



Update

Fall 2008

Published by Community for Education Foundation

Gala to Celebrate Two Lifetime Achievements

On November 12, 2008, Overcoming Obstacles will host its 14th annual Achievement Awards gala to present Dan Doctoroff, president of Bloomberg, LP, and John Dyson, chairman of Millbrook Capital Management Inc., with Lifetime Achievement Awards. The event will take place at Cipriani 23rd Street in the Historic Toy Building on Fifth Avenue.

This year's honorees join an illustrious list of Lifetime Achievement Award winners, all who exemplify the Overcoming Obstacles program—Muhammad Ali, Wayne Huizenga, Al Lerner, Pete Dawkins, Jack Rowe, Peter Grauer, and John Chalsty.



Dan Doctoroff



John Dyson

Dan Doctoroff brought strong leadership, inspiring ideas and a persistent willingness to tackle urgent issues to the office of Deputy Mayor for Economic Development for six years in the Bloomberg administration. And, he did the job for a dollar a year! His efforts brought a new vitality to New York City. Prior to serving as deputy mayor, Dan was a managing partner of Oak Hill Capital Partners where he was active in the acquisition of companies in a wide variety of industries including information services, insurance, thrifts, cable television, hotels and leasing. Following 9/11, Dan led the effort to combat the City's fiscal crisis, leading New York to its strongest economic position in decades. He championed PlaNYC, the most widespread initiative embarked on by an American city to create the first environmentally sustainable city and reduce global warming emissions by 30% before 2030. Dan also founded the nonprofit organization that bid to bring the Olympic Games to New York, which spurred development projects across all five boroughs.

Throughout his career, John Dyson has combined his entrepreneurial drive, his leadership talents and his desire and dedication to keep businesses in New York City strong and thriving. As New

York City deputy mayor for finance and economic development in the Giuliani administration, he worked to rebuild the downtown area in the aftermath of 9/11. As commissioner of commerce for New York State, he spearheaded the creation of the "I Love New York" tourism campaign which created 100,000 jobs. And as state commissioner of agriculture, he was responsible for the development of the "Grown in New York" program which highlighted the food and agricultural industry in New York State. Dozens of major companies, representing over 50,000 jobs, have remained in New York City as a result of John's work in the development of new incentives and tax cuts. He negotiated the breakthrough deal with Disney to revitalize the Times Square area and engineered the deal to save Radio City Music Hall. John serves as a Trustee Emeritus at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York and Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts.

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Meet the Wizard...Our Newest Team Member!

Meet the Wizard, our newly developed proprietary software program and an active member of our curriculum development team. Here is a quick overview of the most important benefits the Wizard offers us:

- The Wizard helps us create a custom curriculum in about three days, whereas creating one manually could take up to three weeks. When fully operational, it will add 2000 hours of curriculum development productivity each year.
- The Wizard quickly sifts through hundreds of Overcoming Obstacles lessons and activities by theme, teaching times and type classifications and then helps to intelligently organize them based on developer guidelines.
- The Wizard makes it easier for multiple people to work on the same curriculum at once, delivering maximum flexibility in the development process.

To date, the Wizard has been a very productive team member, helping to customize curricula for four schools.

Our Mission: To ensure that all young people learn the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills they need to be successful in life.

Advisory Periods & Overcoming Obstacles

A Perfect Match for 17,000 Students

Lately, the Overcoming Obstacles program has found its way into more and more advisory periods. During the 2007-2008 school year alone, it is estimated that the Overcoming Obstacles program reached approximately 17,000 students in such advisory periods, helping to cultivate strong student-teacher relationships and ultimately increase student retention and promote academic success.

Advisory periods, usually one adult advisor and approximately 15 students, meet on a regular basis to promote and discuss students' social development, academic achievement, and positive involvement within the school and surrounding community. To develop advisory period curricula, Overcoming Obstacles staff meet with teachers, administrators, and school support staff to help identify the needs the school wishes to address and program goals they want to accomplish. A customized curriculum that addresses everything from the length of the program, frequency of meetings, topics addressed, and



Team Building "Build-Me" Activity

more is then created. In addition to the creation of the curriculum, Overcoming Obstacles trains the advisors on how to approach the material so that they are comfortable and familiar with it when they present it to their students.

Advisory periods have generally been discussion based, relying solely on the input from students and the advisor to keep the session moving. Overcoming Obstacles brings a unique way of facilitating each session through its activity-based lessons. Every activity is created with the students' ages and social environments taken into consideration to ensure that each activity is relevant to the students' lives and also fun.

Young people benefit tremendously from advisory periods, which provide a safe environment for them to form relationships with advisors and fellow classmates. They also benefit tremendously from Overcoming Obstacles' focus on communication, decision making and goal setting skills. A perfect match!

Gala *(continued from page 1)*

Student Achievement Awards will be presented to young people who have been nominated by their school administrators as exemplars of Overcoming Obstacles. The nominated students submit applications and essays in which they describe their experience with the program and feats they have accomplished through their understanding of the curricula. The Overcoming Obstacles staff and board select student winners who best demonstrate the communication, decision making, and goal setting skills upon which the Overcoming Obstacles program is built.

Last year's student honorees were Shaquana Lateesha Andrews of East New York Family Academy in Brooklyn and Octavia Casillas-Warren of McNair Academic High School in Jersey City. Despite living in transitional housing, Shaquana prevailed over her troubles, remaining strong and successful in her academics, eventually leading to her admittance to Norfolk State University in Virginia. Octavia was presented with the award for her strong leadership skills and desire to excel and is currently attending the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta.

Teacher Training: On-Site Now, On-Line Soon

When teachers and school districts from the local New York and New Jersey areas purchase our curricula, Overcoming Obstacles staff generally visit the school to train the teachers on how to effectively implement the curriculum in their classrooms. With more and more out-of-state teachers reaching out for our curricula, on-site training can be difficult. Fortunately, this will be remedied by late 2008 when Overcoming Obstacles web-based training will be offered.

Teachers who purchase curriculum will be given a password to access a series of training presentations and videos aimed at helping them teach the program. On-line workshops will address every step of the training process provided to local schools, including an overview of the curriculum, approaching the lesson, leading group discussions, debriefing and more. Overcoming Obstacles staff will also host monthly on-line seminars to address questions of all teachers who use Overcoming Obstacles.

By incorporating these features on the Overcoming Obstacles website, we will be able to train teachers from across the country, giving them the same expert-level training and support currently given to local schools and districts.

If you would like to receive Overcoming Obstacles' Update newsletter via email, please contact us at mail@overcomingobstacles.org.



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