Overbook School for the Blind Towers News

Vol. 70, No.6, Summer 2017

The Class of 2017 Celebrates 185 years of OSB History!

**Towers NewsLETTER**

Vol. 70, No. 6, Summer 2017

Overbrook School for the Blind

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Established 1832

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Gerald Kitzhoffer

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*Photos*

Executive Director’s Message by Gerals Kitzhoffer

Having some fun with the OSB Huskie on History Day.

Dear Friends:

As I compose this, my final newsletter “letter”, I’m struck by how fast these past nine years have gone. Overbrook has faced some challenging times and many moments worth celebrating throughout this period. We have lost some beloved staff and students, faced some significant funding issues, and encountered political turmoil resulting in less emphasis on our school as a viable alternative for students with blindness, visual impairment and additional disabilities. Yet, despite these events, Overbrook School for the Blind continues to thrive. Our students have overcome the obstacles in their lives and achieved a great education, our   
staff continued to motivate and inspire, and we have worked our way through the financial difficulties to ensure Overbrook’s future. We have conquered these challenges because we have a great mission and purpose. We also have had a   
lot of help in fostering and supporting that mission. And for that I thank each and every one of you. No matter the nature of your affiliation with our great school, we know that you are there to help us tell the story of student success and   
institutional progress. Keep up the good work!

And now, in closing, even though my role is changing in the future, I am looking forward to hearing about the great work that Overbrook will continue to do. Thank you for all your help and support over the years.

Take care.

“Mr. K”

Gerald Kitzhoffer, *Executive Director and CEO*

Thank you, Mr. K

We are grateful for your dedication & nine remarkable years of service at OSB. Here’s to a well-deserved & happy retirement!

Jerry collected trophies for OSB from an EAAB tournament.

Jerry with (left to right) ParaEducator Shannon Walsh, Transition Secretary Clare Medori, Transition ParaEducator Beth Ann Barr-DiFabio, and Transition Instructor Justine Blinck, at his retirement party.

Members of the OSB Board of Trustees and a few staff members join Jerry for a group photo at the last board meeting.

Jerry with (left to right) HR Specialist Carmelina Arias-Torres,   
HR Coordinator Michael C. Mansor, and HR Manager Carol   
Havens-Dobbs

Jerry with students from the Early Childhood Program.

Presenting the Class of 2017

**To Our Graduates:**

We are proud to have known you as students and look forward to you remaining part of the Overbrook School for the Blind family as alumni. We are confident you will never cease to confront life’s challenges with grace and fortitude.

**Look back with a smile and go forward with courage. Congratulations!**

Stephanie Algarin Diaz

Sherrita Blackwell

Christian Childs

Megan Erhard

Jazlyn Morales

Justin Morrisey

Madeline Nobles

Jacob Pratt

Cristian Sanchez-Paulino

Shaniyah Scott

Commencement

Peers, family members and friends shared in the joyous OSB Commencement ceremony that celebrated the academic accomplishments of our ten graduates. OSB Executive Director Jerry Kitzhoffer and OSB Board of Trustees President Rick Wheeler presented awards and diplomas to the graduates, and the OSB Encore Singers performed.

Distinguished Alumni Award Winner Marilyn A. Klein, Class of 1973, addresses the graduates with a motivational speech that will be remembered by all.

**To our youngest graduates and their families: With pride and pleasure, the entire staff of Overbrook School for the Blind celebrates your success as you leave Early Intervention for other adventures in learning.**

Top Right: Early Childhood Program Coordinator Marguerite Bradley greets graduate Ahziyah K. Above: The Early Childhood Program Choir sang a song during the graduation ceremony.

Abed A.

Julian B.

Serenity C.

Milayah D.

Charles F.

Ma’Kira G.

Jacob H.

Tyler H.

Isis J.

Ahziyah K.

Lingsen K.

Dinushka P.

Tyler P.

Liam P.

Christian S.

Kyleigh S.

Aiden S.

Noah T.

Huy V.

Randy R.R.

Emma R.

