



OUR LADY'S  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Leading the journey in faith and knowledge

# The Journey

## Creating a Safe School: New initiative promotes a positive environment

**O**ur Lady's Christian School is taking a proactive approach to addressing a common issue in today's schools: bullying. In conjunction with The Ophelia Project, OLC will introduce a comprehensive initiative this fall to promote a positive social culture that encourages kindness—and discourages aggressive behavior.

The Creating a Safe School (CASS) program is a multifaceted, school-wide initiative that also challenges all members of the school community to examine their beliefs about peer aggression and address aggression within the school.

**“CASS will help students build personal skills they'll use throughout their lives.”**

“What's great about the CASS program is that it's research-based. It's proven to work, proven to create a positive environment,” says Principal Patty Landenberger. “Instead of addressing bullying behavior after it has happened, we'll focus on creating a school culture in which that kind of behavior just isn't socially acceptable.”

Developed by the Ophelia Project, CASS is a proactive program that empowers older students to be trained mentors to their younger classmates, and to model positive social interaction and courageous intervention. But the collaboration doesn't stop there. A key feature of CASS is that everyone in the school community is involved in the effort:

- Students participate in weekly class meetings
- Teachers, staff, coaches and volunteers are trained in CASS principles
- Faculty members attend in-service training twice a year
- Parents and community members are invited to serve as program volunteers and attend monthly Community Night Programs.

Work on the program has already begun and will continue over the summer. Throughout the next two school years, an Ophelia Project graduate assistant will work 25 hours per week in the school. Every class will spend 30 minutes per week learning CASS principles. Approaching these principles from a Christian perspective, CASS will be worked in to the Religion curriculum and examined along with other Gospel values.

*(continued on page two)*

## OLC introduces half-day Pre-K

**F**our-year-old Matthew Cizmek loves riding his bike and playing baseball with his brothers. The youngest of four boys, he's eager to prove he can do anything that Mason, Mitchell and Michael can do. He can swim under water, help with chores, and ride a scooter. And this fall, he'll even go to school every day—just like his brothers.



**Preschooler Cameron Sauers learns about weights in the half-day class.**

Matthew was one of the first enrolled in OLC's new half-day Pre-Kindergarten, a class for 4- and 5-year-olds that meets daily from noon to 3 p.m. in the preschool classroom in Saint Jude Church. The class was added this past winter after the all-day Pre-K class filled in less than two weeks.

“Families rave about the all-day Pre-K class at OLC, so much so that we could not accommodate everyone who wanted to enroll,” said Principal Patty Landenberger. “With the half-day class, we're offering a new option to help meet families' needs.”

In addition to the daily afternoon option, students enrolled in the 4-year-old preschool on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings have the option of staying for afternoon classes each day, or just on Wednesday afternoons. After-school care is available until 5:30 p.m.

Like all OLC preschool classes, the Pre-K is taught by certified teachers with many years of teaching experience. They use a variety of hands-on activities to foster students' academic, social, spiritual and emotional growth in a structured but fun setting. Teachers communicate frequently with parents and include parents in activities such as class parties,

*(continued on page two)*



The Sweny Family poses for a portrait of Catholic education: (l-r) Tim, Patty, Dennis, Herb, Dan, Peg, David and Matt. All seven children and 16 of Herb and Audrey Sweny's grandchildren attended—or still attend—OLC.

## Legacy Gala celebrates Catholic education

It was a cool spring evening, but the atmosphere inside the ballroom at Lake Shore Country Club was warm and welcoming as more than 175 friends of OLC gathered for the school's third Legacy Gala on May 14. The event honored Herb and the late Audrey Sweny, long-time supporters of Saint Jude Parish and Our Lady's Christian School, as recipients of the Legacy Award. With the help of co-chairs Tom and Mary Alice Doolin and the generosity of many sponsors, contributors, participants and volunteers, the event raised more than \$50,000 for our school!

### Half-day Pre-K *(continued from page one)*

guest readers, field trip chaperones, and "Community Helpers" visits.

Having experienced the all-day program with her son Michael, Amy Cizmek is looking forward to sending Matthew to Pre-K.

"It's a great introduction to kindergarten. It's a good balance of structure and fun, a great way to introduce them to school. I love it that the priests are involved, and that they visit the class. I think it helps the children get comfortable with church and helps them develop a love for God and their Catholic faith at an early age.

"This will be really good for him."

*If you would like more information about the half-day Pre-K, please visit our website, contact the school office at 838-7676, or email miller@ourladychristian.com.*

## Mr. Eisert named recipient of 2011 Legacy Award

Mr. Mark Eisert, a 1961 alumnus and a beloved teacher for 41 years, has been named the recipient of the 2011 Our Lady's Christian School Legacy Award.

Mr. Eisert will end his long career at OLC with the 2010-11 school year. As he approaches retirement, he will teach 8th grade social studies while mentoring the new teacher who will succeed him.



"I have enjoyed every moment that I've spent at OLC," says Mr. Eisert. Looking back I have great memories of the students, parents, faculty, and staff that I've had the opportunity to work with. OLC has been my second family and I will miss all of you."

Mr. Eisert will be honored at the Legacy Gala at the Ambassador Center in Erie on May 14, 2011. Please plan to join in this celebration of more than four decades of inspired teaching and exceptional dedication.

### Creating a Safe School *(continued from page one)*

As Mrs. Landenberger explains, "CASS will help us build community, build consensus, and help our students build personal skills they'll use throughout their lives. It's something that will involve everyone, and something that will benefit everyone."

