

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Fall
2019

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.



Ja'Nai

Age: 5

Excels at: Computers

Hopes to be: A Teacher

"The Homework Club is fun. I like being here a lot!"

Katiel

Age: 14

Excels at: Language Arts, Reading

Hopes to be: A Painter

"I like the Education Center because it's helping me to reach my potential."



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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



FSHD recently expanded our ERLH development, opening a fifth court with 36 new rental units as well as a nearby development in Mount Laurel called Robinson Estates (pictured above), which features 24 single-family homes, a rarity in affordable housing.

Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties by developing affordable housing in high-opportunity communities. Ethel R. Lawrence Homes (ERLH), our award-winning development in Mount Laurel Township, provides 176 townhome-style apartments in a safe environment with access to one of New Jersey's top school districts. ERLH has long been recognized for setting the gold standard for affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods. Next year will be the 20th anniversary of our flagship development!

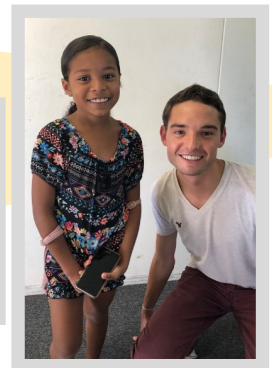
Affordable housing in an integrated community is the first step to helping families overcome problems stemming from generational cycles of poverty, racial segregation, economic isolation, and the lack of a good education. The

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 (Kaitlyn DeVeydt and Scott Henderson). 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 classes and a higher education prep program designed to help teens understand 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.



A Message From Michael Morris, Our Education Director

A warm and welcome Fall to all of our families! Here in the Center we are making the transition from our annual summer education program into our school year Homework Club. Our 2019 summer program was a blast, spanning six weeks with 30 children. Summer is always a stressful but rewarding time of year. Studies show that students who do not participate in some form of educational enrichment drop significantly in skill level during the summer break. In order to address this deficit, we spent our mornings honing math, science, English, and computer skills. Our afternoons were full of recreational activities and enrichment field trips to ensure a balanced routine. We also changed up our weekly trips this year to include some new sites with arcades and go-carts topping the list of favorites.

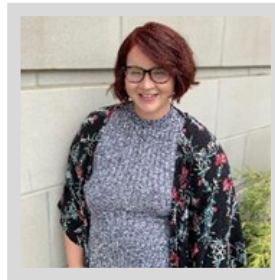


Education Director Michael Morris
with MDOC students

As we move into back into our school-year routines, we are proud to welcome kindergarteners to the Homework Club for the first time. The Mount Laurel School District will finally make the transition to full-day kindergarten this year and as such, we are expanding our program to help our youngest students adjust to their first year of school. Another change: this year our program will feature an updated technology center! New computers will be installed in September to ensure our children are working with the latest and greatest while a generous donation of Chromebooks from the Mount Laurel School District will create an environment where no student needs to wait to use our technology. All this makes for an exciting and fun-filled year.

Meet Our 2019-2020 Jesuit Volunteers: Kaitlyn and Scott

This year, we are pleased to welcome two new Jesuit Volunteers: Kaitlyn DeVeydt and Scott Henderson. Kaitlyn is a graduate of Boston College. She boasts a Bachelor's Degree in English and a French/Creative Writing Minor. Kaitlyn hails from Carmel, Indiana, where she grew up in a large family with 9 younger brothers and sisters! She loves yoga, squishy dogs, and humor. This is Kaitlyn's second year as a Jesuit Volunteer. Last year, she was in Tanzania, where she worked as a high school teacher.



Scott grew up in Massachusetts and also graduated from Boston College as a Neuroscience Major on a Pre-Med track. On campus, Scott embraced a range of opportunities, including acting as a Resident Assistant, completing internships in the health/neuroscience fields, participating and leading retreats on campus. His hobbies include volleyball, reading, and watching movies. He has completed service trips to Nicaragua, Virginia, Los Angeles, and South Carolina, and has wanted to do a year of service with the JVC since his freshman year.

Both Kaitlyn and Scott are delighted to have the opportunity to empower our ERLH youth. Each year, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps provides two full-time youth coordinators to work at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center. Jesuit Volunteers commit to one year of post-college service where the need is greatest and to live in apostolic community with other Jesuit Volunteers.

