

JOYFUL
Echoes

ISSUE 15

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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.

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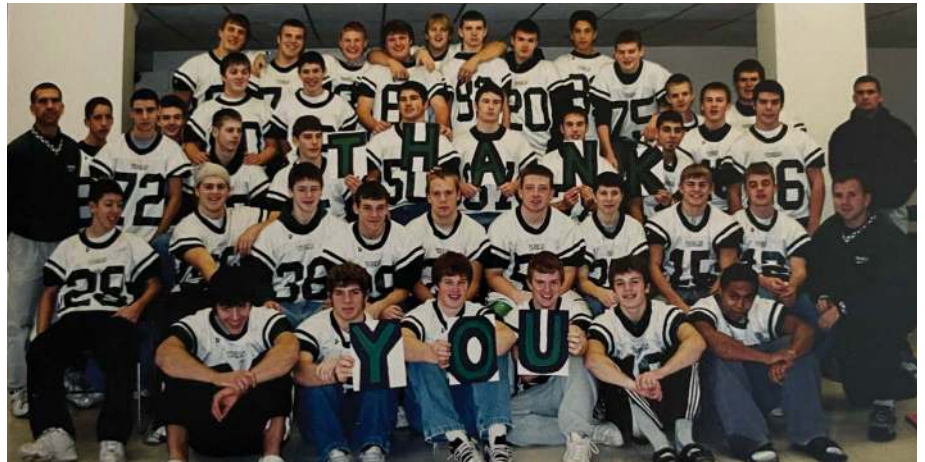
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**UNDEFEATED:
THE TWENTY-YEAR CELEBRATION
OF ONONDAGA'S FOOTBALL STATE
CHAMPIONSHIP TRIFECTA**

by Natalie Price, Class of 2023



Twenty years ago . . .

It's November 22, 2002. Under the bright stadium lights of the Carrier Dome with less than three minutes to play, the Onondaga Tigers' two-year, twenty-four game winning streak is in serious peril. Leroy High School leads the Tigers 10-7, and Onondaga is backed up on its own 35-yard line. Junior

running back Mike Hart gets the handoff only to find himself trapped and penned in by the Leroy defense. But this is the moment they trained for, the moment the Tigers had all been waiting for. The Tiger fans are on the edge of their seats. In a flurry of action, Hart spins and reverses and twists, agilely dodging the defenders and races 65 yards for the game-clinching touchdown.

Continued on page 4

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. Please visit our web page: <https://www.ocseducationfoundation.com/>

HAPPENING NOW

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2022 VALEDICTORIAN AND CO-SALUTATORIANS

VALEDICTORIAN



SOPHIA MYER

The valedictorian for the class of 2022 is Sophia Myer. She is the daughter of Julie and Matthew Myer. Sophia graduated with 20 credits from Tompkins Cortland Community College and 22 credits from Onondaga Community College. Sophia has also taken every AP course and exam offered at Onondaga. She was a member of the varsity soccer,

indoor track and lacrosse teams at Onondaga. She has been vice president of the Class of 2022 since her freshman year, president of the Varsity Club, and secretary of both the National Honor Society and Key Club. Sophia is studying biology at the University of Rochester, to be followed by medical school.

RICHARD KOPP

Richard Kopp is the son of Nancy Walker-Kopp and Richard Kopp. Richard earned 12 credits from Tompkins Cortland Community College, 18 credits from Onondaga Community College and 3 credits from SUNY Oswego. He also earned a qualifying score on the AP World History

exam and took the AP Government and Politics exam. Richard competed on the varsity soccer team and is a member of National Honor Society. He is studying computer science at Miami University.



SALUTATORIAN

SALUTATORIAN



VANESSA WOOLERY

Vanessa Woolery is the daughter of Mia and Robert Woolery. She earned 16 credits from Tompkins Cortland Community College and 14 credits from Onondaga Community College. Vanessa earned a qualifying score on the AP United States History exam and took the AP Government and

Politics exam. She was a member of the varsity soccer, indoor track and outdoor track teams. At OCS, she participated in Robotics Club, National Honor Society and Varsity Club. She is attending Niagara University, studying elementary education.

