RESILIENT RESPONSE
TO COVID-19

2020–2021 Annual Report
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.

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Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Overbrook School for the Blind Board of Trustees and staff, we are pleased to share the 2020-2021 Annual Report with you, “Responding to Covid-19”.

There is no question that 2020 was one of the most challenging years for Overbrook School for the Blind and our community. Together, we weathered innumerable challenges, and there were many days when it was difficult not to focus on the hardship and loss that Covid-19 brought to our doorstep.

But with the strength and support of our staff and with the expertise of our Board of Trustees, whose insight and guidance helped us carry out our mission, we quickly adjusted to the situation, switched to virtual methods of interaction, and continued to serve our students and families.

We learned that we can deliver progress even amid historic adversity. We adapted and became more resilient, adjusting operations and working methods. We became more responsive, assisting our students and families in times of immediate need. We maximized the use of technology. More importantly, we worked together in good faith and with shared goals, many of which are highlighted in this report and appear alongside the creative solutions and strategies implemented to restore what was lost due to the pandemic.

As we hope for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-2022, we look back on a very active and impactful year at OSB, and thank you for your continued generosity and commitment to changing the lives of students with vision loss and other challenges.

Sincerely,

Todd Reeves  
Executive Director and CEO  

Marjorie G. Stein  
President of the Board of Trustees
Throughout our history, Overbrook School for the Blind has experienced many successes in enhancing the education of students with vision loss, but the arrival of Covid-19 tested our school like never before.

Our team pulled together admirably to continue delivering extraordinary instruction and care in the face of this unprecedented pandemic.

What we learned is that no matter how long this pandemic lasts, our work can only be done when we mobilize the collective power of our entire community, weaving a web of support between families, staff, partners, donors, and volunteers.

We are all in this together—stewards of our community and caretakers of one another.
**2020-2021 PANDEMIC TIMELINE on OSB’s Campus**

- **JULY**
  - OSB announces on-campus and distance learning plan for opening of school year

- **AUGUST**
  - School Reopening Health and Safety Plan issued
  - Transportation schedules and practices adjusted to create social distance between students
  - Plan created for staggering use of communal rooms, hallways, cafeteria
  - Quarantine Room established in the Nevil Center Multipurpose Room

- **SEPTEMBER**
  - Virtual and in-person instruction begins

- **OCTOBER**
  - Contact Tracing Procedure issued

- **NOVEMBER**
  - Temporary Covid-19 Employee Procedures updated

- **DECEMBER**
  - With partners The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, OSB advocates for the prioritization of teachers, support staff and therapists who work closely with children with complex medical needs for the planned administration of COVID-19 vaccines

- **FEBRUARY**
  - Phase 1A Vaccination Support Letter issued

- **MARCH**
  - Covid-19 Testing begins on campus
  - Vaccination program for teachers and staff at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia begins

- **APRIL**
  - OSB hosts first on-campus vaccination clinic
  - OSB returns to a five-day, on-campus instruction

- **MAY**
  - OSB hosts second on-campus vaccination clinic

- **JULY**
  - OSB hosts third on-campus vaccination clinic
2020-2021
AT A GLANCE

180 STUDENTS

- 79 Virtual Instruction
- 101 On-Campus Instruction
- 40 Blind
- 140 Visually Impaired
- 55 Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)
- 37 Hearing Loss
- 63 Wheelchair
- 102 Walker
- 10 Assisted Walker

- 148 Occupational Therapy
- 107 Physical Therapy
- 137 Speech
- 96 Orientation and Mobility
- 23 Audiology

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
- 8 Intervener (works one-on-one with students who are deafblind)
- 22 1:1 Nurse

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT
- 10 Counseling
- 17 Behavior Plan

WORK EXPERIENCE
- 63 On Campus
- 17 Off Campus
Using the Unique Learning Systems, OSB Students Follow One of Four Curricular Areas:

**Academic Focus:** 29 Students follow a typical academic curriculum or program

**Functional Academic Focus:** 46 Students focus on independent living, vocational and social skills, and emphasize communication

**Experiential Focus:** 67 Students with significant challenges learn to interact with their environment

**Life Skills Focus:** 38 Students learn the skills needed for full participation in everyday life

A student’s specific curricular focus is individually determined by their multi-disciplinary IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team.

**LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME**

156 English
3 Arabic
1 Chinese
14 Spanish
1 Korean
1 Punjabi
1 Russian
2 Urdu
1 Vietnamese

**STUDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

**Berks County**
Conrad Weiser Area
Muhlenberg

**Bucks County**
Bristol Township
Neshaminy
Pennsbury

**Chester County**
Avon Grove
Great Valley
Tredyffrin-Easttown
West Chester Area

**Delaware County**
Chester-Upland
Chichester
Garnet Valley
Marple-Newtown
Penn-Delco
Radnor Township
Rose Tree Media
Southeast Delco
Springfield
Upper Darby
Wallingford-Swarthmore
William Penn

**Montgomery County**
Abington
Cheltenham
Colonial
Hatboro-Horsham
Jenkintown
Lower Merion
Methacton

**Norristown Area**
**North Penn**
**Perkiomen Valley**
**Pottstown**
**Springfield Township**
**Spring-Ford Area**
**Upper Dublin**
**Upper Merion Area**
**Upper Moreland**

**Philadelphia School District**
Philadelphia (Charter Schools)
Agora Charter School
Mastery Charter School–Hardy Williams
Mastery Charter School–Pickett Campus
Mastery Charter School–Smedley Elementary
Universal Companies
Universal Institute
Charter School

**York County**
Spring Grove

**Camden County**
Camden City
**Gloucester County**
Deptford Township
**OPERATIONAL RESPONSE**

**Vaccinations:** In order to protect students and staff from getting seriously ill with COVID-19 and to reduce transmission, all teachers, staff and students who were eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination were encouraged to do so.

- 3 Vaccination clinics were held on campus
- 99% of staff vaccinated (to date)

**Masks:**
- 14,000 masks ordered
- 1,600 pediatric masks ordered
- 200 clear masks for hearing impaired
- 500 N95 masks
- 2,000 Face shields
- 4,100 disposable gowns
- 54,000 pairs of gloves
- 648 bottles of hand sanitizer
- 20 stand hand sanitizer dispensers
- 30 wall hand sanitizer dispensers

Who says you can’t look great while protecting yourself and others? Face masks have become a part of our wardrobes, and some folks have had fun with them. In addition to creating OSB-branded masks, which are available for purchase on our website, students and staff have shown their creativity by turning face masks into art projects and expressions of identity while staying safe.

**Social Distancing:**
To the extent possible, distance was created between desks and tables in classrooms, shared spaces and restrooms, and on bus transportation.

- 4 Food Carts were ordered to transport food to classrooms to limit large groups assembling in the lunchroom

**Ventilation:**
We held class outdoors. We opened the windows and doors. We repurposed large spaces to serve as temporary classrooms. We decreased occupancy in areas where increased ventilation was not feasible.

- 200 Air Purifiers ordered
- 6 Picnic Tables ordered

**Physical Barriers:** Ways we changed the physical environment in classrooms to prevent the spread of Covid-19

- 10 New sinks installed in classrooms
- 18 Touchless faucets installed
- 100 Student desk shields
- 25 (6X6) Classroom barriers

**Visual/Auditory Cues:** Signs and recordings to remind students and staff about physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and directional signs in hallways

- 66 Printed Signs/Posters ordered

Layered prevention strategies were implemented to reduce the overall risk of Covid-19 transmission for students and school staff.
Covid-19 Task Force: Formed to create a consensus-driven set of guidelines for reopening school and keeping students safe. Identified a designated point of contact responsible for responding to Covid-19 concerns

Training: Key staff trained and able to conduct contact tracing protocols

Testing: Screening Testing provided a critical layer of prevention that identified infected people with Covid-19, including those with or without symptoms

46 Thermometers ordered (Thermal, Free Standing and Hand-held)

100 Batteries for Thermometers

1,600 Covid Test Kits ordered

PROGRAM EXPANSION

Despite the challenges of navigating a global pandemic and the alterations it demands, Overbrook School for the Blind’s programs found a way to grow.

The CVI Clinic: Just before the Covid-19 shutdown, OSB introduced a Cortical Visual Impairment partner clinic to address the growing population of children diagnosed with CVI. While the pandemic slowed the number of students seen during the clinic days, a plan to develop a full time clinic for enrolled and unenrolled children with CVI was solidified by the Board of Trustees.

