



## **PERSPECTIVES ON A PANDEMIC**

2019-2020 Annual Report



### Dear Friends:

## What an unforgettable year.

When the 2019-2020 school year started off on a high note with our recognition of White Cane Awareness Day in the fall, we never expected that by springtime a global pandemic would close our school for months to come. The loss of our daily routines and social experiences wasn't something many of us even fathomed could happen before the pandemic hit.

Virtually overnight, Overbrook School for the Blind shifted to distance learning, a challenge for visually impaired students who use their sense of touch to learn about the world around them. Covid-19 forced us to quickly reassess how we teach, how we work, how we collaborate, how we engage with our students and families, and how we can embrace technology in ways we have not in the past.

It was a steep learning curve. It was a huge challenge to find the best way to support all of

the unique needs of our students, and distance learning required adaptability and rapid pivoting in every aspect of the day.

But as we have always done at Overbrook School for the Blind, we drew strength from our supportive family: the OSB Board of Trustees, alumni, donors, staff and volunteers. Thanks to your investment — which supports the dedicated faculty and enriches the experience of all of our students, from our youngest babies to our School to Work learners — OSB continues to provide an educational community that is built around each child.

On behalf of the students we serve, thank you for your commitment to our school. We are proud to share this Annual Report with our Overbrook School for the Blind family and friends.

Sincerely,

**Todd Reeves** 

**Executive Director and CEO** 

Marjorie G. Stein

President of the Board of Trustees

Mayora S Steen

# PERSPECTIVES ON A PANDEMIC

The unprecedented shuttering of Overbrook School for the Blind due to the Covid-19 pandemic was the most jarring experience of the 2019-2020 school year. Within a moment's notice, teachers were asked to leave their classrooms indefinitely and recreate a learning environment that was one hundred percent virtual. Suddenly incumbent upon us was retooling, rethinking, and reimagining the way we deliver education to over 340 students with visual impairment, blindness, deafblindness and other challenges.

But as Overbrook School for the Blind has proven time and time again, we will meet every challenge with a renewed determination to further our mission: to develop and deliver education that enhances the options available to students with visual impairments. Our dedicated team of teachers, paraeducators, therapists, and specialists found ways to rise to the challenge and embrace the new normal while working individually and in groups with students and collaborating with their parents, guardians and sometimes, siblings, who supported learning plans.

Together, we pivoted to technology and a distance learning platform while staying connected as partners, colleagues, and friends.



# MAXIMIZING **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

"What if we could reach beyond the confines of the online class-room to fully engage with our students?"



About a month into the school's pandemic shutdown, warmer weather was on the horizon, but students were still confined within their homes on the computer for most of the school day. Elementary classroom teacher Maria Dwyer and a team of service providers asked, 'What if we could reach beyond the confines of the online classroom to fully engage with our students?'

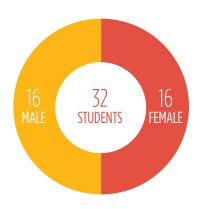
"Here was an opportunity to develop hands-on lessons about nature as part of a unit I was delivering virtually," says Dwyer. "The unit was titled, 'Nature: Studying Plants and Exploring the World Around Us.' The subject matter propelled us to develop lessons that would bridge the gap between school and home since learning goes on even after class ends."

Seven-year old **Aubrey Marino**, a student in the Elementary program with cortical visual impairment (CVI) and mobility challenges, loved being outside after learning about nature inside. "Aubrey loves to sit on the grass," says Elissa Marino, Aubrey's mother. "Today, while sitting on her chair she asked to go outside and when I asked if she wanted to get down, she replied with the new word, *ground*. Yesterday, she stayed outside under the shade of our big tree discovering nature and playing for two hours with leaves, sticks, and our windmills."

Similarly, third-grader **Noah Thome** typically loves to use his adapted mobility device for orientation and mobility to navigate familiar environments on campus such as his classroom and throughout the hallways. During the school closure, with the support of family members who worked with Noah's teacher and IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team to magnify those mobility skills, it was even more fun to use this equipment outside, picking up treasures he found along the way.

