

# *Oxford Educational Foundation*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2004

P.O. Box 142  
Oxford, Pennsylvania 19363

**How** quickly another year passes! Once again it is time to share with our members and friends this annual report. As president of the Oxford Educational Foundation (OEF), on behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Directors, and as required in our by-laws, it is my pleasure to present this review of OEF activities from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004.

I am pleased to say that the past year has given OEF another opportunity to, in the words of our mission statement, “enhance the quality of education in the OASD...contribute to the success of Oxford students...and to enrich curricular and co-curricular activities of the school district.” As you will read, the volunteers who comprise our board, and our volunteer coordinator have continued to work very hard to achieve our goals.

### **The Mentoring Program**

Kay Skinner, our Volunteer Coordinator, has done a wonderful job in recruiting, training, and supporting our volunteers, tutors, and mentors within the School District. In September of 2003 we had 25 Mentors, 15 Tutors, and 4 General Volunteers. Because of Kay’s effort and commitment to this cause, we are happy to report that by May of 2004 we had 25 Tutors, 20 Mentors, and 5 General Volunteers. She has been working tirelessly to increase what many think is our most important contribution to the Oxford Area School District. Because volunteers come and go from year to year, Kay continues to speak about our mentoring programs to various churches, social groups and senior organizations.

Kay requested T-shirts for Mentors, Students and Board Members in order to encourage the students and promote OEF. The T-shirts arrived just in time for our annual Mentor’s Picnic held on May 27th at the Nottingham Elementary School. The Mentors and Students had a great time. Gerry Sauer took photos of Mentor/Mentee matches and of tutors with tutored children. Each individual received a photo.



Volleyball at the Annual Mentor’s Picnic 2004  
Photo courtesy of Mentor, John Thomson

School guidance counselors recommend each student in the mentoring program. These students are considered at risk of succeeding academically or otherwise in the public school setting.

In an article about the picnic in our local Oxford Tribune, MaryJo Steele, counselor at Elk Ridge School, stated that the program “is absolutely wonderful. The dedication of our mentors is amazing. They follow the kids up (through the grades) as long as they want the relationship. They’re consistent and very caring. ...They want to make a difference and they do.” We are very pleased with the success of the program. However, there is always a need for more mentors, tutors and volunteers. If you would like to contribute to this program with your time and commitment, please e-mail us at: [oxfordedfound@yahoo.com](mailto:oxfordedfound@yahoo.com).

### **OEF Receives Endowment Gift**

In June 2004, the OEF received a donation from Robert N. Cleaver (class of ’51) in memory of his sister, Helen Cleaver Reburn (class of ’47). These funds were earmarked for our Endowment Fund, which generates

interest and dividends that are used to support our efforts, while the principal remains intact. The OEF thanks Bob and the Cleaver family for their generosity and for remembering the OEF in their estate planning.

### **Alternative Education Grant**

In the Fall of 2003, Board member, Jim McLeod, and Vice President, Dick Winchester with the approval of both the School District and The Pennsylvania Department of Education began to implement the Education Mentoring Initiative. This program was funded by a portion of the grant awarded to the district in June 2003.

Alternative Ed. Students were provided with 23 copies of 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens Journals. We worked throughout the year to recruit special mentors for this group. Dick volunteered to be a mentor as well as help develop the program. This grant also provided funding for the printing of 2500 copies of "A Guidebook for Youth and Parents" revised by Board members, Edith Swoboda and Dick Winchester.

### **The Dansko Grant**

The OEF recently received a generous grant from the Dansko Foundation in the amount of \$1,500. The money will support a home literacy program for English learners in the Jordan Bank Elementary School.

The purpose of the Dansko Foundation is to inspire, support and facilitate charitable giving and service projects by Dansko employees. Discretionary grants are available to qualified nonprofit organizations working in education and a variety of other fields.

The Dansko dollars purchased bilingual books to be used by students in kindergarten and first grade who speak languages other than English in their homes. These materials became available at the beginning of the 2004-

2005 academic year and are part of the mini-grant program directed by ESL teacher Leah A. McComsey.

