

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

FALL
2017

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 of 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.



Amiya

Age: 14, 9th Grade

Excels at: Math

Hopes to be: A Doctor

"Homework Club is a place I go to focus and find quiet. I get to socialize with my friends and classmates. We do our work together."

Hassan

Age: 10, 5th Grade

Excels at: Science

Hopes to: A Football Coach

"The reason I like the Education Center is because you get to do your homework early with help instead of at home later. Plus if you are hungry you always get a snack!"



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Thank You Donors
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FSHD: 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 New Jersey'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.



The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH is staffed by a full-time Education Director (Michael Morris), an Associate Education Director

(Chantel Young) and two college graduate Jesuit Volunteers who provide a year of service (Kathleen Harmon and Andy Beck). We also get assistance from various teen mentors who volunteer with 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 and a new higher education prep program designed to help teens understand the application requirements and how to apply for financial aid.



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 death threats to fight exclusionary zoning in NJ's suburbs. She died in 1994, six years before ERLH opened its doors.

PARENT SPOTLIGHT

"Ethel Lawrence Homes has been a huge blessing for me and my family. My children absolutely love it here. The Education Center has also been amazing! The staff at the Education Center make sure Albert gets his homework done each day which makes it so much easier on me after a long day of work. Albert has also made a lot of new friends there. It really puts a smile on my face to hear my son talk about how much he loves the Center and living at Ethel Lawrence Homes. We feel very fortunate."

—Elisa Gonzalez, ERLH Parent



Education Center Expands Staff: New Apartments To Open Soon

This Fall, FSHD began accepting applications for the 60 new apartments that will become available for rent in the first quarter of 2018 at our award-winning development, Ethel R. Lawrence Homes (ERLH), and a nearby site in Mount Laurel now known as Robinson Estates. This exciting development has required FSHD to expand the staff at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center to accommodate the additional children we expect will join the ERLH community.

In August 2017, we welcomed our new Education Director, Michael Morris (*center left*), and an Associate Education Director, Chantel Young (*center right*), who is serving our teen population. We also enjoy full-time support from two college graduate Jesuit Volunteers who provide us with a year of service. This year, our JVs hail from New Orleans (Kathleen Harmon, a IT graduate of Spring Hill College, *far right*) and Baltimore, Maryland (Andy Beck, a political science major from Haverford College, *far left*).



FSHD's former Education Director, Steve Axberg, announced in June that he planned on returning to college to get his teaching certification. Steve, who hopes to work in Philadelphia, had many young fans at the Education Center. "Mr. Steve was a nice guy who always helped us," said Jhalil Conway, 11, a 6th grader. "I'm going to miss him because he was always honest and treated me like an adult."



Steve Axberg, our Former Education Director Has Headed Back to School to Get His Teaching Certification

Michael Morris, FSHD's new Education Director, said he was grateful to Steve for professionalizing and expanding the program. Under Steve's direction, the staff grew to two JVs and FSHD also developed a database that tracks the progress of all of our children. "Steve dedicated two years to developing the homework club and it wouldn't be what it is today without his contributions," said Mike, a former Jesuit Volunteer himself, who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and a minor in Counseling and Human Services from the University of Scranton.

Prior to joining FSHD, Mike spent two years working in education as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC). He taught computers, health, and P.E. classes while also substitute teaching middle school and running the afterschool program at an elementary school in Phoenix. Mike moved from Arizona to Boston where he worked as a part of the academic success team at West End House Boys & Girls Club. Mike said he enjoys helping our kids excel in academics and thrive in real life. "I

am so grateful for my time so far at the Education Center," Mike said. "I am excited to continue to expand and reinvigorate our services for the community. Attendance is up already and we hope to continue to grow in a way that suits the needs and interests of our children, Ethel Lawrence Homes, and the greater Mount Laurel Community"

Assisting Mike is Chantel Young, our new Associate Education Director, who was brought on to develop and head a new college prep program called "Mission: Excellence." The goal of this program is to promote higher education, degree attainment, increased parental involvement, and pride among students.

Chantel, a former volunteer at the Education Center who has extensive managerial experience in the

(continued on page 4)

Mission Excellence: A New Program For College-Bound Teens

By Chantel Young, Associate Education Director



Chantel Young, our new Associate Education Director, is in charge of **MISSION: EXCELLENCE**

As part of Fair Share Development's continuing effort to enhance the lives of the families of Ethel Lawrence, the Homework Club is piloting a new college preparatory program called Mission: Excellence.

The mission of our program is to promote higher education, degree attainment, improved parental involvement, and a culture of personal excellence among the students of Ethel Lawrence Homes. Through educational support, mentorship and parent engagement initiatives, the program will guide participants to academic success through college, mastery of leadership skills, and personal excellence. Our goal is a 100 percent college graduation rate for all program participants.



Here's our motto:

I want the best for M.E.
So, I work hard for M.E.
I will let nothing stop M.E.
My future depends on M.E.