Loary Thome, Noah's mother, was excited to see him continue to thrive, grow and learn, and she emailed a photo of Noah on one of their walks to demonstrate his progress. "Just wanted to share a picture of Noah walking with his shopping cart," said Thome. "Mommy took him for two walks today! Thanks for making that possible."

## ELEMENTARY PROGRAM



3 BLIND
29 VISUALLY IMPAIRED
6 HEARING LOSS

#### **AMBULATION**

17 WHEELCHAIR 13 WALKER

#### **RELATED SERVICES**

**33** OT **27** PT **32** SPEECH **15** O&M

#### INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUM

2 ACADEMIC FOCUS
11 FUNCTIONAL ACADEMIC FOCUS
12 EXPERIENTIAL FOCUS
7 LIFE SKILLS FOCUS

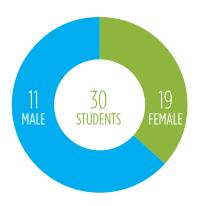
#### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

2 INTERVENER 2 1:1 6 1:1 NURSF

#### **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

2 COUNSELING 1 BEHAVIOR PLAN

## MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM



6 BLIND 24 VISUALLY IMPAIRED 10 HEARING LOSS

#### **AMBULATION**

9 WHEELCHAIR 20 WALKER

#### **RELATED SERVICES**

**25** OT

**12** PT

**25** SPEECH

**19** 0&M

#### INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUM

8 FUNCTIONAL ACADEMIC FOCUS

8 EXPERIENTIAL FOCUS

14 LIFE SKILLS FOCUS

#### **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

**3** INTERVENER **3** 1:1 **5** 1:1 NURSE

#### **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

**3** COUNSELING 7 BEHAVIOR PLAN Fifteen-year-old high school student **Amy Rubins** has been a part of the Overbrook School for the Blind community since she was nine months old when her family was referred to the Early Intervention Outreach Program after she was diagnosed with deafblindness and cortical visual impairment.

"All of Amy's educational life has been at Overbrook, and all of her special education teachers have been TVI's (Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment) which I think is so important," says her mother, Rita. "What I love about OSB is that Amy is in the least restrictive environment and she's not a token. She does all of the things other typical kids do as if she didn't have disabilities. Everything my other typical daughter does, Amy does, too. She has a best friend; they've been friends for years. They have fun together and they get in trouble together. I know that Amy wouldn't have the quality of life she has now if she wasn't surrounded by actual peers, people who understand things the way she does."

When OSB had to shut down in March due to the pandemic, Rita was worried about Amy's potential skill regression and social isolation.

"At the beginning, distance learning was hard, and I think Amy was confused that she wasn't going to school every day," says Rita. "But now, I can't get over how hard the middle school team worked virtually to give Amy as much education as they could considering the upside down world we are living in today."

Rita frequently collaborated with Amy's teacher, Sarah Boudwin, and her Occupational Therapist, Grace Culbertson, to deliver virtual lessons to Amy that would keep her attention.

"Collaborating and connecting daily with parents—and sometimes, siblings who have pitched in and supported learning plans—is the key to having success with distance learning," says Boudwin. "Parents have the best grasp of their child's strengths and challenges, and a positive partnership between parents and teachers goes a long way in helping students reach their full potential."

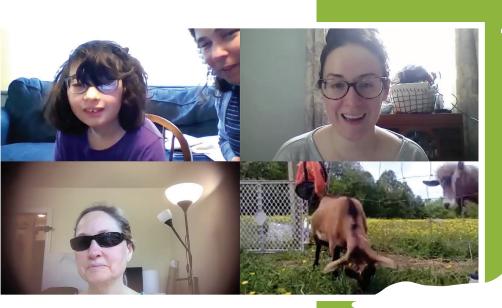
While collaboration in virtual spaces might not happen the same way as it does in person, connecting with each other and planning around each student's diverse needs to figure out what works has become essential in our current environment.

