

MARGARET DONNELLY O'CONNOR Education Center

Winter
2011-12

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.



D'Andre

Age: 9, 4th Grade

Excels at: Reading and Dancing

Hopes to Be: Baseball Player

"I like coming to Homework Club because we have fun. We learn about plants and animals and we get to do a lot of activities."

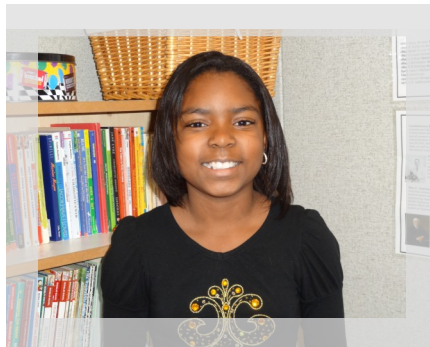
N'Dea

Age: 10, 5th Grade

Excels at: Math (got a perfect score on the NJ ASK standardized test)

Hopes to Be: A Singer or Nurse

"I love learning. Mrs. Cindy and Ms. Abby help me a lot."



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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.

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.



Children Playing Football at ERLH

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.



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.

"Living here at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes has been a blessing. Not only am I able to raise my daughter in an affordable home, but Jasmine also benefits from the educational assistance offered by the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center. Because of the help and support Jasmine receives from Homework Club, she is getting great grades on her report card and nice remarks from her teachers. I am praying and looking forward to my daughter furthering her education in the future."

—Katrice Groce, ERLH Parent

Parent Spotlight



Katrice and Jasmine, age 13

Technology Expert Gives Career Talk



What kinds of IT jobs are available in the military? How are computers used to solve crimes? What skills do you need if you want to create a website? These were some of the questions answered by Ray Douglass, Technology Director with Source One System Solutions, during a presentation he gave on careers in technology at the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center on October 21, 2011. "The kids really got interested when I talked about the military," recalls Douglass. "They also love computer games and didn't realize you could make a career out of that."

Nearly 20 high school, middle school and elementary school students showed up to hear the presentation. Later they all participated in a hands-on computer building project as well. Douglass says he volunteered to give the talk because he's a "big fan" of the Education Center and he wanted to expose our kids to the many career options available in the field of technology. "It's a rewarding occupation. I really love what I do." Source One System Solutions is a full-service office solutions company that provides help desk and support services for small and medium-sized businesses across the East Coast.

ERLH Kids' Day

Pony rides, a moon bounce, scarecrow stuffing, cupcake decorating, face-painting, and a visit by McGruff the Crime Dog were among the highlights of the Ethel R. Lawrence Homes Kids' Day. Some 80 children and their families came out to enjoy the beautiful Fall day, which included a visit by the Mount Laurel Fire Department as well as the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and a Council Member. The Education Center thanks Wawa, ShopRite, Costco, Winslow Rentals and Anna Muniz (an ERLH resident who did face painting) for supporting the October 15, 2011 event, which promotes community cohesiveness and celebrates ERLH's wonderful children!



Holiday Toy Donations

More than 70 ERLH parents and children enjoyed a visit with Santa on Saturday, December 17th, 2011. Families and children were photographed with Santa and treated to a pancake and egg breakfast. Children from infants to age 13 each received a toy and a chance to whisper their Christmas wishes into Santa's ear. The gifts came courtesy of Toys for Tots and the Mattel Toy Donation program with Good360. ERLH resident Anna Muniz graciously donated her artistic skills to those interested in having their faces painted.



Message From Cindy Haas, Education Center Director

In a world full of technology, too many young people spend their free time playing video games or surfing the Internet. But when our students are not busy reading, writing, and practicing arithmetic, they are actively representing and participating in their community and schools. Two of our fifth grade girls were selected to participate in their school's math league contest last year. One of our inventive eighth grade children placed third in the science fair held at the local community college. Our fifth and sixth grade Citizens of the Month are recognized in the school newsletter. Our gregarious singers and actors showcase their talents in the school choir and talent shows and have been selected for roles in the district-wide Theater Week play. Our aspiring artists are recognized as artists of the month. Our versatile musicians play the saxophone in jazz band and are learning to play the piano and the violin. Our athletes stay fit playing volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, football, and soccer after school and for the Township. A handful of our little leaders are peer mediators, serve on the safety patrol and are members of the student council. One of our outstanding teens, a future member of the National Honor Society, led an outdoor track and field group on our property so that our younger children could participate in structured exercise. Visit us on any warm day throughout the year, and you will see children running, playing baseball or riding their bikes.



Cindy Haas

Meet Our Staff



JVs Abby Habein

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 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

U.S. 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, and St. Olaf College.

Abby Habein, our 2011-2012 JV, graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota with a degree in mathematics and philosophy. Abby provides individual math tutoring, daily homework assistance and has run SAT Prep Classes at the Education Center. She also helped plan our annual Kids' Day and Holiday Event. Abby's love of children, commitment to service, and work for social justice have been wonderful assets to the Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center at Ethel R. Lawrence Homes.

Teacher Testimonial

"When I came to Harrington four years ago, I was very interested in learning more about the Ethel Lawrence community and the mission of Fair Share Housing. Even in our earliest visits, you were eager to share the story of Ethel Lawrence and the vision of FSHD. Our common goal of helping all children to achieve was an instant bond that made our work together productive, precedent-setting and joyful.

I will miss our work together, and hope our paths cross again in the future. The passion, expertise, and vision you bring to the table have gone a long way in helping our kids. And I say our kids with all of my heart."

—Irene Romanelli
Former Assistant Principal
Harrington Middle School

An Inspiration: 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, 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, 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.

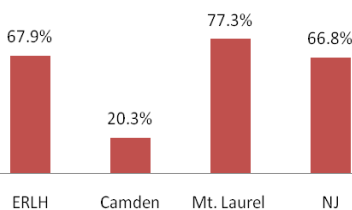


Margaret Donnelly O'Connor
(College of New Rochelle
Yearbook Picture, 1937)

Housing Policy is School Policy

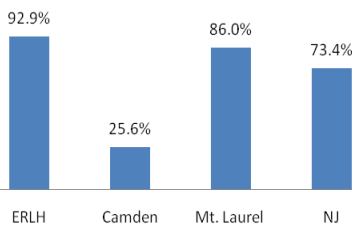
Language Arts: Spring 2010 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



Math: Spring 2010 3rd-8th Grade

■ % Students Proficient and Above



What is the best way to ensure the educational success of low-income children? Move them into affluent neighborhoods where they can attend school with middle-class peers. That's the finding of decades of research – data that is borne out in a recent study of ERLH children conducted by Aly Parma, the 2010-2011 Margaret Donnelly O'Connor Education Center Jesuit Volunteer. Ms. Parma analyzed New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) scores from 2010 for 28 Education Center students and found 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.

The reason? 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

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