

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Fall
2014 -
Winter
2015

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.



Emmalee

Age: 7, 2nd Grade

Excels at: Writing, Reading

(Emmalee is enrolled in the Gifted Academic Program)

Hopes to Be: President of the United States

"I like the summer camp and playing outside. I like living at ERLH because it is a good neighborhood."



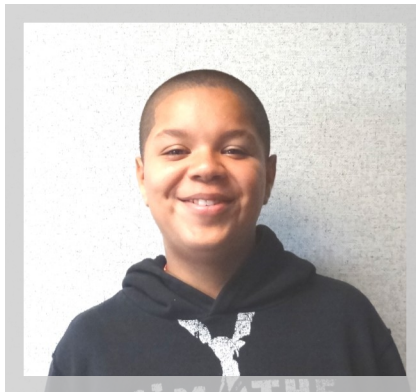
Joshua

Age: 13, 7th Grade

Excels at: Math

Hopes to Be: A Baseball Player or
a Police Officer

"I like getting help with my homework and going on field trips. ERLH is a very friendly place to live."



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Thank You Donors
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 **FAIR SHARE**
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
building homes and hope

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.



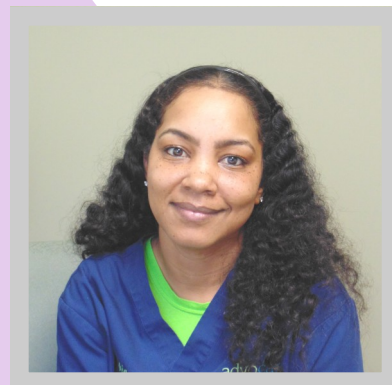
The high school graduation rate at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center is 97 percent! This compares very favorably with the 49.27% 2012 high school graduation rate in Camden.

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 (Martha Novotny), 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

"It really wasn't safe living in Camden. I wasn't comfortable letting my children out of my sight. They couldn't go down the street or go to their friends' houses. It's so much different at Ethel Lawrence Homes. It's quiet and my kids can go outside to play. I also love the Education Center. Miss Cindy keeps me informed about everything."

-Tykia Bundy, ERLH Parent



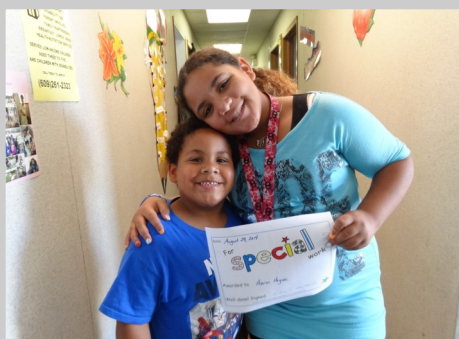
New Pre-K Reading Program Is a Success

Starting school for the first time can be a daunting experience. Some of our children do not have the opportunity to participate in full-day, quality pre-school prior to starting kindergarten. Other children who have completed kindergarten may not have access to programs that promote learning continuity during the summer. To address these concerns, Hillside's administrative team and reading specialist and the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center staff met in 2013 to develop a program to assist our younger children. During the two weeks prior to the start of the school year in 2013, the Education Center offered an eight-day, 1.5 hour daily summer

program to children who completed kindergarten and would enter first grade. Five children participated in activities that focused on literacy and math activities. All children were provided with access to a phonics development program, Reading Eggs. They also practiced fine motor skills and explored our community garden. According to Amy Bunting, the Hillside Reading specialist, all of the children "either remained at the same level or demonstrated growth. No one regressed! It was WONDERFUL!!!! Thank you so much for that!"

The 2014 summer program was expanded to three hours a day for two weeks prior to the start of school. Eight children participated in this program. The focus of this program was to prepare more than half of the enrolled children for entry into kindergarten. Lessons were developed based

upon kindergarten readiness assessment (KRI) feedback conducted by the school and the staff. One child was able to conquer his separation anxiety as he had never attended preschool. By the end of our program he looked forward to joining us and was able to increase his KRI score by more than half when retested by the school district on the first day of school! Your support will allow us to offer more programs to our youngest learners who are in need of the foundational skills to be successful in school.



Kathryn, 12 with her brother Aaron, 6



Dante, 5, with his mom Jenyth

Help Us Bridge the Digital Divide: Make a Donation Today!