In addition to assessments, the CVI Clinic will develop partnerships with community medical providers, programs to foster growth in the parent alliance, coaching and training to bolster effective educational planning and a professional learning community, and opportunities to conduct research to contribute to the knowledge of CVI in the field.

CVI Specialist Beth Ramella created comprehensive reports to share with the families and educational teams who were seen in the clinic and met virtually to review the report and answer questions.

“Parental participation is so important to the educational team,” says Ramella. “Parents who understand their child’s CVI are able to strongly advocate for good vision services.”
OSBnb: Over the course of the school year, multiple in-depth discussions were held with the Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Overbrook Farms community to discuss OSBnb, our endeavor to create a student-run, accessible bed and breakfast located on campus at 6398 Woodbine Avenue.

With planned features that go above and beyond ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements, OSBnb will address the need for travel accommodations for those living with complex disabilities.

“Once OSBnb is operational, we believe it will offer an entire care suite for disabled travelers visiting Philadelphia for medical care or for tourism,” says Todd Reeves, Executive Director and CEO. “We’re excited about the opportunities OSBnb will afford our School to Work students in the hospitality services industry, giving many of them a chance to demonstrate their abilities in the workplace.”

The Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment recently approved OSB’s zoning variance so renovation to the property will begin soon.

Accessibility Plan: Thanks to the support and advocacy of State Senator Vincent Hughes (D-Philadelphia/Montgomery) and State Rep. Morgan Cephas (D-Philadelphia), Overbrook School for the Blind was the recipient of a $750,000 Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) grant to improve accessibility and safety at the school’s main entrance and within the Rotunda building.

The grant will benefit our visually impaired and increasingly non-ambulatory student population with adaptations that will make the main school building publicly accessible and secure. All of the components—from an elevator large enough for multiple wheelchairs to the installation of ramps and additional accessible routes for rapid egress—will serve and protect our student population.

The first phase of this project began in late summer.

The M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center: One of the silver linings to the Covid-19 pandemic was the bounty of fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs that our Horticulture Program continued to produce—816 pounds of it!

With the assistance of OSB students from most of the educational programs and two student interns from the School to Work Program, multiple donations were organized to go to the Upper Darby and Chester County Food Banks.

“I fully expect next year’s growing season to be even more successful,” says Horticultural Therapist Rich Matteo. “Plans are already underway to share the crops with families, friends, and our neighbors in the Overbrook community.”

School to Work student Ela helped harvest the tomato crop
OSB’s Development and Communications Department:
It was easy to feel overwhelmed with information about Covid-19 during 2020-21, mostly because the data rapidly changed from one day to the next.

“With reduced opportunities to spend time together in person came new challenges to remain socially connected,” says Pamela McGonigle, Director of Development and Communications. “To help the OSB community navigate the pandemic, information was continually updated on our social media channels and website, and several new publications were produced by our department.”

Parent Update: Produced every Monday on our website, this digital newsletter provides guidance and resources to parents and guardians about the latest changes in policies and procedures within OSB.

Health & Safety Update: A steady flow of information from the CDC and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health is provided to families and staff members every Tuesday so that they can make the best decisions for themselves and their children.

Staff Update: Published every Wednesday, staff members are provided with updates on employee policies, events, classroom news and procedures, all staff meetings, clinics and more.

Campus Connect: With an inspirational tone, this publication is produced every Friday as a way to keep us connected while we work remotely or participate in distance learning.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT KHOUNRIDY VISITH was a virtual student for the entirety of the 2020-21 school year.

“I liked that we were still able to attend school while being safe during the pandemic,” said Khounridy. “But I hated that I couldn’t get the hands-on and interactive help that I could have had in person.”

With the help of her educational team and teacher, Khounridy worked on improving her assistive technology skills in order to read braille more independently.

“During the pandemic, I learned how to use my phone and the BrailleNote Polaris to access my schoolwork,” said Khounridy. “I began to learn how to touch type which is something I never knew how to do before. I learned these things with help from the school. I used what I learned to keep practicing on my own time and figured out how to do other things based on what I knew I needed to do for school.”

Her persistence paid off.

“I improved my knowledge of braille contractions,” said Khounridy. “I was able to read braille more independently. I liked reading about Edgar Allen Poe in English class. I researched how events in his life affected his poetry and short stories. In class, we read, “The Masque of the Red Death.” And I really enjoyed a March Madness Poetry competition in my English class. We made a bracket to guess who we thought would win. We listened to readings of lots of different types of poetry. We voted between two similar poems each day. We tried to guess what would be the most popular.”

