

forward suggestions for future Wildcat Spotlight features in addition to helping us complete our alumni database. I truly hope that in the short time it took to read this, you managed to take a stroll down a memory-filled hallway of your Wildcat experience.

Tim Hopper is President and Alumni Chairman of the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation. The Education Foundation is a private, non-profit charity, independent of the Owen J. Roberts School District, whose mission is to ensure the highest level of educational innovation by supporting students, faculty and staff with community involvement in a partnership of lifetime learning.

Second Annual Mathemusical Celebrates Connection Between Math and Music

Owen J. Roberts celebrated its second annual District math night with Mathemusical. The night celebrated the District’s commitment to providing a rich and rigorous mathematics education to our students. The connection between math and music was an outstanding way to connect math to real life.

The event had much to offer families with a variety of examples of how math makes life interesting and fun. Students voted for and charted favorite singers. Other activities included dancing, playing cards, measuring, and playing musical instruments. Live music by the middle school jazz band and the excellent talents of Mr. Jeremy Fox, Mr. Mark Bilodeau and friends provided rhythm for the evening.

“I was very impressed with the college students, teachers and all the volunteers who helped with Mathemusical,” said parent Mrs. Karla Romberg, “We had a great time and loved the activities that were chosen for the evening. The jazz band was entertaining to watch and encouraged children to keep on practicing!”

It takes many hands to create such a large-scale event and special thanks go to Mrs. Kristin Colfer, Middle School Academic Coach, and the members of the District Math Night Planning Committee.



Mrs. Betsy Miller and Mrs. Kathy Billger, Math Night Committee members, sing “It’s Only Rock & Roll (& Math) and I like it”

Video Technology Helps EC’s L³ Choose Project

As six East Vincent Elementary School fourth grade students waited for their first robot game round to begin, they began to express their doubt. They had spent months preparing for their rookie debut at the FIRST Lego League regional qualifier and facing off against an eighth grade team that literally towered over them caused them to be a little nervous. But as soon as the starting buzzer sounded, they were lost in a world of robotics and science, demonstrating their teamwork skills, perseverance, and ingenuity.

The FIRST Lego League theme for the year was Body Forward, so the newly-formed EC team decided to research a degenerative muscular disease called ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Through an online video conference, students interviewed Mr. Greg Telthorster, who explained how ALS has changed his life and showed them the assistive devices he uses. The team was inspired and created a clever skit about motor neurons, the human body, and ALS. They proposed new technologies to make living with ALS better.

Then, they worked built and programmed an autonomous robot to solve biomedical engineering missions on the FIRST Lego League robot board. For months, they stayed after school or came on a Saturday morning. On January 8th, the team traveled to the FIRST State regional competition in Oxford, Pennsylvania. When the competition was over, they returned to East Vincent Elementary School with a sense of pride. As a rookie team, they met many of their goals, bonded as a team, and learned more than they expected about science, technology, and robotics.

Odyssey Mindset

by Zach Matarazzo, Grade 10, member of Mr. Palochak’s OM team

The witty inventor Thomas Alva Edison once quipped, “To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk”. Harnessing this creative mindset, Owen J. Roberts’ students gather each year to compete in the Odyssey of the Mind program. Odyssey of the Mind, fondly referred to as “OM” by OJR students, is a problem solving competition by definition, but at heart it is much more. OM brings people from around the world together to compete in yearlong problems. These problems, ranging from writing skits to building vehicles and balsa wood structures, put students imagination, knowledge, and skill to the test, while teaching them important life-skills including time management, peer interaction, and quick-thinking when under pressure. Problems in the 2011 competition include the creation of a vehicle made of mousetraps (Problem I), a Rube Goldberg machine (Problem II), a performance about a classical Tour Guide (Problem III), a balsa wood structure designed to fold together, then support weights (Problem IV), and, a performance about a character whose emotions come full circle (Problem V). All problems have an 8 minute time limit, but in no means a limit in imagination and creativity. Teams compete at regional and state competitions, as well as world finals, where students get the opportunity to interact with their peers from around the world, gaining invaluable social skills. Owen J. Roberts has problem solving teams at all educational levels and in every school in the district. Coaches include Ms. Patty Janda, Jyl Harrington, Rose Vey, and Mr. Christopher Palochak. The regional contest will be held this year at Southern Lehigh High School on March 19th, April 9th marks the state finals date at Williamsport Area High School, and World Finals will be held May 27-May 30th at the University of Maryland. Anyone interested in the program is encouraged to stop by a competition, or go to the Odyssey website, www.odysseyofthemind.com and learn more.