WORDS OF PRAISE



Mount Laurel Schools
Superintendent George Rafferty

"Since its inception, the Ethel Lawrence development has been home to many highly successful students heading into high school and college. Their triumphs are a credit to the many opportunities FSHD and the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center have provided to them and their families."

ERLH Back-to-School Fundraising Drive Is Parent-Led Success

Back-to-School can be a stressful time for parents and kids. This year, our families got to ease back into the swing of things thanks to some community-minded parents who led a fundraising drive to supply ERLH kids with free book bags, supplies and many other treats.

Deitra Chamberlain, a longtime resident of Ethel R. Lawrence Homes who organized the event with another ERLH mom, Nicole Yancy, as well as dedicated Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center staff, said she wasn't sure how her "First Annual Back-To-School Drive" would turn out.

"We ended with over 60 book bags as well as additional supplies to replace/replenish during the school year and generous gift cards to encourage participation in the workshops offered the day of the event," said Deitra. "Most heartwarming were generous gift certificates donated by Once Upon A Child (\$100), Target (\$75) and Walmart (four \$25 cards), which were given to deserving families in the development. These donations brought tears to my eyes and made all the hard work worth it."



Thank you **Deitra Chamberlain** (above) and **Nicole Yancy** (below right) for making the First Annual Back-to-School Fundraiser a huge success!



Dozens of children and their parents attended the event, which was held on August 30, 2019, and featured free food, academic success workshops, free boys' haircuts, face painting, raffles, games, prizes, a selfie station and music.

"The most uplifting part of this event was knowing our efforts helped our families," Deitra said. "The children were so excited to pick out their book bags. Their smiles were certainly thanks enough. Knowing that parents could be relieved, even if just minimally, was a pleasure. Others have given/helped my family in the past and I just wanted to pay it forward."

In all, the fundraising drive resulted in many generous gifts from the Great Mount Laurel community.

Donations included 30 book bags with supplies from Masonville Deli, a Polish-American eatery in Mount Laurel; 15 book bags with many bins of school supplies from St. John Neumann Church; 15 book bags and several boxes of supplies as well as handwritten notes to our kids from the youth who attend Hope Church; and a large blue bin of supplies from Fellowship Community Church.



We also received gifts from SkyZone (10 one-hour jump passes), the Philly Pretzel Factory in Moorestown (four \$20 gift cards), Francesca's Pizza, Pasta and Grill (\$25 gift card), and TCBY of Marlton (60 free cones and 15 \$3 gift certificates).

Deitra said she plans to organize another Back to School event next year. "I believe whole heartedly in the African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' I think it's really important for parents to join together to ensure a successful future for all of the children of Ethel Lawrence Homes. All of our efforts collectively are much more effective than any one parent's individual efforts in just their home."



Deitra thanked Matt Cooley, an ERLH dad, for his "creative and eye-catching flyer design." She also gave a special shout-out to Education Center Director Mike Morris and Chantel Young, our Associate Director of Education and Social Services, as well as this year's Jesuit Volunteers: "Ms. Kaitlyn and Mr. Scott hit the ground running in their new placements and really contributed to this awesome event."

A Welcome Back Message From Chantel Young, Our Associate Education and Social Services Director

Another year has started at MDOC and we are excited and raring to go! Our attendance rolls have increased, with the center welcoming approximately 10 new families and kindergarten students into the fold for the first time in our history. We are literally and figuratively bursting and could not be more thrilled.

To our students, I promise you that this year will be greater than any years past. The MDOC staff has been diligently working to create an environment where children feel valued, inspired, and emboldened to be the very best they can be at home and in the community. We have set high academic and behavioral standards and will hold each child accountable for reaching those goals. We expect our students to LEVEL UP! This is also the name of our new achievement program for grades 5-12. We will mentor, teach, challenge, and support – and we will love every minute of it.



To our parents and caregivers, I can promise even more outreach initiatives to keep you involved with life at MDOC and informed about current events and issues affecting our youth. We've already started "Parent Takeover" days, which will allow you to be a mentor for a day, and we are planning even more exciting events in the months ahead. We realize that it truly does "take a village" to help our children be successful. I look forward to working with each of you. Cheers to a great year!

