RARE BEAUTY IN A MOTHER’S WORDS: see page 2
Dear Friends,

“What might you do next year, crawl for 10 miles?”, asked someone with her tongue firmly planted in her cheek while thumbing through our social media feeds describing my 10-mile swim to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Kappen Aquatic Center. I just smiled without a direct answer, but pointed out that what I do doesn’t matter, but what Overbrook’s students do does. Just as ten miles of swimming is no great achievement for a true swimmer — it’s just a couple of routine workouts for accomplished athletes — our students persevere on tasks many might consider routine despite challenges that I and many others can’t possibly fathom. And they achieve nonetheless. Knowing every day we either become a little bit stronger or a little bit weaker, our collective aim is for our students to be academically, physically, socially and emotionally stronger each succeeding day. The only constant in a dynamic school is the complete embrace of continuous change.

But the direct answer to the question originally posed is that if I thought I could advance the interests of Overbrook’s students by figuratively getting on my hands and knees, I’d do it. I’m not above it. I take comfort in knowing I’m not alone, because everyday I see the impact of staff who encourage students through gentle correction, provide subtle verbal cueing that encourages discovery and consistently and firmly expect that students perform to their capacity. We don’t see ourselves as paternalistically pulling our students up from our “higher position” while their feet dangle without a foundation, but rather placing students on our figurative shoulders in which we feel the weight of their futures.

Our students are great because they take responsibility for their learning. Our staff is great because of the depths they go to support our students, irrespective of fanfare or social media feeds. If you don’t know much about us, I hope the pages that follow entice you to find out more.

Kind regards,

Todd Reeves
Executive Director and CEO
Stephanie goes on a walk with students from Overbrook Preschool and Kindergarten.

"I've always wanted to work with little kids," says 21-year-old Stephanie Algarin. "So the teachers in the School to Work Program at OSB helped me find a job in a daycare."

For the past two years, Stephanie has been working as a teaching assistant three times a week in a pre-Kindergarten class at Overbrook Preschool and Kindergarten. In addition to preparing snacks, readying the children for outdoor recess, helping to supervise play on the playground, and assisting teachers during times of group learning, Stephanie has become the classroom Spanish enrichment teacher. Using the lessons from the school’s Spanish instructor as a jumping off point, Stephanie has created several original games, taught the children Spanish songs (one of which they performed for the parents), and helped the students to write Spanish words that are incorporated into their project work.

“I like teaching them Spanish,” says Stephanie. “Today, I played a game with them to teach them how to count to 10 in Spanish.”

Kate Nelson, Education Director of Overbrook Preschool and Kindergarten says Stephanie has provided valuable opportunities for the children to learn about vision, and about the challenges that she, herself, has faced. “Stephanie has had very honest conversations with the class, has answered their questions thoughtfully and directly,” says Nelson. “She has taken the initiative to prepare lessons that have included mini-orientation and mobility experiences, practice walking with a cane, and using various pieces of adaptive equipment. In these moments, Stephanie has provided these young children with the marvelous opportunity to know a capable, competent young woman who is not limited by vision loss.”

Many students greet “Miss Stephanie” with “Hola” when she arrives in the morning and hug her goodbye as she leaves in the afternoon. They look to her as one of the teachers of the classroom. “There has not been one day of Stephanie’s tenure at Overbrook that she has not arrived on time, ready to work, in an enthusiastic and professional manner,” says Nelson. “She takes direction well, asks questions that will inform her work, and shows interest in learning about the field of early childhood education.”

Upon graduation, Stephanie would like to continue working in the child care field.

“Stephanie has been an integral part of our classroom teaching team and a valued colleague,” says Nelson. “We have been thrilled to have her working with us at (the other) Overbrook!”
twenty-one-month-old Mia is one of a kind — literally. She is the 191st documented case of a rare genetic condition called Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome (HPS) Type 3, a disorder that consists of decreased pigmentation (albinism) with visual impairment and blood platelet dysfunction.

“I was overwhelmed when we were told Mia’s diagnosis when she was six-months-old,” says Yari, Mia’s mother. “I went outside one day to cry for a minute and a neighbor saw me. She said that she had a friend who worked at Overbrook School for the Blind, and maybe she could help. That’s how I was introduced to OSB. I did my research and signed Mia up.”

