

Advocate

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photo by Cole Whitelock



The newsletter of the
Owen J. Roberts
School District

December 2015

Inspiring Each Student for Success Today and Greatness Tomorrow

Message from Superintendent Michael Christian



The Owen J. Roberts School District has high expectations for all its students and we are dedicated to continuous improvement of academic programs. We will provide an environment where learning occurs in meaningful context, where students have

choices, and where they are encouraged to follow their interests and reach their highest potential. We have seen evidence of our students' growth this past year in a variety of areas including the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Exams taken by our high school students and the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS) by which our K-8 students' academic growth is measured annually.

Earlier this fall, the Owen J Roberts School District received growth data from the Pennsylvania state assessments that students took in the spring of 2015. Growth data, or PVAAS, provides districts with information about academic growth. Unlike achievement data, growth data looks at student progress over time and compares a student's performance from one year to the next. Additionally, growth data is used to measure a district's ability to raise achievement in a tested subject. Growth data is used along with achievement data to determine the effectiveness of academic programs and student progress.

The Owen J. Roberts School District is the only district in Chester County where all of the district's elementary schools earned the highest score (100 %) for growth on the PSSA for English/Language Arts. Each of the five elementary schools' scores demonstrated high growth in this area. As well, the Owen J. Roberts School District is the only Chester County school district to have every elementary school earn high growth scores in science and mathematics. We are extremely proud of the work that our students, teachers, and staff do each day to support high achievement and growth in our schools.

We can also be proud to once again be distinguished by the College Board as an AP National Honor Roll School District. Owen J. Roberts High School continues to show an increase in AP course and test participation while consistently scoring well above state and national averages. Earlier this year, Owen J. Roberts High School was ranked among 21 Pennsylvania Schools to make Newsweek Magazine's "America's Top High Schools." Newsweek's ranking showed an average AP score of 3.7 for Owen J. Roberts students with a high percentage of perfect 5 scores.

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Supporting Digital Safety and Citizenry

The lightening-fast pace in which technology is changing our lives is staggering. Mobile devices and the Internet have opened up avenues of communication that were once only imaginable. Families keep in touch, workers collaborate, and students can access rich multimedia content that enhances learning. At times it seems that digital opportunities outpace the understanding of the rules and etiquettes needed to govern behavior in the digital world. Social codes, digital laws, rights, and responsibilities for which we all must be aware are forming around us each day.

Mr. Paul Sanfrancesco, Owen J. Roberts School District Technology Director, has been actively engaging with parent and student groups on a variety of weighty digital topics such as security, information-sharing, and social interaction in new media. Students must learn and practice all it means to be a good digital citizen as well as understand online safety and the potential permanence of one's digital trail. Mr.

Sanfrancesco often tells students, "If you cannot picture yourself saying what you share online with your grandmother or someone else you highly respect standing behind you, then you should not share it."

Digital safety, privacy, and digital identity are of paramount concern to parents and guardians. As part of an ongoing effort to support and partner with parents, in addition to PTA/PTO presentations, the district is providing a K-12 Parent Technology Series. On November 12, the first session of the series, "Raising Digital Kids: What Parents Need to Know to Survive" was held. In many cases, young children have more familiarity with digital applications than do their parents. If knowledge is power, than the first step to keeping children safe is to understand what is available to them and to learn how to manage and monitor. "Parental presence is key," said Mr. Sanfrancesco, who advises parents to consider a household internet contract. Parents should set boundaries and acceptable use policies that everyone accessing the Internet from their home should follow.

Mr. Sanfrancesco answered questions about hot topics such as cyberbullying. There was a discussion about the possible perils of video game content. He pointed out popular "vault" apps which hide photos and messages. In explaining the permanence of one's digital identity and digital trail, Mr. Sanfrancesco likes to use the analogy of putting toothpaste back into a tube; "You can't do it," he shares, "it is the same with everything you post online." Future presentations will strive to continue to inform and support parents in becoming partners and role models in the digital world.



Mark your calendar for the following upcoming parent technology programs:

January 21: Kids & Technology

Dr. Brian Schneider will explore psychological impacts of technology including how technology changes the way children think and focus.

March 9: Social Media Hands-on

High school students will share technology tips, tricks and inside information with parents.

May 16: Student Tech Showcase

Come see what our students are creating and how they are interacting with technology to solve real world problems.

All sessions will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Middle School Auditorium.

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**Kindergarten Registration
information can be found on page 2.**

Science Learning

by Heidi Lehmann, Ed.D.