"I wondered how I could make distance learning more fun," says Rita. "Knowing that Amy is an animal-lover, a friend of mine told me about a farm in Virginia that offered a live video feed over Zoom of their farm animals for a small fee. I emailed the farm owner to set it up and contacted Amy's teacher to coordinate the video feed into a one-on-one math class. I remember asking Miss Sarah, 'Can I bring a goat to Zoom class today? Her name is Margoat.' It was fun, and I think it motivated Amy a bit."

"OSB teachers and therapists are so committed to our kids," says Rita. "They always go beyond. All of the love and care that Amy receives in person at Overbrook is still there. We can feel it online."

# VIRTUAL COLLABORATIONS





"Can I bring a goat to Zoom class today? Her name is Margoat."

# WORKING DURING THE SHUTDOWN



"I am going to Kutztown University to become a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment"



Twenty-one year-old student **Rashad Peebles** was working hard on his academic goals and orientation and mobility skills when the pandemic hit in the spring.

"Mr. Le helped me a lot during class time," says Rashad. "We talked a lot about college and career development, how to build a resume, what to do at a job, and more importantly, what not to do when you get a job."

Rashad actually started at OSB in the Early Childhood Program, but transitioned to an elementary school within his district. In 12th grade, he returned to OSB. "At my last school, I felt like they were just pushing me along, and I wanted to get into a college," says Rashad.

In January, with the skills he learned in the School to Work Program, Rashad independently sent in a resume and interviewed for a job as a dishwasher at Ann's Choice, a senior living community in Warminster.

"I wanted to save money to go to school," says Rashad. "I was nervous about getting coronavirus, but I wasn't working directly with residents. I wasn't near them. I was a utility worker and worked in the kitchen as a dishwasher. I was extra careful about handwashing and wearing a mask."

With the goal in mind of going to college, Rashad continued to work part-time throughout the height of the pandemic until August...when he departed for college.

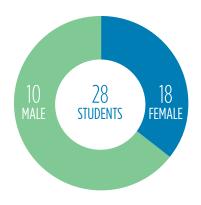
"I'm going to Kutztown University to become a TVI," says Rashad. "I really like it."

Over the summer, Rashad prepared for his move to Kutztown by studying the virtual tours that the university provided on Instagram to get a sense of the layout of the campus. He also sought assistance from the Office of Disability Services who provided him with a guide to help him create a footprint of his class schedule, and when in doubt, he asked many questions of his new friends, too.

"It isn't too difficult to get around since the dormitories are on the south side of campus and all of the academic buildings are on the north side, and there's one main street that you have to cross to get to them," says Rashad. "It's pretty easy. It's not like I have to cross a lot of streets like I do in the city."

Unfortunately, after putting in all of this work to adapt to living on campus, there was an outbreak of coronavirus on campus, and Rashad returned home to finish the semester virtually. "I wasn't really surprised," says Rashad. "I kind of expected it. I'm doing my classes online now because it's safer, but I'm really looking forward to going back, hopefully in January."

## SCHOOL TO WORK PROGRAM



9 BLIND
19 VISUALLY IMPAIRED
4 HEARING LOSS

**AMBULATION 6** WHEELCHAIR **19** WAI KFR

#### **RELATED SERVICES**

**15** OT **10** PT **10** SPEECH

**16** 0&M

#### INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUM

4 ACADEMIC FOCUS

9 FUNCTIONAL ACADEMIC FOCUS

10 EXPERIENTIAL FOCUS

5 LIFE SKILLS FOCUS

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

**2** 1:1 **3** 1:1 NURSE

## **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

**3** COUNSELING **1** BEHAVIOR PLAN



## 2019-2020

#### **OCTOBER**

Blindness Awareness Month was celebrated with multiple events including White Cane Awareness Day, the Inaugural OSB 5K Run Walk 'N' Roll, and the Overbrook Experience Gala.

## NOVEMBER ----

OSB's newest student-run enterprise, a commercial-grade 3D print shop, opened for business.



## **DECEMBER**

Overbrook Outpost opened for business in the Springfield Mall selling student-made arts and crafts.

## **FEBRUARY**

OSB's first international student was evaluated in the CVI Clinic.