Lourdes Diaz, a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment (TVI) for 26-years in the OSB Early Intervention Outreach Program, became Mia’s vision teacher. “When I first met the Alvarado family, I could see that they were a very close, loving, and dedicated family,” says Diaz. “Yari is one hundred percent dedicated to the welfare of her daughters, and I admire her determination to find out all she can about Mia’s condition, and what is available to help Mia reach her full potential.”

In addition to providing a family-centered curriculum and visual adaptation techniques for the family, Diaz encouraged Yari to attend one of the EIO program’s family activities so that she could meet other parents and form supportive relationships in the program.

It was at one of these outings when Yari met OSB Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M Specialists) Walter Ducret. “I was so impressed with him and how he answered my questions that I knew Mia would benefit from having him on her team,” says Yari. “It was perfect timing because Mia was crawling and starting to pull up on everything, but she would bump into something and then be covered in bruises. That was socially challenging for me because people would stare at her bruises and make comments to me. They would say, ‘Oh, she has another bruise on her face.’ I was worried about what people were thinking of me.”

Mia started receiving vision and Orientation & Mobility services in her home through OSB. “Because of her vision, Mia had issues with balance and depth perception when she was learning to walk,” says Yari. “I struggled with how to help her. I couldn’t grasp the concept of how she sees.”

During a session with Walter, he showed her a cell phone application that simulated Mia’s vision. “This app showed Yari how steps look like a ramp to Mia,” says Walter. “That’s why Mia didn’t have any concept of how to go down steps. We downloaded the app, and Yari now uses it around the house so that she can see what Mia sees, and prepare for it.”

“I had been to eight different doctors with Mia, and I asked all of them that same question but none of them could answer me,” says Yari. “Walter has been like a superhero to me. Walter and Lourdes have so much experience, knowledge, and connections. They’ve taught me how to help Mia be the best she can be.”

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HER NEW ROLE

For Mia, visiting the playground — an essential part of a child’s early development — was impossible. There wasn’t enough shade at Mia’s local playground, and for a child with albinism, which includes photophobia or sensitivity to light, the playground was unbearable. And so was every other playground Yari and Mia visited in Northeast Philadelphia where the family lives.

“I tried taking her to the playground in the evening, but it was still too bright for Mia,” says Yari. “She had a hat and sunglasses on, but the swing seats and the slide couldn’t be turned away from the sun. She couldn’t enjoy it.”

With support from Mia’s OSB team who provided educational visual resources and strategies, Yari tried indoor activity areas, like Lulu’s Casita, Kids At Play, and We Rock the Spectrum. “Lourdes and Walter encouraged me to seek out adapted playgrounds and to advocate for Mia,” says Yari. “As a parent of a special needs child, I realized this was my new role, and I had no idea how to make this happen. I just asked them every question I could think of. I talked to other parents of special needs kids, talked to my neighbors, and eventually, I submitted a request to the City to incorporate shade structures on playgrounds so they could be inclusive for everyone.”

But Yari quickly learned that the term inclusive had a different definition for some. “I responded to a local councilmember’s invitation to the community to attend a meeting and provide input on improvements to a nearby playground,” said Yari. “I went to the meeting and was relieved to hear the various presenters talk about how important inclusion was. But that quickly turned to disappointment when a councilmember dismissed my question about a shade structure with, ‘We don’t see the need.’”

Yari shared her daughter’s condition to explain the specific need, but the councilmember’s response was disappointing. “He announced that we had spent enough time on this topic and that any investment in the playground had to benefit the entire community, not just one child.”

“I was temporarily heartbroken, disgusted that the word inclusion was being used as a social and political feel-good word,” said Yari. “But his dismissal of my request backfired. It just motivated me to advocate harder for my daughter and for other Overbrook School for the Blind parents who felt the same heartbreak. I started making phone calls again.”

Unbeknownst to Yari, a member of Mayor Kenney’s Parks and Recreation Department also attended the meeting and was moved by her story. He contacted Yari and assured her that shade structures would be installed on playgrounds that were to be renovated or redesigned by the City. He said he researched shade structures and found them to be a low-cost solution that would benefit children and adults in the playground. Thanks to Mayor Kenney’s ‘Inclusive Parks and Playgrounds’ bill which had been signed into law, all parks and playgrounds managed by the City had to be inclusive, intergenerational, and family-friendly. This law required adapted play areas for children with special needs, making city parks and recreation facilities accessible for all.