For Khounridy, the key to succeeding with distance learning was perseverance.

“I was successful because I fully participated in school during the year,” said Khounridy. “I was able to fully use my technology by the end of the year without assistance. These new skills help me to do everything I need to do in school now. I can turn in assignments, do research, read and write materials for classes, and more.”
OSB PROGRAMS
2020–2021

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 and physical education. Students ages 16 and older are eligible to participate in the residential White Hall Independent Living Program.

EARLY INTERVENTION OUTREACH (EIO)

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 services in preschools and daycare settings.

90% of parents learned how to set up accessible play and learning activities for their children

90% of parents reported observations of their children’s successes/challenges to their teachers during home visits

Approximately 5 students had a successful experience with cochlear implants and learned how to communicate through words as well as signs and gestures

At least 15 students made choices by using picture communication for toys, play and food

Approximately 30 students learned to wear their glasses throughout the day

90% of families learned how to implement sensory strategies to transition to different activities throughout their day

Approximately 24 children learned to crawl

20 students learned to use adapted mobility devices and canes

1 teacher became more versed in how a child’s neurological history can impact a student’s visual history. This teacher feels 100% confident speaking with parents about this topic.

100% of teachers in the EIO program coached families using tele-intervention

85% of families became advocates for their children during the transition process

EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

60% of parents participated in virtual learning activities so their children could successfully participate in instruction

19 children successfully transitioned out of Early Intervention into a School-age Program

Approximately 95% of Early Childhood students successfully mastered one or two goals as indicated on their IEPs
100% of students who were diagnosed with CVI were given necessary accommodations and programming according to the recommendations of their latest CVI Range both virtually or in person by their classroom teacher.

Approximately 50% of students learned how to successfully use their communication devices for instruction.

Approximately 90% of students had IEP revisions during the school year due to achievement of goals.

6 Early Childhood staff took classes to further their knowledge in the field of vision, communication and supervision.

**ELEMENTARY PROGRAM**

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

6 teachers discovered new and inventive ways to teach virtually and implement goals.

1 classroom used in home and 5 senses scavenger hunts to promote senses and location techniques with help from parents.

All classrooms made interactive lessons and games by giving students control access to make choices virtually.

5 classrooms utilized the Unique Learning System Curriculum and the Help Kidz Learn app while learning virtually.

1 classroom worked on math skills by following recipes with ingredients that the parents provided from their homes.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

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.

24% students used braille.

46% students chose virtual instruction.

54% families chose on campus instruction.

6 Students used Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (virtual and in person).

**HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM**

The High School Program serves students who are aged 15-18 yrs old.

60% of students came from Philadelphia County, 40% from surrounding counties.

18% of students used Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices (AAC).

28% of students were bilingual.

3 Students were enrolled in math classes at Brigham Young University.

33% of students used braille as the primary learning mode.

25% of students prepared and presented Powerpoint presentations for their IEP meetings.

3 students started off campus jobs.

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SCHOOL TO WORK PROGRAM (STW)

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

9 Students graduated from the School to Work Program

13 Students worked on-campus jobs:
   1 STW Student worked in the Security Department
   6 STW Students worked in the On-Campus Workshop
   4 STW Students worked in the Pawprint Shop
   2 STW Students stocked vending machines

15 STW Students participated in on-campus Learning

11 STW Students participated in distance learning

2 STW Students participated in alternate learning plans

3 STW Students participated in White Hall

100% of STW Students made progress on at least 1 IEP goal

70% of STW Students received an award on Achievement Day

90% of students participated regularly in virtual services last year

97% of students with vision specific goals met the goal during their IEP term

50% of the students that use a cane increased their usage overall

71% of the students learned to use technology for O&M sessions

93% of students learned to use their technology independently

63% increase in parent involvement in their child’s educational program

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

OSB promotes the use of assistive technology to expand education and employment opportunities for people with visual impairment in the Southeast Asia region.