Science is the study of the structure and behavior of our physical and natural world. We learn about science through “doing” science - and OJR students learn best through discovery, exploration, observation, and experimentation.

In addition to content that is prescribed by state standards and assessment benchmarks, our students are given opportunities in all grade levels to explore various connections to content, discover new concepts with inquiry, and exercise problem-solving scenarios to investigate and create possible solutions. Students maintain science journals to record observations and data, generate ideas, construct conclusions, and write summaries about their research, curiosities, and reflections about content.

Much attention has been given to the integration of STEM or STEAM strategies in Education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). This approach to learning involves strategies that build on innovation, design, creativity, and problem solving to demonstrate the multiple solutions or possible outcomes for a specific problem. There’s not a “single winner” in STEAM as it’s not about the competition. The learning journey in a STEAM environment demonstrates to students an approach for collaboration, communication, planning, revising ideas, constructing, building, and designing ideas for the possibility of multiple solutions or “multiple winners.”



The OJR-created Kindergarten Science Discovery Kits are now in the third year of use. At a very early age students are introduced to measurement, magnetism, gears, weather, conservation and recycling, and classification practices to provide opportunities to experience science concepts. In addition to exploration, the discovery science kits are also linked to literacy strategies to give students opportunities to explore, investigate, and communicate as young scientists. In November, a group of teachers from East Coventry Elementary School presented the district kits at the NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) conference in Philadelphia. Overviews of the OJR Kits’ components and

implementation process were provided to more than 70 participants who attended the conference from across the country. Educators from as far away as Florida and Texas may soon be modeling STEAM initiatives in their schools after the strategies OJR teachers shared at the conference.

The district will offer new STEAM opportunities in this school year to incorporate a greater focus on the design and engineering functions of the learning process. In one example of these new opportunities, science concepts initially targeted for grades three and four, will utilize maker’s spaces and tinkering opportunities for the Forces & Motion unit and Physical Science units. Kids learn by

making stuff! Using recycled items students will tinker with science and technology concepts by taking control of their learning in a more creative way!!

Early discovery and exploration opportunities in grades K- 2 will lead to purposeful learning projects for students in grades three and four for innovation and design. The middle level years in grades five through eight include a variety of digital learning experiences, engineering projects, and career exploration opportunities bundled with foundational content in Physical, Life, and Earth & Space Sciences. Students will then have multiple STEAM course opportunities at the high school level to develop skills in art, design, video production, engineering, prototyping, and problem-solving in combination with course offerings in the Life, Physical, and Earth & Space Sciences. New courses in Biotechnology, Ecology, and Genetics are currently in development to begin with the 2016-2017 school year.

Learning opportunities bundling the elements of DISCOVERY, INNOVATION, and DESIGN with prescribed science concepts over a K-12 experience will give our students a learning resume fortified with the necessary skills to become independent thinkers, problem solvers, and creative contributors as adults when they enter their chosen careers.

Author Visits Middle School

Mr. Scott Armstrong, the father of eighth grader Nathaniel Armstrong, is the author of *Russian Snows: Coming of Age in Napoleon’s Army*, an historical fiction account of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812. Mr. Armstrong shared with the students his love of history growing up in a family of historical re-enactors and how his life experiences helped shape his writing. He was inspired to write the story by his daughter, Helen, who is also a creative writer. He took on the challenge of writing the entire novel in one month during the annual National Novel Writing Month (NANOWRIMO.ORG). Students learned about the facts surrounding the history of the novel *Russian Snows*. They also learned that in order to shape characters, Mr. Armstrong studied personal accounts from Napoleon’s troops and eyewitnesses from the period.

Mr. Armstrong shared some important writing tips with the students. He imposed upon them the importance of editing. He told them to never be afraid of feedback they can use to improve their own writing, and encouraged them to give him feedback on his own book as he works on the sequel. His talk was organized by Literature Links Teacher Laura Frank.



Kindergarten Registration

Children who will attain the age of five on or before the first day of September 2016 are eligible to begin school in the fall of 2016. In mid-February, please visit www.ojrsd.com for more information regarding kindergarten registration and to begin registering your child. At the end of the online registration process you will be prompted to make an appointment to finalize the registration at your child’s school. School contacts can be found below:

- East Coventry Elementary School: Kirsten Gieseler – 610-469-5707
- East Vincent Elementary School: Karen Hydutsky – 610-469-5714
- French Creek Elementary School: Alexandra Lewis – 610-469-5710
- North Coventry Elementary School: Chris Ficca – 610-469-5709
- West Vincent Elementary School: Diane Banks – 610-469-1402

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Superintendent’s Message

The High School continues to grow its dual enrollment program giving students an opportunity to prove mastery of college-level curriculum through several institutions of higher learning. In 2014-15, there were 256 registrations in 18 different courses at Montgomery County Community College alone, earning students 766 college credits. Graduating students have applied dual credit coursework toward future college majors in engineering, technology, the arts, agricultural sciences, medicine, and the military.