A Heartfelt Thank-You to Last Year's JVs: Peter and Rebekah!



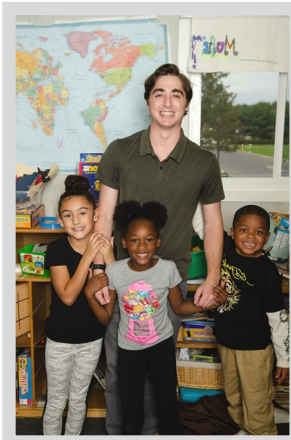
"After I graduated from college, I did not have a set career. I knew I wanted to work with kids, in some capacity, but I had no clear idea of how or where. My experience with the kids at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center has given me the courage to consider classroom teaching as a career path. Working with the elementary school students has been a favorite part of my experience because young kids are so willing to form a relationship and to give attention to someone who genuinely wants to return it. I look forward to continuing these relationships, and finding a way to say good-bye without it being the end."

Rebekah DuDevoir is currently serving a second term in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, this time in Tanzania. We wish her safe travels!

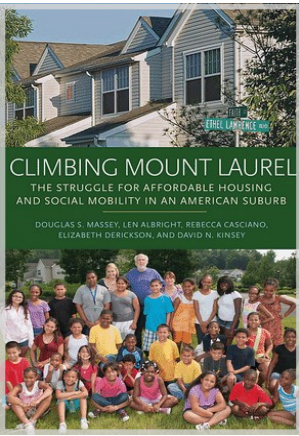


Peter O'Brien plans on remaining true to his love for music. Last year, Peter said he enjoyed giving music lessons to an enthusiastic group of kids at the Education Center. Thanks for your good cheer, Peter. Godspeed!

"Watching students cultivate a love for an instrument and being a part of that has been one of the most rewarding experiences. Music is able to bring together different people from all walks of life and all ages."



FSD Housing Offers '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 FSD’s flagship development. *Climbing Mount Laurel: The Struggle for Affordable Housing and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* was published following two years of research led by Princeton Professor Douglas S. Massey. The Princeton team focused on Ethel R. Lawrence Homes because the development was built as part of the settlement agreement in the landmark Mount Laurel decision, which is often called the most important civil rights ruling since Brown v. Board of Education.

Massey and his research team asked residents of Ethel R. Lawrence Homes to assess their neighborhood, school, personal, and household 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 because tenants got to live in a safe neighborhood); and **rates of employment rose** 22 percent. The Princeton research also found NO evidence of increased crime, higher taxes or a decrease in property values for residents of Mount Laurel Township.

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.

Dedicated ELRH Moms Work Hard to Support Their Families: FSD Report



JV Corey Hubbard with Alaina

Our parents shared their hopes and dreams for the future in a first-ever needs-assessment study that was conducted by one of our Jesuit Volunteers. JV Corey Hubbard interviewed nearly 30 families and put together a detailed report about the many challenges faced by Education Center parents and their kids. The report found that most of our families are headed by ambitious, hard-working moms whose dreams of continuing their education beyond high school were derailed because they couldn't afford the cost of college or other professional certification programs. Corey's report also found that:

- A quarter of our moms work two or more jobs to make ends meet.
- Most of our moms are employed in low-paying jobs in the medical field, such as medical assistants (MA) or certified nursing assistants (CNA).
- Nearly a third of our families live below the federal poverty line (\$24,300 for a family of four in 2016).
- Most families earn between \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year.
- Four-fifths have seen an annual increase in earnings of several thousand dollars since moving into Ethel Lawrence Homes. This data is supported by other research which proves that moving low-income families into high-opportunity communities is the best way to combat generational cycles of poverty. It also reduces teen pregnancy, increases college attendance as well as marriage rates, and significantly improves adult earning capacity.

Corey's report also reveals some interesting facts about the strengths and challenges faced by our Education Center students, nearly 40 percent of whom receive supportive services from the Mount Laurel School District, including special education, speech therapy or reading support:

- About a fifth of our students struggle in math and/or reading.
- Eight students (20 percent) have been on the honor roll for at least one year.
- Four students are either in advanced classes and/or in the Gifted Education program.
- Fifteen students (38 percent) “take pride in their work and work hard to make good grades and do their best.”
- Ten students (26 percent) read for fun.



