

# OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Spring 2024 Newsletter



## Two OCC Alumnae are Semifinalists in the Regeneron Talent Search 2024



**An OCC Mini-Reunion:** Anabel Reed dropped in to OCC to say hello to her preschool teacher, Gerri DeSilva, and her friend from OCC, Jiji Vanegas. (Jiji, another OHS senior, now works after school in Gerri's classroom.)

**Two OCC alumni placed among the top 300 scholars nationally** in the Regeneron Science Talent Search, the oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors. Anabel Reed and Shae Shandroff were among the five Ossining High School seniors who achieved semifinalist status in the Regeneron competition.

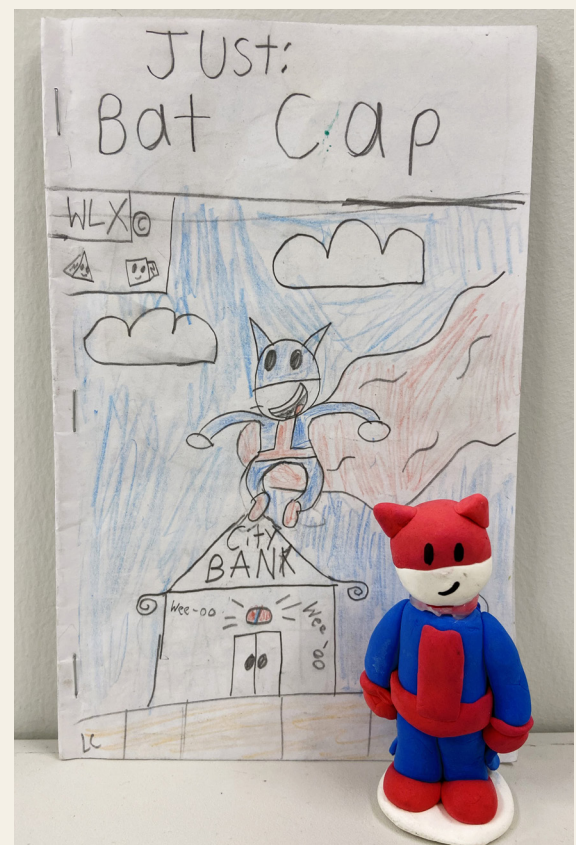
The Ossining High School Science Research Program is renowned for its consistent showing in the annual Regeneron Talent Search. Year after year, several OHS seniors place highly in the competition.

**The Music of Science, the Science of Music:** Anabel Reed, now a senior at Ossining High School, found the inspiration for her research project in her own passion for music (she plays piano, cello and guitar). Her research demonstrated that musical training can reduce the demands on one's working memory when performing challenging tasks. "My goal is to demonstrate that music education can enhance cognitive abilities, reduce stress, and improve overall academic performance," said Anabel.

Anabel can trace her insatiable hunger for learning and her fascination with science from her days as a preschooler at the Ossining Children's Center. "I was an early reader,

and also developed math skills at a young age, thanks to OCC," says Anabel. "I also loved the singing, the rhythm band, and other music activities."

**Makos at Montauk:** Shae Shandroff, also an OHS senior, explored the waters off Montauk, Long Island, to determine if it served as a critical nursery habitat for the endangered shortfin mako sharks. She tracked and analyzed data that ultimately led to the classification of the area as a nursery habitat, with potential implications for enhanced protection and conservation measures. "Mako sharks are an endangered species, so it's important that their habitat supports them into their later years when they're able to reproduce," Shae said.



**Creativity thrives after school:** Three of our fourth-graders have created a comic book world with a unique set of superheroes. (See story on page 2)



## Update: New York State Child Care Funding

Thanks in large part to the advocacy efforts of OCC's Executive Director, Howard Milbert, OCC's staff and parents, and our child care coalition partners across the state, the 2023-24 New York State budget contained good news on childcare, particularly for families. The budget provided much needed support, raising the income eligibility for child care assistance and adding \$150 million to Pre-K statewide.

However, there is still work to be done. Though the NYS legislature did provide some support for centers like OCC, they failed to provide adequate funding for worker compensation. Without more significant and sustainable wage increases, recruiting and retaining child workers will continue to be a struggle. Look out for upcoming opportunities to show our elected leaders how much our community cares about child care. We are stronger together!