It is good to celebrate the quantifiable successes of our students and schools. There are many ways in which students excel each day that may not be easily measured, and we applaud those efforts as well. You can read about many of our students’ endeavors in this newsletter, and we invite you to check our website, www.ojrsd.com, often to get a glimpse of the daily life and excellence in our schools.

Construction Projects Around the District

East Coventry and East Vincent Elementary Schools, two of our oldest schools, are in need of upgrades. Both originally built in the 1950's and 1960's, these older facilities are not adequately serving the needs of our students. The most recent feasibility study was performed in 2011, but the district has been paying close attention to aging buildings and systems since a 2004 study. According to the District's Chief Financial Officer, Jaclin Krumrine, "Over the past decade we have been saving incrementally for these projects. The only immediate tax impact will be those indirect costs associated with maintenance of the building. Avoiding the issuance of debt will save the District enormous interest costs over the next 25 years."

Dr. Michael Christian, Superintendent of Schools, shared that the new buildings will upgrade the learning and teaching experience with updated facilities to better align with 21st century learning initiatives. Both elementary schools have been designed with flexible learning spaces to foster collaboration and facilitate a wide variety of teaching and learning methods – all with technology integrated throughout to support the needs of the modern learner.

The anticipated construction timelines for each school are as follows:

New East Vincent Elementary School

- Construction November 2015 – December 2016
- Occupancy December 2016/January 2017
- Final Site Development January 2017 – July 2017



A groundbreaking ceremony for the new East Vincent Elementary School was held on Monday, November 16, 2015. East Vincent Township officials, district administrators, teachers and community gathered with students who ceremoniously turned the first sod to mark the beginning of construction for the new East Vincent Elementary School.

New East Coventry Elementary School (dependent on agency approvals)

- Construction June 2016 - August 2017



Marotta/Main Architects' rendering of the new East Coventry Elementary School



Marotta/Main Architects' rendering of the new East Vincent Elementary School

Harvey "Rerun"

Owen J. Roberts High School students, under the direction of Mrs. Dawn Galambos, performed Mary Chase's delightful comedy, "Harvey" November 20 and 21. Mrs. Galambos was thrilled to learn that Saturday night's audience included alumni on a "Harvey Field Trip". The group had performed in a 1984 OJR production of the same play. Alums traveled from as far as Ithaca, NY to reminisce on their Owen J. Roberts experiences—recalling cast parties, long hours of practice, lines remembered and forgotten. Mrs. Galambos shared that the 2015 cast was impacted and moved to have the group attend the 2015 performance. The photo shown to the right is from the 1984 performance.



Friendships and Conflict Resolution

Your daughter comes home distraught because her best friend left her out at recess. Your son got in a fight with a boy in his class whom he refers to as his “enemy”. And almost every day there is a new media account about bullying in schools.

Parents are left wondering: What is normal conflict between children? What is bullying? When should I intervene; when should I step back? How can I support my child’s social development?

East Vincent Elementary School offered a program, Understanding

Children’s Friendships and Conflicts: What Every Parent Needs to Know. A main goal for the Olweus Program and Character Training programs at East Vincent Elementary School is to continue to educate the staff and parents regarding children’s friendships and conflicts, and to continue to grow the partnership between home and school. On the evening of Tuesday, November 10, Ms. Catherine Mallam came to East Vincent to share her wisdom and expertise with parents and staff on how to help our children navigate the world of peer relationships.

Sponsored by the East Vincent PTA, the program helped to clarify the continuum of typical peer struggles to more serious issues of bullying for children and adolescents at various stages of development. In addition, Ms. Mallam addressed the topic from both a preventative and responsive framework. Strategies were shared regarding parenting with the goal of building children’s social competencies and resiliency, as well as tips for best practice in parenting through difficult times and how to most effectively work in a collaborative manner with school.

Catherine Mallam has over twenty-five years’ experience as an elementary school counselor in the School District of Haverford Township. She presents to parents and educators in area schools on a variety of child development topics, including girls’ and boys’ friendships, ADHD, and childhood anxiety. She has been a presenter for Pennsylvania School Counselors’ Association and teaches professional development courses for The National Liberty Museum’s Teacher Training Institute in Philadelphia.