Mission: Excellence, which consists of 17 students (grades 6-10), held its first official meeting on October 12th, 2017. It was phenomenal! Our theme for the month is simply "All about Me," so for the first session, we played games and completed activities designed to help our students better understand their personalities and discover their passions. We even watched a Ted Talk that sparked great discussion about the grit and perseverance needed to be successful in life.

We are truly energized and excited about this program and looking forward to a successful year. This is not just any mission. It's **MISSION: EXCELLENCE**

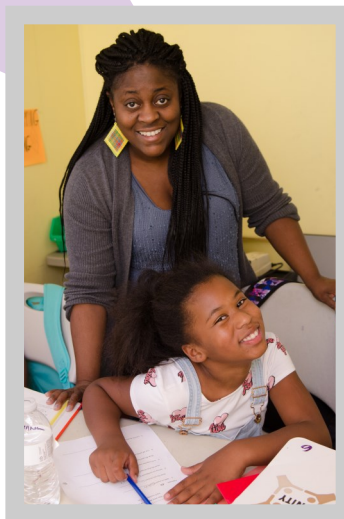
Education Center Expands Staff

(continued from page 3)

telecommunications industry, also provides supervisory support and tutoring assistance at the Homework Club. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Thomas Edison State University in Trenton, NJ.



"I am so happy to be working at the Education Center helping children and families," said Chantel. "There is nothing better than living out your passion. I'm on a mission to equip our future leaders with what they need to be successful in life." Chantel, who was recruited by Steve Axberg, said she was grateful to the former Education Director. "Steve is an amazing individual and one of the main reasons why I'm here," she said. "His commitment to the well-being of the students at Ethel Lawrence was evident from our very first conversation. He has laid a great foundation that I am honored to build upon."



A Message From Our Education Center Director

As the new Education Director, I am very excited to kick off the 2018-2019 school year. The transition period has been quite smooth thanks to the dedication of our previous Education Director, Steve Axberg. Steve did an excellent job building up a foundational program over the last two years. He will be sorely missed! Thanks to Steve's hard work, the Education Center is now poised to enter a new era of change and growth. In the last year, we have doubled our staff (from two full-time employees to four, including the addition of a new Associate Education Director, Chantel Young). Moving forward, we will continue to introduce changes and improvements in order to better serve our children, their parents, and the greater Ethel Lawrence Homes community.

This fall, we began offering extended tutoring hours from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. three days a week. Our Mission Excellence (M.E.) Club, a new college access program which is described on page 4, has drawn much support from students and parents. We look forward to developing more partnerships with parents, teachers, volunteers, and nonprofit collaborators in order to help our students thrive in and outside the classroom. Stay tuned!



Education Director
Michael Morris with
Raquel, age 11

MEET OUR NEW JESUIT VOLUNTEERS



This year we have two new Jesuit Volunteers: Kathleen Harmon and Andy Beck. Kathleen is a New Orleans native. She graduated from Spring Hill College with a degree in Computer Information Systems. She is a spunky camp enthusiast with a passion for baking and an impossible dream of being a flag girl. She is so excited to be working at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center and loves getting to know the kids. She hopes to bring many fun STEM ideas to the center.

Andy is from Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from Haverford College with a degree in Political Science with a minor in Educational Studies. Andy is passionate about music, sports of all types, creative facial hair, cooking, and learning new things. He is excited to introduce some basic social-justice lessons to the Education Center through our enrichment and mindfulness programs. He thinks elementary-age children are some of the wisest people on Earth.

Each year, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps provides a full-time youth coordinator to work at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes. 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, University of Portland, Marquette University, St. Olaf College, and Loyola Marymount University.

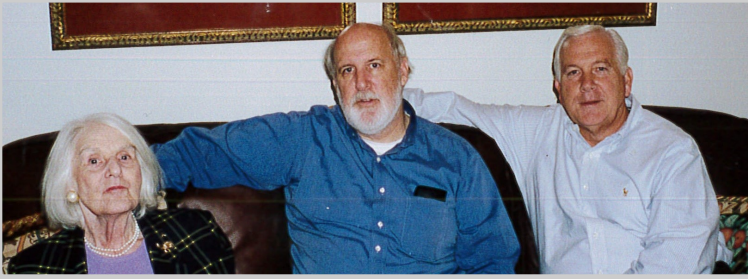
TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

"Our partnership provides our students with excellent academic and social support. Together we work to provide our students with the best educational experience possible."

—Dr. Briean Madden
Principal
Hillside Elementary

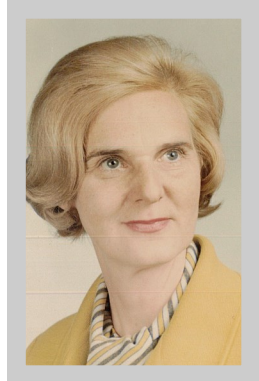
A True Life Hero: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

By Peter J. O'Connor



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

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 49 years, father of two daughters, and a grandfather of four, 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, 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.



