

J O Y F U L
Echoes

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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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OCS DRAMA CLUB

by Natalie Price, Class of 2023



All great things come from humble beginnings, and Onondaga High School's Drama Club is no different. *Joyful Echoes* reached out to the club's former and current directors and advisors to prepare this brief history.

The Drama Club, started by former science teacher John LaRose in the 1990's, allowed a small group of seniors to perform plays annually. From that humble start the program took off.

Mr. LaRose was an active member of the OCS community. In addition to teaching science,

he coached tennis for over twenty years. According to John Lonczak, an All-American Tennis player whom LaRose coached at Onondaga Community College and who is the current LeMoyne tennis coach, LaRose was a "mentor and beloved friend." During his tenure, the coach, teacher, and play director touched the hearts of the students of OCS, leaving them with many unforgettable memories. According to Lonczak, the students, athletes, and actors were "not only his lineage, but also the reason why he remained at Onondaga for so long."

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

HAPPENING NOW

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

YEARBOOKS DONATED TO OCSEF

Joyful Echoes thanks a friend from Marcellus, Don Stalker, who protected a trove of OCS yearbooks and passed them along to us. The yearbooks, dated from 1936 to 1947, belonged to his mother, the late Carol Stillwell Stalker (OCS '48), and many were in crisp, new condition. The collection included a copy of the

original dedication booklet for the "new" K-12 school—constructed in 1935 for \$176,000.

We put the yearbooks in the hands of Ellen Pristash, the current OCS librarian, who has updated the school's collection—called "annuals" back in the 40's—and who reminds

our readers that the books are available for viewing or limited borrowing.

We are grateful to both Don and Ellen, who value continuity and the preservation of our history.

Reunion ANNOUNCEMENT

CLASS OF 1973

Class of '73, please save these dates:

August 4th and 5th, 2023

for our 50th class reunion celebration!! More details will be available as our planning committee continues to meet.

Check this website - alumni.class.com and follow prompts to reach the Onondaga Central page.

Please reach out to Tina (Matterson) Young at **315-708-3319** or woodzwoman55@gmail.com with any questions.



OCSEF UPDATE

THE 2023 CHARLES MOLLOY OCSEF GOLF TOURNAMENT

SAVE THE DATE!
July 8, 2023

Visit our web page to stay tuned for details:
[ocseeducationfoundation.com/
fundraisers/annual-golf-tournament](http://ocseeducationfoundation.com/fundraisers/annual-golf-tournament)

VISIT THE OCSEF WEBSITE: WWW.OCSEEDUCATIONFOUNDATION.COM

Forever IN OUR MEMORIES

Patrick Tracy

Class of 1977
September 2022

Gary Searle

Class of 1969
September 30, 2022

Gerald Hawley

Class of 1967
June 14, 2022

Barbara Weyand Hartmann

Class of 1957
July 4, 2022

Thomas W. Reilly

Class of 1954
December 21, 2022

Sue Fitch Thompson

Class of 1968
January 16, 2023

Susan Ramsden Sweeney

Class of 1968
November 23, 2022

Walt Kowalski

Class of 1962
January 10, 2023

Norris Fay

Biology Teacher
March 3, 2023

Addie Rae Dole

Music Teacher
February 3, 2023

Richard T. Perry

Gym Teacher / Football Coach
February 13, 2023

Kathleen Delaney Callagee

Class of 1958
March 4, 2023

MEMORIAL BERNARD J. FINLAY D.D.S.

APRIL 26, 1935 — MARCH 15, 2023

Joyful Echoes was saddened to learn that Bernie Finlay (OCS '55), one of the legends of Onondaga County basketball, has passed away. Dignity Memorial Services of LaJolla, California, provided this obituary, supplemented with some additional information from the editor:

Dr. Bernard J. Finlay was born in Syracuse, New York, to Theresa Streiff Finlay Boles and Howard "Hap" Finlay. As a child he attended a one-room schoolhouse across from the end of Yenny Road in the Town of Onondaga, New York. He graduated from Onondaga Central High School, led OCS to a County League basketball championship, and for many years held the single-game County League scoring record. Bernie traveled to the West Coast on a basketball scholarship, the first in his family to attend college.

