

J O Y F U L  
*Echoes*

*Welcome!*

Joyful Echoes is an Alumni Newsletter published by the Onondaga Central School Education Foundation for the purpose of keeping alumni and friends of OCS engaged with the Onondaga community and informed of current activities happening at OCS.

**H I T C H !**

*Which OCS student went on to play music with Alice Cooper and Rod Stewart, recorded with Janis Joplin and Miles Davis, met the Beatles, and received a Grammy for having co-written "I'll Be Where The Heart Is" for the movie Flashdance?*



*Answer: Duane Hitchings*

Yes, a boy who grew up on a dairy farm on Nichols Road in the 1950s made it big time in the music business with a lot of hard work, talent, and a little bit of luck. But first he learned how to work - baling hay, feeding animals, and driving a tractor. His Syracuse roots are deep, as his great grandfather Grant Hitchings owned

Hitchings Apple Orchards, and invented new strains of apples through grafting, including a much bigger McIntosh. Duane's dad was also President of the School Board, and his mother was part of OCS's first graduating class. Growing up in central New York gave Duane a long abiding appreciation for country folks, who value honesty, kindness, and plain old common sense, along with a deep love for their country.

*Photo above: Producer Tom Dowd, Duane Hitchings (middle) with Rod Stewart*

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**About the OCSEF** The Onondaga Central School Education Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, all-volunteer 501(c) charitable corporation whose purpose is to provide support to students, staff and academic programs at Onondaga Central through charitable donations. The OCSEF was founded in 1984 with a vision of growing an endowment over the years.

# 2017 PROM

by Taylor Featherstone, Class of 2018 President

On May 26th, 2017, Onondaga Central Jr-Sr High School held its prom at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown. It was the first prom held in the renovated former Hotel Syracuse. The Class of 2018, along with parents and friends, raised funds by holding numerous paint parties, participating in Junk in the Trunk, working the Hancock Air Show, and selling concessions at high school functions. The venue selection was also due in part to Onondaga alumna Sarah (Block) Conway, Class of 2003, who currently works in the Sales

Department of the hotel. Sarah helped to negotiate an attainable price and secured the Finger Lakes Ballroom, where the prom was held, for her former school. The theme of the prom was "Old Hollywood," and students were able to take pictures in the magnificent venue, built in 1924. It was an honor and a lifetime memory to attend the first prom held at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown. Many thanks to Sarah and the Onondaga Central alumni who continue to support the school and its students.



VALEDICTORIAN



**BENJAMIN POSNICK**

The valedictorian for the class of 2017 is Benjamin Posnick. He is the son of Sherrie and Bret Posnick. Ben graduates with a cumulative grade point average of 100.96 while earning a total of 44 college credits. Benjamin was a Commended Student in the National Merit Scholarship Competition and a recipient of the

Bausch & Lomb Science Award from the University of Rochester. Benjamin is a two-sport varsity athlete. He was captain of the Varsity Cross Country Team and a member of the Varsity Outdoor Track Team. He is also the Co-President of Key Club, President of Student Council, and a member of National Honor Society. During

the summer of 2016, he was selected from a competitive group of students for an engineering internship partnership with Syracuse University and Siemens Foundation.

In the fall, Benjamin will pursue an engineering degree at Cornell University.

SALUTATORIAN



**MEGAN DiBELLA**

The salutatorian for the class of 2017 is Megan DiBella. She is the daughter of Pamela and Michael DiBella. She will graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 100.58 while earning a total of 47 college credits. She is co-president of Key Club, editor for the Newspaper Club, and a member of National Honor Society and Drama Club. Throughout

the years, Megan's musical talents have been on display at a number of Onondaga concerts, athletic contests, and various performances. She has also participated in NYSSMA with a piano performance.

Megan will study biomedical engineering at Binghamton University in the fall.

**BEST OF  
LUCK  
TO BOTH  
GRADS**



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CAROL SEARLE

by *Cynthia Porter Korolov*

Although Carol was born and raised in the Valley section of Syracuse, she had South Onondaga in her blood. Her mother was born and raised on a farm in South Onondaga, but lived her entire married life in the Valley. Carol came to country living through her love of horses.

