

# MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Winter  
2012 –  
Spring  
2013

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.



### Raphael

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

Excels at: Basketball, Phys Ed

Hopes to Be: Basketball Player

"Homework Club is fun. They help me do my homework and protect me. I like going on field trips, swimming and I like arts and crafts."

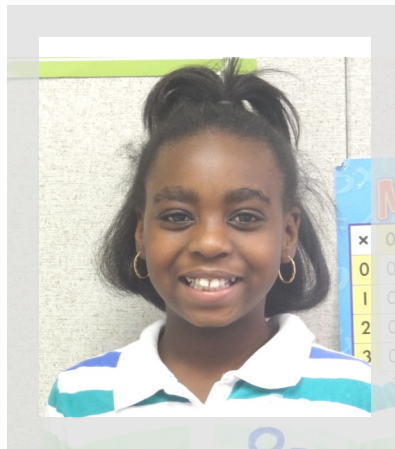
### Amiya

Age: 9, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Excels at: Math

Hopes to Be: A Doctor or a Surgeon

"I like coming to Homework Club because they help me learn better and write my sentences better."



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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.

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.



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.

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 (Joe Whittaker), 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

"I have very positive feelings about the Mount Laurel School System and the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center. The teachers use various strategies to teach the children and they keep in touch with the parents. If you have a problem, they try to solve it in a positive way. The Education Center staff encourages the children, gives them praise and makes them believe that they can accomplish anything in life. They mold the children into positive people."

—Candis Calaf, ERLH Parent



Candis Calaf (right) with daughter Asiniah, age 5



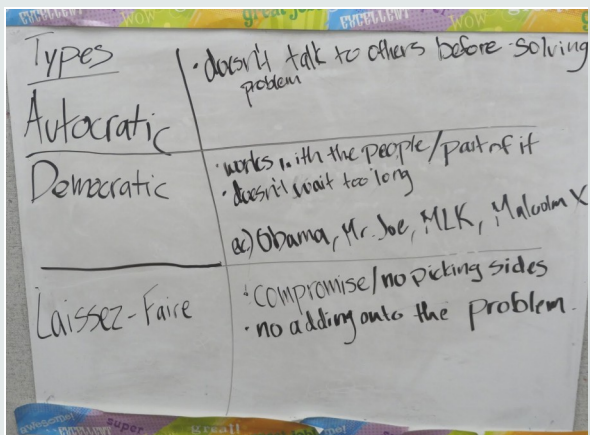
# New Leadership Program for ERLH Boys and Girls

At the College of the Holy Cross, Joe Whittaker says one of his favorite extracurricular activities was a multi-cultural leadership group which gathered once a week to talk about current events or other issues important to the students' daily lives.

When Joe came on board at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center as the 2012-2013 Jesuit Volunteer, he decided to tailor the program to benefit the kids of Homework Club: "I

wanted to create an open forum discussion time where teens can come and talk about current events, public happenings or anything that is on their minds."

Joe's leadership program targets boys and girls in 5th to 8th grade and meets on the last Friday of every month. Joe describes the goal of the program: "I want the kids to be able to identify different leadership styles, and also to know which style each of them tends to use. Then I will teach the kids to identify the most appropriate leadership style for a given situation."



JV Joe Whittaker asks ERLH kids to think about what it takes to become a leader in the community.

## Reflections from A Homework Club Alumnae



Burlington County Community College Student Melissa Mote takes a break from college to reflect on the advantages of living at ERLH.

*Burlington County Community College Student Melissa Mote attended Homework Club during her years in the Mount Laurel School District. She took a moment to reflect on the many ways living at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes and attending the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center helped her get ready for college.*

### What are your thoughts about ERLH?

ERLH is a really comfortable place to live; I've met good friends here. Living at ERLH gives you many different opportunities: college tours, educational services, and jobs in the summer that keep youth focused.

### How did the school system help you?

I was introduced to teachers who care about students. If the student cares, then the teacher cares. The Mount Laurel School school system provides a good working environment and atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The teachers kept us really busy.