## Welcome to the Universe of WXL Comics

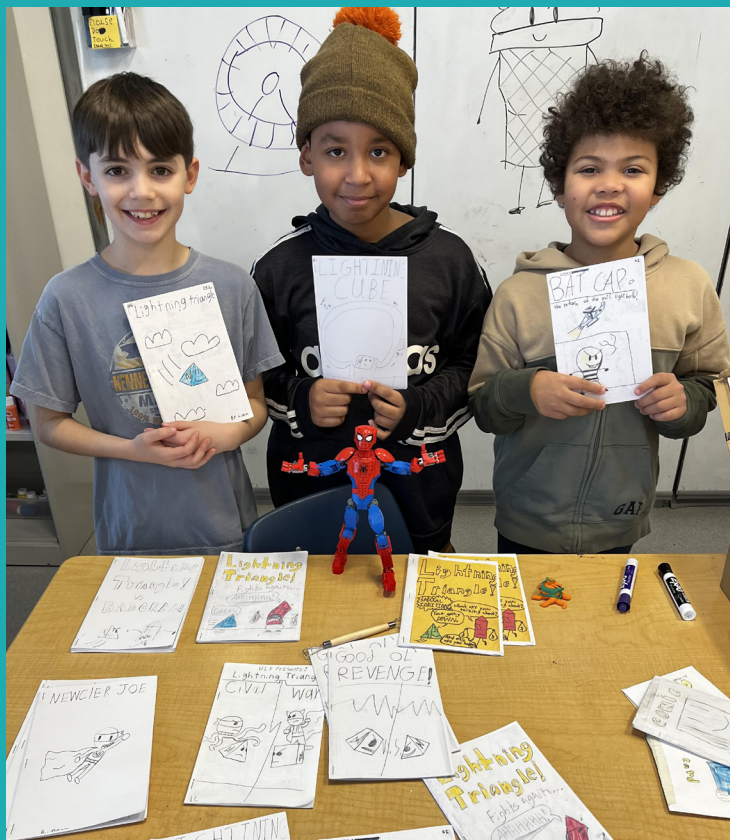
Two years ago, in a second grade after-school classroom, young Wesley showed his friend Liam how to draw three-dimensional shapes. The shapes leapt off the page, creativity took hold, and two new superheroes were born. The boys teamed up with their friend Xavier to form WXL comics.

The comics detail the adventures of a courageous team of do-gooders, Lightning Triangle, Lightning Cube, and Bat Cap, as they battle their archnemeses Bad Crayon and Evil Lightbulb. Now fourth-graders, the boys have written and illustrated more than 30 comics. Thanks to Xavier's astute business sense, the comics have been distributed throughout OCC, along with WXL trading cards and collectors' figures made out of clay. You can own your own WXL masterpiece for just one piece of candy, preferably chocolate.

In a recent issue, Bad Crayon is committing a string of bank robberies all over the city. He's trying to gather enough money to build a robot to take over the world. Triangle and Cube are the only ones who can put an end to Bad Crayon's devious plans.

Liam says he is inspired by the comics his dad read as a kid. He makes his art work "old school" and loves coming up with new stories. Wesley really likes drawing, too, and says it feels good to know people are enjoying his work. Xavier has a new character of his own soon to appear. He loves bringing the boys' amazing stories and ideas to "the masses" at OCC. Perhaps what's most impressive is the friends' ability to collaborate and listen attentively to each other. Every issue is a team effort. When reading the

issues you can feel the boys' energy and excitement. We are so proud of them and fully expect to see their work on the shelves of comic book stores everywhere.



**Creating Comics After School:** L to R: Liam Cooper, Wesley Alarcon, and Xavier Shropshire, fourth-graders in OCC's After-School Enrichment Program, have created their own comic book series.



## Abigail Wallace joins the OCC Board

When the popular community gathering place, Moonbean Cafe in Briarcliff, closed, owner Abby Wallace had some time to consider “What’s next?” in her life plan. She had incorporated her commitment to volunteer service during the 16 years that Moonbean was a community hub; Moonbean hosted and supported a myriad of donation drives and volunteer activities – including some for the Ossining Children’s Center.

It was fortuitous, then, when her neighbor, Darryl Moy, an OCC board member, asked her to consider serving on OCC’s governing board. A graduate of NYU with an education degree, Abby had always found work with children meaningful; as early as age 12, she became a volunteer teacher in her church’s religious education program. Abby also can identify with many families in the OCC community as she is the daughter of immigrants. The mom of two teen-age daughters, Ossining High School students, Abby and her husband, Kirk, have been Ossining residents for 19 years.



*Abigail Wallace*

## Volunteer Spotlight: Hayden Golemis

Hayden Golemis, now a freshman at Ossining High School, came to OCC five years ago as a soon-to-be fourth-grader on a warm August morning. Her little brother joined the second grade class. Their parents wanted the siblings to acclimate to OCC before the school year started. Hayden immediately felt right at home. When asked about her two years at OCC, Hayden says the friendships she made stand out the most. For her, OCC was a place of connection and support, whether it meant a teacher helping her with homework, or a good friend greeting her with a much needed hug.

When Hayden’s stepmom asked if she was interested in volunteering at OCC, Hayden leapt at the chance. She was excited to be part of the children connecting and sharing as she had experienced. Hayden loves any activity where she can engage with the children.