Despite her mother's objections, Carol loved horses and learned to ride when she was in her mid-teens—offering to muck out the stable of an old cavalry horse owned by an even older retired cavalry colonel in return for riding lessons. Before she was 20, she bought her first horse, moved to an old farmhouse on Route 80 in Nedrow, and became half owner of Nedrow Valley Stables.

Shortly after opening the stables, Carol traded her office job and bookkeeping machine for a school bus, and began a multi-decade career driving bus for Onondaga Central Schools. She really enjoyed interacting with the children. She fussed over the little ones on their first few days riding the bus, admonished the naughty ones, and gave out pink slips to the incorrigible offenders, although she did that with a heavy heart and only after every other option was eliminated. She often told of worrying about the winter road conditions as she drove a bus load of students to and from school in the heavy CNY snow.

Carol loved taking athletic teams to games at various places in the area

and rooting for the OCS players from the bleachers, and as an avid fan of the OCS Tigers, she was present at most of the home games. She also loved the field trips that brought the students to the local museums or the Civic Center.

She drove three generations of OCS students over the years, remarking, half in jest, about how old it made her feel when she got her first kindergartener who was the child of one of her early bus passengers. When that happened she was laughing and crying at the same time when she said that she REALLY felt old now. But she loved interacting with the students on a daily basis, and really did not want to give that up. After doing all sorts of courier work for the school district over the years, Carol was well-known to the teachers and administrators. Following her retirement from driving after over 35 years, she filled in where she was needed in the school offices, eventually taking on the full-time position of building secretary at the Wheeler Middle School.

In 1989, Carol joined the South Onondaga Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary so she could be more active in her community. Along with other Auxiliary members, she responded to fire calls, and provided drinks, food, and moral support for the firefighters as they worked to battle blazes and save homes, barns, and other structures. But supporting

the volunteer fire department was only part of the work of the Ladies Auxiliary. Carol was an active member, holding various offices over the years, and although she held her offices willingly, Carol was happier working behind the scenes, organizing. Her favorite events were the academic awards dinners for the OCS students, and dinners for senior citizens that the Auxiliary put on regularly. She enjoyed being a part of the food team ... seeking

tirelessly raising funds, promoting the Relay for Life, participating in the relay, and serving as team captain for what became known as the Toad Hollow Team. During the summer of 2014, Carol was stunned when she received the news that she had been diagnosed with cancer. She continued to work, saying that her daily interactions with the children, teachers and administrators what kept her grounded and able to cope with her treatments. A year

## **“A CARING, COMPASSIONATE WOMAN, CAROL BELIEVED IN GIVING BACK TO HER COMMUNITY.”**

the best deals, purchasing and transporting it to the firehouse, and preparing of the meals. And she just loved baking apple pies for these events, and went out of her way to find the Northern Spy apples she preferred for pies. Only the best from her kitchen was prepared for the Auxiliary events.

Carol met her husband George while working at OCS. George was a dairy farmer and bus driver. They married in November 1980, and their marriage was a happy one. After George succumbed to a fast-spreading cancer in the summer of 1991, Carol worked through her grief by becoming involved fundraising for cancer research. When a local Relay for Life, a community based fundraising event for the American Cancer Society began in Central New York, Carol participated. Each year until 2014, she worked

of treatments left her cancer free, but significantly weakened from the aftereffects, and when the 2015 Relay for Life was in the planning stages, she was saddened to realize that she did not have the strength or stamina to participate. Carol passed away on November 14, 2015.

A caring, compassionate woman, Carol believed in giving back to her community. Her activities with the South Onondaga Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary and her participation in the local Relay for Life events over the years were demonstrated her desire to be an active, helpful, contributing member of the Navarino and South Onondaga communities where she lived and worked. I am proud to say that she was my dearest friend for 60 years.

# HITCH!

Duane's love for music started young, listening to WNDR and learning to play the piano at age five. In fact, he took his first piano lessons from Mrs. Wheeler, the principal's wife! Before long, he'd put a band together – with fellow student Bob Sanders on trumpet – and played a few dances at OCS, as well as local barn dances (in real barns with real “essence of cow” wafting through).

