

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Spring-
Summer
2012

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 very low-income families. 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 students get the support they need to make the most of the opportunities available in the high-achieving Mount Laurel School District.



Nasim

Age: 13, 7th Grade

Excels at: Football

Hopes to Be: NFL Player

"I like to visit Homework Club because we get help with homework that is difficult and get to spend time with other kids."

Kathryn

Age: 10, 5th Grade

Excels at: Writing, Drawing

Hopes to Be: An artist and hair stylist

"The Education Center staff helps me understand math and language questions and I get to learn how to draw and paint in art class!"



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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.



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.

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 (Cindy Haas), a college graduate Jesuit Volunteer who provides a year of service (Abby Habein), 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.



Aylissah Calaf-Payton, 7, and Alexia Trinidad-Dorin, 9

Parent Spotlight

"Ethel R. Lawrence Homes is a peaceful and quiet place to live. I am glad I don't have to worry about fighting or distractions in the neighborhood or in school. I also like that everyone works together to educate the children. The Education Center's one-on-one assistance benefits my daughter Ashley because it helps her stay focused and work to her potential in the challenging Mount Laurel School District."

—Lisa Worley, ERLH Parent



Lisa Worley (right), with daughter Ashley, 12 (center), and niece Deeonna (left) at annual Education Center's clean-up event.

Teen Book Club, Field Trips, Art Lessons = Summer Enrichment 2012!



Eddie, age 10, loves to read!

A teen book club, art lessons and field trips to the Franklin Institute, the Popcorn Park Zoo, the Camden Children's Garden, the PAWS Farm, Mount Laurel Animal Hospital and the Schuylkill Nature Center were among the enrichment activities featured during this year's seven-week-long summer program. The goal of the program is to ensure academic continuity during the summer months. Mornings were centered around literacy and math games and afternoons involved arts and crafts, science experiments and recipe-making – in addition to the field trips. This summer, for the second year in a row, Mrs. Cindy ran a book club for kids in grades 7 to high school to help students complete their curriculum-mandated summer reading. Students also looked forward to creating more fun projects with Miss Marcy, a certified art

instructor whose empowering program continues to be sponsored by the Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance. Thank you MLMA!!

A Farewell Message from JV Abby Habein

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. This year's volunteer was Abby Habein, a math and philosophy major who graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Abby provided students with individual math tutoring, daily homework assistance and she ran SAT prep classes among other duties.

As her year of service came to an end, Abby took a moment to reflect on all she had learned: "I cannot express what a gift it has been to be here this year. I have met so many thoughtful, spirited and uniquely talented children. They have made my year so very special and I will miss them more than words can tell. I also want to thank the many parents I have had the privilege of meeting as well as the staff at Ethel Lawrence Homes – especially Mrs. Cindy. Because of the support you have all given me, this year will be one that I will look back on with pure love and gratitude." This fall, Abby plans to apply for teaching fellowship as she gears up to get a Master's in Education.



JV Abby Habein

Strengthening Family Bonds

Some 20 ERLH children and their parents took time out of their busy schedules to participate in a special seven-week program to reduce conflict and improve family communication. Prevention Plus of Burlington County funded and provided instruction for the Strengthening Families Program. Each session started with a family dinner, then the parents and children engaged in different activities. ERLH moms and dads were asked to watch videos of parents interacting with their children, then reflect upon and discuss the scenarios presented on-screen. In a separate room, the children discussed peer pressure, substance abuse and conflict resolution. At the end of each session, the parents and children completed a team project and were assigned homework to be completed by the next session. Many ERLH families said they found the activities to be helpful and insightful.



ERLH parents and children outside Education Center trailer after annual end-of-school-year volunteer clean-up event.

Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

As the old adage states, it takes a village to raise a child. Our village consists of caring teachers, enthusiastic volunteers, and dedicated parents who work daily to help our children grow and blossom. Our teen volunteers do just that each week during our after-school Homework Club. The teenagers commit to working with a child, mentoring and assisting him or her with homework and social play once a week. Their dedication is invaluable. They too must balance school work, extracurricular activities, work and the stresses of competitive academics. They are exemplary role models to our children!

Many of our parents also take the time to develop their parenting skills and contribute to the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center programs. They participate in educational meetings to become empowered to navigate the ever-complex educational system and cutting-edge curricula. They serve as field trip chaperones during the summer program and contribute time to an annual Education Center clean-up. Some of the parents are township sports coaches or attend their children's baseball, soccer, football and cheerleading games. Others have participated in the Strengthening Families program, a seven-week course that enhances and strengthens family bonds (see article at the bottom of page 3). We are proud of our village and our children's successes!



Cindy Haas

Meet Our Teen Volunteers!

Teen and high school volunteer partnerships are an essential component of our after-school and summer enrichment program. Collaborating organizations include Quixote Quest, the Lenape National Honor Society and ERLH teens. The teens mentor and



Teen Volunteers Outside Education Center

assist Education Center children daily, often providing one-on-one tutoring during Homework Club. Their support allows the other staff to focus on larger groups of children and helps keep the atmosphere conducive to learning. A volunteer training session is held in the fall to educate the teens about how to work with the children in an after-school setting. On June 1, all 16 teens who volunteered their services during the 2011-2012 school year received certificates of appreciation at a recognition ceremony. Another five teens were set to provide assistance during our summer enrichment program. Each year, our Education Center staff attends volunteer fairs and speaks at various meetings to recruit new teens.

