



OVERBROOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

VOL. 71, No. 3, Summer 2018

TOWERSNEWS



**BEST YOU'VE EVER SEEN
CLASS OF 2018!**



TOWERS NEWSLETTER
Vol. 71, No. 3, Summer 2018
Overbrook School for the Blind
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Established 1832

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends:

Today is a special day. For our graduates, it is a celebration of years of hard work and study. We hope the commencement ceremony is an occasion that you will remember fondly for the rest of your lives.

It is also an important day for the parents, partners, family and friends of the graduates. The achievement of a degree is one that is seldom managed without the support of those nearest to us. Today is a celebration which you are very much part of too.

We are also united today by a shared sense of pride in achievement. OSB is proud of its graduates, and we hope you are equally proud to be joining a community of alumni that is over 185 years old. We hope you will take confidence from that long history which shows that OSB graduates have gone on to great success in life. We also hope you will remember your time here as being some of the happiest years of your life.

Congratulations, Graduates! On behalf of everyone at Overbrook School for the Blind, I wish you every success for the future.

Sincerely,

Todd Reeves
Executive Director and CEO

COMMENCEMENT



OSB Seniors put on their best and lined up for the processional to the stage as the Commencement ceremony began.



OSB Board of Trustee Vice President Elizabeth Passanante Rodriguez accepted the Distinguished Alumni Award posthumously in honor of classmate Alexander J. Stewart.



Mr. Reeves posed with Shamira B. and OSB Board of Trustees President Warwick S. Wheeler.



HS Coordinator Helene Marano presented an award to Shahdirah W.



Tyler J. addressed the senior message to his classmates.



Janna T. addressed her classmates during the senior message.

THE 2018 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

The 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award was awarded posthumously to OSB Alumnus **Alexander J. Stewart** at this year's Commencement Ceremony. This award recognizes an individual who has made a significant contribution to society and has demonstrated unusual courage, persistence and imagination in overcoming challenges.

At the age of 11, Mr. Stewart developed purpura hemorrhagica and was hospitalized and in a coma for three months. When he awoke from his comatose state, his eyes had to be forced open and the scar tissue from the dryness caused him permanent blindness. He enrolled in OSB at the age of 12, became captain of the track team and was voted Vice President of his graduating class in 1953. After graduation, Mr. Stewart went into the snack bar business for 45 years and retired at the age of 65. He married in 1955 and had three children, eight grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

In 1978, Mr. Stewart received a black belt in karate which took eight years of hard work and dedication to accomplish due to his vision loss. He was featured in *PM Magazine* and *Black Belt Magazine* and also did many shows at sports arenas, churches and schools. He was in the Lions Club for 26 years, was a mason, head of the Blue Lodge, Chapter Council and Commandery, and awarded the Masonic York Cross of Honor. He was president of the Blind Merchants guild and served for over 25 years and received the Terence Reilly Service award in 2000.

The 2018 OSB Distinguished Alumni Award was posthumously awarded to Mr. Stewart in loving memory and grateful appreciation. OSB Board of Trustee Vice President Elizabeth Passanante Rodriguez accepted the award on his behalf.

PRESENTING THE CLASS OF 2018



SHAMIRAH BROWN



RICKY CHARLTON



SHANE FAUST



RASHIY JONES



TYLER JORDAN



BRYSHEEN PAYNE



RASHAD PEEBLES



GILBERT PEREZ



ASHLEE PRESTON



JANNA TAWAM



TAMIR TERRELL



SHAHDIRAH WESTBROOK

CONGRATULATIONS

Early Childhood Program Graduates!



The entire staff of Overbrook School for the Blind celebrates your success and wishes you well as you leave Early Intervention for other adventures in learning. We will miss you!

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM CLASS OF 2018

Daniel A.
Joseph M. M. B.
Saliyah B.
Gabriel G.

Neveah J.
Addison L.
Alena M.
Zahira M.-S.

Elaina P.
Brendan R.
Noelle S.
Antoine S.

Sora S.
Johny V.-S.