But it was his first paying gig at the Auburn Elks Club that convinced him music was his calling – not only was he doing what he loved and getting

remainder of his high school years. It was during those years in the early 1960s that he found himself playing with Del Shannon, Bobby Vinton, and Ricky Nelson in the Dick Clark Tours. (Syracuse University alum Dick Clark started the hugely popular American Bandstand show in 1957, introducing millions of people to rock n' roll, and created tours thereafter to build on that success.) Classmates may remember other local sites Duane played, including the old Holiday Bowl on Erie Boulevard, the Three Rivers Inn (“Home of the Stars”), and the Hackney House.

## “...NOT ONLY WAS HE DOING WHAT HE LOVED & GETTING PAID FOR IT, BUT THERE WERE PRETTY GIRLS & LATE-NIGHT ADVENTURES, TOO.”

paid for it, but there were pretty girls and late-night adventures, too. That night, he and his bandmates may have gotten more than they bargained for, as the story features a 6' 5" farmer with a double-barreled shotgun who was looking for his daughter in the wee hours of the morning. It is likely no coincidence that soon after, his parents transferred him from OCS to Manlius Military Academy for the

Duane went on to get a scholarship from San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and also attended Syracuse University and Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. Among his many credits include being an original member of the Buddy Miles Express as well as the group Cactus, discovering the band Tesla, and working with Eddie Money, Kim Carnes, Robin Gibb, Pat Benatar,



Duane (left) with Mike Pinera

Heart, Steve Perry, Rick Springfield, Tupac and TLC, among others. He plays multiple instruments, and composes pop, country and electronic dance music.

You can listen to Duane's work through songs he's written or co-written (including Rod Stewart's hit “Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?") and there's a fantastic 10-minute clip of him

jamming with Jimi Hendrix on [www.reverbnation.com/duanehitchings/songs](http://www.reverbnation.com/duanehitchings/songs). Turns out, Hendrix produced Duane and Buddy Miles for a time, and even put “The South Onondaga Grocery Store” on Miles' first album! These days, Duane lives in Nashville, alongside the country folks he loves, like those from OCS. Retired? Not for a moment, as Duane continues to compose and play, having more recently collaborated with Faith Hill, Ken Chesney, Rod Stewart, Tanya Tucker, Tim McGraw. If you ever get the chance, pull up a chair alongside Duane and ask him a few questions

## “HE'S A TALENTED, FUN-LOVING MAN, WITH A BUCKETFUL OF AMAZING STORIES TO SHARE.”

– he's a talented, fun-loving man, with a bucketful of amazing stories to share.

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## What's Duane's advice for any current OCS students looking to get into the music business?

“ LOVE music so much you have to play or sing. Practice, learn, and listen to the truly successful musicians and performers from today and yesterday. They're successful because their love for music moves other people – they aren't in it for the money, and they don't make fake music. So get good at what you do - then hire a good attorney! (I'm serious!)”