Increasing iPad Fluency

On Saturday October 24, sixth graders Lydia Kronengold and Sarah Zhang celebrated the iPads that were funded for the ATP/ Gifted Support classroom at West Vincent Elementary by the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation. Both girls, 6th graders at West



Photo: by Jessica Marzella

Vincent, created presentations on the iPads to share with staff, fellow students, and OJR Education Foundation members so they could see the many uses and projects for the iPads not only in their Gifted Support classroom, but in their daily schedules and regular classrooms as well. The girls demonstrated their iPad fluency with organized apps, various presentation modes, as well as project based and problem solving apps which included Prezi, Animoto, Google Slides, Noetic Math Challenges and iMovie. One very special guest the girls were extremely proud to share their work with was Owen J. Roberts Superintendent, Dr. Michael Christian. It was a lovely evening for demonstrating the effectiveness that technology plays in creating successful and innovative classrooms.

NC Students Show Photos in Philadelphia Art Gallery

On one day a year, Greater Philadelphia Photo Day (formerly Philly Photo Day) is held. On October 9th, students at North Coventry Elementary School were sent out to document things that were happening here on that day. Their photos will join photos from people throughout our region to create a rich portrait of the Greater Philadelphia Region. These photos will be displayed at the Photo Arts Center in the Crane Arts building which is located in the Fishtown neighborhood of Philadelphia. They will also be part of an online show at the Photo Art Center website: <https://www.philaphotoarts.org/ppd/>. Above is a photograph by student Brooke Banninger.



Safe Night, No Tricks



Roberts Education Association hosted yet another great night for little trick-or-treaters while also creating an abundant night for the Coventry Food Pantry. There were almost 1,200 kids and more than 750 parents who visited the high school bearing canned goods for the food pantry. 52 boxes of food, paper goods, and personal care items for the Coventry Food Pantry and more than \$175 in cash donations were made. Dozens of volunteers lined the halls of Owen J. Roberts High School to ensure a night of fun for all.

Packing the Pantry



On Friday, October 23, a Gross School Bus, donated by the company made its rounds to all district schools, the bus lot, and office buildings to collect generous donations that will help sustain families of need in our district through the next weeks and months. The drive is the work of many hands, all coordinated with the help of Ms. Kira Rump at the Middle School.

NJROTC cadets helped load the bus and the high school wrestling team used their muscle to pack the pantry with the provisions. The finale of the major drive was the collection taken at the REA Safe Halloween Night.

Wall of Fame Additions

On Friday, October 16, on Henry Bernat Field at Wildcat Stadium, the Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation presented two annual awards. The Ed Foundation has been giving the Outstanding Community Service and Distinguished Alumni Awards since 1997. The Community Service Award is given annually to honor an Owen J. Roberts resident who enhances the quality of life by preserving, promoting and carrying out positive and quantifiable traditional community values and traits. The Owen J. Roberts Education Foundation honored Mrs. Karen Oncay, a dedicated archive volunteer who has become an expert on the history of Justice Owen J. Roberts, with the 2015 Community Service Award.

The Distinguished Alumni Award is presented annually to an Owen J. Roberts alumnus who enhances the quality of life by preserving, promoting and carrying out positive and quantifiable traditional values and traits. This individual's leadership and integrity should result in significant accomplishments in his business and professional life in the community. Two alumni of the Owen J. Roberts School District, John W. Stone, Jr., Class of 1985 and Christopher A. Chaney, Class of 2000, were awarded Distinguished Alumni Awards this year.



Harvest Farm Day

On October 7, kindergarten students from East Coventry, East Vincent, French Creek, North Coventry and West Vincent Elementary Schools had the unique opportunity to take on the role of “farmer” at a special Farm Day held at Owen J. Roberts High School. More than 50 high school agriculture students worked with their teacher, Mrs. Julie Taney, to provide hands-on activities that included harvesting, animal care, and taking goods to market. All the activities help students understand life on a farm, the food cycle, and how food finally arrives at the grocery store or market. The opportunity for students is funded through a grant from the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation.