A True Life Hero: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

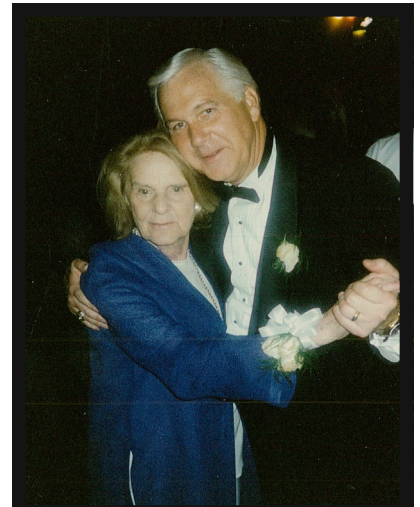
By Peter J. O'Connor



"Mom instilled in us the value of a good education. Peter knows housing alone won't break the bond of poverty. One also needs a solid educational foundation. That's why no other donation comes before my gift to the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center."
—James 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.



"As Peter's 'Irish Twin' younger brother (by 11 months), I have followed Peter's tireless efforts and the tremendous progress of Fair Share Housing since its inception in the 1970s. Mom would be so proud to see how many people Peter has helped over the last 50 years."
—James O'Connor

James, now married for 51 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.



Margaret with her 1970 elementary class in Newark, New Jersey



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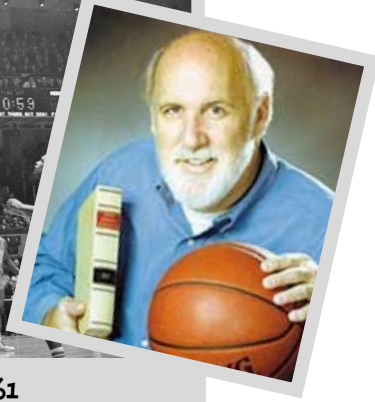
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"Each contribution from a Holy Cross classmate, teammate or fellow alumni reminds me of our days at the Cross, the strong bonds we developed, the commitment we have made to each other through lifelong friendships, and the common values instilled in us by the Jesuits, especially helping the less fortunate."

-Peter J. O'Connor, HC '63

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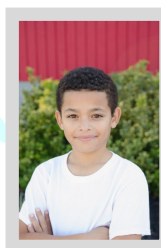
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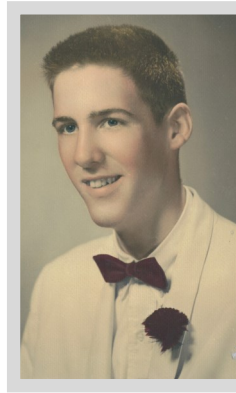
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"It gives me energy and a wonderful feeling of camaraderie to have the backing of my **Seton Hall Prep** brothers."

-Peter J. O'Connor, SHP '59

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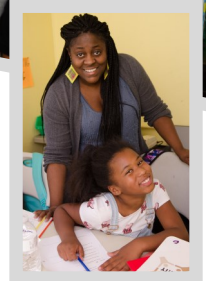
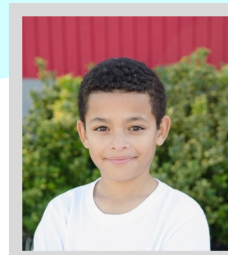
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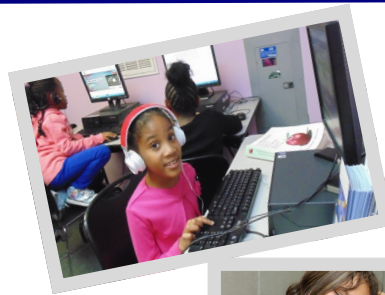
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Quixote Quest Teen Club
Salvation Army, St. John Neumann Church

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Rebecca Bates (2008 Education Center JV)
Abby Habein (2012 Education Center JV)
Peter Habein (father of 2012 JV Abby Habein)
Harold Habein (grandfather of 2012 JV Abby Habein)
Donald and Theresa Harmon (parents of 2017 JV Kathleen Harmon)
Deanna Johnson (2007 Education Center JV)
Kate Maich (2005 Education Center JV)
Olivia McCracken (2014 Education Center JV)
Pamela Parma (mother of 2011 JV Aly Parma)
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