**DUANE'S TOP 6 FAVORITE COMPOSITIONS**

**1. Strangers of The Heart**

*Heart  
(Bad Animals album)*

**2. Don't Look Any Further**

*Dennis Edwards  
and The Temptations*

**3. I'll Be Where The Heart Is**

*Kim Carnes  
(for the movie Flashdance)*

**4. Young Turks**

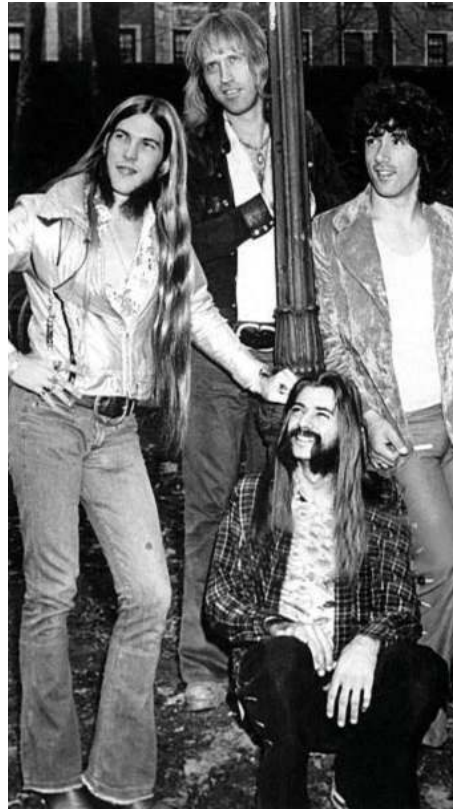
*Rod Stewart*

**5. Confidentially**

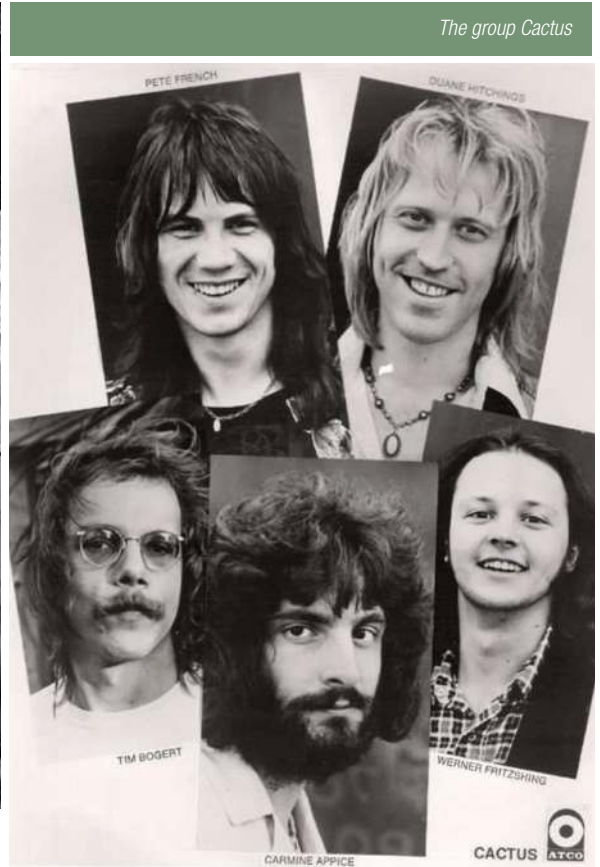
*David Frizzel*

**6. Do Ya Think I'm Sexy**

*Rod Stewart*



*Duane (top) with Carmine Appice & Friends*



*The group Cactus*

**26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL 1983 GRAMMY AWARDS**



*Best album of original score  
written for a motion picture or a  
television special*



# OCSEF UPDATE

The Onondaga Central School Education Foundation, Inc., was established in 1984. Its primary mission has been to provide financial assistance to deserving OCS graduates. Students are selected to receive awards based on their academic record, their academic potential, their service to the school, and their service to the community.

In 1986 the OCSEF established a policy of saving a portion of its annual earnings. Those earnings were designated for investment into an endowment fund, the purpose of which would be to provide scholarships not only for the current-year seniors but also for graduating seniors far into the future.

Every May the OCSEF establishes dollar amounts for its awards, and those amounts are based on the previous year's fundraising and investment growth. The OCSEF doesn't use the endowment itself to fund the awards, a policy which ensures that the endowment will not get spent down.

For the first 8 years, the endowment was invested in CD's, but in 1994, the Foundation's Board of Directors, following the recommendations of its independent investment advisor, began investing in a diversified selection of mutual funds.

A number of factors have contributed to the steady growth of the endowment since 1994. First, the investments have been successful and fulfilled their objectives. In

addition, the OCS faculty and administrative teams have supported the Foundation financially. Also, the OCS community, alumni, and friends have been generous in their support of phone-a-thons, solicitations and the annual golf tournament.