After studying at a junior college in Washington state, Bernie attended San Diego State University from 1958 to 1960. While at SDSU, he set numerous basketball records, some of which remain. He was one of the top scorers in Aztec history, finishing his career with 1,110 points. He averaged 20.1 points per game in his senior year and was named All-Conference each of his three years at SDSU. He was an outstanding free-throw shooter, making 78% in his career and 83% in a single season, both totals still in the SDSU top 10.

Upon graduation from SDSU in 1960, he was drafted by the Syracuse Nationals in the 1960 NBA draft. Choosing a career in dentistry rather than basketball, Dr. Finlay attended New York State University at Buffalo. While a dental student, he met and married Susan Parry, from Marcellus, New York. He graduated with a doctorate of dentistry in 1964, and he and Susan moved to San Diego. They had a son, Blake John Finlay, and a daughter, Dana Reid Finlay. Bernie and Susan, now Susan Marrinan, divorced in 1976 but remained friends and committed parents.

Bernie married Candis Ross in 1979. During their 43 years of marriage, they resided in Pacific Beach and El Cajon, CA. He was stepfather to Spencer Ross and Brandon Ross, M.D. One of Bernie's and Candy's priorities was spending quality time with their blended families of children and grandchildren. He and Candy traveled the world from Alaska to the Galapagos Islands, to the Erie Canal, to Africa.

Bernie loved living in San Diego but fondly remembered his early years on Onondaga Hill. In 2012, in recognition of his outstanding basketball career and his work in the medical field, Bernie was honored at Onondaga Central as one of the first three alumni to have a plaque hung on the OCS Wall of Distinction.

Bernie was diagnosed with Alzheimer's seven years ago and peacefully passed away while a resident of ActivCare in Pacific Beach. He was predeceased by his brother Kenneth Finlay. He is survived by Candis, the children of their blended family, and his brother Donald Finlay, of Syracuse, New York. Memorial services will be private.

Bernie and Candy provided scholarship money for athletes graduating from OCS. In lieu of flowers and to honor Bernie's desire to help young athletes, the family asks that donations be made to the Onondaga Central School Education Foundation (OCSEF, Inc.) and mailed to 4466 South Onondaga Road, Nedrow, NY 13120



HISTORY/NOSTALGIA

OCS DRAMA CLUB

by Natalie Price, Class of 2023

Continued from page 1

Once Mr. LaRose retired in 1998, Steven Braddock took over the club and expanded it to all high-schoolers, not just seniors. Braddock did *Midsummer Night's*, *Dream*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Return of the Pink Panther*. In those days, Braddock had a very limited budget and recalls that his first two shows were by Shakespeare and Charles Dickens because neither required a royalty fee.

It was at this time (1998) that the Mr. and Mrs. Cormier entered the scene. Because their children were avid members of the club, Mrs. Cormier assisted with costumes and her husband helped construct sets.

All through high school in Herkimer, New York, Mrs. Cormier was an actress for her school's drama club and even directed *The Glass Menagerie* as a senior in high school. Ironically, she told her teacher she

In 2002, Braddock's fourth year as advisor, the club performed its first musical, *Grease*, with Mr. and Mrs. Cormier assisting him. As reluctant as Braddock was to take on such an arduous feat, Mrs. Cormier noted, "Nothing gets an audience like a musical." The club had saved enough money to pay for royalties, and the Cormiers stepped up to the challenge. Conveniently enough, Mrs. Cormier knew how to sing and Mr. Cormier knew how to play the guitar, so together and with some help from Linda Spinella, they led the choir and the club's first pit band. They recall that *Grease* was their first OCS Drama Club to draw a full house. Braddock now serves as the artistic director at Niagara University, having directed over twenty productions there.

