

# Voyages



OUR SISTERS THEN, OUR SISTERS TODAY.  
AND A WHOLE WORLD WAITING ...



OSS Class of 2012 courtesy of Bob Hughes Photography

## CLASS OF 2012 SETS SAIL

For a second year in a row, the Cook Theatre at the New Bedford Whaling Museum radiated with bittersweet excitement and high emotion as the Class of 2012 collected their certificates of promotion. The crowd celebrated the accomplishments, triumphs and the on-going journey of the twelve members of Our Sisters' School's second graduating class. As these graduates were the first to complete a four-year tenure at OSS, we are most proud of their success. Families, volunteers, friends, the Advisory Council, Board members ... all gathered together, with great pride and support, to launch the Class of 2012 on the next leg of their voyage.

The evening was filled with reflections from graduates, teachers and members of the OSS community, offering encouraging words, stories of memories clear in their minds and excitement for all that the future may bring. "Coming to OSS showed me the opportunities all of us have," said Melissa Olejarz. "After being here for three years, I can see myself growing up to be a very kind-hearted person. I have learned that in your life one percent of people will like or love you, one percent of people won't like you, and 98% of people won't even notice you. Part of the one percent that love me are *sitting right there in the front row!* I am glad I was able to come here. Thank you."

A musical duo comprised of an enthusiastic 6th grader and a proud 8th-grade graduate were honored to be part of the ceremony as they belted out a powerful version of "I'll Be There" by Michael Jackson, in the process reassuring the graduates that they will always have a family at OSS. For the Class of 2012, the next leg will bring challenges, excitement and new opportunities as they embark on their various high-school journeys. "Tonight we are presenting each of you with a compass necklace so that you will always be able to feel the pull of OSS – your always-faithful magnetic north – giving you a little guidance on the open seas of life," concluded Head of School Lisa Yates as she officially "cast off" the Class of 2012.

We are proud of their accomplishments to date and confident they will continue to grow and succeed. OSS's Secondary School Program has worked with each student to find the right high-school match for both the student and their families. Graduates in the Class of 2012 have been accepted to an exceptional list of schools, including: Bishop Stang High School, Cushing Academy, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical School, Lincoln School, New Bedford Public High School, Noble & Greenough School, Tabor Academy and the Wheeler School. Final decisions for these students will be made once financial support has been determined and secured.

### *Dear Friends of Our Sisters' School,*

*With the end of our fourth school year and second graduation ceremony fresh in our memories, we as a school have many to thank for the time, dedication and resources given to OSS to make the 2011-2012 school year a resounding success.*

*We are excited to share with you some highlights from this past year and to inform you of what is on the horizon.*

*We extend a special thank you to all of our crew – students, families, staff, volunteers, donors, community partners and the Board -- for all of your hard work. OSS is fortunate indeed to have such loyal participants! Have a safe and wonderful summer! We look forward to the start of the 2012-2013 school year in August.*

*Sincerely,  
Lisa Yates, Head of School  
Our Sisters' School*

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## OSS SCIENCE FAIR

### Letter from the Board

On June 20th, the first class to have worked its way through all four grades at Our Sisters' School received their diplomas -- a landmark for the school and a major achievement for the Class of 2012! They came as nervous fifth graders to a school that was totally unknown and opening its doors for the first time. Today, after four years of hard work and exciting challenges, those nervous fifth graders have been transformed into poised and confident young women, ready and eager for the next leg of their educational journey. And while all this was going on, the school itself also matured. We have learned from our mistakes. We have celebrated our successes. We have transitioned from "unknown start-up" to "important presence in New Bedford." But the point is this: *We didn't do this on our own!* OSS is a community effort, and with this in mind we would like to thank you all -- volunteers, donors, parents and supporters -- for helping make our school the educational gem it has become.