# Highlights



#### MARCH

The Covid-19 pandemic closes Overbrook School for the Blind.

#### APRIL →

The Voices of Overbrook Choir, directed by Christopher Sapienza, partnered with Musicopia teaching artist Alex Mitnick, on a songwriting residency to write, produce, and virtually perform an original tune entitled. "Dream."



## MAY

The M. Christine Murphy Horticulture Education Center received a Zero Energy Certification, making it the second Zero Energy-certified project in Pennsylvania.



## JUNE ----

OSB hosted its first virtual prom, sports banquet, and graduation.

# 2019-2020 **By the**



Female



## **182 STUDENTS**







37 Rline

145 Visually Impaired

38 Hearing Loss



**99** Wheelchair



**67** Walker



148 Occupational Therapy



11 Physical Therapy



137 Speech



100 Orientation & Mobility

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

**8** INTERVENER

**13** 1:1

**20** 1:1 NURSE

## **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

12 COUNSELING

**17** BEHAVIOR PLAN

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

**70** ON CAMPUS **14** OFF CAMPUS

### LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

AT HUITE

**89.4%** ENGLISH

**5.4%** SPANISH

**1.1%** ARABIC

**2.1%** URDU

.5% KOREAN

.5% CHINESE

.5% RUSSIAN

.5% SINHALA



## USING THE UNIQUE LEARNING SYSTEMS, OSB STUDENTS FOLLOW ONE OF FOUR CURRICULAR AREAS:

#### INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUM

**33 Academic Focus:** Students follow a typical academic curriculum or program

**45 Functional Academic Focus:** Students focus on independent living, vocational and social skills, and emphasize communication

**58 Experiential Focus:** Students with significant challenges learn to interact with their environment

**46 Life Skills Focus:** Students learn the skills needed for full participation in everyday life

A student's specific curricular focus is individually determined by his or her multi-disciplinary IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team.

## Numbers











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#### Berks

Twin Valley

#### Bucks

Bensalem Township Bristol Township Centennial Central Bucks Neshaminy Pennridge Pennsbury

#### Chester

Avon Grove Great Valley West Chester Area Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School

#### Delaware

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Philadelphia (Charter Schools)
Mastery Charter SchoolHardy Williams
Mastery Charter School Smedley Elementary
Universal Bluford Charter School
Universal Daroff Charter School

#### York

Spring Grove

#### Camden

Camden City

#### Gloucester

**Deptford Township** 

#### Salem

Penns Grove-Carneys Point

## **PROGRAMS**

All of OSB's programs teach the Pennsylvania Core Standards and the Expanded Core Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairments. Students also receive related services as determined by their IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team. These services can include: Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Educational Audiology, Orientation and Mobility, Positive Behavior Support and Counseling. Students also have classes in art, music, physical education, and swimming. Students ages 13 and older can participate in sports as part of the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind which includes swimming, cheerleading, wrestling, Goal Ball, and track and field. Students ages 16 and older are eligible to participate in the residential White Hall Independent Living Program.

#### EARLY INTERVENTION OUTREACH

Provides specialized services to children who are visually impaired ages birth to five and their families. Birth to three services are typically provided in the home, and three to five year olds receive community based services in preschools, daycare settings or on the OSB campus.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD

The campus-based component of the Early Intervention Outreach Program designed for children between the ages of three and five.

#### **ELEMENTARY**

Along with academics, instruction includes mobility, communication and technology, and social skills for students six to ten years of age.

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Students between the ages of 11 and 14 are immersed in classroom learning, daily living skills, assistive technology, and communication skills with a goal of functional independence.



#### HIGH SCHOOL

College, career, and community-ready is the goal for students 15 to 18 years of age.

#### SCHOOL TO WORK

After 12th grade, students gain additional work experience and prepare for college while taking college courses under the supervision of TVIs.

#### ITINERANT SERVICES

OSB also provides itinerant services for school age students (K-12) at charter schools and school districts upon request.

#### INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

OSB promotes the use of assistive technology to expand education and employment opportunities for people with visual impairment worldwide.