In 2003 Mrs. Cormier became the director. She was a perfect fit for that position as her husband was already the tech director. Mrs. Cormier was able to work alongside her

The first musical Mrs. Cormier directed by herself at Onondaga, *Guys and Dolls* in 2005, was not easy, but it became a successful team effort. After watching the production, former superintendent Carolyn Costello made sure to find money in the budget to buy three wireless lapel microphones for the students. The kids would trade the mics around so everyone who had a solo would have one when he or she needed it.

Today, fourteen years later, the club has twenty-eight wireless body microphones. (When Mrs. Cormier compared her first shows to more recent ones, she observed that *Guys and Dolls* included nineteen students in the cast, four on stage crew, and three in tech. Thirteen years later when she produced *Newsies*, the show had forty-eight cast members and fifteen stage and tech kids.)

In 2008, Mr. Bill Rasbeck, the high school principal, loved the *Wizard of Oz* so much that he joined the cast, kicking off the integration of staff members in the productions. It was in this play they used "magic" for the first by making the wicked witch "melt into the floor." The results were so magnificent the applause stopped the show. That was also the first time the performance included Wheeler students, who played the munchkins.

Mrs. Cormier mentioned that the club now performs two musicals a year instead of the traditional play in the fall. Plays, she observes, have smaller casts while musicals allow for more creative casting and artistic expression, permitting everyone to have a role, whether it's to be a featured performer or a back-up dancer.

DRAMA CLUB GIVES ALL STUDENTS A HOME, A PLACE TO BE THEMSELVES, TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES, AND FIND CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES...FROM "THE 'DROW OR THE HILL," THEY ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.

would not be "caught dead" as director of theater because it was extremely difficult. Mr. Cormier was not a theater kid. He participated in a play in middle school, but his experience ended there until he began creating sets in 1998 at Onondaga.

sister, Chris Miller, for one year. Together they produced *Arsenic and Old Lace*. In the spring, Mrs. Cormier recalls, we did a "cheesy musical," *Teens in Tinseltown*. The club used a CD for the music because they could not find enough performers to work the show.



Though “club” is the official term for the OCS group, Mrs. Cormier asserts that it is much more than that, more like a “growing family.” It is a place that welcomes all. From seventh graders to seniors, high GPA’s to low GPA’s, “all are welcome.” Drama Club gives all students a home, a place to be themselves, to express themselves, and find confidence in themselves. According to former drama club members, whether you are from “the ‘drow or the hill,” they are all in this together.

Over the past twenty years, Mrs. Cormier recalls that her most challenging performances have been Disney shows, especially *Beauty and the Beast*. The intricate details such as costumes, props, and makeup, along with the involved vocal and pit music, made raising the curtain on opening night taxing but rewarding. While the Disney productions were fantastic displays of hard work and talent, *Newsies* is her absolute favorite show because it is “all about kids.” Every aspect of the show, she observes, is “oriented on the spirit of being young, independent, having power despite your age, and being in control of your future,” something she advocates for her students.

The latest production featured at Onondaga Central was *High School Musical*, directed and assembled by the Cormiers. The show,

with its friendship-oriented plot, illustrated the power of theater, community, and hard work.

Mrs. Cormier still directs Onondaga’s Drama Club well after her children have graduated “because of the kids.” She has been told by drama students that this club and its components are her “fifth child.” The personal growth of her performers is obvious, and Mrs. Corimer can be thanked for that. She has helped the shyest young kids find their confidence to go from being too scared to even walk across the stage to sauntering back and forth, belting out a high note in a solo scene.

Mrs. Cormier continues year after year to dedicate herself to the club out of not just her passion for theater, but for the kids because it is “all about them.” Her favorite part of every show is the senior speeches and being able to give the actors and actresses their final standing ovation. The speeches and goodbyes recall the good times, the hard times, and the amazing shows they produced together, making for a bittersweet and emotional night. While that is the hardest part of the job, she mentions it is also the most rewarding part of it. She says that to see students struggle and work resolutely to that final ovation is truly special to experience.



