



# Voyages

*Our sisters then, our sisters today -  
and a whole world waiting ...*

Our Sisters' School

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## Our Sisters' School of New Bedford to Open Doors in September of 2008

When the bell rings for the first time at New Bedford's new independent middle school for girls, students will file into a freshly-renovated building at 145 Brownell Avenue, across from Buttonwood Park on the corner of Hawthorn and Brownell Streets. The school building, which is being leased

from Tifereth Israel Congregation of New Bedford, includes classrooms and offices, as well as a large multipurpose room and athletic fields.

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“The site on Brownell Avenue is ideal in many ways and will be a wonderful place where our girls can learn and grow,” said OSS Executive Director Lisa Yates. “We are so appreciative of the opportunity presented to us by Tifereth Israel Congregation, and we believe that this move is a ‘win-win’ for both of these important New Bedford organizations.”

By leasing an existing space that is well-equipped and centrally located, OSS has been able to meet one of its primary goals -- using the majority of current funds for programming and curriculum. This arrangement also allows the

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Members of the Our Sisters' School Board of Directors, Executive Director, Lisa Yates, and lawyer, Dan Perry, were on hand for the signing of the lease at Tifereth Israel Congregation.

### News of Note

#### The Women's Fund of Southeastern Mass. Awards Scholarship for OSS Student

The Women's Fund, part of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, has announced the award of a four-year scholarship for a student at Our Sisters' School. The Fund's Executive Director, Kate Fentress, stated, “We are delighted that New Bedford will soon have a free, single-gender school for inner-city girls. Our Sisters' School will significantly contribute to raising expectations for all young women in New Bedford, not just the ones who will be students there.” Several members of the Women's Fund have also made individual contributions and pledges to support OSS. We are honored and grateful for their support.

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### Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. Our goal with “Voyages” is to communicate with our supporters and community partners on a regular basis. This pioneer issue provides updates on our progress as we prepare for the opening of Our Sisters' School in September 2008.

As the school's Executive Director, I am privileged to be working with so many wonderful people here in the New Bedford area who are filled with hope and optimism for the city's girls. I am equally excited to be working with the students, families, teachers and administrators who will soon make up our OSS family.

I first began visiting New Bedford seven years ago as a consultant at the Education Development Center working on the opening of the

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## Message from the Board

With our building being readied, our students enrolling and our teachers signing on, Our Sisters' School is well on track for its September '08 opening. On behalf of the Board of OSS, I am pleased to say that this recent flurry of activity and accomplishment only adds to our faith in and our excitement for this wonderful new endeavor.

Our Sisters' School is an independent, tuition-free middle school for New Bedford girls from low-income families who are seeking an alternative, enriching academic environment. The school was developed by a group of concerned women and men from the Greater New Bedford community. Their idea grew from a clearly unmet need to focus specifically on the education of adolescent

girls -- to provide for these girls the skills, mentoring and inspiration they need to become strong citizens and community leaders. As with every good idea I have ever known, timing and fate played a role in how we got where we are today.

As a life-long South Coast resident, I have known and supported many efforts aimed at the revival of New Bedford, a city both beloved and beleaguered. And it has seemed to me that the most successful of these efforts have generally involved education. One shining example is Nativity Prep, New



Bedford's innovative and independent private school for low-income boys. Nativity is terrific, I thought. But what about our girls?

Not surprisingly, several community leaders -- people like Bernadette Souza of the Boys and Girls Club, Gail Fortes of the YWCA, Helena Marques of the Immigrant's Assistance Center, Doreen Lopes of Nativity Preparatory School of New Bedford and JoAnn Clarke of Trips for Kids -- were asking the same question. JoAnn tells the story of how, one day a few years back, a group of 5th- and 6th-grade girls returned from an outing that included boys from Nativity Prep. The girls were so impressed with what the boys said about their school, with their learn-

ing and their opportunities for the future, that they asked JoAnn, "Why can't we have a school like that?" JoAnn had no answer, but resolved to find one. A few days later, she and Doreen heard that I was pursuing a school for girls. That was the beginning. We have never looked back.