**Welcome! Todd Reeves**

The Overbrook School for the Blind Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Todd Reeves has been named executive director/CEO.

Reeves comes to OSB from the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children where he has served as executive director and superintendent since 2007. Reeves served as Superintendent of the Washington School for the Deaf in Vancouver from 2003 – 2007. Originally from Eugene, Oregon, Reeves received his undergraduate degree from Pacific University with a major in communication disorders. He received a master’s degree in 1988 in deaf education and clinical audiology at Lamar University in Texas and began his career as a speech language pathologist and teacher at the Washington School for the Deaf, where he served for five years. Reeves then attended the University of Washington in Seattle, receiving a J.D. from the School of Law and an educational administration certificate from their College of Education in 1996.

Following completion of his law degree, Reeves held positions as the Principal at Oregon School for the Deaf and Program Administrator in the Peninsula School District, supporting   
all secondary level special education services there, before   
accepting the position as Assistant Director of Special   
Education in the Tacoma School District. Over the next   
five years, as Assistant Director and then Director of   
Special Education of the Tacoma Public Schools, he provided oversight of a special education department serving 4,400 students with disabilities in this public school district of 34,000 students.

“I want to express my gratitude to the Board of Trustees   
for placing their faith in me and giving me this great   
opportunity, which I wholeheartedly embrace,” said Reeves. “I look forward to upholding the legacy of a school such as Overbrook, which in its early history was the sole pathway taken by children who were blind or visually impaired in the Commonwealth. I am understandably impressed with the great things that occur at OSB now, every day. It is with deep respect for the past and high regard for the present   
that I’m eager to work alongside the staff to create new   
inroads for those we serve.”

Todd Reeves begins his tenure at OSB on July 3rd.

OSB History Day

Students and staff celebrated 185 years with our founder, “Julius Friedlander” (aka, Executive Director Jerry Kitzhoffer) on OSB History Day.

Dressed in a period costume from the era, “Julius” visited each OSB program to discuss and celebrate Overbrook’s long and distinguished history.

In the Early Childhood program, students presented a   
185th anniversary collaborative art project which included the handprint from each child in the program. After answering Julius’ questions about the early founding of OSB, students and staff sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to OSB, blew out the candles, and had birthday cake with Julius.

Julius then visited with students from the Elementary   
Program in Biddle Garden where they presented their   
185th art project entitled, “185 Smiles for Overbrook,” an   
art collage which included 185 photos of OSB students.

Middle School students met Julius in the OSB Museum to   
see the contents of their collaborative time capsule which included items from our era (such as photos and flash   
drives) and letters from current students to future OSB   
students. The time capsule will be opened during OSB’s   
200th anniversary celebration.

Later, Julius sat down to discuss OSB’s history with School to Work students in White Hall and then addressed High School students in the auditorium where everyone viewed the movie trailer created by our high school students entitled, “Then and Now at OSB.”

OSB History Day was a fitting tribute to 185 years of making a difference for students who are visually impaired.

**Prom 2017**

The OSB Fieldhouse was completely transformed to *Moroccan Magic* for this year’s Prom, thanks to the OSB Prom Committee, Chaired by Transition Teacher Justine Binck. Elijah M. and Shaniyah S. were voted Prom King and Queen of this enchanting evening.

Breaking Ground

OSB Executive Director and CEO Jerry Kitzhoffer welcomed **Mayor Jim Kenney** at the top of the Rotunda steps for the groundbreaking ceremony for the **M. Christine Murphy   
Horticulture and Education Center** on Friday, April 21.

Students, staff, and members of the board of trustees all took part in the customary shovel ceremony.

The planned 1,780 square-foot adaptive and accessible   
greenhouse will be built on the north side of campus   
between the Rotunda Building and Lions Hall, and will   
house OSB’s award-winning Farm to Table program and   
horticulture therapy activities.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Green Mountain   
Energy Sun Club, the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture   
Education Center will be a LEED-certified, NetZero Building. With construction anticipated to be complete by the spring   
of 2018, the Horticulture Center will also create an on-  
campus hub where students in OSB’s School to Work   
Program can gain real-life workforce skills that can result   
in future employment.