*Hayden Golemis*

When our friendly snowman volunteer was running late for this year’s Festive Fair, Hayden quickly switched gears, handing off her hot chocolate ladle to step into the snowman suit. Her energy level was off the charts as she put smiles on the face of every child. She danced with the children and gave them hugs, making every one of the children feel special.

After Hayden volunteered at the fall festival for our school-age youngsters, Juan Pomales-Vazquez, our School-Age Director Juan Pomales-Vazquez, wrote an email to Hayden’s parents, “I was so incredibly impressed by her demeanor, her professionalism, her enthusiasm and eagerness to rise to the occasion.” We are so grateful to have Hayden as part of our OCC family.

## Springing into Warmer Days



In anticipation of sunshine and warmer days, our three-year-olds participated in an engaging garden lesson with Master Gardener and Educator Andrea Sauro. The children learned all about where their food comes from and tasted some delicious cucumbers and peppers. Andrea can’t wait to get our little gardeners’ hands in the dirt this spring as they plant a special garden of their own.





## The Nutcracker Comes to OCC

A huge thank you to Logrea Dance Academy for coming to the Ossining Children's Center to show our three- and four-year-olds excerpts from *The Nutcracker* ballet!

Nick Logrea, assistant director of the dance school and an OCC parent, told the enchanting story as dancers waltzed across the gym floor. The children learned about toe shoes and what it means to dance "on pointe," and we even learned a few dance moves ourselves: plié and relevé. The Logrea Dance Academy provides dance lessons for children as young as three years old. We can't wait until we see them again!



## Fall Festival Fun



Our annual Fall Harvest Festival features a beloved tradition: a visit from the Ossining High School marching band, led by Maestro Vargas. After the children danced and jumped to the upbeat music, they learned about the instruments up close with their new high school friends.



## Hilary Clark, our Emerging Nonprofit Leader

OCC's Annual Giving and Events Associate, Hilary Clark, graduated recently from NonProfit Westchester's *Emerging Leaders Program*. ELP is an 11-month professional development program that supports individuals with 3-5 years' experience in the nonprofit sector. The program aims to grow the participants' leadership skills and their knowledge of the issues addressed by Westchester's nonprofit organizations; the leadership and administrative models of various nonprofits; challenges that nonprofits face; and the mission and impact of other organizations in the County.



**OCC's Hilary Clark joins fellow Emerging Leaders** at NonProfit Westchester's annual meeting. L to R: Hilary; Brenda Brush, Manager of Digital Projects, Westchester County Association; Cheryl Brandwein, RSVP Program Manager, Volunteer New York; and Tsahai Amazan, Consultant, Sister to Sister International Inc.

## Sending Love



**Our older three-year-olds took a walk** to the local post office to mail their Valentine creations to their parents at home.

## In Memoriam: Mary Lou Morrissy

The Ossining Children's Center community bade a final farewell this winter to Mary Lou Morrissy, a long-time community leader, a teacher, a champion for children, and the matriarch of a family of OCC supporters. The Morrissy family's friendship with OCC began 25 years ago when Mary Lou's late husband, Jerry, joined our board and became a valued advisor on strategic planning, fundraising, and public advocacy. Through the years, all of Jerry and Mary Lou's adult children have supported the work of the Ossining Children's Center in various ways. Even grandson Emmett, now age 25, did his Eagle Scout project for OCC in 2013: he and fellow scouts built raised beds for our children's garden at 90 South Highland Avenue.



**Mary Lou Morrissy**



## Our Shawn Cribari Honored by Nonprofit Community

A huge shout out to our own Shawn Cribari, Association of Development Officers' (ADO) selection for Fundraising Professional of the Year! Shawn was honored on March 13 at ADO's Philanthropy Awards Breakfast. Over her 30-year career, Shawn has formed relationships with many in our community, building a strong foundation of support for the Center. Her hard work, energy and leadership has produced OCC's \$17 million Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building, our robust Tuition Assistance Fund, and a variety of enrichment programs.

"Development is a team effort," said Shawn when accepting the award. "Our board, our executive director, our staff and many volunteers are responsible for OCC's successful fundraising efforts. This award belongs to all of us."



*Shawn Cribari*

## Spreading Holiday Cheer at the Festive Fair

On November 17 and 18, the community came together to put on this year's Festive Fair. Sue Taub, long-term friend of OCC and owner of Holbrook Cottage, spearheaded the event. This year the annual holiday festivities expanded, adding Images Art Gallery, Briarcliff Toy Shop, and Manor Wine and Spirits to the list of Festive Partners. March Boutique and Holbrook Cottage generously donated 10% of their sales over the two days to the Ossining Children's Center.