Owen J. Roberts Friends of the Arts

Friends of the Arts (FOA) is a non-profit group that raises money to fund the arts and art activities for students in the Owen J. Roberts School District. FOA started as a concerned group of parents and teachers wanting to insure that there was funding for students to express their imagination and creativity, while experiencing the arts first-hand.

FOA directly supports Artists in Residence who come to Owen J. Roberts schools and work with children teaching technical skills to create lasting art. North Coventry Elementary School is adorned with many striking works of art created by artists and students working together.

The annual Craft Show (this year was the 31st annual) is FOA's biggest fundraiser. This along with the Holiday House Tour, and Studio & Garden Tour each year allows FOA to fund field trips to museums and performing arts programs, artists in residence, assemblies, classroom supplies, art show prizes, framing for senior honor artist's work, scholarships for art camps for deserving students, scholarships for graduating seniors continuing studies in the arts, Art Goes to School, and other cultural activities.

FOA is always open to new members and new ideas. Everyone is invited to join their meetings at the North Coventry Elementary School on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.



North Coventry Elementary is influenced by the artwork of Pottstown tile artist, Lisa Muller, who through the tradition of tile making helped students shape a visual story of their school with cast and sculpted tile.

Wet Cats Wanted

Having students graduate “swim safe” has proven to be a source of pride in the Owen J. Roberts community. But beyond academic use, the pool is a great way for community members to practice fitness at an affordable price. A few new programs have been especially popular according to pool manager, Mr. Mark Zeleznick. The parent and child classes teach parents how to provide beginning swim safety to their babies and toddlers help-

ing youngsters to be comfortable and confident in the water.

“Water Polo has also been a big hit”, mentioned Mr. Zeleznick, explaining that elementary, middle and high school students can play water polo as a club sport. In addition, the diving boards spring into full action with Diving Conditioning Clinics open to all levels of swimmers.

This past fall, Owen J. Roberts spon-

sored a USMS Masters Swimmer’s Meet which brought in masters-level swimmers from across the mid-Atlantic region. There were 71 participants ranging in age from 18 to 72 years. In fact, the meet was so popular that Owen J. Roberts is looking for committed masters swimmers to form an OJR Wet Cat Swim Team. Swimmers can work out at both morning lap and evening recreational swim times as well as by entering conditioning sessions.

All swim programs are advertised on the Owen J. Roberts website. From the landing page select District Home on the top tab, then Community on the left-hand menu. Swim Program/ Aquatics is a link under Community. Registrations are taken in person during rec swims on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Contact Mark Zeleznick at MZeleznick@ojrsd.com for more information.

New Crew Clubs

Competitive rowing has been on the world scene for generations and has now made a name for itself at the Owen J. Roberts High School. With the force of enthusiasm, extreme hard work and numbers this fall, a girl’s rowing program – or Crew – proudly represented the students of our District on the waters of the Schuylkill River. The Girls’ Crew did so by successfully competing in their first race against other high schools from around the mid-Atlantic region in November. Rowing requires unequalled stamina, teamwork, skill and discipline and the girls showed that they had it all and more. The road to the race was challenging and successfully navigated by the girls organizing a team, securing baseline funds, finding a coach, a place to row, a boat, oars, associated equipment and time to train both on and off the water.



OJR’s first-ever girls crew club raced their first regatta while a new boys club formed. Crew Club is not funded through school funds and counts on sponsors, donations, volunteers and membership. Students work hard on rowing and on supporting their club.

This club sport is funded solely by the students through membership dues, club loans and this season, charity fundraising events. The team has sponsored Row-for-the-Heart – an all-day, indoor marathon rowing event held at Final Results Fitness, Sunday, February 27th. Proceeds benefit the team and The American Heart Association.