In addition to the original OCSEF endowment, many generous people have funded their own endowment funds over the years. Gordon Cameron, a former OCS District business manager, established the first named endowment fund; Greg Moore was instrumental in establishing the Moore-Powlesland endowment; Jonna (Parsons) Lewandowski (OCS '67) and Glenn Lewandowski have funded an annual scholarship for the past 10 years; and Gary and Jean Keehfus (OCS '62) have contributed tens of thousands of dollars to back the Keehfus-Delaney scholarship. Other endowments have been funded by Len Fellows (OCS '65); the family of Anne Miller Lohff; the Howe Family; the OCS Class of '65; and Marilyn and David Dominick.

In September of 1990, the OCS endowment fund was \$3,483. That previous June, 1990, two graduates each received a \$500 award. The current treasurer is pleased to report that the total amount held by the OCSEF including its original endowment fund, all subsequent endowments, cash and checking accounts surpassed \$300,000. In 2017, graduating seniors will receive more than \$22,450-as the endowment continues to grow.

## 2017 SCHOLARSHIPS

FUND NAME	AMOUNT	RECIPIENT
Anne June Lohff Memorial	\$350	Emily Johnson
Carolyn Cameron Carter	\$500	Rebeca Mack
Howe Memorial	\$300	Robbie Wucher
Howe Memorial	\$300	Jacob Leland
Keefhus-Delaney	\$3,000	Megan DiBella
Keefhus-Delaney	\$3,000	Benjamin Posnick
Keefhus-Delaney	\$1,000	Karleigh Wucher
Keefhus-Delaney	\$1,000	Jacob Carter
Len Fellows	\$500	Shaun Rush
Moore/Powlesland	\$3,000	Lydia Loan
OCS Class of 1965	\$500	Evan Gantley
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$2,000	Abbey Fenner
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$1,500	Garrit Peck
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$1,500	Alyssa Cregan
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$1,000	Joslyn Doupe
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$750	Max Marcy
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$750	Megan Palmowski
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$500	Matthew Wojak
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$500	Ellen Sorber
OCSEF Endowment Fund	\$500	Julia Magalheas

## TILE-BY-TILE PROGRAM

The OCSEF Tile-by-Tile program is a unique opportunity to raise funds for scholarships by recognizing individuals in the OCS community with tiles on the wall at the OCS Jr/Sr High School. Tiles are mounted on the wall leading into the school gym. These tiles make excellent gifts and will enable you to preserve the memory of a cherished member of the greater OCS community. To honor someone with a tile, please see the instructions on our web page: <http://www.ocs.cnyric.org/community.cfm?subpage=40046>

**Thank you to the OCS alumni & community for contributing to the first OCSEF fund drive. This fundraising effort replaced the longstanding annual phone-a-thon and raised \$8,424.**

## Forever IN OUR MEMORIES

### Jean Whalen

Class of 1942  
February 17, 2017

### Ray Volles

Class of 1944  
February 20, 2017

### Rosemary Block Tokar

Class of 1960  
February 26, 2017

### Greg Cox

Class of 1988  
June 26, 2017

### Cliffy Squire

Class of 1990  
April 2, 2017

### Ryan Campbell

Class of 2006  
March 1, 2016

### Jonathan Diaz

Class of 2008  
November 24, 2016

### Eric Kunai, Jr.

Class of 2014  
June 11, 2016

## ALUMNI LUNCHEON WHERE DID THE YEARS GO?

All alumni from OCS classes 50 (!) or more years from graduation are invited to attend an annual luncheon at the Orchard Vali Golf Club. The year's new "invitees" were from the

Class of '67 and joined the "upperclassmen" on May 26th. Our one hundred and fifty alumni attended, enjoyed the food and entertainment, and exchanged memories.



Attendees from the class of 1957 celebrating their 60th reunion

## SCHOOL EVENTS



### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

OCS Homecoming will be held on Saturday, September 30th, 2017.

Please come and support us! Visit the school and enjoy the parade, sports events, food, and the Wall of Distinction ceremony.

# OBITUARIES

## RYAN CAMPBELL



May 2, 2011, was my first day back in America after spending five months studying abroad in Italy. It was a day I will never forget – not because I got to see my family for the first time, but it was the day I learned what addiction can do to a person.