Today, thanks to the enormous generosity of donors -- including two challenge grants in 2007 that encouraged giving with a dollar-to-dollar match -- we have raised over \$1 million. We have also hired an incredibly talented Executive Director, Lisa Yates, whose enthusiasm, experience and tenacity have made real our vision for the school.

In September of '08, Lisa, her staff and our Board will welcome 30 students into grades 5 and 6. In our second year, we will have 45 students in the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. And in our third year there will be a total of 60 students in grades 5 through 8. Our fundraising efforts continue in earnest as we seek an additional \$1 million to underwrite our fully-enrolled operating budget. We urge one and all to contribute by donating money, providing an in-kind donation, or sponsoring a girl for a tuition year.

As vehemently as we ask for help, we thank those who have already contributed. Mere words are inadequate to describe the gratitude and pleasure all of us on the Board feel at being able to say to the deserving girls of New Bedford: "Yes, we do have a school for you! And here it is!"

Sincerely,

*Lisa Schiel Alvard*

## News of Note

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### What Really Matters for Middle-School Girls in New Bedford? Community Input Sought

In December, OSS launched the pilot phase of a research study aimed at determining community perceptions of what is truly important for middle-school girls in New Bedford. Interviews and focus-group sessions were conducted with three groups of people: 1) adolescent girls; 2) adult family members of adolescent girls; and 3) community members. Participants were asked to discuss priorities for the academic, social, emotional and physical development of New Bedford girls. Additional questions addressed the role of parent and guardian involvement and thoughts about single-sex education for middle-school girls in our city. Our most heartfelt appreciation to those individuals who have taken the time to share their thoughts, concerns and hopes with us. Your feedback will be invaluable as we design the program at OSS.

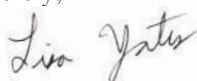
## Greetings from the Executive Director

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Global Learning Charter School. As I drove south on Route 18 in the early morning watching the birds wheel in the air and the sun rising on the water, I was often overcome with a sense of possibility – the potential of this city – and the hope and promise for its future and that of the children who live here. My desire to join others working toward the education of New Bedford’s young people compelled me to leave Boston and plant my roots here on the South Coast.

Now, at the beginning of a new educational endeavor in the city, I am humbled by the energy, enthusiasm and support of the regional community in helping to launch Our Sisters’ School. Thank you to everyone for supporting Our Sisters’ School in this exciting voyage!

Sincerely,



### Matching Challenge Grant for 2008

Due to the generosity of an anonymous donor, 50% of every donation received during the 2008 calendar year will be matched. Please help us to fully utilize this tremendous gift to launch our school at this critical stage in our evolution!

## Opening of School in 2008

Continued from page 1

school to stay in the same location as it grows to full capacity of 60 students in 2010.

The School's location, across from Buttonwood Park Zoo, provides a unique opportunity for science curriculum as well as for community-service partnerships with organizations like Friends of Buttonwood Park and Operation Clean Sweep. Yates adds: “Being a central part of the community through our presence, and our partnerships with other community groups, is very important to Our Sisters' School.”



OSS Board Members tour the new school.

