

# MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Spring-  
Summer  
2014

Connecting  
People  
Who Care with a  
Cause that Matters

at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes

## NEWSLETTER

### Meet Our Children

Ethel R. Lawrence Homes (ERLH), developed by Fair Share Housing Development, Inc., is one of the first affordable housing communities in New Jersey's suburbs to house very low-income families. The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH offers an after-school Homework Club, a Summer Enrichment Program, one-on-one tutoring and college prep assistance to ensure that the children residing at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes get the support they need to make the most of the opportunities available in the high-achieving Mount Laurel School District.



### Jayla

Age: 12, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Excels at:** Dancing, Physical Education,  
Math, Cross-Country Running

**Hopes to Be:** Entrepreneur who designs her  
own clothing line

*"I like Homework Club because they help me with  
my homework and protect us. We have fun  
swimming, in Lego Club, and during free time on  
Fridays with our friends."*

### Jhalil

Age: 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

**Excels at:** Math, Homework Club,  
Running

**Hopes to Be:** A Teacher

*"I like Legos, my friends, the teachers. They  
help me with my math and reading."*



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# FSTD: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes is operated by Fair Share Housing Development, a non-profit housing and social services provider that seeks to reduce racial and economic segregation in Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties by developing affordable housing in high-opportunity communities. Ethel R. Lawrence Homes (ERLH), our award-winning flagship development in Mount Laurel Township, provides 140 townhome-style apartments in a safe environment with access to one of NJ's top school districts.



JV Olivia McCracken reading with Emmalee and Asiniah, both 6 years old



Ethel R. Lawrence is often called the "Rosa Parks of Affordable Housing." A teacher, wife, and mother of nine, Lawrence was renowned for braving racist threats to fight exclusionary zoning in NJ's suburbs. She died in 1994, six years before ERLH opened its doors.

Affordable housing in an integrated community is the first step to helping families overcome problems stemming from generational cycles of poverty, racial segregation, economic isolation, and the lack of a good education. The key to positive permanent change is to provide ERLH children with supplemental educational support and enrichment programs to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available in Mount Laurel Township.

The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH is staffed by a full-time Education Director (Cindy Haas), a college graduate Jesuit Volunteer who provides a year of service (Olivia McCracken), and various teen mentors from local organizations. Throughout the year, our dedicated Education Center staff works closely with the Mount Laurel School District to provide a disciplined but creative program, which includes an after-school Homework Club, parent participation workshops, a Summer Enrichment camp, and one-on-one year-round tutoring to transform children's lives through educational achievement and enrichment. Homework Club alumni also get support with the college application process thanks to SAT prep classes, campus tours and other programs designed to help teens understand the application requirements and how to apply for financial aid.

## Parent Spotlight

"In Camden, I felt like I couldn't protect my son. But the set-up at Ethel Lawrence Homes is a thousand percent better. My favorite thing about living here is that I can sit in the front of my house. And that my 4-year-old can ride his bike and I don't have to worry about someone shooting. I have peace of mind. I feel like I can breathe. I just have normal worries now. I still have to watch for cars."

-Jenyth Ruberte, ERLH Parent



Jenyth with her youngest son Dante



# LEGOS CLUB A BIG HIT: Thank You Suzanne Shenk!

When Jesuit Volunteer Olivia McCracken began her year of service at the Education Center, she decided to put her engineering degree to use by starting a Lego Club for 1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Last year, Olivia secured a \$200 grant for the program from Suzanne Shenk, a Mount Laurel resident who had previously donated electronic toys and games, including some Lego building bricks, to the Education Center.

Olivia's initial goal was to enroll 10 students but the sessions proved to be so popular that the Lego Club now has 34 participants. Each meeting is designed around a theme -- submarines, bridges, dams, skyscrapers, boats, homes, cars

and airplanes, for example -- which presents a challenge. Prior to building with Legos, the children look at pictures of these structures and learn basic operation information. "The purpose of the club is to get the students interested in engineering by giving them an opportunity to complete a task using the materials given," Olivia said. At the end of each session, the children are encouraged to talk about their creation and identify some special features.



The program was not as easy to facilitate as Olivia had anticipated. "I did not realize how challenging it would be to take what I have learned and make it understandable for kids as young as first grade. I have used the three little pigs as examples for building houses and what materials are strong enough. It is always very cool to see what creations the kids come up with; they are always so detailed in whatever they build."