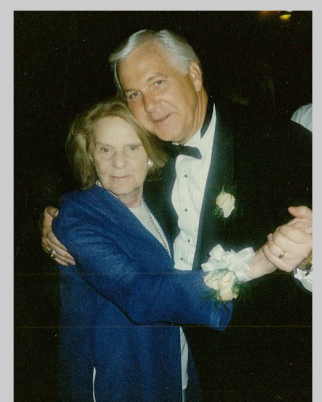
Margaret with granddaughters Erin (far left) and Meredith (to Margaret's left), Judith and James O'Connor, and Peter (far right).



Margaret with her 1967 elementary class in Maplewood, New Jersey

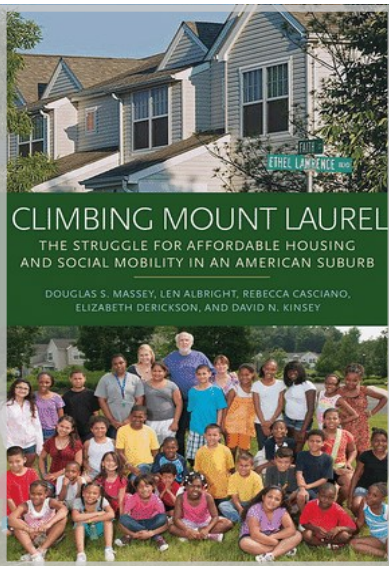


Margaret Donnelly O'Connor
(College of New Rochelle
Yearbook Picture, 1937)



Margaret with James

ERLH Offers A “Pathway Out of Poverty”



Ethel R. Lawrence Homes provides “a pathway out of poverty” for low-income residents, 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.

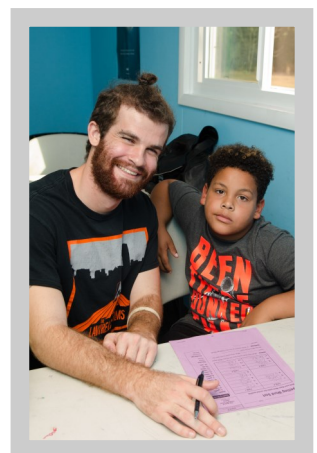
Massey and his research team surveyed residents of Ethel R. Lawrence Homes to assess their personal, household, neighborhood and school circumstances before and after relocation, then compared them to a similar group of low-income people who applied for an apartment at ERLH but did not get in. The research 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).

The high school graduation rate at the MDOC Education Center is 97 percent! This compares very favorably with the high school graduation rate in Camden, which hovers around 50 percent.

“In their new neighborhood, project residents evinced better mental health and achieved greater rates of employment, more abundant earnings, and greater economic independence than 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 research also found NO evidence of increased crime, higher taxes or a decrease in property values for residents of Mount Laurel Township.



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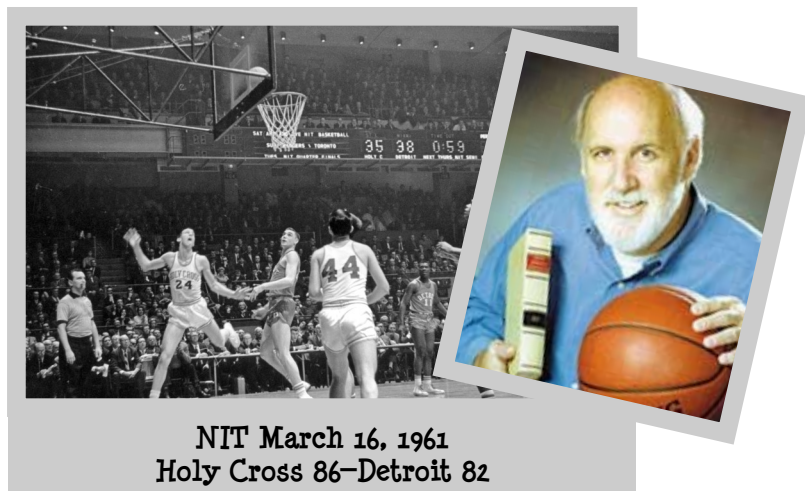
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Thank You!

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Abby Habein (2012 Education Center JV)

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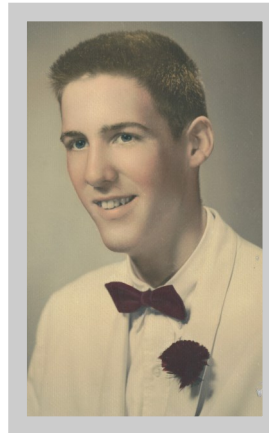
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Thank You!

Peter J. O'Connor, SHP '59

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Sara Grimes
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Princeton University Press (Climbing Mount Laurel royalties)
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Mother's Matter is a program run by the **Lauren Rose Albert Foundation**, which is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization that was created to honor the legacy of Lauren Rose Albert, a woman who touched the lives of many woman. Besides providing Mother's Day baskets to mothers in lower-income families, the organization also provides emergency financial assistance to women and families, education grants, and new and "gently used" career clothing for interviews.

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