Whole Child Focus at French

Many of our current educational decisions are based on providing a rigorous, content-rich, educational program aligned to the Pennsylvania Common Core. At the forefront of providing an engaging and enriching educational experience, is an educational program with a focus on the whole child. We recognize the value of the arts, not just through the traditional classes we provide, but through extra-curricular opportunities which include Art club, Handbells, Chorus, Instrumental Music, Reading Olympics, Odyssey of the Mind, Lego Club, Drama Club, Robotics, Intramurals, and the PTA Reflections contest. Most recently, our students in Art Club prepared the school for our annual Veterans Day assembly by draping the halls with red, white and blue banners with messages of gratitude for our honored Veterans.

Citizenship is another lifelong learning skill that we foster at French

Creek Elementary. Students embrace support of our community through the District's annual Make a Difference Campaign and community service organizations such as K-Kids and Lion Cubs. Students also volunteer to serve in our school store. While assisting “customers”, students practice life skills which include counting money, making change and providing service to others. French Creek also recognizes our “Fantastic French Creek Citizens” each month. Staff members select students from each classroom who model respect, responsibility and a readiness to learn.

The French Creek community of students, staff, parents and community members are the heart of our exceptional elementary school. Our primary focus is educating the whole child, in a safe and supportive learning environment. We believe this ensures students to be well prepared for a successful future.

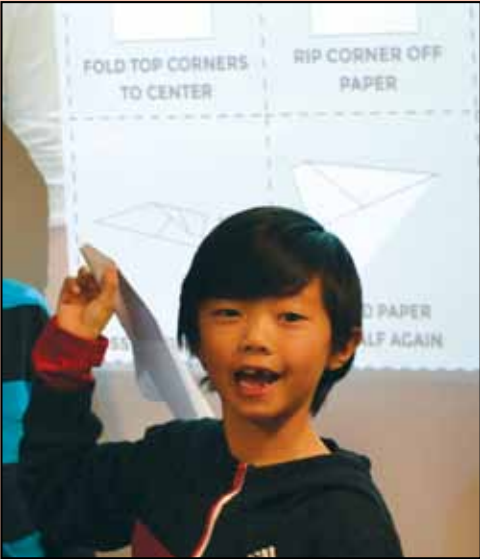
New Friends in Ireland

by Isabella Bobo, Grade 10

The Owen J. Roberts High School NJROTC has done quite a few spectacular things, but their trip to Ireland takes the cake. Last school year, the unit decided they wanted to make their dream of traveling a reality. After the cadets and parents immediately started working on many fundraisers, and generous donations were contributed from organizations like the American Legion, the trip was set in stone. This past summer, 22 cadets, 11 parents, and one sibling took a two week trip to Ireland. The group visited multiple museums (including the National Maritime Museum of Ireland), saw the cliffs of Moher and the city of Dublin, and spent time at the beach. The cadets were also able to spend time with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, or RNLI, which is the largest charity that saves lives at sea around the United Kingdom. They paid homage to what the RNLI has done for them by holding a constant donation boat for them in the JROTC room. A RNLI friend gave the unit a clock shaped like the wheel of a boat which hangs on the wall in the NJROTC room, where it will stay set on Ireland time. Cadets found the trip to be a great team-building experience and hopes to be able to travel again in the future.

Hour of Code

Owen J. Roberts students joined tens of millions of students across the globe in Hour of Code events this December. Taking steps to provide computer science literacy to students, Hour of Code events guide students through programs that demystify computer code and programming creation. Learning how to write computer code empowers students to manage technology. Lessons are designed to help nurture problem-solving skills, logic and creativity. At right, a student learns ways we use algorithms in our daily lives, specifically making paper airplanes. Check out hourofcode.com for more information.



Speak Up

Parents, teachers and students were asked to join the conversation about the use of technology for learning through Speak Up, a National Research Project. Since 2003, nearly 4 million K-12 education stakeholders have participated in the annual online surveys. Data findings are shared each year with federal, state and local policymakers to inform education programs, policies and funding. To learn more about Speak Up, visit www.tomorrow.org/speakup. In February, the school district will be able to access survey reports which may be used to evaluate current technology needs, inform strategic planning and budgeting processes, and measure progress towards technology goals.

Gaining STEAM

by Darcy Harris, Grade 12

Where there was once a large-group room, there is now an engineering lab, complete with a boss laser cutter, a materials tester, a drill press, a band saw, a scroll saw, grinders, and numerous hand tools. This engineering lab was built over the summer for the new engineering course at the high school to support the school in introducing a new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) initiative.

