

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

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.



Journee

Age: 10

Excels at: Drawing, Math

Hopes to be: A Fashion Designer

"My favorite part of the day is when I get to snack while doing my work. It's super relaxing."

Emmalee

Age: 10

Excels at: Math, Art and Reading

Hopes to be: A Lawyer or an Artist

"I like that we all do fun activities together at the end of the day."



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Thank You Donors
How You Can Help

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



This year, FSHD is pleased to report that we expanded our ERLH development, opening up a fifth court with 36 new rental units as well as a nearby development called Robinson Estates (pictured above), which features 24 single-family rental homes, a rarity in affordable housing.

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 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.

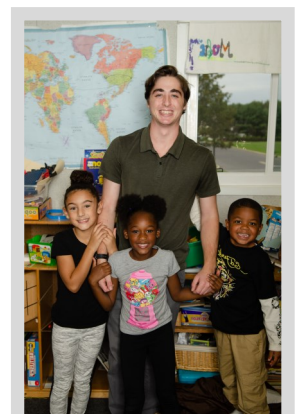
Affordable housing in an integrated community is the first step to helping families overcome problems stemming from generational cycles of poverty, racial segregation, economic isolation, and the lack of a good

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 (Rebekah DuDevoir, below left, and Peter O'Brien, below right). 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 new 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 Our Education Director

As we begin the 2018-2019 school year at the Education Center, I'd like to welcome all of our new families in Francis Court and Robinson Estates. This Fall, we are excited to announce a few new partnerships. We're working with the Mount Laurel School District to bring better resources to our Education Center and now have enough Chromebooks and upgraded Wi-Fi to almost completely eliminate computer wait times. Our work with new ERLH residents has introduced us to community groups that aim to overhaul our Education Center garden. Thanks to our partnership with the South Jersey Food Bank, we will continue our Tower Garden project and hope to grow lots of delicious, nutritious organic produce.

Another goal this year is to improve communication between parents, staff, and school teachers. We plan to contact teachers and parents once every two weeks. Thanks to the support and dedication of George Rafferty, the Mount Laurel School District Superintendent, we've been able to create stronger connections with school principals, guidance counselors, and teachers to better align our work with theirs, providing a unified network of support for our kids. We've also overhauled our daily schedule to better suit our children and improve the quality of time they have in the Education Center.

—Michael Morris, Education Center Director

Meet Our New Jesuit Volunteers



JV Peter O'Brien, Associate Education Director
Chantel Young, JV Rebekah DuDevoir and
Education Director Mike Morris (left to right)

This year, we welcome two new Jesuit Volunteers: Rebekah DuDevoir and Peter O'Brien. Rebekah was raised in Maine, but was adopted from Guatemala. Her passion for service work was inspired by a week-long high school service trip to Guatemala. She was volunteering at a school for children affected by poverty, neglect, and abuse. She graduated in May from Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana with a

degree in Psychology and a minor in English Literature. In the future, she hopes to continue working with programs that focus on at-risk youth. At the moment, she is excited to start working with the kids while also learning from them.

Peter is from Rye, New York. He spent his last four years at Santa Clara University in Northern California, graduating with a degree in music. Peter is excited to be back on the East Coast and is eager to start the year off. When Peter is not wrapped up in music, he finds his passions in outdoor activities, movies, playing sports and following his beloved New York Rangers. Peter has worked with children as a division head and camp counselor for the past seven summers at Camp Dudley in Westport, NY. He has enjoyed helping children find and pursue their passion. Peter is thrilled to join the amazing staff at the Margaret Donnelly Education Center and looks forward to working with and growing alongside the community here at MDOC.

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

From the Mount Laurel Schools
Superintendent George Rafferty



"Since its inception, the Ethel R. Lawrence Homes development has placed great priority on the education of its children. Staff at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center do a great job

with after-school and summer programs, but they also work with our teachers and administrators to determine the level and type of support that would benefit individual students. That partnership is a true asset to our staff and to our Ethel Lawrence families and we are constantly working together to find ways to strengthen it."





Chantel Young with Jordan

All of our student families, both new and returning, can expect a year of solid academic support, trauma-informed practices, and innovative new clubs.

One of my main priorities this year will be to strengthen our literacy program. My goal is to foster a greater love of reading in more of our students and to implement strategic academic support to help 100 percent of our children become at-grade-level or above-grade-level readers.

In addition, we will continue to expand our offerings to youth ages 13 to 17. Last year, we conducted a job-readiness workshop to equip teens with the skills necessary to snag their first jobs. Out of 10 eligible teens who took the workshop, five were able to find summer employment! Our goal is to offer another workshop in Fall 2018 and to further expand our program offerings to address the unique

physical and socio-emotional needs of these 21st century teens.

Finally, Mission: Excellence will be back by popular demand. The inaugural year was filled with lessons on responsibility, character, and the hard work needed to get to college. At the end of the year, we were ecstatic to receive confirmation that 2 students would be attending college this fall. As you can see, we are prepped and ready for a successful year. So, as our MDOC students often say, "LET'S GET IT!"