Forever IN OUR MEMORIES

Arlene Farrance Pollack

Class of 1939
June 3, 2022

Doug Fisher

Class of 1972
August 21, 2022

Dave Clarke

Class of 1975
August 14, 2022

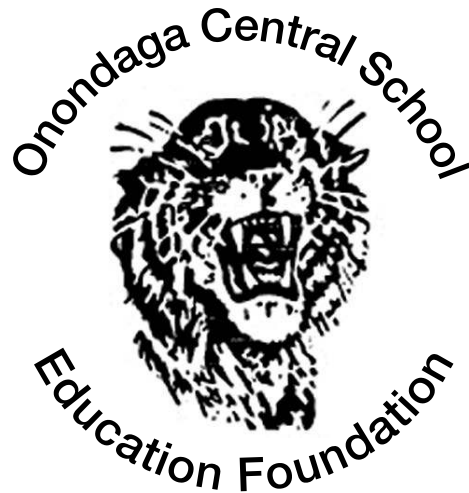
Warren Bonnell

Teacher/Coach
July 29, 2022

Sharon Garvey

Math Teacher
May 12, 2022

OCSEF UPDATE



GOLF RECAP

The 2022 Charles Molloy OCSEF Golf Tournament was another big success. A full field helped raise over \$5000 to contribute to the scholarship funds for OCS students.

2022 OCSEF SCHOLARSHIPS

The OCSEF is proud to announce that 24 scholarships totaling \$34,150 were awarded to our 2022 graduates. Congratulations to all scholarship recipients!

VISIT THE OCSEF WEBSITE: WWW.OCSEDFUNDATION.COM

PLEASE *Join* US!



During homecoming weekend, October 21-22, OCS will be celebrating the 2001-2003 state champion football teams. Please come help us celebrate as well as enjoy all the other activities Onondaga Homecoming has to offer.



Continued from page 1

It's a play one can still find on YouTube, an astounding touchdown, a play now known simply as "The Run." (The Run: Mike Hart TD run in 2003 {sic} NYSPPHSAA State Semifinals, YouTube.) The Tigers held on to win the Leroy game and would win the following week to clinch their second consecutive NYS championship. *Joyful Echoes* reached out to some of the players who were part of the "trifecta." Kyle Martin, former Onondaga football player, reflected on that game and others. Playing tight end and outside linebacker for the Tigers, Martin remembers the first championship win in 2001 being a "big surprise." While the Tigers were expected to have a strong season, making it to the state championship finals was not on the horizon, let alone winning the title. Actually, Martin's favorite memory from the 2001 season was beating Dolgeville in the Section III finals.

Vanquishing a long-time rival put the team on cloud nine. After Sectionals, the team kept winning and felt absolutely unstoppable. With momentum carrying them, the Tigers defeated Newfield 20-14 and Clymer 33-26 prior to taking the state championship handily with a 35-7 rout of Dobbs Ferry.

In 2001 Martin was a junior, so by the 2002 season, he and his fellow senior teammates were determined to win again. The seniors needed to go to the finals again in order to reach their full potential. Falling short would end their high school careers on a sour note. The first championship season was fun, but as for the second, he recalls, the pressure was on. In 2002, Onondaga dispatched Lansing 38-0, LeRoy, and then Briarcliff 35-6 in the championship game.

In 2003 the streak continued with wins over Deposit 56-16, Lyons 29-22, and Cambridge 41-21—a game in which the Tigers at one time fell behind 21-7. The winning streak wouldn't end until 2004 after an extraordinary 43 straight wins were logged into the record book. The third consecutive state championship was the final lofty accomplishment for Hart before moving on to play at the University of Michigan—and leave as its all-time leading rusher!

But winning three State titles in a row is not even the most impressive part of this invincible team. After years without even fielding a team, the football program made a comeback in 2000. And what a comeback they made. The team had an undefeated season until playoffs.

This was a season of rebuilding and freshman Mike Hart was "still getting his feet wet," yet somehow the Tigers pulled off an impressive season, losing only to Mohawk.