High School teachers, Mr. Richardson and Mr. Crowl, were both approached to help design an engineering course and set up the lab. Mr. Crowl stated that they wanted to “give students of OJR the opportunity to do activities they might not get to do in some of their other courses.” In the years to come, more courses will start being added to the school. “We’re planning on starting an ecology course and a biotechnology course for next year,” Mr. Richardson said. The course was made to be flexible and adaptive. Next year, they also plan to start a

Principles of Engineering course - the next level in the engineering pathway. The life sciences pathway will also be broadened with the possible creation of a genetics course down the road. Both Mr. Crowl and Mr. Richardson said they would like to see more design-type electives: architectural engineering and design, mechanical engineering and design, and product engineering and design. These initiatives bring more of a focus to students who are interested in engineering and life sciences.



Locker Tags designed using CADD software and then imported into the Laser Cutter program for cutting and scanning. The designs were created by the students and the tags will be used to claim lockers to store materials in the STEAM lab when working on projects.

Running Color

The Best Buddies/Education Foundation color run drew 592 registered runners in the 5K on November 7. An estimated 100 more ran or walked the 1 mile fun run—a total of nearly 700 registered participants! Last year’s 5K event saw 120 runners, the year before that about 75.

Many elementary students participated in after school running programs in the weeks prior to the events where they gained stamina and understanding for the sport of running. We heard from many families that they planned subsequent running events together.

The event was planned for families and friends to have fun together. In the spirit of a true, homegrown event, all proceeds will funnel back into our schools to impact OJR students through the Best Buddies and Education Foundation programs.



photo by Frank Wrubel

Wee Wildcats

Owen J. Roberts High School is pleased to announce a new program as part of the Family and Consumer Sciences department coming Spring of 2016. The new course, Preschool Lab Experience, will provide an opportunity for high school students to reinforce learning through observation and direct contact with young children under teacher supervision. Intended to strengthen student knowledge of child development and promote leadership and service skills, the new course will invite the community to join in on this exciting journey. Twelve community children (ages 3 ½ -4 ½) will be selected to participate in the student-run preschool, which will be named “Wee Wildcats.” Visit <http://www.ojrsd.com/Page/5909> or email Ms. Lindsay Hale, LHale@ojrsd.com for more details.



Hairy Goal



East Coventry Elementary first grade teacher, Mrs. Pahl, wanted to incentivize reading in her class, so she worked with students to set a goal of reading 1,000 books in one month. She promised students that she would cut her hair if they made their goal. The students surpassed their goal to read 1,000 books by reading 1,285 books and on November 4, Mrs. Pahl fulfilled her end of the bargain. With her class cheering on, eight inches of her hair was cut off and donated to a charity that provides wigs to children in need. The class was eager to set a new reading goal for this month!

Free Press, Free Headphones

by Navdeep Handa, Grade 12

Our ragtag team hopped off the school bus and walked into the School of Media and Communication at Temple University, excited but nervous about the day ahead. Participating in this event for the very first time, our school's media and journalism departments, consisting of the Paw Report crew, the Ledger's yearbook staff, and the Gavel (HS newspaper) writers, had no idea what to expect.

Entering the welcome presentation fashionably late at 9:10 (thanks to the wonders of Philadelphia traffic), but armed with fun Temple swag such as headphones and a stretchy phone case contraption that can secure your credit cards, we sat down and listened to the keynote address.

I will give it to Cherri Gregg, the speaker: she knows how to take an audience of half-asleep high schoolers and get them excited about journalism. With an energetic demeanor and passionate speech, she detailed her journey to journalism, of how she was incredibly involved in media studies in high school, took a detour in law for financial reasons, and finally risked it all to pursue a career in journalism again. Very bluntly, she said that it isn't easy to pursue what you love; she had to starve some nights to make her dreams of become a journalist a reality, but finally, through contacts and luck, she landed an internship at KYW. Since then, she has used journalism as an agent of social change, attacking and indirectly leading to the strike-

down of unfair Pennsylvania voter ID laws and providing a voice for the transgender community in Philadelphia. She praised her job, saying it gave her "a front row seat to history" and experiences of a lifetime, such as interviewing Aretha Franklin. However, she acknowledged that the long hours that accompany a huge event and the negative comments associated with publishing controversial material are drawbacks of the career.

After the lively keynote, the real fun began: journalism competitions. Depending on the category, participants would write an article, a poem, a broadcast, a yearbook caption, or an editorial or draw either an

editorial cartoon or literary magazine stand-alone artwork in 45 minutes. Participants also had the option of participating in a yearbook spread competition.

After the competitions were over, break-out sessions were conducted, where current students on Temple's newspaper, The Temple News, sat down with us to "bounce around ideas," discuss experiences and give advice about writing techniques. As we boarded the bus back to school, a realization hit me: October 13th, 2015 proved to be incredibly fun and informative for all of us, and it challenged us and inspired us in ways that we hope to implement back at Owen J.