Partner: Living Dignity for the Blind, provides training and other services in Myanmar

15 Students in smart phone user training

52 Students in online computer training

8 Students in music training

Partner: Resources for the Blind, Inc., provides services and training in the Philippines

Virtual Computer-Eyes Camps for Beginners:
   62 College and High School students
   3 Adult students

Virtual Computer-Eyes Camps Advanced:
   64 College and High School students
   6 Adult students

Use of an accessible calculator on an android phone:
   45 High School students

Math Award for girls: advocates equal access in STEM for visually impaired girls

21 High School students

SCHOOL AGE ITINERANT SERVICES

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

70 Students received services

3 Counties served (Philadelphia, Delaware, Montgomery)
“It’s a cause that allows me as a donor to make a difference,” said Sid Rosenblatt of the Rosenblatt Family Charitable Fund. “We can see the results from the support we provide. I look at the students, all of whom have challenges to overcome, and in their home communities, they are looked at differently than their non-disabled peers. At OSB, they are looked at as children and do all the things that all children do—learning, socializing, playing, laughing. They are free to be children, and to me, that’s the most wonderful thing.”

A long-time donor to Overbrook School for the Blind, Sid Rosenblatt and his family have supported OSB students, programs and construction for many years, going back to when he and his family lived across from the campus. His late wife, Christine, used to volunteer at OSB before becoming a board member.

“She was passionate about the school,” said Rosenblatt. “It always had a place in her heart.”

In 2019, in Christine’s memory, Sid and his entire family joined students and staff to celebrate the grand opening of the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center, a LEED-Gold certified and Net Zero Energy greenhouse that is now an accessible, sustainable headquarters for the OSB Farm to Table Program.

“That was one of the best experiences I’ve had giving a gift to OSB, building it and naming it,” said Rosenblatt. “Every year, seeds are planted and growth takes place there, and it reminds me of Christine and everything she loved.”

Another great example of how the Rosenblatt Family Charitable Fund improved one of OSB’s programs was in the art room with their donation of a new ceramic kiln.

“[Art teacher] Susan DiFabio always reaches out to me when I’m on campus to thank me for the donation and what it contributes to the students in the art program,” said Rosenblatt. “This means so much to me.”

Looking to the future, Rosenblatt feels the CVI Clinic and the Accessibility Plan for the campus will make a significant difference in the lives of many children and their families.

“We have supported and will continue to support OSB,” said Rosenblatt. “We want to make a difference in the lives of these students for a long time.”
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 impairment, and other challenges. We have compiled a list of donors who made a gift from July 2020 through June 2021. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy. Please accept our apologies for an incorrect listing or omission, and let us know about the error by emailing development@obs.org.

INDIVIDUAL GIFTS

Mr. Jeff Aaronson
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Aaronson
Mr. Steven V. Abramson and Ms. Caren Barnet
Mr. Richard Adelizzi
Ms. Lizbeth Alavardo
Mr. George Alesio
Mr. Vincent Allman
Dr. and Mrs. Michael D. Allodoli
Ms. Yari Alvarado
Ms. Marit Anderson
Mr. John Anderson
Ms. Wendy Andrews
Mr. Donald L. Andrews
Ms. Maria Angelopoulos
Ms. Amy M. Anson
Ms. Deborah Assenmacher
Mr. Michael Atwood
Ms. Diane Atwood
Mrs. Colleen Atwood
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Ms. Nancy Baron-Baer
Ms. Julie Barry
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Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brennan
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Mr. and Mrs. Michael Brooks
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Mr. and Mrs. James M. Buckingham
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Mrs. Maria J. Buonadonna
Ms. Barbara Burch
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Ms. Caroline Cacchio
Ms. Alison Cacchio
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Mr. Stephen W. Cameron
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Ms. Ikia Carrington Lyons
Ms. Meg Carroll
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Carter
Ms. Kim Caruso
Mr. Francis Casey
Ms. Crystal Casmirri
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Mr. Mark McGowan
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Ms. Karen McGuire
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Mr. Francis McLaughlin
Mr. Richard McMonigle and Ms. Katherine Chancler
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Mr. Vincent McVeigh
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Mr. Lane Norman
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Mr. and Mrs. Dennis J. Palladino
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• 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
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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:

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While out on an orientation and mobility lesson, high school student Alex learned about the APS (Accessible Pedestrian Signal) right outside of OSB’s front gate. The APS is a push button that communicates when to cross the street in a non-visual manner, by using audible tones, speech messages, and vibrating surfaces.
... thank you for your continued generosity and commitment to changing the lives of students with vision loss and other challenges.