Bill Spicer coached at OCS for six years before joining the coaching staff at Hamilton College. He told *Joyful Echoes* that from his time at OCS, he is most proud that his players now have successful lives, are employed and supporting families, and are all-around great citizens.

As coach, he found the biggest challenge to be getting the boys from three different areas to come together and work as one unit. For Martin, this was an advantage to the team. "The beautiful thing about OCS is the three separate communities that come together," Martin added.

When they were younger, the boys played against each other on teams that were located where they lived. Once they reached varsity, they were no longer competitors but teammates, and that is what "got them through tough games."

Coach Spicer's favorite memory as Onondaga's coach was the team's spaghetti dinners, where the team was able to bond over a common interest—food! His favorite memory from each state final was receiving the plaque at the end of the game on the field,

to run up scores. He fielded a well-disciplined team that never taunted opponents or engaged in elaborate on-field celebrations.

Martin's favorite part of football is the opportunity it gives athletes. He said, "There are not many places where you can work person versus person physically." On the field, there is "a place for anyone," regardless of one's speed, size, or strength. Martin makes it clear that football is a game of sacrifice and part of being on a team means sacrificing. "Some get recognition through media and others do not, but for the betterment of the program you need to put your ego aside." Players makes sacrifices for teammates "when normally you would not have met them or run in the same circle." "Football," he asserts, "is a great way to bring people together."

And this team did just that.

Martin continued his football career at Hobart and William Smith and now coaches at Cazenovia High School. His advice to current Onondaga football players is to get in the weight room and prepare. As an athlete, you need to be able to "look yourself in the mirror and know you gave it your all." Martin added, "By game day it is too late. You are either prepared or you're not."

Martin thinks back on his days as an Onondaga football player fondly and often because those successes "don't happen to everyone." Only five teams in New York State win that title every year, and the Tigers were able to take one of them for three years straight. To prepare for those successful seasons, the players put

"TWENTY YEARS AGO, BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS WERE Poured OUT IN THE NAME OF FOOTBALL."

where everyone who worked hard to make the win happen came together for a picture and a celebration. What means just as much as the titles to Coach Spicer is that the Tiger team earned the sportsmanship award every year. Fans remember that Spicer endeavored never

in the work needed to be champions. Every day in the summer, the team went to the weight room, and Coach Spicer was there, holding the players accountable for the effort they put in. This, Martin adds, was motivation for him and his friends.



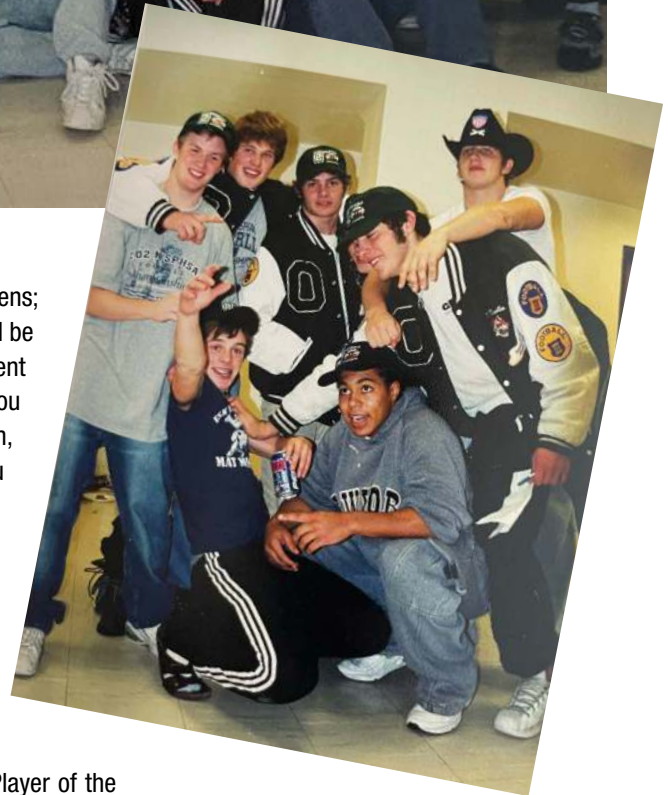
The team saw the time their coaches put in for them and were grateful because without them the team would not have achieved its goals. The team was always together, whether it was lifting, playing seven-on-seven, or working on offensive plays in the summer. The players were inseparable, building the mentality and bond a good team needs to play as one and be successful.