Veteran's Week



Owen J. Roberts schools honored veterans in November. Several schools hosted breakfast or lunch. Students performed, made greeting cards, and created decorations to demonstrate honor. Owen J. Roberts High School hosted the 10th annual ceremony and luncheon celebrating veterans on November 11, 2015. Students thoroughly enjoy interacting with veterans during these celebrations.

Working and Learning Together



South Coventry Township was struggling with a problem area at Connie Batdorf Park. A 2500 square-foot, low-lying area was not draining water. On September 23, high school horticulture students filled the area with 3,000 plants including iris, sedge, bee balm and asters to create a bioswale to create an eye appealing and natural answer to concrete gutters to allow flood control. The project helped the township and community, but also allowed students to learn about bioswale through direct experience.

Elementary Boundary Study

Owen J. Roberts School District is fortunate to have five excellent elementary schools with dedicated faculty and staff, strong parent organizations, and wonderful families.

The district is expected to see moderate growth in its student population over the next five years. New housing developments are under construction in some portions of the district in addition to the resale of existing homes. With this growth, one continued area of concern is the equitable distribution of students throughout our five elementary schools.

Since last spring, the school district has been developing a plan to create new attendance boundaries for our five elementary schools. A redistricting committee comprised of 35 parents and teachers representing each of our schools and administrators met six times since April 2015 to develop possible options for redistricting. The working group performed a thorough evaluation of enrollment projections. They closely examined housing developments which are either underway or planned in the district's seven townships and examined the many factors affecting transportation of students. The committee thoughtfully established a list of priorities. Using those guidelines, the committee explored many possible boundary scenarios with a goal of equitable enrollment among schools for the next 7-10 years while moving the fewest number of students.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Christian shared four options and a draft recommendation for redistricting our elementary schools with the Board of School Directors at their regular business meeting in November. The presentation may be found on the district website. The School Board will continue the discussion in January 2016.



Students from East Coventry, East Vincent, French Creek, North Coventry and West Vincent Elementary Schools participated in an annual cross country event at Warwick County Park on October 27. The event is sponsored by the High School cross country team and district wellness council.

Wildcat Athletic Highlights

The fall athletic season was productive for Owen J. Roberts athletes with many teams advancing to Pennsylvania state-level play. In addition, many athletes were named to All Conference Teams with a good number named Player of the Year. Local print media publishes those awards along with athletes who have committed to continue their careers at Division One and Two colleges and universities.

The high school golf team had an outstanding regular season finishing with a 7-1 league record. In the PAC final, the team finished second. An outstanding final round of golf was played by our student-athletes. The following students went on to the District One Tournament: Ward McHenry, Andrew O'Brien, Matt Folk, Tommy Opitz, and Maddie Sager.

Maddie Sager finished second in the District Tournament after losing out on a playoff hole. She moved onto the regional tournament where she qualified for the PIAA Individual Championships. She advanced on to her third trip to the PIAA State Golf

Tournament where she earned second place.

In tennis, Junior Meredith Lee won the PAC-10 singles title and finished in second place in the PIAA District One AAA tennis tournament. She progressed to compete in the PIAA State AAA tournament in Hershey.

The boys soccer team completed the season with 16 wins tying a school record for most wins in OJR soccer history. The team lost to Boyertown in penalty kicks in the PAC-10 final and entered the District One Tournament as the #5 seed. They beat Penn Wood 4-1 in the first round and then lost to Downingtown West 2-1 in the second round.

The field hockey team finished with an overall record of 19-7-0. The team was seeded eighth in the District One playoff bracket and made it to the quarterfinals before losing to the eventual District 1 champion (Unionville). The team came from behind against Neshaminy to win 2-1 and qualify for the state playoff tournament. They finished sixth in the District One bracket. The first state playoff game was against Palmyra,

who was the 2014 co-state champion (and eventual 2015 state runner-up). The girls gave everything they had and played a really great game, but lost 2-0, ending their outstanding season.

The Wildcat football team had a very successful year. On offense the Cats tallied over 3,200 yards and had four ball carriers rush for more than 400 yards. In addition to rushing, the Cats had four different receivers catch a TD pass and have over 10 catches on the season. The Cats averaged approximately 28 points a game and were one of the leading rushing teams in the PAC. Defensively the Cats had three DL in the top of the sac leaders in the PAC. The Cats were ranked fourth in total defense this past season and were at the top for team interceptions.