There was much excitement at school a few weeks back. Everyone was congratulating Emma Bruce, and not merely for her accomplishments as a sixth grader. In fact, the entire school -- faculty, staff and fellow students -- were celebrating Emma's mother. Bridgit Bruce was scheduled to graduate on the following Saturday from UMASS Amherst's "University Without Walls" program, an online educational opportunity that has enabled Bridgit to complete her college degree while being an involved parent and holding a job. We are very proud of Bridgit and her accomplishment, and of what it means for OSS. For don't forget: OSS is not only about educating young girls; OSS is about educating an entire community.

*Have a wonderful summer,*

**Lisa Schmid Alvord**  
President, OSS Board of Trustees



Weeks before the Science Fair, projects were tested, chemical reactions occurred, independent and collaborative work filled the classrooms and students felt genuine excitement over the opportunity to display their knowledge of all things science. The OSS Science Fair has become an event the students look forward to each year as they are able to display their hard work in science to friends and family. The multi-purpose room turns into a scientist's dream come true, as students share their work, steps, results and, of course, what they have learned while preparing for this night.

For the 5th-grade class, the science fair this year focused on cells: animal cells, plant cells, multi-celled organisms and single-cell organisms. For each of these groups, the students were required to research the history of each topic, location, parts and important facts of their specific focus. Along with the research aspect, each group created a colorful 3-dimensional object that represented their organism or cell.

In the 6th grade, students collaborated with our Visual Arts teacher, Ms. Wayss, to create colorful game boards featuring imaginative simple machines and contraptions made of various items of their choosing. Many times the contraptions did not work precisely as the girls had intended. However, instead of being defeated they were inspired and continued to try new methods over and over again. Ultimately, the students created hypotheses about the success and/or failure ratios and presented these ratios on white boards as part their final project presentations during the science fair.

The 7th-grade science-fair challenge was to build bridges using only fettuccini noodles and glue. These bridges incorporated a wide range of knowledge learned through web quests, student research on famous bridges and interactive notes. The girls researched and drew rough sketches of their bridges before building their structures for the science-fair competition. The competition had two-person teams competing to see which bridge would hold the most weight in a dramatic and exciting finish. Hopefully, the girls will take their new-found engineering skills and continue building and learning throughout the rest of their scholastic -- and perhaps even their future -- careers!

Using knowledge gained during their Chemical Interactions unit, the 8th grade completed individual chemistry experiments for the science fair. To start the project, each student created a proposal on a topic of their choosing and did background research on the science behind their experiment. Over the next week, students created acid/base volcanic explosions, made home-made lava labs, and tested cosmetics for the presence of lead. Onlookers waited in anticipation with goggles on and cheered as soda and Mentos shot 15 feet into the air and "elephant toothpaste" foamed over the pavement of our parking lot. After a week of fun, the girls got down to work and wrote formal written lab reports about their experiments. They each made a tri-fold board to display their work and presented their projects at the fair.

# DANCE TAKES OFF: Q. & A. with Ms. Puccio, the OSS Dance Teacher



## Q. What does a typical dance class entail at OSS?

A: Each class begins with a warm-up, where we stretch and isolate muscles. Warm-ups, to the girls' chagrin, always include crunches, and depending on the class we also do a few sets of push-ups. If you are ever at OSS on a Friday and you hear groaning coming from the multi-purpose room, chances are we are on our final set of these! All of the exercises are geared towards strengthening and toning our muscles for the end goal of a strong, centered dancer.

Next, we move to choreography. Throughout the year, each class worked on at least two pieces. How long we spent on a piece definitely depended on the class. Sometimes we got tired of a routine and moved on. Other times, as when the 8th grade performed "Good Feeling," we stuck with it for a long time. We've been having fun learning new steps and testing them out. Many classes have called for the girls to develop their own choreography. In the 5th grade, our dance piece is a combination of various groups' work.