Another one of Martin's favorite memories was going to St. Bonaventure University on an overnight training trip with Baldwinsville High School, an experience that significantly helped with team bonding. During the season, the team spent twelve hours "in class" watching game film of their opponents for the upcoming game, not to mention the countless hours spent on the field and in the weight room.

Each season Spicer had a theme, but his biggest motto he drilled into the boys' heads was "nobody breaks the chain," emphasizing the importance of unity. Beyond football, he hoped to teach the team three things: 1) place

academics first; 2) be good citizens; and 3) care about other people and be selfless. Spicer's message to current or former Onondaga players is "If you set your goals and put the work in, you can accomplish the goals you set."

The team has more than just a State Title to be proud of. Onondaga football was filled to the brim with talent. From 2001-2003, Bill Spicer was awarded Coach of the Year and Mike Hart was awarded Class D Player of the Year. In 2002, Kyle Martin, Kurt Wasilewski, Jake Cummings and Mike Hart were first-team selections for New York's All-State Football team while Justin Graham, Dan Willis, and Hodges Sneed were second-team All-State. In 2003 Hodges Sneed, Kyle Bome, Pat Neuman, Don Cummings, Matt Popov, and Mike Hart were all first-team All State picks; as for second team, Matt Amidon, Carl Runge, and Matt Majewski all earned spots.



Twenty years ago, blood, sweat, and tears were poured out in the name of football. Onondaga Central started as an underdog and emerged a champion. While three consecutive championships sound like a miracle, these players and coaches were beyond dedicated and earned every title and ounce of recognition they received, one practice at a time, one off-season workout at time, and one game at a time.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

GARY & JEAN DELANEY KEEHFUS

by Natalie Price, Class of 2023

Two OCS alumni from the Class of '62 have made a huge, positive impact on the lives of numerous OCS graduates. *Joyful Echoes* wants to tell you about those two remarkable people.

Gary Keehfus grew up on Young Road on Onondaga Hill. He was one of five children, all of whom graduated from OCS. The first was Richard ('57), followed by Lincoln ('60), Gary ('62), Roger ('69), and Sylvia ('71). Gary did not consider himself to have been particularly studious, but a review of OCS sports history reveals that he was an outstanding athlete, excelling in football, basketball, baseball and track. During his tenure, Onondaga's team sports were thriving, earning several championships. The most notable to Gary were the 1960 football team that went unbeaten and the 1960 basketball team that beat Marcellus for the county championship. His senior-year basketball squad won the Section III championship, defeating Hamilton in the finals.