Our Parents Share Their Hopes and Dreams

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. Corey Hubbard, the Education Center's 2015-2016 JV, interviewed nearly 30 families and put together a detailed report about the myriad 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:



Jesuit Volunteer Corey Hubbard
with Alaina

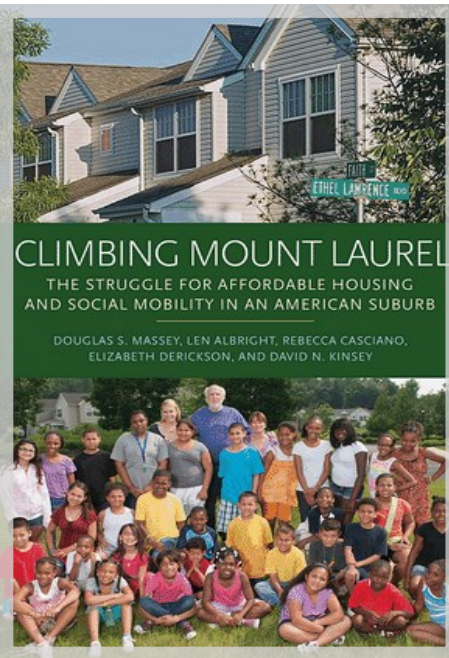
- A quarter of our moms work two or more jobs to make ends meet.
- Most of our moms are employed in low-paying jobs in the medical field, such as medical assistants (MA) or certified nursing assistants (CNA).
- Nearly a third of our families live below the 2016 federal poverty line (\$24,300 for a family of four).
- 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 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.

The parents Corey interviewed offered recommendations to improve the Education Center. We have already implemented a number of these suggestions, including hiring more staff and launching a college readiness program. Parents also wanted more recreational activities. We will soon break ground on a new Outdoor Recreation Area.

ERLH Offers A “Pathway Out of Poverty”



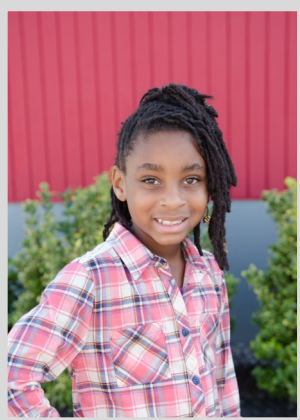
Ethel R. Lawrence Homes provides “a pathway out of poverty” for low-income residents, according to a book published by Princeton University which identified significant benefits associated with moving into FSHD’s flagship development. Among the findings: ERLH residents experienced a reduction in welfare 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 because tenants got to live in a safe 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.

A True Life Hero: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

By Peter J. O'Connor



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

FSD'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 50 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 in Paris



Far right back row, then clockwise: Margaret with James, Peter, granddaughters Erin, Meredith and Judith, Jim's wife.



Margaret with her 1967 elementary class
in Maplewood, New Jersey



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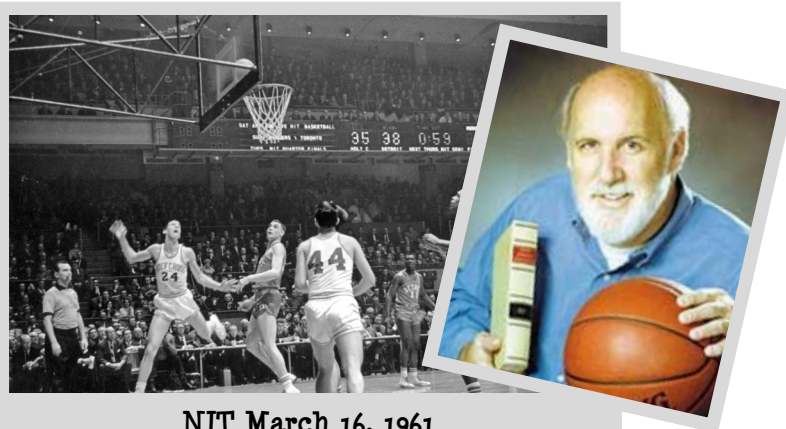
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-Peter J. O'Connor, HC '63

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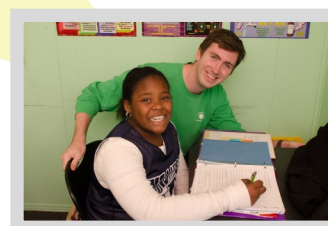
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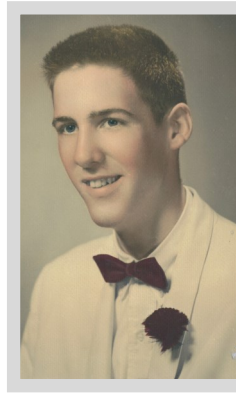
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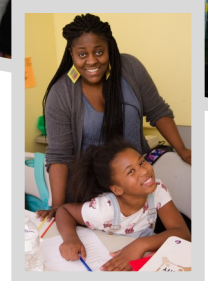
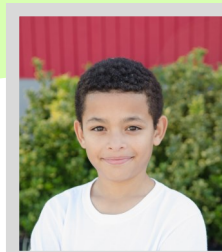


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—Peter J. O'Connor, SHP '59

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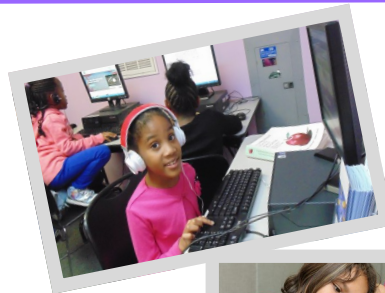
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Harold Habein (grandfather of 2012 JV Abby Habein)
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Pamela Parma (mother of 2011 JV Aly Parma)
Gizelle Pendang (2015 St. Luke's, Camden JV)
Joel and Christine Stenberg (2010 Education Center JV)

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