Letter From Our Program Director

Episcopal Community Services’ Out of School Time (OST) program is a community school-based afterschool and summer day camp program for under-resourced children and youth in the Philadelphia region.

Since 2001, our goal has been to give youth a wide range of choices and opportunities that will promote academic and social achievement and cultivate healthy lifestyles. These programs utilize a STEAM curriculum that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics — naturally fitting into a project-based learning model.

Many former OST participants credit the program with helping them master subjects they had trouble with in the classroom, while also providing a wonderful environment full of exploration and fun! We are proud to offer programming that both stimulates and engages the mind of youth, preparing them to become lifelong learners.

God bless, and have a great day on purpose.

Christian Holland
Director, ECS Out of School Time Programs

“A Trusted Neighbor

Janet, or Ms. Janet as she’s best known as to participants, has worked at OST since the program’s beginning — nearly 15 years ago.

As a matter of fact, her son was the first student to be enrolled, and today, her grandson and granddaughter are participants.

Originally from Puerto Rico, Ms. Janet moved to Feltonville 30 years ago and has worked for the Philadelphia School District for 24. After her day working as a teacher’s assistant, she heads back to her neighborhood to assist the five and six year olds at OST.

“I like being with them and teaching them what I know. At five and six, they need a lot of help, so I like to help them do the things on their homework they need. That’s what I do, and that’s what I’ve been doing for a lot of years,” she said.

From living in the neighborhood, Ms. Janet often runs into participants and their families. “I go to the park and the kids call to me when they see me. They will point me out and say, “She helps me out with homework, mom!”

“I know a lot of the parents from outside [of the program] ... and they’ll ask me about it. Sometimes, they’re single moms and need help when at work. I’ll tell them it’s a good program for the kids. [It] helps a lot of kids and their parents. The kids learn a lot when in the program ... they learn everything they learn in school.”

Every school year and summer, OST reaches its enrollment capacity. Often, parents will ask Ms. Janet if there are any spots available for their kids, and she tells them, “if anything opens, I’ll let you know.”

After talking to Ms. Janet, it quickly becomes clear that to her neighbors, she’s much more than an OST employee – she’s a trusted friend. “I’ll see a lot of kids in the street, and I’ll tell the parents, ‘Look, [they] can be in the program from 9 to 5. I stay with the kids until their parents come.’ They know they’re safe. We will always be watching them, they’re in good hands.”

“During the summer, I’m the first one here and the last one out. My kids are grown; my baby is 25, so I like to be at the school,” she said. “I like to help the neighborhood with anything they need. With anything, I’ll be there.”
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“A Natural Born Leader

Noah is the kind of kid you can tell will grow up to be nominated senior class president or prom king. He’s a natural born leader, and at just 10 years old, he can engage in a conversation with just about anyone. Ask him what he likes most about OST, and the list goes on.

“At its core, OST brings families together and serves as a resource to the community.”
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Noah has been enrolled in both the afterschool and summer programs since kindergarten, and it’s the highlight of his day. “We get out of school at 3 o’clock, wait for our teacher, and go upstair to eat a snack. At 4, we go to a classroom and do homework, and at 5, we have some sort of activity.”

“Why I like … is that they try to encourage us to do it … learn how to do it on our own. They want us to try first, and if we can’t, then they’ll help us,” he said.

Unlike some of his peers, Noah doesn’t mind homework because of the help provided by OST staff. “My teacher gives us double-page [homework]; front and back, and then front and back! Two pages! But it educates your brain more, [which] helps you get a good reputation.”

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Expanding Our Reach
In the fall of 2015, ECS opened its OST program to two neighboring schools located in Delaware County, Pennsylvania – Park Lane and Colwyn Elementary Schools.

CONTRIBUTE
To make a financial gift supporting these and other ECS programs, please call 215.351.1460 or visit www.ecsphilly.org/give.

These afterschool cohorts come as a result of The Darby Mission, a joint partnership between ECS and the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. After hearing the concerns voiced by our neighbors in Darby, we are proud to help meet the academic and socio-economic needs of youth and families in this community. OST Darby and OST Colwyn were launched with the private support of dedicated donors, Jean Evans and Elizabeth L. Useem, and generous parishes, Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, St. Christopher’s Church in Gladwyne, and St. David’s Episcopal Church in Radnor.

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