The OEF is grateful to the Dansko Foundation for its support, and appreciates the advocacy of Dansko employee Jan Kenney.

### **Mini-Grants**

We were very fortunate to have the funds to award seven mini-grants to the professional staff of the Oxford Area School District this past spring. For the fourth year, we asked teachers and other professionals in the district to present their requests in the form of grant proposals to the OEF for consideration.

The seven awards were as follows:

1. Grant in the amount of \$1,520 to implement an After-school Homework Club. A 2 day a week program for recommended students who scored "Below Basic" or "Basic" on PSSA. Students will be assisted with homework, other school preparation and behavior. Ms. Cheryl Hewitt, of Elk Ridge School, wrote this proposal.
2. Grant in the amount of \$1,500 for a School/Home Literacy Program to purchase bilingual books (fiction, biography, folktales, etc.) for Kindergarten and 1st Grade. These will encourage parents to read at home in both English and Spanish. Ms. Leah McComsey of the Jordan Bank Elementary School developed this proposal.
3. Grant in the amount of \$1,042 to purchase materials for a Reading Fluency and Comprehension Program to include training videos, cassette tapes, and recorders to sequence readers. This program will help struggling readers and incorporate OEF volunteers. Mrs. Leslee Schad of the Nottingham School, wrote this proposal.
4. Grant in the amount of \$414 to buy books for Goodbye Round Robin. Language Arts

teachers will build on a mini-grant from Last year's "Strategies That Work",. This promotes reading comprehension with interactive peer discussion and oral reading sessions. Ms. Karen Gregan of Elk Ridge School developed this proposal.

5. Grant in the amount of \$575 to purchase a turntable, recorder, and headphones for the 8th grade "Sound Unit". The sound effects generated will also be used for the audio component of Internet lessons. Mr. Allan Schaefer of the Penn's Grove School wrote the proposal.
6. Grant in the amount of \$1,235 for 3rd and 4th Octave handbells to expand on the program funded in 2002. These will allow more children to participate in the Friday school-wide Sing-a-long.. This proposal was written by Mr. David Keefer of the Jordan Bank Elementary School.
7. Grant in the amount of \$348 for Kindness Week Posters. This is an annual February program "to make Nottingham School a kinder and more gentle place". Posters will be placed in each classroom to enhance other school-wide "kindness" activities. Ms. Wendy Rector wrote this proposal.

## **The Hess Memorial Scholarship**

As mentioned in last year's annual report, in 2003 the family of Marion James and Anna Ressler Hess established a scholarship in their names to benefit students pursuing a career in teaching. The first recipient of the Marion James and Anna Ressler Hess Memorial Scholarship was *Diana Jean Digiacomio*. The 2004 Scholarship award was \$1,000.

Diana has wanted to be a teacher as long as she can remember. During her freshman year in high school, being inspired by her

mentor and Spanish teacher, she decided that she wanted to teach Spanish and English as a Second Language. By her sophomore year, Diana was a Spanish tutor and was later asked to assist with ESL students. In order to explain the concepts of the English language to these students, she herself had to be very fluent in Spanish. It gave her tremendous satisfaction to teach children to read in English.

Diana is in her freshman year at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Robert E. Cook Honors College.

## **OEF Personnel**

At our annual October meeting, Secretary to the Board, Steve Roberts introduced Corey Caudill. Corey is a junior in the high school, and will be our student member on the Board.

Sadly we said goodbye to two Board members this year, Nancy Fowler and Rowena Jenkins. We thank them for their support of OEF. Rowena was a founding member of the OEF and served on the Board for many years working within the schools and the community to achieve our goals.

Assistant Superintendent, Leon Trager retired as our Administration representative in April. Ray Fischer, Principal of the Elk Ridge School, will be taking his place. Patrick Curran was elected to the Board in October 2003 for a term ending in 2006.

The members of the Board are dedicated to our mission. They contributed in many ways to help achieve our goals this year. By working within the schools and being a tutor, mentor, or volunteer in the district, several of our members have first-hand knowledge of the effectiveness and success of our programs. We are grateful for the extra time and effort each has given to help the students of the Oxford Schools.