*Want to learn more about CASS or find out how you can get involved? Visit our website, [www.OurLadysChristian.com](http://www.OurLadysChristian.com), and go to "Current Parents."*

## Kindergarten expands for next year

**OLC** is making room for a significant increase in kindergartners this fall. With approximately 60 children registered for next year, plans are underway to create a third kindergarten class. It will be taught by Mrs. Janet Blakeslee, who has previously taught second grade and kindergarten at OLC.

"We are so blessed to have an increase in enrollment to our pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. It is wonderful so many parents want to enroll their children in our school," says Mrs. Landenberger. "This will help OLC thrive well into the future."

## Businesses help families through EITC

"Your tax dollars at work." It's a phrase usually uttered with more than a hint of sarcasm. But for business owners like Elmer Kissell, owner of Joe Roots Grill and a participant in the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, it means much more.

"Recognizing my money is going to children who have a financial need allows me to know that my investment is making a difference in their future," says Kissell.

Joe Roots Grill is one of eight local businesses to enroll in the EITC program, contributing \$87,000 to OLC in lieu of a portion of their state taxes. Other contributors include Reddog Industries, Hamot Medical Center, Erie Concrete and Steel, VelocityNet, Carrara Steel, Spectrum Control, Printing Concepts and one business that remains anonymous. Their gifts helped more than 100 children receive an outstanding Catholic education—the kind their parents want for them but have trouble affording.

"More than a third of OLC families meet the criteria for financial assistance, an increase of more than 23 percent since 2006. With the average tuition support per family topping \$1,200, the need for assistance is growing," says Jennie Hagerty, Director of Advancement.

"When a business owes Pennsylvania state tax, they have two choices," Jennie says. "They can write a check and have the state decide how it should be dispersed, or they can invest in the lives of children who desire a Catholic education."

Businesses receive as much as a 90 percent tax credit with a two-year commitment to the EITC program. Enrolling is easy—it involves a half-page application which can be obtained by contacting the Advancement Office at (814)838-0908 or emailing [hagerty@ourladychristian.com](mailto:hagerty@ourladychristian.com).

There's still time to enroll for next year—and begin seeing your tax dollars at work.

Mrs. Lascuola enjoyed working with her teacher, Margaret Mascharka. "Is she available next week?" Mrs. Lascuola asked.



## 8th Graders Rule the School

What would happen if 8th graders ran the school? Fifteen minute classes and long recesses? Gum chewing mandatory? Communication only by text? Actually, eighth graders were very serious and professional when they took over in February.

As part of the language arts curriculum, students created resumes and applied for jobs throughout the school. They prepared for and underwent interviews, and each was awarded a job for the day. Filling in as teachers, administrators, maintenance workers, librarian and more, students developed a new appreciation for what it takes to be on the other side of the desk.

Eighth-graders worked with teachers to prepare lesson plans, and then to teach those plans themselves. Meanwhile, the principal, Billy Fessler, visited classrooms and answered calls, the advancement director, Johnny Hilbert, raised \$4,500, and the maintenance supervisor, Charles Erven, marveled at the clean-up required after lunch.

Perks of the jobs? Those included a special lunch in the Faculty Room where they could share their experiences over good food and plentiful desserts. Girls enjoyed the opportunity to wear makeup and heels—items not allowed by the student uniform code—and boys looked their professional best in shirts and ties.

When it was over, the student principal had one suggestion: "Let's do this every Friday!"

Second-grade teacher Mary Conti was thrilled with Chris Jiulianté's performance. "I was his second grade teacher, and it was amazing to watch him carry out his responsibilities in a very grown up way," she said.





## OUR LADY'S CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

*Leading the Journey in Faith and Knowledge*

606 Lowell Avenue • Erie, Pennsylvania 16505  
814/838-7676 • 814/838-6860 fax  
www.OurLadysChristian.com

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 418  
Erie, PA

*The Journey* is published for parishioners of Saint Andrew, Saint Jude and Saint Julia parishes; alumni and friends of Our Lady's Christian School.  
Editor/Writer: Ann Miller. Photos: Nancy Hilbert, Mary Menditto  
Please direct comments or questions to [miller@ourladyschristian.com](mailto:miller@ourladyschristian.com)

## 16th Annual Saint Jude/OLC Raider Golf Classic



**Mark your calendar and plan to be our guest for the 16th Annual St. Jude/OLC Raider Classic Golf Tournament on Friday, July 16, 2010. Join us at Lake Shore Country Club for a fun-filled day of golf that includes:**

- Continental breakfast at 8 a.m.
- 18 hole shotgun start at 9 a.m.
- Great prizes and contests
- Lunch banquet
- Use of the pool for golfers' families

Proceeds benefit OLC athletics (and the 250+ student athletes who participate in 22 sports each year), the parish community, and the school's academic and endowment funds.

**Visit us at [www.OurLadysChristian.com](http://www.OurLadysChristian.com) for more information and to register online! Questions? Call Lou Montefiori at 814-397-2582.**

## Kudos to...

Seventh-grader **Alex Kruszewski** and sixth-grader **Noah Nicolia**, who took 2nd and 5th places respectively at the Challenge24 Math Competition held April 26 Seton Catholic School in Meadville.

Alumnus **Ben Engel**, a member of the Collegiate Academy's Academic Decathlon team that won its second consecutive small-school national title in April.

Alumnus **Danny Ford**, recipient of the Chick Evans Caddie Scholarship, a full tuition and housing scholarship to The Pennsylvania State University. Danny, a recent graduate of Cathedral Prep, will attend the Smeal College of Business at University Park.



## Stay in touch on Facebook!

If you'd like to stay in touch with OLC or get in touch with fellow alumni (and alumni parents), then join us on Facebook! Just search "Our Lady's Christian School" and "like" us!