With changes in process to her local playground and others throughout the City, Yari says this experience has defined what her new role is. “I stand up for Mia and encourage other parents to advocate for their child, too,” says Yari. “I’m involved in the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Network, NOAH (National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation), Parent 2 Parent of PA, and I was asked to present at a conference for 150 pediatric dermatologists at CHOP (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia). But without the encouragement from Mia’s team at Overbrook, I wouldn’t have pursued any of this. They give me real world advice every day. They’re genuine. They help me outside of what their job description is. And I’m so grateful.”

“From them, I’ve learned that being rare can be a beautiful thing.”
Often made with lightweight PVC pipe, Adaptive Mobility Devices (AMDs) are specially designed tools that provide environmental information to young toddlers and students who may have difficulty learning to navigate safely using a long cane. Prescribed by Orientation and Mobility Specialists, AMDs are intended to provide protection and are particularly useful as a drop off detector for those with balance issues. Many AMDs include low profile wheels which are built into the bottom cross support and are suited for use indoors or on firm outdoor surfaces.

In Mia’s case, the AMD she is holding has been designed so she can walk in a more organized fashion without receiving support. “The handle will help Mia to position her hand in the same manner as if she was holding a long cane,” says Walter Ducret, Mia’s O&M Specialist. “This adapted tool will encourage her to explore her environment without exposing her body directly to harm.”

For some students, AMDs may take on a different form so they may practice traveling more independently. OSB Elementary student John (seen here with O&M Specialist Samantha McGovern) is preparing for his transition to Middle School with an AMD that allows him to travel by using both hands on his device, with no direct contact from a human guide. Later, when Mia is closer to independent mobility, the pre-cane will be replaced with a long cane which will detect, inform, and confirm what is in front of her with a simple touch. OSB High School student Eric (pictured on opposite page traveling in the subway station) uses his cane for obstacle detection, trailing, and drop-off detection.

For more than 20 years, O&M specialists at OSB have designed and built custom pre-canpes and canes for students of all ages and ability in the OSB Cane Shop (pictured on opposite page). Thanks to their efforts, young learners can walk with their customized AMDs and canes on all types of surfaces and terrains, detecting changes in elevation and different surfaces with the device, and stopping when they contact objects.
SB’s Early Intervention services are provided for children in the home, where Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment (TVI) work closely with the family to determine the child’s needs and teach the family how to work with their child to develop important skills. Lessons are developed based on the family’s daily routine and focus on everyday activities that the child is most likely to encounter with his or her family.

In addition to providing individualized lesson plans, teachers work with parents and caregivers to navigate the often-confusing health care realm and connect them with helpful resources so that they have the tools to advocate for their child. We help parents or caregivers understand the paperwork and processes so that their child receives the care that he or she needs.

“The EIO program uses a family-centered curriculum to give the child the best possible start, to reach developmental milestones, and to prepare them for school-aged programs,” says Durrae Delp-Ducret, Outreach Coordinator. “We also introduce parents to other families who are raising a child who is blind, visually impaired or living with other challenges so that they can share information and offer each other emotional support.”

OSB’s EIO program serves children in Philadelphia, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties.
As the old saying goes, “April showers bring May flowers.” We had a little of both on May 10th for the grand opening of the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center — a LEED-Silver certified and planned Net Zero Energy greenhouse that is now an accessible, sustainable headquarters for the OSB Farm to Table and Horticulture Therapy Programs.

Construction of the $1 million Center was made possible in part by a generous memorial contribution from Murphy’s husband and current OSB Board member, Sid Rosenblatt, as well as a grant of more than $200,000 from Green Mountain Energy Sun Club. The grant provides the greenhouse with a high-efficiency misting and irrigation system; manual solar shades that balance the temperature in the greenhouse, and reduce the electric, heating and cooling costs; and a 50-kilowatt photovoltaic (PV) system which was installed on the roof of OSB’s Nevil Field House.

Members of the OSB Board of Trustees, students, and staff joined Sun Club Executive Director Stacy Mehlhoff to officially flip the giant ceremonial light switch to commemorate this important milestone. “Our mission is to advance sustainability, and we do that through partnering with excellent organizations like Overbrook School for the Blind,” said Mehlhoff. “We provide funding for things that go beyond renewable energy to include resource conservation, sustainable agriculture, clean transportation, and of course, education.”

After a ceremonial cutting of a blossom garland at the front door to the new greenhouse, OSB Student Ambassadors provided guests with tours of the facility and previewed programming to be hosted at the Center.