### What do you remember about the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center?

I attended Homework Club and worked as a teen leader during the summer program. The education programs were a great source of help. You could come in confused and you left with an understanding. The college workshops kept me focused. The guest speakers helped me learn about experiences to keep in mind. The finance speaker helped me to think about how to prep for college, save and be responsible with money. The teen speakers told me about how they had to prepare and the process of when to look for schools.

## Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

Our children are growing up during a time of rapid change. Globalization and technological advances are making it necessary for schools and supportive programs to reevaluate how our children learn to better prepare them for jobs that require critical thinking, extensive technological use, and careers that are yet to be created. The Education Center staff continually works to improve upon and introduce new programs that will provide the most effective support to all of our children. This year we have restructured our tutoring program, introduced a leadership program and continued to expose the children to innovative ways of learning. During tutoring the children learn in small groups that offer an opportunity for them to share their learning styles and methods, reflect upon their reading and writing with their peers and play cooperative games that instill an appreciation for the subject. Our Friday Forums focus on leadership and goal setting through role play and discussion. Literacy skills are enhanced through web-based programs such as Reading Eggs and Reading Eggspress that incorporate audio and visual techniques that promote active learning. The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center is committed to identifying and utilizing the most creative and effective learning tools available to ensure our children are able to make the most of the many exciting opportunities they are bound to encounter growing up in the 21st century.



Cindy Haas

## Meet Our New JV: Joe Whittaker

Our newest Jesuit Volunteer is Joe Whittaker, a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross, who "hails from the blistering heat down in my hometown of Dallas, TX where I have spent most of my life." Joe graduated in May 2012 with a degree in psychology and hopes to pursue a career in marketing or PR. Joe played soccer in college and says he enjoys "the outdoors, fishing, listening to music, cooking, and relaxing with friends."



JV Joe Whittaker with ERLH Kids

Each year, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps provides a full-time youth coordinator to work at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH. Jesuit Volunteers commit to one year of post-college service where the need is greatest and to live in apostolic community with other JVs. Our youth coordinators have come from colleges and universities across the United States including Holy Cross, Boston College, Gonzaga University, Fairfield, Notre Dame, Stanford, Dartmouth, Dayton, Fordham, George Mason, Georgetown, Hamilton, Michigan, Rockhurst University, Scranton, St. Joseph's, St. Louis University, and St. Olaf College.

## Teacher Testimonial

The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes is a wonderful resource and advocate for the community."

—Mary Fitzgerald  
Principal  
Hillside Elementary 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)



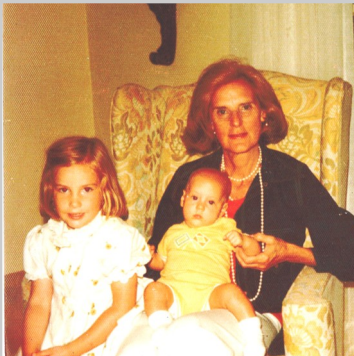
Margaret with her 1972 elementary class at  
South 17th Street School, Newark, NJ

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

# New PRINCETON UNIVERSITY Study Shows ERLH Families Are Working Their Way out of Poverty

Living at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes allows low-income families to “work themselves out of poverty,” according to a study by Princeton University which identified a number of benefits associated with making a home in our development including a reduction in welfare dependency and significant improvements in mental health, personal safety, employment rates, income levels, school quality, and children's focus on school.

The study will be published in book form in July 2013, and the proceeds from the publication are being donated to FSHD, the nonprofit that developed and manages ERLH. Princeton Professor Douglas Massey described the results of his two-year study of the affordable housing complex, which is located in the affluent suburbs of New Jersey, near Philadelphia.

“Everyone knows opportunities and resources vary geographically,” Massey told *The Star-Ledger*, shortly after the study's results were first released in 2012. “Some neighborhoods are more advantaged than others. Allowing low-income families to benefit from those advantages – access to jobs, better schools, less exposure to crime and violence – rids them of stress. As a result, people were able to improve their lives. They were able to work themselves out of poverty.”