## **SUPPORTERS**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND COMMITMENT TO OUR STUDENTS. As a donor, you are an essential part of our mission to enhance the lives of students with blindness, visual impairments, and other challenges. We have compiled a full list of donors who made a gift from July 2019 through June 2020. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy. Please accept our apologies for any incorrect listing or omission, and let us know about the error by emailing development@obs.org.

#### **VOLUNTEERS BY EVENT**

#### ANNUAL REPORT AND **DEVELOPMENT MAILINGS**

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In Honor of Eva Dougherty Mr. Robert W. Wilson

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In Honor of Rebecca Ilniski Mr. Leon J. Martz

Ms. Cynthia Pfleegor In Honor of Sean Madden

## Ms. Victoria McKeever

Mrs. Paula Madden Cicchinelli

#### In Honor of Sean Madden's Graduation Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Hodel

In Honor of Nick Mangano Labov Plumbing & Heating Supply, LLC

In Honor of Michele McCallion Ms. Patricia Bonner

In Honor of Haley Murphy Ms. Jocelyn Brody Labov Plumbing & Heating Supply, LLC

In Honor of Robert L. Pratter Mr. Stephen d. Solenberger Dr. Joseph E. Giangrasso

In Honor of Aiden Stone Labov Plumbing & Heating Supply, LLC

#### In Honor of David Rosenblatt and Brooke McQueen's Wedding

Mr. Sherwin I. Seligsohn

#### In Honor of the Later John D. Ware and his Surviving Wife Alice M. Ware

The Ware Bluegrass Foundation Inc. of Naples Florida

#### In Honor of Karen and Marion Weiss 25th Wedding Anniversary

Mrs. Lois Beamesderfer



## 2019 - 2020 FINANCIAL REVIEW

#### **OPERATING REVENUES**

TOTAL	\$26,485,300
Other Income	876,800
Gifts and Private Support	4,731,000
Government & Grants	1,513,900
State & Local Tuition	\$19,363,600

#### **OPERATING EXPENSES**

TOTAL	\$26,485,300
International Outreach	342,600
Early Intervention	1,407,600
Preschool	5,700,100
School Age	\$19,035,000

## GIFTS TO THE SCHOOL

Overbrook School for the Blind is a private, non-profit educational organization that qualifies for tax-exempt contributions. There are many ways for individuals, organizations and corporations to support the School and its programs, including:

- A gift of cash made either directly or designated to the school through other agencies, such as the United Way or the Combined Federal Campaign. Overbrook's number with the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania is 00816
- A gift of cash, if made by an individual, may also qualify for a matching gift from the donor's employer
- A gift in memory of or in honor of a relative or a friend
- In-kind gifts of services, goods, equipment, or property
- · A gift of appreciated securities or real estate, outright or deferred
- A gift of a life insurance policy, designating the school as the beneficiary
- A charitable gift annuity, which in addition to helping the school, provides the donor or a designee with a regular stream of income
- A gift by will. Those who wish to make a personal beguest to the school may use the following language: "I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to Overbrook School for the Blind, a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the sum of \_\_\_ dollars (\$\_\_\_). I direct that this sum be applied to the general uses and purposes of the corporation under the direction of its Board of Trustees."

For additional information about methods of giving and other ways of supporting the school, please visit the Donate section of www.obs.org or contact:

Development Office, Overbrook School for the Blind 6333 Malvern Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19151 Tel: 215.877.0313, ext. 264 Fax: 215.689.0401 E-mail: pamela.mcgonigle@obs.org



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#### The Mission Of Overbrook School For The Blind

is to develop and deliver education that enhances the options available for persons with visual impairments, including those with additional challenges, so that they have the greatest opportunity to experience active and fulfilling lives.



#### The Vision Of Overbrook School For The Blind

is to inspire individuals with visual impairment, including those with additional challenges, to achieve their highest potential; to share our culture that embraces their abilities; to be a dynamic and leading educational organization; and to use our expertise to positively influence our students, families, partners and peers, regionally, nationally and internationally.