Happy Retirement!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RETIRING STAFF MEMBERS!

We are grateful to Ernest Grimes (Security Officer, 4 years), Linda Bucher (Lead Teacher, Middle School and School to Work Programs, 30 years), and James Loftus (Receiving Specialist, 9 years) for their remarkable years of service at OSB.

Wishing you a new journey of success and happiness!



Ernest Grimes (left) with Linda Bucher and James Loftus

The **OVERBROOK EXPERIENCE**

OSB will present the first **Caulfield Medal of Distinction** to Jeffrey D. Marrazzo and Kathy A. High, M.D., Co-Founders of Spark Therapeutics, during the fifth annual Overbrook Experience Dinner on Tuesday, October 9, 2018.

Created in honor of the legacy and pioneering spirit of Genevieve Caulfield, an alumna of OSB, the Caulfield Medal of Distinction will be awarded to individuals or organizations responsible for exceptional deeds that improve society, especially the lives of those living with disabilities.

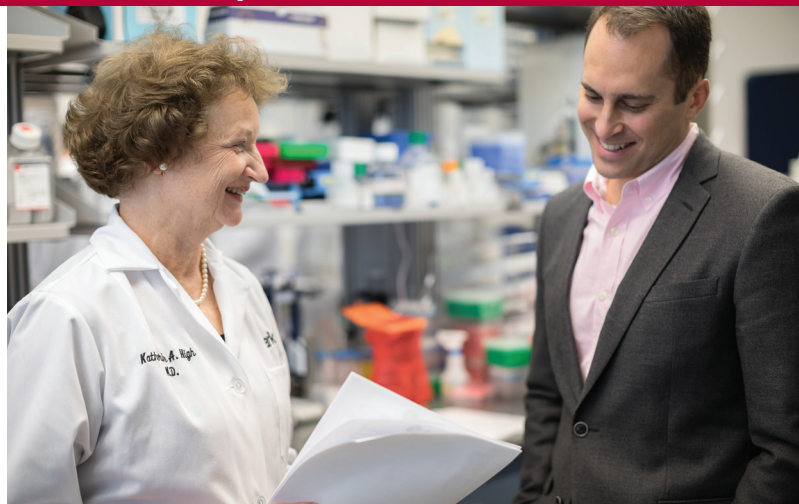


Genevieve Caulfield

Genevieve Caulfield lost her sight in an accident when a doctor spilled acid into her eyes when she was two months old. She graduated from Overbrook School for the Blind in 1905 and went on to attend Columbia Teachers College. In 1938, she opened the Bangkok School for the Blind, partly financed by her own savings, after she learned that blind children were considered useless in Thailand. From 1956 to 1960, she organized a school for the blind and a rehabilitation center for boys in Saigon. In 1961, Ms. Caulfield was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding. In 1963, she received the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** in recognition of her work for the blind in Asia. The award was given by President Lyndon B. Johnson in honor of President John F. Kennedy. Ms. Caulfield published an autobiography about her achievements in 1960 entitled, *The Kingdom Within*.

The inaugural recipients of the Caulfield Medal of Distinction, Jeffrey Marrazzo and Dr. Kathy High, are pioneers in gene therapy.

Jeffrey Marrazzo has led the creation and growth of Spark Therapeutics from a research center within the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to a fully integrated, commercial gene therapy company. Under Marrazzo's leadership, Spark has received FDA approval for and launched the first gene therapy for a genetic disease (Retinitis Pigmentosa) in the United States. In the four years since founding Spark, Marrazzo has secured more than \$1 billion in capital and built an organization of more than 320 colleagues. Marrazzo currently serves as a board member of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO). He received a B.A. in economics and B.S.E. in systems science and engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. He also holds a dual M.B.A./M.P.A. from The Wharton School of the University of



Dr. Kathy High with Jeffrey Marrazzo

Pennsylvania and Harvard University, a program which he founded.