While the girls proudly and successfully pioneered the first season, a newly organized, companion boys program will help carry on this success the girls attained this fall. The addition of the boys squad has doubled the number of participants from 20 to approximately 40 students. Both squads row out of the Hines Rowing Center in Conshohocken, train up to six days per week and both plan on taking part in seven regattas this spring season. The first regatta this spring will take place Sunday, March 20th and culminate in the City Championship Regatta on Sunday, May 8th. All races will be on the Schuylkill River adjacent to Kelly Drive. The crews would love your support and to see you at the river!

Will Work for Taxes

Owen J. Roberts School District maintains a Senior Tax Relief Program which enables senior citizens to receive a relief on their property taxes in exchange for service in the District. Approximately 65 seniors presently contribute expertise and skills in the schools.

According to the program coordinator, Mr. Barry Haring, most of the volunteers donate far more hours than “required” for tax relief. All schools benefits from the time and talents of these community partners. At French Creek Elementary, for example, Mrs. Sweisford helps every day in the library putting books back where they belong on the shelves - a huge help to the librarian. Ms. Stamm comes twice a week during student lunchtime, to help third through sixth grade students discover ways to focus in class. The students love trying various methods and discovering what works. Mr. Butler brings two adorable certified therapy dogs to encourage students to read out loud. Leyla and Carrick are very attentive listeners! Primary students appreciate having Ms. Franz & Mrs. Leighton come to help them with their math. Students say it is so much fun learning with a friend.

At the middle school, retired Assistant Superintendent Mr. Richard Flickenger, manages the school store two days each week and appreciates the social aspects of the job. “I hear a lot of things in the community about the state of schools, but I get true perspective being here, and I like what I see,” he said. Information about the program may be found in the School Tax section of the District’s website.

Rocket Math Blasts Off!!

Basic facts mastery has long-reaching effects on students through secondary mathematics courses and in college or career. Students need a firm understanding and recall of basic facts in order to focus on higher level expectations which are being emphasized through middle school and high school mathematics courses. Mastery and retention of basic facts allow students to concentrate on learning the mathematical concepts with a deeper understanding.

Rocket Math, the District’s basic facts program, was piloted in a number of during November and December. All of the first through sixth grade classrooms are now using Rocket Math daily. Students work at their own pace and set individual goals in the program. Parents can assist their children by practicing facts at home as a regular routine or when a practice sheet comes home from Rocket Math. This is just one example of how the Owen J. Roberts School District continues to believe that more math = more possibilities for students.

Running As One

By MaryGrace Keller, Sophomore

Inspiring young girls and women in 150 cities across North America, Girls on the Run is an organization with a mission to educate and prepare girls for a life-time of self-respect and healthy living through the training and preparation for a climactic 5K.

On December 11, 2010 this culminating event took place for over 600 Girls on the Run, Girls on Track and boys in the STRIDE programs of Chester County. Beginning and ending at Downingtown West High School, 1,500 runners took off at noon to conquer the 3.1 mile race through Downingtown. Every participant received a medal, though the smiles, hugs and high-fives at the finish line said it all. Each of the young athletes who completed the race won the gold in a sense of self-confidence and improved physical fitness.

Founded in 1996 by Molly Barker in Charlotte, North Carolina, Girls on the Run was created to teach girls how to live outside the “girl box”, or to live by their own standards, not the ones society imposes upon them. During a sunset run back in 1993, Molly Barker found the vision she needed to stop questioning her self-worth and image, realizing that no young woman should ever feel insecure. Through her teaching and coaching background, Barker created Girls on the Run. From the



The French Creek Elementary Girls on the Run Fall 2010 Team, with High School coaches Robyn Flores and Autumn Recke, pose after finishing their first-ever 5K race.

pilot launch of the 24-lesson curriculum with only 13 girls in '96, the program grew to become an international non-profit organization. By the year 2000, hundreds of thousands of women were ready to embark on their own coaching expeditions.

The idea that women should try to morph into a certain kind of person has greatly changed over the years, but it is still a factor today that affects young lives. The prevention of depression, eating disorders, substance and alcohol abuse is just one of the objec-

Happy (Chinese) New Year!



Two Language Arts classes from Owen J. Roberts Middle School joined together one morning in February to celebrate the Chinese New Year and learn more about the culture and history of China. Students in Mrs. Sherrie Gabage’s seventh grade and Mrs. Laura Frank’s eighth grade Period 2 classes enjoyed making crafts, eating traditional foods, and learning more about the mythology of the Chinese zodiac.