*Santa and his Festive Elves Fiona and Brynn Clark*

The Fair kicked off with a luncheon hosted by Donato's Trattoria on Friday afternoon. The Fair also featured entertainment for the entire family, and a raffle of items donated by the participating stores. The highlight for the youngest fairgoers had to be a visit with Santa. Briarcliff Manor Fire Department transported Santa directly from the North Pole, dropping him off in front of Houlihan Lawrence. Community volunteers, including Chapqua Boy Scout Troop 2 and Briarcliff High School students, among others, added to the holiday cheer. A snowman and some friendly elves could be spotted in front of Janniello's Specialty Foods, handing out hot apple cider and donuts.

A huge thank you to Sue, all of our Festive Partners and our amazing volunteers. We can't wait to see you again next year.



*Twins Marco and Maximo pose with our friendly snowman*



## Norman and Mary Ann Nichols leave a legacy gift to OCC

The late Norman “Norm” and Mary Nichols were known throughout the Ossining-Briarcliff community for their community involvement and generosity.

The Nichols left a generous legacy gift to OCC, which will be directed to child care tuition assistance for working parents who are public service employees, other essential workers, volunteer firefighters, recent immigrants, or studying to improve their earning capacity through trade school or college.

Norm passed away last year, having been predeceased by Mary in 2021. The Nichols traveled the world throughout the course of Norm’s career. Mary Ann always found a way to put her nursing degree to good use wherever they lived. And Norm served on the Board of the Open Door Family Medical Centers for nearly 20 years.

*Editor’s Note: Norm and Mary Nichols were OCC supporters for 30 years. Their legacy gift ensures that their support for OCC will continue for years to come. For information on how you can include your charitable intent in your estate plan, see below.*

### Secure the future of OCC by including us in your will or estate plan

Planned gifts ensure that the Ossining Children’s Center will be able to continue to serve future generations. The simplest planned gift is a bequest in your will. Here are a few FAQs about leaving a bequest:

***Don’t you have to be rich to leave money to charity in your will?***

**In fact, the majority of charitable legacies are from people of average means.** (It is a myth that only the rich leave legacies to charity.) Each and every gift, regardless of size, counts and will help make a difference to future generations of children in Ossining.

***What about my family?***

**Family and friends first – then think of the Ossining Children’s Center.** Once you have taken care of your loved ones, please consider

leaving a bequest that will make a real and lasting difference to the future of our community.

#### ***Ways to give through wills:***

- Give only the remainder, or “residue,” of your estate — that which remains after bequests to your loved ones have been made, or
- Designate that a percentage of your estate be given through your will, or
- Leave a specific dollar amount, or
- Provide for a gift of specific property-real estate, stocks or other items.

#### **OCC’s Federal Tax ID # 13-1861927**

For more information please contact Shawn Cribari, Development Director, via email at [shawn@ossiningchildrenscenter.org](mailto:shawn@ossiningchildrenscenter.org) or call her at (914) 941-0230, ext. 313. All inquiries are held in strict confidence.



## Sandy’s Street

OCC Board member, retired Assemblywoman Sandy Galef, has had a street named for her. She served our community from her district office at 2 Church Street in Ossining for 30 years. In recognition of her decades of distinguished service from this location, the intersection of Church Street and South Highland Avenues is now renamed Sandy Galef Place. Pictured here is Sandy (in the red coat) surrounded by community leaders and friends.



## Blair family memorializes Jonathan Blair with Music Enrichment Program

*"I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy – but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning."*

– Plato

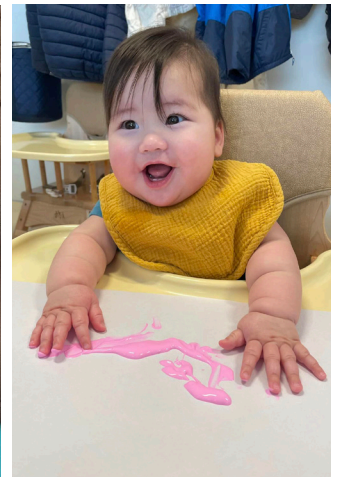
Jonathan Blair was an avid musician, singer and songwriter. A creative and kind man, he died of cancer at the age of 54 last summer, leaving a void in the lives of his family and friends. His parents, Jim and Elaine Blair, are keeping his memory alive by funding an exciting music enrichment program for OCC's school-age youngsters.

Thanks to the Blairs, OCC is partnering with the Westchester Philharmonic Orchestra to bring professional teaching artists from the orchestra to OCC for five workshops that will introduce the children to different instrument "families" of the orchestra.

"This generous gift from the Blairs is a dream come true," said Howard Milbert, Executive Director. "Many of our kids have never been to an orchestra concert. They don't know what they're missing. For years I have wanted to be able to give them this kind of music experience – something hands-on and fun – to whet their appetites for classical music and to inspire the desire to learn an instrument."



L to R: Jonathan, Elaine and Jim Blair



## Ossining Children's Center



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*Executive Director*

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