Dr. Kathy High, a hematologist with a long-standing interest in gene therapy for genetic disease, was director of the Center for Cellular and Molecular Therapeutics at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) where she assembled a multidisciplinary team of scientists and researchers working to discover new gene and cell therapies for genetic diseases and to facilitate rapid translation of preclinical discoveries into clinical application. As president at Spark Therapeutics, she has led the development and regulatory approval of the first gene therapy for a genetic disease in the United States. Spark has shown human proof-of-concept of its leading gene therapy platform in both the retina and the liver, and has received breakthrough therapy designations for three different therapeutics across two different tissue targets, the eye and the liver. Dr. High was a long-time member of the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania and of the medical staff at CHOP, where she was also an Investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. She served a five-year term on the FDA Advisory Committee on Cell, Tissue and Gene Therapies and is a past president of the American Society of Gene & Cell Therapy (ASGCT). Dr. High received her A.B. in chemistry from Harvard University, an M.D. from the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, a business certification from the University of North Carolina Business School Management Institute for Hospital Administrators and an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania.

The Overbrook Experience Dinner connects guests with the challenges that students who are blind, visually impaired or living with additional disabilities face each day. More than \$300,000 has been raised by the Overbrook Experience Dinner to support the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture Education Center on OSB's campus and improve student access to adaptive/assistive technology.

For more information about the Overbrook Experience Dinner, please contact Robert Smith, Director of Development at rsmith@obs.org or 215-877-0313, ext. 264.



FROM THE GROUND UP

The OSB Campus will look appreciably different when students return in the fall. The M. Christine Murphy Horticulture Educational Center will be nearly complete, located on the north side of campus between the Rotunda building and Lions Hall.

During the summer, keep an eye on the Overbrook School for the Blind YouTube Channel (OverbrookSFTB) or the OSB website at www.obs.org for daily videos of the bricks and mortar going in and eventual installation of the glass greenhouse panels.

Happy Summer!

ESY, OSB's Extended School Year Program, is designed to maintain skills and reduce regression during the summer months by incorporating academic, social, behavioral and vocational Individualized Educational Program (IEP) goals. ESY will begin on July 9th.



The Transitional Vocational Summer Program, OSB's three-week residential program to prepare blind or visually impaired students for employment, is presented in partnership with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS). It will run from July 8th to July 27th.

OSB students return on Tuesday, September 4th for the first day of school. The entire 2018-2019 school calendar is available on our website at www.obs.org.

OUTBOUND WITH OSB



Front row: Amanda Bear, Samantha McGovern, Allison Failing, Brittany Larkin

Second row: Laren Simpson

Third row: Eva Worsley, Elizabeth Fox, Kelsey McGuire, Helene Marano, Katherine Davis, Courtney Romano, Joann McNamee, Stephanie Hays and Vince McVeigh

(Not pictured: Jessica Suppa, Bob Ashbridge, Frank Irzyk, Melissa Brown, Laura Stephan)

OSB had a big presence at the recent Pennsylvania-Delaware Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Penn-Del AER) Conference. A team of OSB Specialists and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment attended the conference and some presented, including Occupational Therapist Melissa Brown and Speech Language Pathologist Laura Stephan ("Tactile Talking: a Case Study"), High School Coordinator and Penn-Del AER Board Member Helene Marano and Transition Coordinator Bob Ashbridge ("Bridging the Gap from High School to Beyond"), and Technology Coordinator and Penn-Del AER Board Treasurer Frank Irzyk ("How Artificial Intelligence Can Broaden Horizons for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired"). After the presentations, the group of OSB TVIs and Specialists took a moment to pause for a photo with OSB Board of Trustees member and Penn-Del Board Officer/Conference Committee Co-Chair Vince McVeigh.



We welcomed 129 guests from 35 OSB families for our first-ever Funky Friday Family Barbeque and Swim, an opportunity for

our parents, students and their siblings to meet other families with children who have visual impairments. Guests enjoyed the Kappen Aquatic Center, playground and patio on a beautiful night. Many thanks to the 20 OSB staff volunteers who volunteered their time to make the evening so memorable.



OVERBROOK
SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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