I grew up in Onondaga Hill with what people thought of as a picture-perfect family. My brothers and I were active at OCS – we played sports, were involved in numerous clubs and had too many friends to count. My parents were involved too – my mom always helped to prepare meals before football games and my dad was active on the Board of Education. My oldest brother, Matt, went to Nazareth College after graduating from OCS in '03 and is now a 4th grade elementary teacher in South Florida.

I went to St. Bonaventure University, after graduating from OCS in '08 and I am now an insurance adjuster. My

brother Ryan graduated from OCS in '06 and went to heaven on 3/1/16.

May 2, 2011 was the first of many nightmares my family went through. For five years, my family and I lived in fear that the disease of addiction would take Ryan from us. For five years, we watched this disease slowly kill him. For five years I watched my parents cry and pray for help. For that entire five years, I never opened up to anyone about what we were going through. I was ashamed, I was embarrassed and I was scared. I often asked myself, how could something like this happen to us? How could something so low-life come into our family? How could heroin be a topic of our family dinners?

My parents found help through Families-Anonymous. They quickly learned that the stigma our society has placed on addiction is so false. They met other families, like ours, going through the exact same thing. These families soon became friends and their source of therapy.

My parents learned the hard way through FA that addicts have to want help. My brother was in and out of inpatient rehabs and even spent time in a halfway house, but nothing seemed to help. I know he wanted help – he and I often reminisced about the good days. We would talk about

his appreciation for history and how that was his best class at OCS. He told me how he missed hanging out with the guys in our basement, how he was ashamed he let the love of his life get away, how he missed skiing with his friends at Song Mountain and Syracuse University games with the family. So why wasn't he keeping his promises? I'm not sure if I'll ever know the answer, but what I've concluded is this: his disease was too far gone, and inpatient rehab for 30 days isn't sufficient for a heroin addict. There is no cure for addiction, and quitting takes more than good intentions or a strong will. A recovering addict will be at the risk of relapse his or her entire life.

My family and I have learned so much these past five years. Our eyes and our hearts have been opened in ways we never thought imaginable. It has been 10 months since he passed. In 10 months I have been so open and painfully honest about his story. I have found myself going to support groups and publicly sharing his story, which is something I would have never done five years ago. I have had so many people reach out to me to share their stories and their pain. I even had a few people tell me that I have saved their life by sharing Ryan's story. I've learned in these five years that there is no such thing as a real-life, picture-

perfect family. I've also learned that if we stop the silence on addiction, we can all start battling this together. If we speak the truth, society will recognize the crisis we are all facing. If we start the conversation, maybe, just maybe, someone's life can be saved.

We just celebrated our first Christmas without Ryan and although he was not with us physically, he was definitely with us in spirit and always will be.

*by Meghan Campbell*

## ROSEMARY BLOCK TOKAR



Rosemary Block Tokar passed away February 26, 2017, at the age of 74. She is survived by her husband Robert, two children and four grandchildren.

From a family of seven, she is survived by four siblings. She was born July 23, 1942 in Syracuse, NY, and later lived in South Onondaga, NY, where she graduated from OCS, Class of 1960. After retirement from Dun and Bradstreet in Murray Hill, New Jersey, she and Bob moved to Fayetteville, PA, where she became involved with various ministries in church and a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 1426 Columbian Ladies.

*by Avalene Perry Bishopp, '60 OCS grad who lives in Fayetteville, PA.*

# REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS & INFO

This newsletter is a product resulting from submissions made by our alumni. Please send us your stories and news! Do you have a favorite memory? An interesting story idea? Or an alumni announcement - wedding, birth, obituary - you would like to share?

For submissions of news, ideas and/or stories, please contact the OCSEF Alumni Coordinator at [ocsalum34@gmail.com](mailto:ocsalum34@gmail.com), or send to:

**OCSEF Alumni Coordinator**  
2598 Kamm Road  
Marietta, New York 13110

The OCSEF has established an Alumni Database. It contains contact information of OCS alumni, community members and current and former staff members. If you know of someone who would like to receive future issues of Joyful Echoes and other alumni-related

communications, please forward the Alumni Data Form to him or her. You can find it on the OCSEF Web Page.