## Q: How would you describe the transformation of OSS in dance class over the course of the school year?

A: I would definitely describe this year in dance as a journey of growth and learning. At the beginning of the year, many students were hesitant to dance. Dance is a very personal and vulnerable thing. We are no longer in our uniforms, and so each student's personality is really out there for everyone to see – and when you dance, you can be sure that someone is always watching. Luckily, we

have some really great leaders who are very confident dancers and, over time, the trepidation has significantly lessened.

Having dance as part of the curriculum at OSS has been an excellent opportunity for our students to have exposure to another form of expression through the arts. We make connections to the other arts all the time by practicing rhythm, character and composition. Some students who danced frequently before coming to OSS had to stop because of scheduling conflicts; for these students, dance class is an overdue opportunity to dance again. For others who had never danced before it is a chance to add a new mode of expression to their repertoire.

## Q: Is there time for reflection on what the students are learning in dance?

A: Dancers at OSS are required to keep a dance journal. The journal should include new choreography learned in class, questions or problems, new ideas, and always an accomplishment of the day. That is what I really wanted dance class at OSS to do: instill an appreciation for dance. Our classes are not about who has the highest extension, who can move the fastest, or who can be the prima ballerina. The real focus is on expressing ourselves through dance and enjoying our time to practice something new and different.

## Q: Have the students performed in front of an audience? Are there any field trips the OSS students have been on to supplement the curriculum?

A: On April 26th, a small group of our students attended a workshop with members of the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. This was a great opportunity for our dancers to meet professionals in the field and learn from their experience. In addition, the 8th grade saw this dance troupe perform at the Zeiterion the following day. Here at OSS, our dancers have worked really hard all year, and have some wonderful pieces to show for it. Many pieces were performed at the Arts Show and at the 7th and 8th Grade Recital in June.



## VOLUNTEER PROFILE Ms. Wotka, 7th-Grade Tutor

### Where did you grow up?

I was raised in St. Louis and summertime on Cape Cod. My love of the Cape brought me East for good!

### What was your major in college?

English

### How did you hear about Our Sisters' School?

I was introduced to OSS by a Board Member who lives in my community. With knowledge of her dedication to education and seeing women succeed, it was a natural fit. I enjoy inspiring young women and giving them support both academically and personally.

### What do you find most rewarding when at OSS?

Every day I am at OSS, I am impressed by the sense of pride the students show for their school, program, space and opportunities. I am reminded of the value of ownership, hard work, and confidence of the students, teachers and staff. I feel the warm sense of community that has been established and I am honored to be a part of the ongoing voyage of the students at OSS.



## 4th ANNUAL VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS SHOW

Walls filled with stunning artwork, the sound of musical instruments being played down the hall, and the talent visible in short dance performances ... it must be the OSS Visual & Performing Arts Show! For a fourth year, the students of Our Sisters' School put their talents on display and enjoyed sharing their skills with the friends of OSS.

OSS opened its doors to students, families, alumnae and friends to share all that students have learned in art, drama, dance and music this year, making for a lively evening of entertainment. Students guided visitors through the hallways of the school, sharing information on the technique and process behind each piece and shedding light on the value of having a component of Visual & Performing Arts built into their daily curriculum. "We feel strongly about giving students the chance to express themselves through the arts," says Head of School Lisa Yates. "Thus we have made it a priority to incorporate these disciplines into their daily schedule. This early exposure to the arts gives our students a chance to take what they have learned here and carry it forward on the next leg of their voyage with a specific medium or instrument."



With a silent auction and a variety of pieces for sale, the OSS Art Show offered visitors the chance to take home their favorite piece while the proceeds support the ever growing Visual & Performing Arts program. We are grateful to all of the staff, volunteers, parents, community partners and friends who helped make this Art Show possible.