Additional key supporters who made the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center possible include: the Connelly Foundation, the McLean Contributionship, the Arcadia Foundation, the Jessie G. Roman Charitable Trust, the Philadelphia Foundation and the Howling Beagles Foundation.
Madison, from the Early Childhood Program, flipped the switch with Stacy Mehlhoff, Executive Director of the Green Mountain Energy Sun Club.

Representatives from Green Mountain Energy Sun Club (l to r): Patty Bejarano, New Product Development and Customer Experience; Sara Updegrove, New Product Development and Customer Experience; Stacy Mehlhoff, Executive Director.

Retired OSB Executive Director and CEO Gerald Kitzhoffer and his wife, Carmella, outside of the Greenhouse Classroom named after him for his years of service to OSB.

“"This Center is a testament to Christine and embodies her love for OSB, gardening, and flowers," said Sid Rosenblatt, Major Donor and husband of the late M. Christine Murphy. "I know that she will be watching over the students and that her nurturing presence will be felt with every seed that is planted and with every new bloom that flowers. The Horticulture and Education Center is the best way our family can pay tribute and honor her legacy.”

Greenhouse guests took in the variety of plants, flowers, and herbs that have sprouted up — already over 4,100 and counting.
Q: Explain to us your role as OSB’s Horticulture Therapist. How do you see your position at OSB?

A: As a Horticulture Therapist, I take a humanistic approach to each and every student to teach them the art and science of plants. Treating them all as individuals with unique skills and abilities, each session is customized to the students’ needs, and while our goals will vary, the overall goal is help them to have the best possible outcomes for their own abilities. I hope that the students not only learn about plants but also learn skills that they can use for the rest of their lives and hopefully gain an appreciation for the natural world by learning about it in a safe environment.

Q: What are you most excited about in your role as the Horticulture Therapist for the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture and Education Center (MCMHEC)?

A: I am absolutely humbled and honored to work in a place that is as beautiful and state of the art as this facility. I want to make this place the best it can be for the students and the faculty of OSB, all while keeping M. Christine Murphy’s memory and legacy alive. I am very excited about the future and all the things we will accomplish here.

Q: How do you approach teaching horticulture?

A: I look at plants as both a medium for growth and healing as well as an outlet for creativity. Most people have an affinity for plants, whether they realize it or not. We are hard-wired to live alongside nature. I try to find whatever barriers people may have in their mind about plants, like if they are afraid of getting their hands dirty, afraid of bugs, or a fear of having a black thumb instead of a green thumb, and break through those barriers gradually to make them comfortable enough to try new things, or at least accommodate all that I can so they are willing to try. With a little bit of knowledge and helping hands, people will be surprised what they can accomplish.

Q: What are your short term and long term goals at OSB?

A: A short term goal is to have a successful first plant sale. We have already grown thousands of plants from seed.

The flowers will be planted on campus and the vegetables will be sold. All the proceeds will go back into our program and will make the next year’s sale even more special.

A long term goal of mine is to learn how to train our fruit trees in the orchard to make it fully accessible to our students. The Espalier technique allows one to grow the trees in rows and trellises making them more readily accessible to students.

Another long term goal is making the area around the greenhouse into a butterfly garden with many nectar-producing plants as well as milkweed for the caterpillars to eat.

I also want to grow and plant more species of native plants to help promote the native wildlife in the area, especially birds. I want to reach out to the Audubon society to help us get bird feeders throughout campus. It would be a cool job for the students to help fill the bird feeders and track what kind of birds we have on campus at different times of the year.
“I hope that the students not only learn about plants but also learn skills that they can use for the rest of their lives and hopefully gain an appreciation for the natural world by learning about it in a safe environment.”

Q: What have you learned from students at OSB already?
A: I have learned through the students how amazing of a place OSB is. Each student is an individual and has their own strengths. They have been nurtured with compassion and love, and it shows with how respectful and courteous the students are. Their enthusiasm for the greenhouse and the horticulture program has been very life-affirming for me. In my time so far I have already had many “a-ha” moments that make being a teacher so special.

Q: What can we expect from the horticulture program and the greenhouse in the next year?
A: In the next year, we should expect the greenhouse to be bursting with life. After the plant sale, we will move into more ornamental plants for projects in the fall and winter. I hope to have a fall mum/spring bulb sale, a winter craft sale of ornaments and handmade gifts, and next year’s plant sale will be even bigger than this year!

Editor’s note: Beginning in 1996, Warwick (“Rick”) S. Wheeler has been a mainstay of the Overbrook School for the Blind community. Rick offers his reflections on his 23-year tenure on the OSB Board—his two-terms as Board President, in particular—below.