This school year (2014-2015), we hope to raise \$20,000 to address the "digital divide" and help our kids gain the skills they need to compete in a tech-savvy world. The Mount Laurel Township School District is advancing its use of computers and technology requiring many homework assignments to be done exclusively on computers. This requirement weighs unevenly on our children, many of whom do not have access to computers at home due to the high cost of the equipment, software, Internet service and IT support. Even though the library provides computer time, some of our families do not have cars either. Here are some of our concerns:

- There are homework assignments that must be done on a computer and are due the next day.
- The children need access to Google Docs to submit assignments.
- Research and lab reports have to be typed.
- Brochure and collage creation requires printing (the library charges for this service).
- Teacher comments are embedded in online programs that require a computer to access.

To respond to this pressing issue, the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center is raising funds to reconfigure and modernize our computer lab, which includes upgrading hardware and software as well as installing new benches and desks. We also seek funding to expand our educational offerings and tech support for various aspects of our program.



Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

How do we measure success? All too often educational success is measured by scores: report cards, standardized tests, and test grades. Scores and numbers are important; we need to be able to accurately gauge our children's learning. However, success requires time, perseverance, communication, and support. Our staff provides the necessary support to our children and relies on feedback from parents and teachers on a daily basis. Quite often our children's accomplishments are achieved with a small win that builds their confidence. Last year we were able to assist a struggling reader with her comprehension. Her success story started with an email from her teacher regarding her current grade. Her teacher suggested strategies that our staff could implement here. With a few hours of one-to-one, concentrated work, the child was able to raise her comprehension test grade from a D average to a very high C, missing a B by one point. Her overall grade increased to a C for the marking period. More importantly, the child learned that she has the ability to succeed in reading and learned important strategies to assist her with achieving success in the future. Stories like these can't be measured by numbers, but they ensure that our children continue to learn to their fullest potential.



Education Center Director Cindy Haas

Meet Our New Jesuit Volunteer



Martha Novotny (center) with this year's Jesuit Volunteers in Camden

Our newest Jesuit Volunteer is Martha Novotny. Born and raised in Milwaukee, WI, Martha graduated from Marquette University with a major in anthropology and minor in history. In her future beyond the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, she hopes to explore any and every opportunity that lies ahead with an open heart and clear mind. Coming from the Midwest, Martha loves frolicking in the four seasons and is excited to see what New Jersey dishes up for her this year. She loves to be outside: gardening, hiking, running and tree-climbing. Worried she's too fast for you to catch her? Not to fret! She loves meeting new people and will

gladly slow down to have a chat. She'd be delighted to listen to whatever words of wisdom or stories you'd like to send her way.

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, St. Olaf College, and the University of Portland.

Teacher Testimonial

"The bridge provided by the programs at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center is definitely a two-way path. Students benefit greatly from personal advocacy and subject reinforcement, and Mount Laurel Schools' staff members have a true partner in the work of inspiring potential and enriching futures."

—Marie Reynolds
Director of Communications
Mount Laurel Schools

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 46 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).



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.

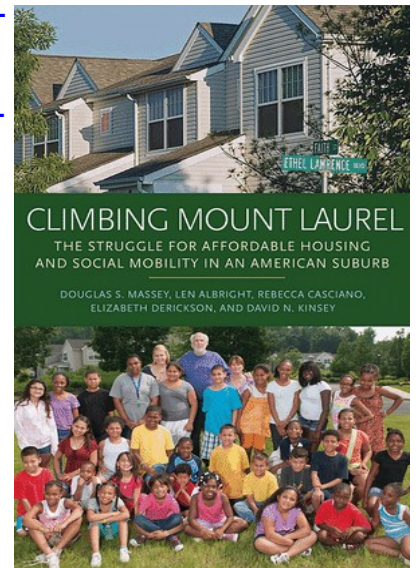
Massey and his colleagues Len Albright, Rebecca Casciano, Elizabeth Derickson and David Kinsey surveyed residents of Ethel R. Lawrence Homes to assess their personal, household, neighborhood and school circumstances before and after relocation, then compared them to a similar group of low-income people 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.



Thank You Individual and Major Donors

INDIVIDUALS

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Linda Cecil

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Ryan Flanagan

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Ken Gordon, Jr.

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Staff of Fair Share Housing Development (2010-2014)

Kevin and Rosemary Walsh



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

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

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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)

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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

Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center

Ethel R. Lawrence Homes

1 Ethel Lawrence Boulevard

Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

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

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