Volunteer Testimonial

"Volunteering has been a great experience. The kids are very nice and welcoming. It has made a difference in my life being able to help the kids reach their highest potential."

—Kim Brown
Quixote Quest Teen Volunteer

"Volunteering has been an amazing experience. You get the opportunity to work with a great group of kids and make a difference in their lives. It is very rewarding to see their progress from beginning to end."

—Megan Brown (*Kim's sister*)
Quixote Quest Teen Volunteer

A True Life Hero: Margaret Donnelly O'Connor

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 43 years, father of two daughters, and a grandfather of two, 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 FSD and Fair Share Housing Center (www.fairsharehousing.org).



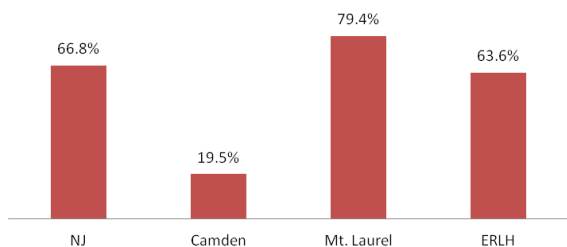
Margaret Donnelly O'Connor
(College of New Rochelle
Yearbook Picture, 1937)

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.

HOUSING POLICY IS SCHOOL POLICY: ERLH Kids Continue To Outperform Camden Peers!

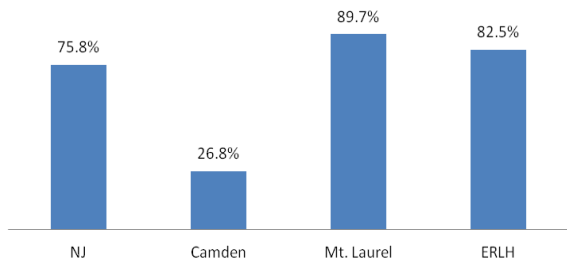
2011 Language Arts: 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



2011 Math: 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



What's the best way to ensure the educational success of low-income children? Move them into high-opportunity neighborhoods where they can attend school with middle-class peers. That's the finding of decades of research – data that is shored up by an ongoing study of ERLH children. Each year, staff at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center analyzes New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) scores. Data from 2011 for 41 Education Center students shows that our children performed much better in both Language Arts and math than their peers in Camden, where the poverty and crime rates are among the worst in the nation. Statistics from 2010 showed similar gains.

Why are ERLH kids doing so well? Upscale neighborhoods generally have better teachers, safer schools, less distractions, more academically engaged students, and a greater number of involved parents. These findings reinforce FSD's mission to promote more racial and economic integration in the high-opportunity communities surrounding the City of Camden. As columnist Bob Herbert noted in the *New York Times*: "If you really want to improve the education of poor children, you have to get them away from learning environments that are smothered by poverty."

Thank You Donors

INDIVIDUALS

James G. O'Connor
Martin G. McGuinn
Robert P. Kelly II
Jean Bender and William J. Mahoney
Keith and Meredith O'Connor Tomatore
Deborah DelGrande (FSHD Director of Property Management)
Cindy Haas (Education Center Director)
Staff of Fair Share Housing Development (2010-2012)
Claire Moran Konner, Teresa Martini Sousa
Lillian LoBianco, Michael LoBianco
Patti Flanagan, Ryan Flanagan
Brenda Betley, Bob and Carol Shaffer,
Beth and Mark Schlitt

FOUNDATIONS

The Sandy Hill Foundation
The Eustace Foundation
NJ SIM Foundation
Laura Rose Albert Foundation

BUSINESSES

BJ's Wholesale Club
Conner Strong Companies, Inc.
Capital One Bank, Camden Riversharks, Costco,
Mattel Toy Donation Program (with Good 360)
Sam's Club, ShopRite
Source One System Solutions, Target
Toys for Tots, Wawa, Wegmans
Weichert Realtors, Winslow Rentals

SETON HALL PREP

Donna and Dan Courain (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '59)
James G. O'Connor (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '60)
Peter J. O'Connor (Seton Hall Prep, Class of '59)

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Daniel Cosgrove (Holy Cross, Class of '63)
Kathy and Phil Fina (Holy Cross, Class of '63)
Monica and Dennis Golden (Holy Cross, Class of '63)
Peter J. O'Connor (Holy Cross, Class of '63)



Peter J. O'Connor with ERLH Kids

EDUCATION CENTER WISH LIST 2012

School supplies, snacks, and books are always needed. This year, we also hope to raise cash for tutors, and much-needed repairs to the trailer that houses our Education Center. We also continue to fund-raise for our Outdoor Recreation area.

JESUIT VOLUNTEERS

Peter Habein (father of Abby Habein, our current JV)
Deanna Johnson (Education Center JV, 2006)
Kate Maich (Education Center JV, 2004)
Pamela Parma, mother of Aly Parma (JV, 2011)

NONPROFITS

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden
Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Lenape High School National Honor Society
Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance (MLMA)
Prevention Plus
Quixote Quest Teen Club
Church of Jesus Christ

How You Can Help

To make a secure online gift, visit www.FairShareDevelopment.org

We also accept donations via U.S. mail:

Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center

Ethel R. Lawrence Homes
1 Ethel Lawrence Boulevard
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054