As President of the OSB Board, I have had the privilege and fun of working with extraordinarily talented and committed people on both the board and on staff. Together, we succeeded on a number of fronts in making Overbrook a better school. Our road map has been a five-year strategic plan that we continue to implement. The most visible results of the plan include the massive job of replacing the roof and stucco on the main building and the brand new horticulture and education center. Building out the school’s leadership team that now includes Todd Reeves, Jackie Brennan, Joe Van Bernum and most recently Sheena Lawrence has been wonderfully rewarding. The impressive growth of the endowment has allowed the school to flourish. Particularly rewarding for me has been helping to develop a multi-faceted relationship with the Phillies. Perhaps most rewarding is witnessing how all elements of the school come together to allow Overbrook students to blossom, each in their own way. We are indeed achieving the school’s mission.

Despite very real challenges — be they inclusion-related, funding-related or a host of other challenges, Overbrook’s future is bright. It has an exceptional leadership team, a number of exciting new initiatives, a stable financial condition, a terrific staff totally committed to the students, and an influx of new board members who will continue to bring new ideas as well as wisdom in addressing the school’s needs. I look forward to working with Overbrook in the years ahead and watching its ongoing progress.

BOARD NOTES: During the May meeting, the OSB Board of Trustees elected the following officers: Marjorie Stein (President); Anne Marble, Elizabeth Passanante-Rodriguez, and Sidney Rosenblatt (Vice Presidents); Joseph T. Doyle Jr. (Treasurer); and, Jackie Keenan (Secretary). Additionally, the Board elected the following new members: Meredith Carter, Diane McCarthy, and Mark Rioboli.
The 2018-2019 school year is in the books. Congratulations to our graduates. We will miss teaching you, advising you, and learning from you. Best of luck!

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Nanci Sumner, Class of 1973, received the 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award at this year’s graduation ceremony. Ms. Sumner studied Medical Transcription at the Goodwin Business Institute in Pittsburgh and was employed for 35 years as a Clerk Typist for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from 1974-2010. She was also employed part-time at the West Park Animal Hospital as a Veterinary Assistant/Kennel Attendant from 1993-1995. Ms. Sumner purchased her first home in 1998 and most recently, is in the process of purchasing a home to be closer to Overbrook School for the Blind, “a place she holds dear to her heart.”

Ms. Sumner is a 10-year breast cancer survivor as of 2018 and is a participant in the Annual Making Strides for Breast Cancer, sponsored by the American Cancer Society. She is a “Cancer Kicker” with the American Red Cross where she regularly donates platelets, which help cancer patients throughout the United States. She goes faithfully about every two weeks to help those in need.

Ms. Sumner is active with the South Philadelphia Lions Club where she serves on the Board of Directors and also does photography and videography for the Club. She is active in the Philadelphia Regional Council of the Blind and the Alumni Association of the Overbrook School for the Blind where she serves on the Alumni Board and Social Committee. Ms. Sumner’s favorite hobby is photography and she is a huge fan of the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies.
The joyous OSB graduation ceremony celebrated the academic accomplishments of our sixteen graduates. OSB Executive Director & CEO Todd Reeves and OSB Board of Trustees President Warwick S. Wheeler presented awards and diplomas to the graduates. The OSB Bell Choir and Encore Singers performed. Pennsylvania State Representative George Dunbar (top right) presented citations in braille to each student from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that celebrated their achievement.
Overbrook School for the Blind has always been at the forefront in preparing students for happy and successful lives. Whether it’s learning skills in the general education curriculum or in the Expanded Core Curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired, our students learn the skills needed to be college, career, and community ready. We continually explore ways to expand learning opportunities for our students, so we are thrilled to announce that we will soon offer students the option to work on our campus in a student-run, small business — a commercial-grade 3D print shop.

Thanks to the support of the Fox Family Foundation and the Scholler Foundation, we have purchased a 3D printer, software, and supplies to create braille and tactile signs for businesses and community organizations. We intend to roll out production in three phases: identifying high-traffic areas on the OSB campus that need additional braille signage; creating classroom and office room number signage in braille and print and installing these signs throughout campus; and later, contacting local community businesses and organizations that may need three-dimensional signage in their offices and workspaces. Eventually, we would like to produce an entire catalog of braille signage options.

Our student-run enterprise will be able to produce the standard ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant braille signage that is typically seen in restrooms, elevators, and building lobbies, but it can also produce plaques and awards featuring photographs and tactile graphics to enhance the aesthetics of braille signs.