## COMPETITION HEATS UP AT OSS: MaBaCh & a new Spring Sports Program spark a friendly rivalry.

We are proud to announce that Our Sisters' School recently competed in the annual MaBaCh Tournament (Math, Basketball, Chess) at Bishop Stang High School and, for the third year in a row, brought home the coveted Spirit Award. With much practice and determination, the fifteen students on the OSS team fought hard and came away with a sense of accomplishment and pride. We extend a huge thank you to all of our fans, supporters, coaches and families -- and, of course, to our team -- for making OSS proud by securing the Spirit Award again this year! Congratulations!



In April, hoping to build teamwork and skills in basketball and soccer, OSS students embarked on a new and improved competitive sports program. In addition to two days of practice each week, the students joined a BLUE or WHITE team in each respective sport and competed every Friday during May & June. The OSS athletics program occurs four days a week as part of the students extended day program. For those of you who were able to cheer them on, we thank you!

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IMPACTS STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Our Sisters' School is extremely grateful to SouthCoast Health System for donating 14 computers to the school to share with students & families who expressed interest for use at home. This generosity has given OSS students the chance to continue to develop their computer skills as well as work on projects, papers and research from home. Partnerships like this are a wonderful example of how organizations continue to support OSS, the students, families and community.



## Applications for 5th & 6th Grades Peak at OSS

Word is spreading quickly around New Bedford: "OSS is the place to be!" With increased awareness, word of mouth, positive personal experiences and a growing fleet of enthusiastic ambassadors, OSS has attracted an incredible group of new students scheduled to arrive in August 2012. With application requests more than double the number of available spaces, the need for our school has been clearly confirmed and accepted throughout the community, and we are confident the school will have a full complement of students for the 2012-2013 school year. Many thanks to those of you who have waved the flag for OSS, shared our story and worked to build our school year after year.



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## OSS ADVANCEMENT NEWS

- The MATCH IS ON!!! Support OSS before December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and your gift will be matched by 50%. A gift of any size is special because every girl is special. Please contact Abby Keene at (508)994-1255 or [akeene@oursistersschool.org](mailto:akeene@oursistersschool.org) if you have any questions about supporting OSS or if you would like to schedule a tour of the school. For further information or to donate online, please visit [www.oursistersschool.org](http://www.oursistersschool.org).
- Many thanks to Jono & Sue Billings and the entire crew of The Cuttyhunk Ferry Company for hosting the 4th Annual OSS Boat Cruise aboard the *Cuttyhunk Ferry* on Thursday, July 12th, 2012. The OSS Boat Cruise brought together over 100 friends of the school from all communities and guests enjoyed a delightful summer evening on the water. We hope to see you aboard next summer!
- LIKE Our Sisters' School on Facebook to see current happenings and events at OSS!



OSS's Class of 2011 has been here, there and everywhere sharing in the many end of the school year events. Thank you for coming back, sharing your high school stories and participating in the many wonderful events of the past few weeks. We are so proud of you and look forward to seeing you all over the summer!

## CALL FOR INSTRUMENTS!

- OSS is looking to expand our Music Mentor program by making this wonderful opportunity available to the 6th grade. To make this happen, we need just six "gently used" instruments to round out our collection. Please help us grow our program by contacting Mary Wayss, Visual & Performing Arts Coordinator, at [mwayss@oursistersschool.org](mailto:mwayss@oursistersschool.org) if you or anyone you know might be able to help.



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## Join the Crew - Volunteer at OSS!

With summer in full swing, OSS is seeking volunteers to support our program during the summer months and throughout our upcoming 2012-2013 school year. Needed are:

- Drop-in Tutors for July & August (twice a week in the evening)
- Evening Study Tutors for the 2012-2013 school year
- After-School Athletic Coaches
- Music Mentors
- Administrative Support
- Facilities Cleaning and Maintenance

*For additional opportunities and full descriptions, please visit our volunteer page [www.oursistersschool.org/html/volunteer.html](http://www.oursistersschool.org/html/volunteer.html) or email [info@oursistersschool.org](mailto:info@oursistersschool.org) or call (508) 994-1225, ext.306.*