Photo by Janice Houck

New Emergency Parent Connection

The district student administration system, Skyward, can now interact with transportation system software. The beauty of this interaction is that Skylert, the emergency parent contact component, can be used to notify parents by bus number in the event of a problem on an individual bus. There have been occasions in the past when a bus has been seriously delayed for some reason (as in a weather event). Now parents can expect to receive a phone call in the event there is a significant delay of their child’s bus. The contact information in Skyward can be updated through the Skyward parent portal or by contacting the office of your child’s school.



the 5 kilometer race this season were Precision Print and Karen Colin DDS, without whom events like this would not be possible. Owen J. Roberts’ sophomores Sarah Dowd and MaryGrace Keller dedicated their time to support East Coventry Elementary Girls on the Run as part of their Girl Scout community service along with volunteer and senior Robyn Flores. Two high school students from other schools were also part of the coach line-up--Autumn Recke and Nicole Sivieri. When asked her favorite part of the entire GOTR experience, Maddie, age nine, replied grinning, “I loved all of it.”

Girls on the Run benefits every person who participates. The impact of this program is truly a life-changing experience. Coach and teacher Kate Bender says this about her East Coventry Girls on the Run, “To see how excited they are after practice inspires me!” The excitement does not stop in December however, as of February 28, 2011 the spring season will begin and continue into early May, recruiting more 4th to 6th graders leading up to another 5K race. Special thanks to Heather M. Connolly, the council director of GOTR and STRIDE programs and of course, to Molly Barker for inspiring young girls everywhere.



District Calendar Highlights

Please note changes made to the School Calendar to reflect snow make-up days

APRIL
April 21-25, 2011 School Closed - Spring Recess

MAY
May 30, 2011 Memorial Day - School Closed

JUNE
June 10, 2011 Graduation for Class of 2011
June 13, 2011 Student Full Day
June 14, 2011 Half Day
June 15, 2011 Last Student Day, Half Day
June 16-17 Teacher Professional Days

Don't Miss:

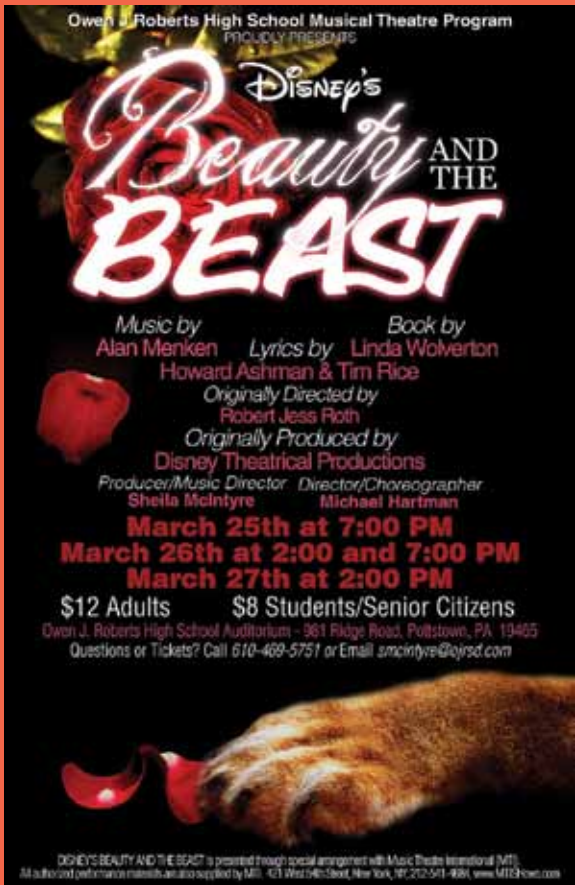
- Beauty and the Beast HS Musical, March 25-27
- Laurelwood Fit for Life Family Swim, Thursday, June 2 (Thursday, June 9 rain date)
- Best Buddies Sprint into Spring 5K, May 1

Check www.ojrsd.com for more details



- Mrs. Janice Houck is a feature artist in the book “100 Artists of the Brandywine Valley” by Catherine Quillman
- Mrs. Krista Venza won the PSEA Leadership in Promoting Intergroup Relations Award for her work with the students in the Make a Difference Day