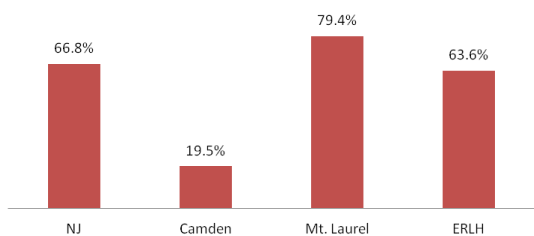
The study also found that the development had no effect on crime, property values or taxes in adjacent neighborhoods. Says Massey: “We’ve basically confirmed the wisdom of the Mount Laurel decision, demonstrating convincing benefits to residents and that fears were misplaced about possible harm to the community.” For more information, visit our website: [www.fairshareddevelopment.org](http://www.fairshareddevelopment.org)



## HOUSING POLICY IS SCHOOL POLICY

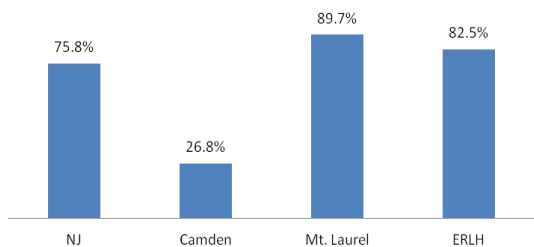
2011 Language Arts: 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



2011 Math: 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



What's the best way to ensure the educational success of low-income children? Move them into high-opportunity neighborhoods where they can attend school with middle-class peers. That's the finding of decades of research, data that's shored up by an ongoing study of ERLH children. Each year, staff at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center analyzes New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) scores. Data from 2011 for 41 Education Center students shows that our children performed much better in both Language Arts and math than their peers in Camden, where the poverty and crime rates are among the worst in the nation. Statistics from 2010 showed similar gains.

Why are ERLH kids doing so well? Upscale neighborhoods generally have better teachers, safer schools, less distractions, more academically engaged students, and a greater number of involved parents. These findings reinforce FSHD's mission to promote more racial and economic integration in the high-opportunity communities surrounding the City of Camden. As columnist Bob Herbert noted in the *New York Times*: “If you really want to improve the education of poor children, you have to get them away from learning environments that are smothered by poverty.”



# Thank You Donors

## INDIVIDUALS

James G. O'Connor, Martin G. McGuinn  
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Jean Bender and William J. Mahoney  
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Claire Moran Konner, Teresa Martini Sousa  
Keith and Meredith O'Connor Tomatore  
Lillian LoBianco, Michael LoBianco  
Patti Flanagan, Ryan Flanagan  
Brenda Betley, Bob and Carol Shaffer  
Beth and Mark Schlitt  
Kathy Dietlin, Pat Lane, Arelis & Peter Rios  
Deborah DelGrande (FSHD Director of Property Management)  
Cindy Haas (Education Center Director), Penny Carr  
Staff of Fair Share Housing Development (2010-2013)  
ERLH Parents

## FOUNDATIONS

The Sandy Hill Foundation  
The Eustace Foundation  
NJ SIM Foundation  
Lauren Rose Albert Foundation

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Sam's Club, ShopRite, Source One System Solutions,  
Target, Toys for Tots, Wawa, Wegmans  
Weichert Realtors, Winslow Rentals

## SETON HALL PREP

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

Daniel Cosgrove (Holy Cross, Class of '63)  
Kathy and Phil Fina (Holy Cross, Class of '63)  
Monica and Dennis Golden (Holy Cross, Class of '63)  
Peter J. O'Connor (Holy Cross, Class of '63)  
Anthony Guida (Holy Cross, Class of '63)



## EDUCATION CENTER WISH LIST 2013

School supplies, snacks, and books are always needed.

This year, we also hope to raise \$40,000 for much-needed repairs to the trailer that houses our Education Center.

## JESUIT VOLUNTEERS

Abby Habein (2012 Education Center JV)  
Peter Habein (father of JV Abby Habein)  
Deanna Johnson (2006 Education Center JV)  
Kate Maich (2004 Education Center JV)  
Pamela Parma (mother of 2011 JV Aly Parma)  
Joel and Christine Stenberg (2010 Education Center JV)

## NONPROFITS

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden  
Jesuit Volunteer Corps  
Lenape High School National Honor Society  
Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance (MLMA)  
Prevention Plus, Salvation Army  
Quixote Quest Teen Club  
Church of Jesus Christ

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

## 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