The high school girls' volleyball team completed its first season as an Owen J. Roberts varsity sport. Although the girls weren't able to take a win, they had an outstanding season and showed a huge amount of growth and determination.

The girls cross country team finished the season 8-1 and finished second

in the PAC-10 Conference. Their fourth place team finish at the PIAA District One Championships qualified them for the PIAA State Championship Meet. At the PIAA State Championship Meet the team finished 10th in the AAA race. As for individuals; Allison Brunton, Alex Glasier, Emma Torak, Megan Bernotas, and Katie Proffitt all finished in the top-15. Those five girls along with Mary Bernotas and Emily Hansell made up the girls varsity runners qualifying for the State Championships. Allison Brunton was the top finisher at the district championships (22nd) and the state championships (48th).

Boys cross country went 8-1 in the league and finished in 2nd place in the PAC-10. Liam Conway (2nd), Abe Van Helmond (13th), and Andrew Griffin (14th) were All-PAC 10 Selections at the championship meet. Liam Conway finished 11th at the PIAA District One Championships with a time of 15:52. That qualified him for the PIAA State Championships. At the State Championships he finished 28th in a time of 16:22.

“Magnificent” Inspection

On December 9, 2015, the Owen J. Roberts Navy Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, under the leadership of Master Gunnery Sergeant Andre Worley, took part in the Area Manager Inspection. The esteemed inspector was Lieutenant Colonel Myron Young U.S. Army (Ret). The Lieutenant addressed the audience after spending the morning with cadets commenting that the cadets are, “just magnificent.”

Guest Speaker, Major General Tom Thomas U.S.A.F., National Guard Assistant to the Commander of the United States Cyber Command and the Director of the National Security Agency, addressed the cadets and audience with a reminder about the leadership training for which the cadets are now taking part “these are the individuals that are developing to eventually run our communities and nation.”

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Christian recounted a teaching award given to Naval Science Instructor Master Gunnery Sergeant Andrew Worley, saying, “He is a



humble and caring teacher and leader genuinely motivated and excited by his students.” High School Principal Dr. Richard Marchini explained that the heart of NJROTC is service to others. “I encounter individuals and groups each day who want to know what the school can do for them,” Dr. Marchini

said. “As a group, and as individuals, those involved with NJROTC inquire each day as to what they can do for the school and community.”

Four platoons of cadets took part in the inspection ceremony phase which included March-on the Colors, Color

Guard and Drill Demonstrations, and Pass-in-Review. A representative from the Army ROTC presented scholarships valued at about \$180,000.00 each to two Owen J. Roberts cadets, Sara Maute and Andrew Shade.

First Lego Leagues

Many people erroneously believe that First Lego League (FLL) is simply about designing, building and programming robots. However, it involves much more from the teams. The program focuses on working respectively and emulating the FLL core values. It's about examining a problem--this year's Trash Trek competition involved the care of our environment--and determining how students can better their world by creating innovative solutions. It's about working hard, playing hard and sharing experiences with others. Above all, it's about rooting for competitors and wishing all teams well – this

is part of what FLL calls “gracious professionalism.”

On Saturday, December 5, 2015, fourth through sixth graders from four OJR elementary schools participated in the Downingtown Area First Lego League Regional Qualifier Tournament. The Wrecking Balls from French Creek presented their research project which focused on the amount of plastic bottles that get thrown away every day, the damage that they can cause the environment, and creative ways to reuse plastic bottles in your home. The Gardenians of the Gummy Worms from North Coventry presented their research project about food waste.

This included a skit, 95-page recipe book that uses food scraps, and school composting proposals. The Gardenians earned the first place trophy for Research Presentation. The Eco Engineers from East Vincent presented their research of K-Cup waste. They designed a more eco-friendly coffee pod for Keurig machines and conducted a taste test that proved their design is tastier than the regular K-Cup pod. The team earned a near-perfect score in their Robot Design Executive Summary judging and received the first place trophy for Robot Programming. The Bio Builders from East Coventry shared their research on milk carton

waste, which included a milk dispenser that measures out 8 ounces of milk once student passcodes are entered and a Power Playground that produces energy in order to run the dishwasher. The team won the first place trophy for Robot Strategy and Innovation.

The Bio Builders was also one of four teams selected to advance to the Eastern Penn FLL Championship on February 6, 2016 at the University of Pennsylvania. All of the elementary team members did a fantastic job at the tournament, demonstrating that OJR students have exemplary character, determination, and ingenuity!