- Mr. Joshua Yoder will travel to the UK for field work for his second masters (this one in Historical Archaeology). He will be making his excavation experiences “live” to his students through a blog that coincides perfectly with their study on colonial America. Many of the colonial artifacts found in America today originate from the sites where he conducts his work.
- An impressive number of OJR students (see cover photo) participated in the PMEA (Pennsylvania Music Educator’s Association) District 12 Band Festival held at Penncrest High School. The students were chosen to participate after a rigorous all area audition process making it quite an honor to be chosen. Aaron Taylor, Kelsey Fries, Kristin Jannotti qualified to advance to the next festival, Regional Band.
- Jana Grater, Kindergarten teacher at East Coventry, was nominated for the 2010 State Farm Insurance National Liberty Museum Teacher as Hero Award
- 2008 OJR Graduate, Daniel Xavier Rosato, with his team took 2nd place in the National Ford Innovation Contest as a student of Villa Nova Engineering Entrepreneurship program
- Taylor Helmers, Grade 11, earned 1st place in the Soprano 2 Section at the PMEA Region 6 Chorus Festival being held at Immaculata University. As a result she will advance to the prestigious PMEA All-State Chorus festival in April.
- David Brown, eighth grade middle school student, is the recipient of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) 2010 American History Contest
- Cadet Kyle Hills was honored for Meritorious Achievement in the performance of duties as a cadet from OJRHS NJROTC and citizen of Pottstown for performing civic duties in an exemplary manner in response to a life threatening situation.
- Cadet Matthew Baratta was honored for Meritorious Achievement in the performance of duties as a cadet from OJRHS NJROTC and citizen of Pottstown for performing civic duties in an exemplary manner in response to a life threatening situation.
- OJR NJROTC unit competed in the 24th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Drill Competition on January 17 and cadets won trophies in two events - 3rd place in inspection and 3rd place in New Cadet Color Guard.
- On Thursday, February 24th, sixteen video production students forming 4 teams participated in the 4500 Digital Video Contest workshop at the Reading Area Community College Miller Center. The event kicked off the 4500 - DVC. The 4500 DVC is a contest that presents the students with a film genre, line of dialogue, character name and prop that must be incorporated into their five minute film. The teams have from the day of the workshop until Sunday, February 27th at 6:30 PM to write, film, edit and submit their films. The films will be screened at the Reading Movies 11 and IMAX Theater in Reading on Wednesday, March 9th at 6 PM, Saturday, March 12th at 10 AM, Wednesday, March 23rd at 6:00 PM and Saturday, March 26th at 10 AM. The event culminates with an Oscar-style awards ceremony on Saturday, April 16th at the Reading Area Community College Miller Center.
- The High School Yearbook, the Ledger has been deemed “Regional Sample” [Philadelphia] by Jostens. The Regional Sample [listing] is a brand new way of recognizing design & journalistic excellence. Jostens carefully reviewed yearbooks from 2009, 2010 and even the current works in progress for 2011, in making selections. Many schools were nominated, but only a few made the cut.



Character Breakfast

Saturday, March 19, 2011, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

OJRHS Cafeteria

\$8.00 Admission

Come dressed as a prince or princess!

Take a walk down the red carpet!

- * Delicious Breakfast
- * Meet the Characters
- * Mini-Preview of Feature Number
- * Coloring Contest
- * Photo Opportunities
- * Autograph Books
- * Storytelling

Wildcat Athletic Highlights

The Wildcat wrestling team won the District I South Wrestling Championship winning the first District One Wrestling Title in school history! The Wildcats scored a school record 101.5 team points in the tournament. The Wildcats qualified a school record 8 wrestlers for the Regional tournament; the most of any team in district one. Andrew Kinney won the District title at 145 pounds. Adam Moser and Jordan Moser took third place. John Bryant, Jon Dempsey, and Mike Lenge took fourth place. Colby Frank and Gordon Bolig took fifth place.

Congratulations to the HS Girls Swim Team for their 4th Consecutive PAC 10 Championship! They also had an undefeated season with a 7 – 0 record in the PAC 10.