## **RSVP Award Luncheon**

On Wednesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> we held our seventh annual Randy Sebastian Volunteer Person of the Year Award Luncheon at the Nottingham School. It was very successful with 68 people in attendance. This year's recipient was Jerry Iler, who, as a band parent, organized the Cavalcade of Bands.



Jerry Iler, RSVP award recipient

A grant to the OEF from the Philadelphia Foundation supports this event. Randy Sebastian, for those who did not know him, was an Oxford graduate, a Harvard-educated lawyer, and a founding member of the OEF Board who donated his time and talent to get us started.

## **Alumni**

This year Dick Winchester spoke to the Emeritus Class Reunion in October. We would like the chance to address many more class reunions. Please invite a member of our Board to speak to your group for a short five minutes. We use these opportunities to familiarize alumni with the OEF, make our publications available and seek new members and mentors.

Our alumni database is growing. If your class is planning a reunion, contact us and

we can share information on current addresses. An Alumni directory remains one of our goals and we appreciate any updates you may have regarding new addresses. Please keep in touch with us at our e-mail address: [oxfordedfound@yahoo.com](mailto:oxfordedfound@yahoo.com).

## **Internal Affairs**

Board members Steve Roberts and Etha McDowell completed a new OEF Board Member Manual this past fall. It has been extremely helpful for existing Board Members as well as new ones to keep minutes, timetables, forms, etc. organized and handy for reference throughout the year.

Our Annual Retreat for review and goal-setting was held on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. We appreciated Dr. Raymond Fischer, current Principal of the Elk Ridge School and founding member of OEF, serving as our facilitator again this year. Our goals for the upcoming year include: expanding our finances and resources, identifying sources of grants and write two grant proposals, adding to and increasing the goal of our endowment, increasing OEF exposure through more aggressive Public Relations, and continuing to expand our mentor, tutor and volunteer pool.

## **Financial Support**

The OEF is fortunate to have volunteers to help in tutoring, mentoring, and serving on our Board and its committees. We also appreciate the financial support we receive by many who read this report.

The Alternative Education grant, which was a one year grant, helped with mentoring expenses this year, but again we must consider funding for future years. The cost of updating our publications and the dollars invested in the mini-grant program are over and above our basic budget. We raise our budget by successful grant proposals, from interest on our endowment, and from generous contributions of alumni and friends.

Thanks to anonymous gifts totaling \$25,000 this year, our Endowment Fund now stands at \$183,000. Until investment income covers our operating costs, we depend on your financial support. All contributions, large or small, in excess of the \$5.00 per person membership fee are tax deductible and can be sent to us at: P.O. Box 142, Oxford, PA 19363.

## In Conclusion

As we mark our 10th year milestone, we reflect upon the beginning of the OEF and the strength and vision of its' founders. In 1994 under the leadership of John Pittenger, former Secretary of Education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and a small group of concerned and dedicated members of the Oxford community, the OEF was founded. We continued year by year to strive to meet our goals, uphold our mission statement , expand our efforts, and "make a difference" in our schools. It is a testament to the strength and commitment of our founders, as well as all of you who have helped us throughout the last ten years, that The Oxford Educational Foundation remains a positive, purposeful organization. We look back with gratification on our past accomplishments and with optimism toward the future growth and contributions of the OEF.

I thank you for considering the OEF a worthy organization and also, for your continuing support in many forms.

If you can help, please join us. If you are available to be a mentor, volunteer or tutor, please contact us at (610) 932-7200. It is a wonderful experience. If you can offer financial support, we welcome your membership, donations, and contribution to our endowment fund.

Once again, on behalf of my colleagues on the OEF Board, I thank you for believing we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Sandy Pepple, President, OEF  
P. S. Please renew your membership and consider a contribution.

The annual meeting is October 21, 2004, at 7:30 pm in the Oxford High School Library.

The official registration statement and financial information of the Oxford Educational Foundation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



OEF Board Member and teacher, Kathy Elters, with other mentors and friends at The Mentor's Picnic



Nancy Thomson with her mentees Jacob Mosley and Michalla Bowditch



Josh Phillips with mentor, John Thomson.

Photos this page courtesy of John and Nancy Thomson