

# MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Summer  
2010

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 help the very poor. The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH offers an after-school Homework Club, a Summer Enrichment Program and one-on-one tutoring to ensure that our students get the support they need to make the most of the opportunities available in the high-achieving Mount Laurel School District.



### Peter

Age: 14, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Excels at: Math

Hopes to Be: A Lawyer

"I know the Homework Club staff wants me to succeed. Someone is always watching out for me, making sure I do what I need to do to be successful."

### Jaelyn

Age: 9, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Excels at: Math, Science

Hopes to Be: An Artist

"At Homework Club, I make sure I finish my homework on time. I get the help I need and get to be around my friends who make me feel happy."



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Fair Share Housing Development, Inc.

To make a donation, visit [www.FairShareDevelopment.org](http://www.FairShareDevelopment.org)

 **FAIR SHARE**  
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT  
*building homes and hope*

# FSHD: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

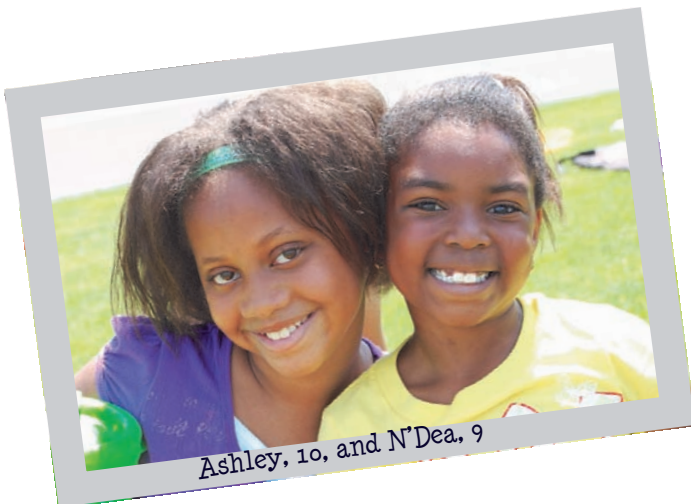
The Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes is operated by Fair Share Housing Development (FSHD), a non-profit housing and social services provider that seeks to reduce racial and economic segregation throughout Southern New Jersey. Through the development of affordable homes in high-opportunity communities, pursuant to the Mount Laurel Doctrine (which requires that every town in New Jersey provide its "fair share" of affordable housing), FSHD has built and manages 656 affordable units in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties. Ethel R. Lawrence Homes, 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.



Children Playing Outside at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes

Because housing alone is just 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, FSHD provides programs to help our resident families take advantage of the educational and economic opportunities available in their new communities.

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) 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 Program and one-on-one year-round tutoring to transform children's lives through educational achievement and enrichment.



Ashley, 10, and N'Dea, 9

## Parent Spotlight

"Before coming to Mount Laurel, the neighborhood where I lived was infested with drug activity. It was very unsafe. But here at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes, we have been able to focus not simply on surviving, or keeping our family safe, but on raising our children well. Today, thanks to the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center and the Mount Laurel schools, my daughter's report card reflects nothing but A's and B's, which shows me that she is thriving."

- Doreen Braz, ERLH Parent



Vicky, 14, with her mom, Doreen



## Summer Program

Our seven-week Summer Enrichment Program focuses on academic continuity through the development of physical, emotional, and social skills. Mornings are centered around literacy and math games, and afternoons involve arts and crafts, science explorations, and recipe-making. Weekly field trips will include visits to the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Air Victory Museum, the Historic Peter Mott House, Camden Children's Garden, PINES Pond Ecology, and Riversharks Stadium to see a pro baseball game. Each year, enrollment continues to climb, showcasing the need and value for year-round support for our resident youth.



Anadie, 11, and Elijah, 10

## Art Classes

Themes of home, security, togetherness, and harmony will be explored during a special art program for students attending the 2010 Summer Enrichment Program. A highlight of the program will be a field trip to Grounds for Sculpture, a 35-acre sculpture park in Hamilton, New Jersey, featuring works by well-known and emerging American and international artists such as Beverly Pepper, Kiki Smith, and George Segal.