## Donation Appreciation: for 2007 Donations

### “THANK YOU” from OSS to:

- |   |                                 |  |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Lisa Schmid Alvord and Joel Alvord  | Janie Coolidge                  | Marjorie and Nicholas Greville             | Mrs. Dorothy Parmer             |
| Anonymous   | Mary Coolidge and daughters     | Calla and Ralph Guild                      | Ann Parson                      |
| Anonymous   | Coolidge-Boreiko Family Fund    | Heidi and Arthur Huguley                   | Celeste and Jack Penney         |
| Anonymous   | Elizabeth Coxe and David Forney | Elizabeth Huidekoper                       | Susan and Daniel Perry          |
| Anonymous   | Evelyn Crocker                  | Gerald R. Jordan Foundation                | Suzanne and Bill Prescott       |
| Arcadia Charitable Trust  | Cindy and Doug Crocker          | Priscilla and Bill Kennedy                 | Cynthia and Jerry Pyle          |
| Trish and Chris Arnold  | Croll Foundation                | Patricia and Robert Lawrence               | Robbins Family Fund             |
| Talbot Baker  | Victoria and Robert Cunningham  | Albert Lees                                | Bernadette Souza                |
| In Honor of Talbot "Toby" Baker   | P. Christopher Cutler           | Margaret and Per Lofberg                   | Ginny and Steven Spiegel        |
| David A. Barrett Fund   | Rose P. Cutler                  | Doreen and Luis Lopes                      | St. Aidan's Chapel              |
| Christina and Charles Bascom  | Katherine and Frederick Dabney  | Ludes Family Foundation                    | Lynda Surdam                    |
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| Mary Jean and Bill Blasdale   | Helen DeGroot                   | Michelle Taipale and Lloyd MacDonald       | Pam and Charlie Trippe          |
| Nancy Braitmayer  | Susan Eldredge Mead             | Helena Marques                             | Mrs. Walter H. Trumbull         |
| Tia and Peter Bullard   | Enable Hope Foundation          | Leigh and Jean Mason                       | Joan Underwood                  |
| Mrs. Carleton Burr  | Sally Fallon                    | Maurice & Anne Makepeace Family Foundation | Charlotte and William Underwood |
| Gaelen and Peter Canning  | Kate Fentress                   | Barbara McManus                            | Dagmar and George Unhoch        |
| JoAnn Clarke  | Barbara and Paul Ferri          | and Anne McManus Hurlburt                  | Jane and Robert Walker          |
| Community Foundation of Southeastern Mass. - Acushnet Foundation Fund           | Finn Family                     | Rose Mendoza                               | Stephanie Warburg               |
| Community Foundation of Southeastern Mass. - Women's Action Fund                | Janet and Jim Fitzgibbons       | Faith and Richard Morningstar              | Elizabeth and Summer Waring     |
| Community Foundation of Southeastern Mass. - Women's Fund of Southeastern Mass. | Gail Fortes                     | Nau Family Charitable Fund                 | Anna L. Waring, Ph.D.           |
|   | Frisbie Family Foundation       | Varick and Nick Niles                      | Sally and Bill Wyatt            |
|   | Garfield Foundation             | Joan and Jonathan O'Brien                  | Lisa Yates                      |
|   | Evelyn C. Goodhue               | Emily and Anthony Pantaleoni               | Mary and Anthony Zane           |
|   | Lois and George Graboys         |  |                                 |
|   | Hannelore and Jeremy Grantham   |  |                                 |



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Jonathan O'Brien

Bernadette Souza

## Executive Director

Lisa Yates

## Why "Our Sisters"?

During New Bedford's storied past, it was not uncommon for young wives to join husbands on extended whaling voyages. These brave young women were known as "Sister Sailors" and in their way, they were seeking then, on the oceans of the world, precisely what the brave young "sisters" of New Bedford are seeking today, in the classrooms of tomorrow: to sail beyond familiar horizons, into unknown oceans of adventure and possibility, of growth and learning and accomplishment. Our sisters then, our sisters today, and a whole world waiting...

### Take the Voyage of a Lifetime

Our Sisters' School is now accepting applications for its pioneer classes for girls entering 5th & 6th Grades in September 2008. Families interested in enrolling their daughters at OSS should call 508-994-1255, email [info@oursistersschool.org](mailto:info@oursistersschool.org), or visit the web [www.oursistersschool.org](http://www.oursistersschool.org).

We can't wait to hear from you.

## Curriculum at Our Sisters' School - "Excellence Inspired by Vision"

The Curriculum Committee of Our Sisters' School has been hard at work developing a curriculum that will challenge and inspire our future students. "We started with a vision of the characteristics and competencies of our ideal graduate," says Kate Dabney, chair of the committee and an independent school educator. "With that goal in mind, we then developed a profile for what we hope our girls will know when they leave us after 8th grade."

After establishing these objectives, teams of committee members have visited curriculum centers across Massachusetts to speak with experts in specific disciplines and to gather information about specific curriculum products that meet OSS standards and needs. The committee is currently reviewing these materials and developing recommendations for the Board, and will soon finalize an overview of the curriculum to present to prospective families.