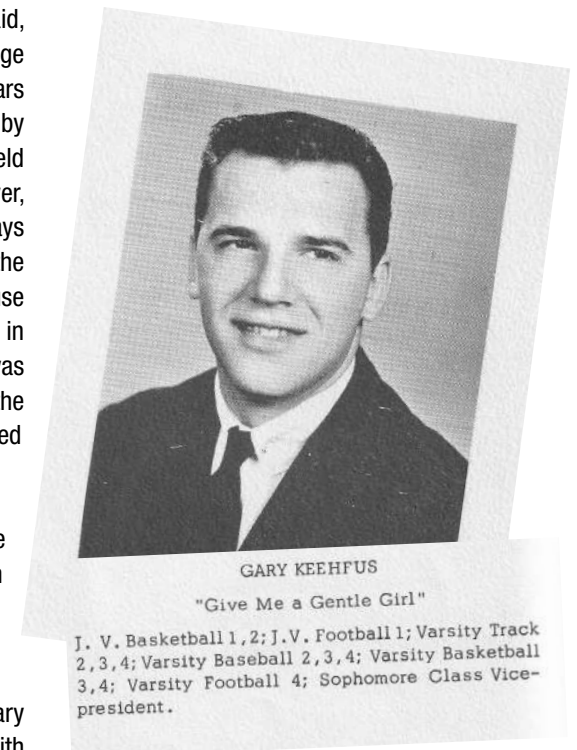
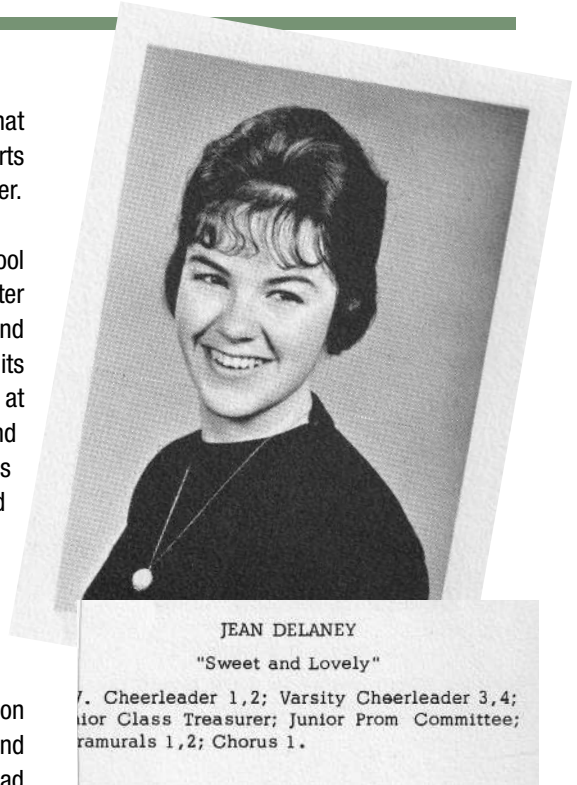
The track teams that were assembled were "practically unbeatable," an amazing feat, Gary recalls, because OCS did not even have a track on which to practice. "The rule," he recalls, "was that you had to run track or you could not play baseball." If that rule had not been in place, Onondaga would not have had enough athletes to field a track team. Gary emphasized that he played with a number of talented, hard-nosed, dedicated athletes who valued teamwork over individual accomplishments. Gary specifically mentioned coaches Bill Gilbert, Jay O'Connor, Dick Perry, and Wally Habel who were very dedicated and successful in taking average but motivated athletes and molding them into competitive and successful teams.

Jean Delaney grew up in Nedrow with two sisters, Kathleen and Patricia, who also

graduated from OCS. Jean observed that because there were no interscholastic sports for girls back then, she became a cheerleader.

Jean and Gary began dating in high school and graduated with their class in 1962. After graduation, Jean attended IBM school and then began working at Dey Brothers in its data processing department. Gary enrolled at SUNY Morrisville, majored in business, and graduated with an AAS degree in Business Administration. At Morrisville, he played basketball and baseball, where the peak experience of Gary's athletic career took place. He vividly remembers playing Syracuse University's freshmen basketball team, which was highly rated and one of Syracuse's best-recruiting classes. Playing on that team were Jim Boeheim, Dave Bing, and four other highly recruited freshmen. Gary had the privilege of guarding Bing, who, he said, was a real "class act" and would be a college All-American and an all-pro for several years in the NBA. Morrisville found itself ahead by one at the end of the first half and had held Bing to single digits. The second half, however, was altogether a different story. Gary says that whenever he talks to people about the game, he mentions only the first half because he "felt like a spectator while guarding him in the second half." Bing, he remembers, was "absolutely amazing." Morrisville lost the game, but its opponent that night provided Gary a life-long memory.

Gary finished his education at Kent State University in Ohio, earning his degree in Business Administration. In 1965, the high school sweethearts married and moved back to Syracuse. Jean worked for Crum and Forster Insurance Company, while Gary took a position as a management trainee with



Carnation Company. They started a family with the birth of Todd in 1968 and Chad in 1971.

Eventually, Gary decided he wanted to change career paths, so he took a job with Connecticut General Insurance Company as a group insurance representative. In taking the position, he and his family had to move to the Albany area. After only a couple of years, he was recognized for his accomplishments in *Newsweek* magazine, which prompted the offer he received for a position with a progressive and aggressive local insurance agency where Gary would stay for 22 years. During his tenure, he rose from account manager to president, playing a major role in taking the agency from 18 employees to nearly 900. While Gary thoroughly enjoyed the growth of the organization and what was being built, he wanted to do his own thing.