The Lego Club allows the children to be creative and get better at teamwork. "I have seen a lot of growth in the kids that participate," recalls Olivia in a "reflection" that was first published in the February 2014 issue of *Inside JVC*. "Some started with hating the idea of coming to Lego Club. But every time they participate they build some of the coolest creations. The children's ability to work in groups has also improved and they are now able to communicate their ideas to other kids. This club has also helped me realize that while it is fun to share my passion for engineering with them, that it is more fun to help them use their creativity and work together."

## College Workshop and AIM High Program Draws Big Crowd

Our annual College Workshop drew a record crowd this year, with some 22 students and their parents showing up to hear presentations from three local colleges on April 1. Representatives from Burlington County Community College, Rutgers University-Camden, and Dickinson College were on hand to answer questions from interested students who ranged in age from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to high school.

A number of the students came to learn more about the AIM High Program, a free summer college-prep program for rising seniors put on by Rutgers University-Camden. The program lasts three weeks in July and provides an opportunity for first generation students to have a glimpse of the college experience. This experience allows for the students to stay on the Rutgers-Camden campus, visit universities, participate in college-readiness workshops and complete college-level coursework. Over the course of the program the students will be given an iPad to use and upon successful completion of the program they will be allowed to keep it, free of charge.

This year, the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center has reached out to six possible candidates for the AIM High Program. Four of the six students have picked up applications and are in the process of filling them out.



## Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

As the school year charges forward in full-force, our children continue to pursue academic excellence on a daily basis. In just four short hours a day, 35 to 40 children participate in our after-school Homework Club and tutoring programs. Imagine attending school for approximately six hours a day, going to Homework Club directly off of the bus to work on homework for an hour, then returning for another hour or so to complete projects, research, or to participate in subject-specific tutoring. Talk about dedication!

Our children's dedication does not stop there. Many of our fifth grade to high school teens spend time developing their character by participating in the monthly Friday Leadership Clubs. Former program teens are included in the club as guest speakers and role models to their younger peers. In February, a former Homework Club teen who served as a Teen Leader during the summer spoke to the Girls' Leadership Club about choosing a high school academic or vocational path that will lead them to their chosen career path and about the difficulties that one experiences in high school. Another speaker included a current Lenape guidance counselor intern who spoke to the Boys' Leadership Club about what it means to be a man. In March, the boys and girls will meet to discuss sewing heart-shaped pillows for young patients at CHOP (Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania). An ERLH resident volunteers at CHOP and will assist us with distributing them to the children. Our children should be commended for the efforts that they put forth!



Education Center Director Cindy Haas

## Leadership Club Update



Jordan Cagle speaks to ERLH teens

This year the boys and girls in our Leadership Club voted to include more guest speakers and a service project as part of their meetings. Jordan Cagle, Lenape High School substance abuse coordinator and guidance counselor intern, gave a presentation to a group of 4<sup>th</sup> - high school boys about what it means to be a man. The boys were very receptive and enthusiastic.

Jamesa Paul, ERLH high school senior, spoke to a group of 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls about her chosen career path at the Burlington County Institute of Technology (cosmetology,) which is providing her with skills to help pay for her future college career in law and public safety. Both groups will design and sew heart-shaped pillows for sick youth at Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania. The young people hope to be able to deliver their pillows in person.

## Teacher Testimonial

"The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center is very much appreciated by the teachers at Hartford School. Your work with the children has had a noticeable impact on our students."

-Paula Carosiello  
5th grade teacher  
Hartford School



# A True Life Hero: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

FSHD's Education Center is dedicated to Margaret Donnelly O'Connor (1914-2005), a true hero who overcame adversity and hardship, never accepted defeat, and was a model of one who promoted education and lived her life for others. Margaret, an orphan, married, gave birth to two sons, and was deserted by her husband when her boys were two and three years old. As a single parent, Margaret O'Connor sacrificed her entire adult life to provide her two sons, James and Peter, with the opportunity to live in South Orange, New Jersey, attend the best schools (Seton Hall Prep, College of the Holy Cross, Villanova University, and Georgetown Law Center) and develop the values needed to succeed in life. James, now married for 45 years, father of two daughters, and a grandfather of three, retired in December 2004 as Group

Vice-President Marketing, Sales, and Service for Ford Motor Company after a 40-year career. Peter, a public interest lawyer, is the Founder and Executive Director of FSHD and Fair Share Housing Center ([www.fairsharehousing.org](http://www.fairsharehousing.org)).