OSB students will be involved in every stage of this enterprise and will be trained in using the software, designing and producing the signs, processing orders, quality control, sales and customer service, and packaging and shipping our orders. A small group of staff members has been trained by Color Direct to use the equipment, and we have partnered with Inter Sign Digital to advise us during the start-up process so that our students can create braille signs in a variety of formats.

We believe that in a short time, the input, talent, and hard work of our student-run enterprise will pay off by providing students with hands-on business experience to learn 21st-century work skills.

Special Thanks

Thanks to our friends at SEPTA who parked a city bus on the OSB campus for the day.

Students had the opportunity to learn how to use public transportation directly from OSB Orientation & Mobility Specialists who showed them how to get on the bus, how to speak to the bus driver, how to pay for the ride, how to find a seat on the bus, and how to access their bus stop. OSB students are learning to become independent travelers, and many will use SEPTA to access their future schools, jobs, and social functions.

Congratulations to Our Retiring Staff Members!

We are extremely grateful for the assistance, guidance, and leadership you have provided throughout the years. Thank you, for everything. You will be missed.

(l to r): Anne Felten, Social Worker, 30 years; Sandy Dobrowski, High School Instructor, 34 years; Pattie Kilgore, ParaEducator, 25 years; Barbara Maiorano, ParaEducator, 27 years; Joseph VanBernum, Business Manager & CFO, 31 years; Joan Whartnaby, High School Instructor, 27 years, with Executive Director & CEO Todd Reeves. (Missing from photo: Lyn Perry, High School Secretary, 22 years, and Ernie Foster, Security Officer, 17 years)
Congratulations to OSB Alumna Peggy Garrett (Class of 1951) who recently received the Louis Braille Award from Associated Services for the Blind (ASB) for her work with blind people and longevity with the ASB Gardening Program. A Master Gardener from Penn State University’s Horticulture Program, Peggy and her group of “Hands-On Gardeners of the Associated Services for the Blind” tend gardens at the Fairmount Park Horticulture Center and the garden outside of our own Nevil Center.

Congratulations to OSB Alumnus Jay Doudna (Class of 1967) who recently received the Jim Aronson Founders Award from Slippery Rock University’s Media Hall of Fame. Jay spent most of his career working in the Radio Reading Service field including the Lancaster County Association for the Blind, the Radio Information Center for the Blind in Philadelphia and served on the board of the International Association of Audio Information Services. Known on the air as “the Jaybird,” Jay worked at WNFT at Slippery Rock University and helped build the station’s vast library of music. He is now retired and living in Oklahoma.

IN MEMORIAM

Marilyn Warburton Lutter (Class of 1956) After obtaining a Bachelor’s degree from Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre and a Masters degree in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh, Marilyn was employed as a social worker for over thirty years. Her career included work with an adoption service in the Scranton area and at the Moss Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia. In 1977, Marilyn moved to Washington, DC, to become the Director of Social Services at the Hospital for Sick Children, a position she held until the 1990s. Marilyn was also a long-time member of the OSB Board of Trustees. She was closely involved with the American Council of the Blind and President Emeritus at the DC Council of the Blind, where she promoted programs to expand independence and opportunities for blind and visually-impaired people. Marilyn and her late husband Rudy, who was also blind, were great travelers. Their adventurous natures are best illustrated by the fact that they traveled together to all seven continents.

Shawn M. Cox (Class of 2013), at the age of 26. Shawn was born and raised in Philadelphia. When he was eleven-years-old, he moved to St. Edmond’s Home for Children in Rosemont and resided there until he was 22-years-old while attending Overbrook School for the Blind. He spent his last four years at Elwyn in Media, PA.

Catherine L. Deraco (Class of 1939) An OSB alumna, Catherine was also a teacher in the music department at OSB as the school choir director from 1969 to 1985. She was also the choir director of the Nevilaires Chorus of the Blind from 1985 to 2010. Catherine was a lifelong active member of the Overbrook Alumni Association in which she served as President and on committees for many years. She was 99 years old.
Thanks to our friends at the US Blind Hockey Association, students from the Middle, High School and School to Work Programs practiced with the Philadelphia Flyers. Students were paired with Philadelphia Flyers players at the Flyers Skate Zone to learn how to play blind hockey. With an adapted steel puck that makes noise when it rattles across the ice, students listened for the puck, and passed, shot and scored!