Students in grades 1st to 8th will learn how sculptors use sharp angles and soft, natural forms to create different expressions. Each student will build a "Safe Home Sculpture," applying techniques of clay slab construction as well as their own sense of style and personal expression. The class is being led by local artist Marcy Morris, who first began teaching at ERLH in 2009. Last year, ERLH students learned how to create a positive self-image through portrait painting. Another art program is in the works for this October.



La Nae, 11

## Saturday Soccer

The fall of 2009 marked the first Saturday Soccer Program for ERLH youth. Each Saturday focused on a "Skill of the Day," which encouraged growth and improvement through practice, and finished with a group scrimmage. The program allowed resident youth to engage in fun and exciting competition while learning the importance of teamwork and leadership. Due to the program's success, a Spring Soccer Program was implemented. Soccer was also included in this year's Summer Enrichment Program and will be offered again this fall.



Jayson and D'Andre, both 8

## Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

Welcome to the first edition of the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes newsletter. We are excited to share our children's many accomplishments at the Education Center as well as within the community. Over the last five years, the Education Center staff and volunteers have been dedicated to providing the ERLH children with the opportunity to reach their fullest potential through year-round academic support, mentoring, and one-to-one tutoring. The educational programs, community events, and workshops offered to the ERLH families are part of Fair Share Housing Development's holistic approach to affordable housing that provides a path to hope and a positive future to ensure that all children – regardless of whether they are rich or poor – have the opportunity to become productive members of society. The children's pride in their daily school work and their attendance in our non-mandatory programs are testaments to the everlasting impact that our programs have. We attribute our success to collaboration with the Mount Laurel School District, the hard work of our dedicated Jesuit Volunteers, teen volunteers, and the support of the ERLH parents and families.



## Meet Our Staff



Jayla, 8, with JV Christine Soma

Each year, Jesuit Volunteer Corps provides a full-time Youth Coordinator to work at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at ERLH. Jesuit Volunteers make a commitment to serve where the need is greatest, to work with people marginalized by society and to live in

apostolic community with other JVs. Our Youth Coordinators have come from all over the nation, attending colleges and universities such as Boston College, Canisius, Clemson, Dartmouth, Dayton, Fairfield, Fordham, George Mason, Georgetown, Hamilton, Holy Cross, Michigan, Notre Dame, Rockhurst University, Holy Cross, Scranton, St. Joseph's, St. Louis University, and St. Olaf College.

Christine Soma, our 2009-2010 JV, graduated from Gonzaga University where she also played Division I soccer. Christine implemented the Saturday Soccer Program, helped plan our annual College Workshop, and designed the first edition of the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center newsletter. Christine's love of children, commitment to service, and work for social justice have been a great asset to Fair Share Housing Development.

## Teacher Testimonial

"Because of the consistency, dedication, and support of the Homework Club staff, my students' reading abilities continue to flourish. The highly effective staff works with my students one on one to foster a real love of reading. Our school is so lucky to have a partnership with the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes."

- Kimberly Hannigan,  
Reading Specialist,  
Hillside Elementary School



# An Inspiration: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

FSHD's Education Center is dedicated to Margaret Donnelly O'Connor, 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 42 years, father of two daughters and a recent grandfather, retired in December 2004 as Group Vice-President, Marketing, Sales and Service, Ford Motor Company after a 40-year career. Peter, a public interest lawyer, is the Founder and Executive Director of Fair Share Housing Development, Inc.



Margaret Donnelly O'Connor with sons James (l) and Peter (r)

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 helping the sick and infirm. She read to the blind on radio, visited the sick, volunteered at nursing homes and church-sponsored activities in the City of Camden, and joined the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

Please join us in honoring Margaret Donnelly O'Connor's life by supporting the Education Center which will give poor children and their families the educational support needed to break the cycle of poverty and live productive and meaningful lives.

## Thank You Donors

The Eustace Foundation

Martin G. McGuinn

NJ Sim Foundation

James G. O'Connor

Peter J. O'Connor

Sandy Hill Foundation

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## 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

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Mount Laurel, NJ 08054