Margaret Donnelly O'Connor  
(College of New Rochelle  
Yearbook Picture, 1937)



Margaret with her 1972 elementary class at  
South 17th Street School, Newark, NJ

Margaret, a graduate of The College of New Rochelle (class of 1937), was an elementary school teacher for more than 30 years in Newark and Orange, New Jersey. She earned a Master's Degree in Education at night at Seton

Hall University, worked every summer to make ends meet, and always told her sons: "I will never let you down," and, "No matter what the obstacles are, you can do it." After her sons became adults, Margaret devoted herself to the sick and infirm: reading to the blind on the radio, volunteering at nursing homes and church-related activities in the City of Camden, and joining the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi in Haddonfield, NJ.



Peter J. O'Connor with "his" kids  
at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes



Margaret with granddaughters  
Meredith (left) and Erin (lap)



Margaret with sons Peter (left) and James (right)



Margaret celebrates her 85th  
birthday with her sons

# Princeton University Books Says ERLH Transforms Lives

Ethel R. Lawrence Homes offers low-income families “a pathway out of poverty,” according to a book published by Princeton University which identified significant benefits associated with moving into FSHD’s flagship development. Among the findings: ERLH residents experienced a reduction in welfare dependency and significant improvements in mental health, personal safety, employment rates, and income levels. Families with children also benefitted from quality academics thanks to a superior school district and an increased focus on classwork and reading by young people living in the development.

*Climbing Mount Laurel: The Struggle for Affordable Housing and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* is the result of two years of research by Princeton University. Professor Douglas S. Massey, who led the Princeton team, decided to focus on Ethel R. Lawrence Homes because the development was built as part of the settlement agreement in the landmark Mount Laurel case, which is often called the most important civil rights ruling since Brown v. Board of Education. Additionally, ERLH’s residents and the surrounding community were most impacted by the New Jersey Supreme Court rulings (1975 and 1983) known collectively as the Mount Laurel Doctrine.

Massey and his colleagues Len Albright, Rebecca Casciano, Elizabeth Derickson and David Kinsey surveyed residents of Ethel R. Lawrence Homes to assess their personal, household, neighborhood and school circumstances before and after relocation, then compared them to a similar group of low-income people who applied for an apartment at ERLH but did not get in. The research found that living at ERLH conferred many benefits to residents and saved taxpayer dollars in the process because:

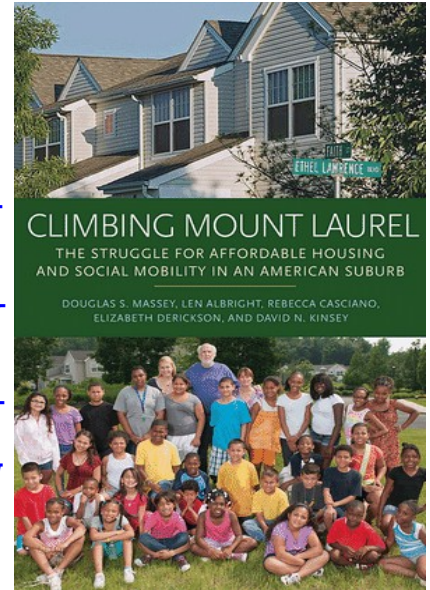
- \* Welfare use decreased by 67 percent;
- \* Earnings went up by 25 percent;
- \* Mental health improved by 25 percent (stress reduced due to safer neighborhood)
- \* Rates of employment rose 22 percent;
- \* Total average income was significantly higher for ERLH residents (\$26,271) than non-residents (\$21,022).

“In their new neighborhood, project residents evinced better mental health and achieved greater rates of employment, more abundant earnings, and greater economic independence that they would otherwise have achieved,” the Princeton researchers said in the preface to *Climbing*

*Mount Laurel*. “It also gave residents more time and energy to devote to the education of their children, and enabled their children to attend higher quality and safer schools while earning grades that were as good or better than what they would have earned in their old schools.

“For these reasons, we see the construction and management of the project not only as a vindication of Ethel Lawrence’s dream, but as a model for promoting greater integration and a pathway out of poverty for disadvantaged minority families throughout the United States,” the researchers said.

The Princeton researchers also looked at U.S. Census and administrative data to undertake a time-series analysis of trends in crime, property values, traffic congestion, taxes, school performance before and after 2000, comparing trends in Mount Laurel to those in surrounding communities. The Princeton research found no evidence of increased crime, higher taxes or a decrease in property values.