In the meantime, Jean was a stay-at-home mother who generously volunteered in her free time. Through her volunteer work, she ended up getting a job at Guilderland High School, which their sons attended. Jean remembers the boys “weren’t always happy to have their mom so close!”

When Gary was 50 years old, he and Jean were both involved in the community and both served on several boards, but Gary wanted one more career challenge. As a family, they sat down and discussed how his departure from the agency would affect them all. They talked it over, and “the decision was unanimous: Let’s start our own company!”

Thus, the next chapter of their lives started in April 1994. First Cardinal Corporation was started with eight people, four of them being family members: Gary, Jean, Todd, and Chad. Gary says, “It would be an understatement to say it was difficult. In fact, it was ‘sheer hell’ the first year.” When they made it through the second year, things started to click. First Cardinal Corporation started hiring a new employee almost weekly for the next several years. The company grew from eight employees in 1994 to nearly three hundred in 2004, with Todd and Chad being top producers

year after year. With the company’s success, several organizations pursued First Cardinal in hopes of acquiring it, attracted by its growth and the uniqueness of its product. In 2006, First Cardinal was sold to a private equity company in NYC, allowing Gary to retire. By then Todd and Chad had already started their own company.

When attending the OCS 75th anniversary in 2011, Jean and Gary were very impressed with the renovations done to the school since 1962: new classrooms, new gymnasium, new weight room, new track, and new locations of the baseball and football fields along with tennis courts. What had not changed, Gary noticed, was how well maintained everything was, the cleanliness of the facilities, and the dedication of the faculty. These are the things, he says, that indicate an outstanding school system.

That weekend Jean and Gary could feel and see a good overall attitude within the building and the student body. They decided to get involved in the OCS Education Foundation, which holds an endowment, Gary observed, that has grown from a dream of Charles Molloy Sr. in 1984 to more than half a million dollars, providing annual awards to seniors and helping them fulfill their dreams.

Gary and Jean told *Joyful Echoes* that they are extremely proud to be OCS graduates. Though they prefer to downplay their generosity, that pride is evidenced by the six-figure sum they have donated to the OCSEF over the last ten years. The Keehfus-Delaney scholarships this past June provided \$4,000 awards to two students attending four-year schools and \$1,500 awards to two students who will attend two-year or technical schools.

Both Gary and Jean look back and realize that when they got into the real world, they were fortunate to have “such a good, fundamental education.” Gary said, “We give credit to the dedicated administration and faculty we had when we attended OCS,” and added, “Success is built from the ground up. It begins with the fundamentals—a support system and an education.” Both Jean and Gary assert that

OCS gave them the tools for success. In return, the Keehfus family has been a tremendous help to OCS graduates. Through their gifts to the OCS Education Foundation, they have provided financial support and encouragement to dozens of OCS seniors headed to college.

Jean and Gary have made OCS proud to call them alumni; they have been fantastic citizens and devoted benefactors.

Gary’s plaque was included in the OCS Wall of Distinction in 2019, an honor richly deserved both for his business accomplishments and his generosity. Today Gary is still involved in various investments, but he and Jean spend most of their time with family and friends. Both play golf year-round, as they winter in Florida, and both are healthy and fit. But most importantly, they are the proud grandparents of three granddaughters, Delaney, Piper, and Taylor.



I enjoyed interviewing Jean and Gary for this article and was very pleased to get this follow-up note from them:

“We are honored to be featured in Joyful Echoes. We think it is an informative and interesting publication in keeping OCS alumni apprised of the past, present and future happenings at Onondaga Central. We feel Tiger pride when we read about a national spelling champion or one of our local players starring in the NFL, and we enjoy reading about devoted teachers such as Arlene Farrance Pollack, who just passed away.”

- NP

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 us at ocsalum34@gmail.com or send to:

OCSEF Alumni Coordinator
3479 Cherry Valley Turnpike
Syracuse, NY 13215

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: www.ocseducationfoundation.com

O N O N D A G A

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