For more information about the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center, please visit www.obs.org.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, OSB students, staff and board members donned white construction hardhats for the customary first shovel dig in the ground on site of the future M. Christine Murphy Horticulture Center.

PA State Representative Morgan Cephas, OSB Board of Trustee President Warwick S. Wheeler, Steve Rewinski from Green Mountain Energy Sun Club, OSB Executive Director Jerry Kitzhoffer, Anna Rosenblatt, Mayor Jim Kenney, and OSB Board of Trustees Member Sid Rosenblatt.

THANK YOU!

**Special thanks to volunteers from KPMG, The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation and The Philadelphia Orchard Project,**who volunteered their time on a very hot day to plant 30 fruit trees with our students in the OSB Orchard. KPMG also donated braille and audio books to OSB students as part of its KPMG Family for Literacy Program.

OSB Education and Professional Development Director Jackie Brennan (in black shirt) gathered students and KPMG staff together to plant a cherry tree in the front orchard.

Everyone helps out at OSB, even the OSB Huskie.

**Happenings as OSB**

**The Friedlander Medal,** the only   
award bestowed by the Overbrook School for the Blind Board of Trustees, was presented in May to two long-time board members, Robert D’Anjolell (left) and F. Howard Braithwaite.

Mr. D’Anjolell has served continuously on the board for 25 years as board president, vice-president, and chair of the Development Committee. Mr. Braithwaite has served on the board continuously for 30 years as treasurer, chair of the Finance Committee, and the Budget and Audit Committee. He also served on the Development Committee.

Thank you for your dedication and years of service to OSB.

**Congratulations to Our Retiring Staff Members!**

We are extremely grateful for the assistance, guidance,   
and leadership you have provided throughout the years.   
Best of luck!

Photo, left to right: Jacqueline Brown, Intervener, 5 years

Patricia Jacobs, Elementary ParaEducator, 23 years

Gerald Kitzhoffer, Executive Director and CEO, 9 years

Bill Hitchcock, Maintenance, 32 years

Anna Maria Giuffrida, Housekeeping, 10 years

**OSB’s Extended School Year Program (ESY)** will run from July 10th to August 10th, from Monday through Thursday, 8:30 am-2 pm. This program is designed to maintain skills and   
reduce regression during the summer months by   
incorporating academic, social, behavioral and vocational Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. Each summer, program themes such as “All About Me” provide an engaging foundation for summer learning and fun. For more information, contact Michele McCallion, Elementary ESY Coordinator at michele@obs.org or Victoria Romano, Secondary Program ESY Coordinator at vromano@obs.org.

**OSB’s Transition Vocational Initiative (TVI)** is a   
three-week residential summer program (July 9-28) to   
prepare students who are blind or visually impaired for   
employment. TVI is presented in partnership with the   
Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services   
(BBVS) within the Department of Labor and Industry’s   
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. For more information,   
contact Stephanie Hays at shays@obs.org.

OSB FUN DAY, a celebration of the end of the school year,   
enabled students to enjoy an entire day of games, activities, and new experiences such as a horse-drawn carriage ride in the rain and guided bike rides.

OSB student Logan J. enjoys a ride with a guide from the   
Pennsylvania Center for Adapted Sports.

Insight **...information about eye conditions and diseases that can affect a child’s vision**

Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) is visual impairment that is caused by damage or atypical structures in the visual pathways and/or visual processing centers of the brain. Although the eye is normal, the brain cannot properly process the information it receives. People with CVI have difficulty using what their eye sees. They may have trouble recognizing faces, interpreting drawings, perceiving depth, or distinguishing between background and foreground.

The major causes of CVI are asphyxia, hypoxia (a lack of sufficient oxygen in the body’s blood cells), or ischemia (not enough blood supply to the brain), all of which may occur during the birth process.

For more information about Cortical Visual Impairment, visit www.afb.org/cvi

2017-2018 School Calendar

AuG 29 Tue All Instructional Staff Return  
In-Service Day – 8:30 a.m.