Jayden, 7, and Masai, 9, reading a book



ERLH kids planting vegetables in the Education Center’s new community garden



# Thank You Individual and Major Donors

Support Fair Share Housing Development and the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center by shopping on AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)) which donates 5% percent all of eligible purchases to a charitable organization of your choice. Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) today and designate FSHD as the nonprofit you want to support!

## INDIVIDUALS

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Dr. Jeffrey Brenner  
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Ty and Ellie Buckelew  
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Suzanne Shenk

**Larry Siegel (FSHD Board Member)**

Teresa Martini Sousa

Linda Sanchez

Staff of Fair Share Housing Development (2010-2014)

Kevin and Rosemary Walsh



## EDUCATION CENTER

### WISH LIST 2014

School supplies, snacks, and books are always needed.

This year we also hope to raise **\$20,000** to bridge the "digital divide." Mount Laurel and other schools across the nation are increasingly requiring that homework and other assignments be done online, putting low-income kids at a distinct disadvantage.

## SETON HALL PREP

**Donna and Dan Courain** (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '59)

Peggy and John E. Hughes, Jr. (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '59)

**Judith and James G. O'Connor** (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '60)

**Peter J. O'Connor** (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '59)

## COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Charles Buchta (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Judy and Hank Cutting (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Daniel Cosgrove (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

**Kathy and Phil Fina** (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Bob and Joan Foley (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

**Monica and Dennis Golden** (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

**Anthony Guida** (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Rev. Msgr. Francis Kelley (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

**Peter J. O'Connor** (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Toni and George Reidy (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

Michael Toner (Holy Cross, Class of '63)

## JESUIT VOLUNTEERS

Amanda Axeen (2000 Northgate II JV)

Rebecca Bates (2008 Education Center JV)

Peter Habein (father of 2012 Education Center JV Abby Habein)

Harold Habein (grandfather of 2012 Education Center JV Abby Habein)

Deanna Johnson (2007 Education Center JV)

Kate Maich (2005 Education Center JV)

Pamela Parma (mother of 2011 JV Aly Parma)

**Joel and Christine Stenberg** (2010 Education Center JV)

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF FSHD DONORS, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [WWW.FAIRSHAREDEVELOPMENT.ORG/DONORS/](http://WWW.FAIRSHAREDEVELOPMENT.ORG/DONORS/)

Supporters who gave more than \$1,000 are listed in bold.

## How You Can Help

To make a secure online gift, visit: [www.FairShareDevelopment.org](http://www.FairShareDevelopment.org)

We also accept donations via U.S. mail:

**Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center**

Ethel R. Lawrence Homes  
1 Ethel Lawrence Boulevard  
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

# Thank You Business, Foundation and Nonprofit Donors

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Every Nook & Cranny  
Independence Fire Sprinkler Service Co.  
Mattel Toy Donation Program (with Good 360)  
McDonald's  
**Merit Service Solutions**  
Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance  
Mount Laurel Animal Hospital  
Nice N Neat Painting  
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Ruiz Construction  
RiverSharks  
Sam's Club  
7 Oil Company  
ShopRite  
Source One System Solutions  
Swisco  
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Wawa  
Wegmans  
Weichert Realtors  
Winslow Rentals

*Thanks very much to our donors who wish to remain anonymous!*



## **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR TRAILER RENOVATION**

**EXCEEDS \$40,000 GOAL!**

A heartfelt thanks to all of our supporters who helped us to raise the money we needed to complete renovations on the double-wide trailer that houses the Education Center. Last fall, we repaired the roof, installed gutters and drainpipes, and finished outside painting. This Spring, we will complete all interior repairs including updating the computer lab.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

**Walsh Family Fund of the  
Community Foundation of NJ**

**The Eustace Foundation  
NJ SIM Foundation**

**100 Who Care  
Lauren Rose Albert Foundation**

## **NONPROFITS**

**Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden**

Jesuit Volunteer Corps  
Lenape High School National Honor Society  
Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance (MLMA)  
N.A.A.C.P. Southern Burlington County Branch, New Jersey  
Salvation Army  
Quixote Quest Teen Club  
Church of Jesus Christ

## **How You Can Help**

To make a secure online gift, visit: [www.FairShareDevelopment.org](http://www.FairShareDevelopment.org)

*We also accept donations via U.S. mail:*

**Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center**

**Ethel R. Lawrence Homes  
1 Ethel Lawrence Boulevard  
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054**