THE PERSONAL GROWTH OF HER PERFORMERS IS OBVIOUS, AND MRS. CORIMER CAN BE THANKED FOR THAT. SHE HAS HELPED THE SHYEST YOUNG KIDS FIND THEIR CONFIDENCE TO GO FROM BEING TOO SCARED TO EVEN WALK ACROSS THE STAGE TO SAUNTERING BACK AND FORTH, BELTING OUT A HIGH NOTE IN A SOLO SCENE.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: LATAVIUS MURRAY

CLASS OF 2008

JON DIAZ COMMUNITY CENTER

by Natalie Price, Class of 2023



On and off the gridiron, Latavius Murray (OCS '08) has proven to be a team player with a caring heart. Murray mentioned that for as long as he can remember, he has “dreamed of having a community center” in his hometown of Nedrow. With the support of the community—and Aldi for donating the land—Murray is ready to “make that dream a reality.”

While working with local leaders, not-for-profit organizations, and residents, he has created a plan for his vision. He envisions a center with playing fields, a gymnasium, classrooms, studios, and even a computer lab.



His inspiration for creating the John Diaz Community Center stems from his childhood and his love of sports. He added, “I had to travel across the Syracuse area to access athletic programs that helped pave my way to a career in the National Football League.” The purpose of the Nedrow community center will be to prevent any more kids from struggling to have access to athletics. Murray’s goal is to bridge the gap for local youth so the children of Nedrow can have access to mentors and opportunities to discover their passions and interests as they learn and grow. Murray asserts, “Every child deserves a safe and accessible place to play, explore interests, and build community.” The JDCC, he says, is “committed to ensuring that families have access to programs and opportunities without having to leave our community.”

This center will be a brand new, multi-million-dollar, state-of-the-art facility in honor of Murray’s late friend, Jon Diaz. According to Murray, the Center will focus on improving community health through opportunities to “connect, collaborate, and move together.” The JDCC is in the early stages of development, but Murray expects to break ground in 2023 and host a Grand Opening in 2024.

Murray notes, however, that he cannot achieve this alone, and solicits the help of the greater OCS community. If you are interested in donating, checks can be made out to John Diaz Community Center Inc. and sent to PO Box 12, Nedrow, NY 13120. For more information on JDCC corporate sponsorship opportunities, contact Latavius Murray at latavius28@gmail.com.



LEVELS OF SUPPORT

FOUNDER'S MEMBERSHIP

- Name proudly etched into the JDCC lobby and permanently featured on JDCC website and communications
- Invitation to exclusive preview event and ribbon cutting
- Honorary guest at Annual Founder's Community Breakfast event and other special events
- Lifelong JDCC membership
- JDCC swag bag

\$5K

FRIEND OF JDCC

- Acknowledgement on website
- Invitation to exclusive preview event and ribbon cutting
- JDCC membership through 2026
- JDCC tote bag

\$500

COMMUNITY CHAMPION

- Acknowledgement on JDCC website
- Invitation to exclusive preview event and ribbon cutting
- Invitation to Inaugural Founder's Community Breakfast Event and other special events
- Lifelong JDCC membership
- JDCC swag bag

\$1K

JDCC SUPPORTER

- Invitation to exclusive preview event and ribbon cutting
- JDCC membership through 2026
- JDCC tote bag

\$250

“ AS THEY SAY, ‘THERE AIN’T NO PLACE LIKE HOME.’ AND I’M JUST EXCITED TO DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL. I THINK THAT’S WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT. WORDS AREN’T ENOUGH. I THINK TO DO SOMETHING THAT GIVES KIDS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE EXPERIENCES LIKE I HAD AND HOPEFULLY GO ON TO DO THINGS I WAS ABLE TO, THAT WILL MEAN THE MOST TO ME. ”

JDCC MEMBER

- JDCC tote bag

\$100

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.ocsefeducationfoundation.com



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