30 Wed Professional Development Day

31 Thu Professional Development Day

Sept 1 Fri No School for Instructional Staff

4 Mon LABOR DAY – SCHOOL CLOSED

5 Tue First day of school for all OSB students

Oct 5 Thu Overbrook Experience 6 - 9 p.m.

9 Mon COLUMBUS DAY – No School for Students & Instructional Staff

10 Tue All students return. Classes resume at 8:15 a.m.

13 Fri Parents’ Day – PERC Meeting

19 Thu PERC Meeting at OSB – 7:00 p.m. Nevil Center Conference Room

Nov 3 Fri Professional Development Day   
No School for Students End of First Quarter Grading Period

6 Mon All students return. Classes resume at 9:00 a.m.

22 Wed 12:00 p.m. Dismissal for Students; 1:00 P.M. Dismissal for Instructional Staff

23 Thu THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY SCHOOL CLOSED

24 Fri SCHOOL CLOSED

27 Mon All students return. Classes resume at 9:00 a.m.

Dec 4 Mon PERC Meeting at OSB – 7:00 p.m. Nevil Center Conference Room

7 Thu Holiday Concert – 7:00 p.m.   
Auditorium Public Invited

14 Thu Early Childhood Winter Program 10:00 a.m. Auditorium – Public Invited

22 Fri WINTER VACATION begins at the end   
of school day

2018

Jan 3 Wed All students return. Classes resume at   
8:15 a.m.

12 Fri 12:00 p.m. Dismissal for Students;   
Professional Development Day in Afternoon for Staff

15 Mon MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY SCHOOL CLOSED

16 Tue All students return. Classes resume   
at 8:15 a.m.

19 Fri End of First Semester Grading Period

Feb 16 Fri 12:00 p.m. Dismissal for Students;   
Professional Development Day in   
Afternoon for Staff

19 Mon PRESIDENT’S DAY   
No school for students & Instructional Staff

20 Tue All students return.   
Classes resume at 8:15 a.m.

Mar 23 Fri SPRING VACATION begins at end of school day  
End of Third Quarter Grading Period

Apr 3 Tue All s tudents return.   
Classes resume at 8:15 a.m.

16 Mon Professional Development Day   
No School for Students

17 Tue All students return. Classes resume at 8:15 a.m.  
PERC Meeting at OSB – 7:00 p.m.   
Nevil Center Conference Room

May 4 Fri Prom – 7:00 – 11:00 p.m.

9 Wed PERC Meeting at OSB – 7:00 p.m.   
Nevil Center Conference Room

17 Thu Spring Concert – 7:00 p.m. Public invited.

25 Fri Achievement Day – 9:00 a.m. – Auditorium

28 Mon MEMORIAL DAY – SCHOOL CLOSED

29 Tue All students return. Classes resume at   
8:15 a.m.

Jun 1 Fri Elementary Program Moving Up Ceremony

4 Mon Fun Day for all educational programs

7 Thu Early Childhood Summer Celebration   
10:00 a.m. Auditorium

13 Wed Commencement – 9:30 a.m. Auditorium

15 Fri 12:00 p.m. Dismissal for Students; 3:15 p.m.   
Dismissal for Instructional Staff; Last day for   
students & Instructional Staff

\*18 – 20 M–W Snow Make-Up Day #4, #5, #6

22 – 24 Alumni Weekend

Jul 4 Tue Independence Day Observed   
SCHOOL CLOSED

Jul 9 – Aug 9 Early Childhood Summer Program  
Program runs Mondays – Thursdays,   
9:00 – 2:00

July 9 – Aug 9 ESY Program   
Program runs Mondays – Thursdays, 9:00 – 2:00

*\* Additional Snow Make-Up days if needed*

WE KNEW HE   
WAS OLD, BUT…!

“Julius Friedlander”, aka Jerry Kitzhoffer, speaks with an OSB Teacher from 185 years ago!

Save the Date

10/5/17

The fourth Annual Overbrook Experience

A Benefit for Overbrook School for the Blind