



Update

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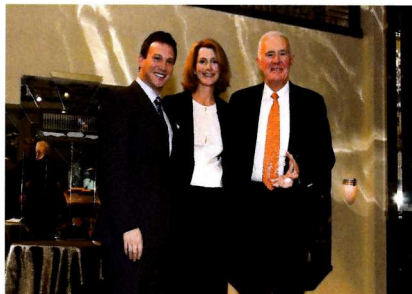
Most Successful Achievement Awards Gala in 15 Years

The 2007 Achievement Awards Gala raised a record amount of funds for the Overcoming Obstacles program and proved to be among the most inspirational dinners ever held in the organization's 15 year history. Held on November 14 at Cipriani 23rd Street in the historic Toy Building on Fifth Avenue in New York City, the event honored outstanding students and adults.

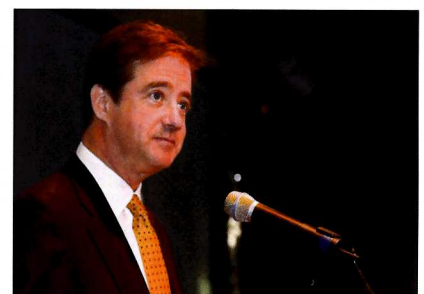
John Chalsty, Chairman of Muirfield Capital Management, was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by his wife, Overcoming Obstacles founder Jill Siegal Chalsty. Jill told guests that no one is more worthy of the honor than John—he lives the Overcoming Obstacles ideal of excellent communication, decision making and goal setting. Further, his business career has been outstanding and his commitment to charitable and community organizations exemplary. In accepting his award, John joked, "I know some of you must suspect I have an inside track on winning this Achievement Award considering my close relationship with the presenter. To that charge I must plead guilty!"



(From left to right) Achievement Award honorees Dr. Charles T. Epps, Jr, Octavia Casillas-Warren, Shaquana Lateesha Andrews, and John Chalsty.



(From left to right) Rick Folbaum, Jill Siegal Chalsty, and John Chalsty.



Geoff Stern, dinner co-chair and president of Muirfield Capital Management.

Dr. Charles Epps, Jr., Superintendent of Jersey City Public Schools, was presented with the Achievement in Education Award by Stuart Subotnick, partner and chief operating officer of Metromedia Company. The Jersey City Public Schools partnership is one of the strongest for Overcoming Obstacles. Stuart was proud to tell attendees that many of Jersey City's record nine Best Practices awards received from the New Jersey Department of Education were for programs overseen or founded by Dr. Epps. And over the past decade, Dr. Epps has taken the leadership role in the district's efforts to reduce the drop-out rate, which has fallen from a high of 14.6% to three straight years at 10% or lower.

East New York Family Academy in Brooklyn saw one of its own, the stellar Shaquana Lateesha Andrews, receive a Student Achievement Award. Ainsley Rudolfo of the New York City Department of Education presented the award. In her speech, Shaquana talked about the challenges she faced growing up and how the love of her family, the support of her teachers, and the skills she learned from Overcoming Obstacles helped her achieve the success she has seen as a young woman now attending college and on the road to realizing her goal of becoming a Clinical Psychologist.

Arthur Williams of Jersey City Public Schools presented Octavia Casillas-Warren with her Student Achievement Award. In her inspirational speech, Octavia told the audience that a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt—"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"—is a guiding force in her life. Although Octavia had excelled academically in elementary and middle school, her social skills were lacking. As she transitioned into Dr. Ronald E. McNair Academic High School, she was placed in the "Fifteen Together" drop-out prevention program. In "Fifteen Together," she learned the Overcoming Obstacles skills of communication, decision making, and goal setting. *(continued on next page)*

Awards Gala

(continued from page 1)

Today, Octavia is in her first year at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta, Georgia, on her way to owning her own graphic design company. She concluded her speech by saying, "My ultimate dream is to one day have the same honor of being in an assembly similar to this, sitting at a table with someone just like you, acknowledging someone just like me through a program just like Overcoming Obstacles."

Fox 5's "News at 6 p.m." anchor Rick Folbaum returned as master of ceremonies. Overcoming Obstacles executive director Tom Kelly along with president of Muirfield Capital Management, dinner co-chair Geoff Stern, gave welcome remarks. Dinner co-chairs Vince DeGiaino of Muirfield Capital Management, Joe Kaminski of JK Solutions, and Stuart Subotnick of Metromedia Company were also in attendance. The commitment of these leaders to Overcoming Obstacles runs over many years and the results could be seen in the excellent guest turn-out and financial support they brought to the event along with co-chairs Catherine Kinney of NYSE Euronext, Dr. John W. Rowe former chairman of Aetna, and Peter Grauer of Bloomberg L.P.

New Web Site

A new, more engaging and technologically advanced web site will be launched this spring by Overcoming Obstacles. Focus groups were held with principals and teachers to find out what would make their experience on-line with Overcoming Obstacles more effective. To meet their needs better, the Overcoming Obstacles site will now offer videos of classroom best practices and a program to customize curricula on-line. With the changes, Overcoming Obstacles staff hopes to serve an even greater number of teachers more effectively.



Service Learning

In the 20th century, service learning came into public awareness through President Franklin Roosevelt's creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Through the CCC, millions of young people devoted six to 18 months to help restore the nation's parks, revitalize the economy, and support their families and themselves. Today, many nonprofit organizations and educational institutions advocate that service learning should be a part of all young peoples' K-12 education. According to the Kellogg Foundation, "This concept of integrating service to others with classroom instruction engages youth in a powerful way that can ensure a bright future for our nation."

Overcoming Obstacles first published service learning curricula in 1999. Since then, the Overcoming Obstacles curricula have been implemented by thousands of teachers across the country. Educators praise them for ease of implementation, for effectiveness in bridging the gap between service and core content, and for the excitement they generate in students as the young people learn the importance of helping their community.

Recently, the State of New Jersey mandated 50 hours of community service for students to fulfill their graduation requirements. Plainfield, Paterson, Jersey City, and Highland Park chose the Overcoming Obstacles customized service learning curriculum to meet their school district's specific needs. In Jersey City Public Schools, students utilize Overcoming Obstacles to battle a major community problem—literacy. Each middle school and high school is attacking a different part of the problem: environmental literacy, reading, financial literacy, and health literacy are among the issues being addressed. For example, to help improve financial literacy, students at Snyder High School will create brochures in their language arts class that communicate better financial management practices to lower income families. At McNair High School, students address adult reading literacy by conducting a book drive with local businesses and libraries distributing the books.

In New York City, Overcoming Obstacles staff worked with teachers to customize a service learning curriculum for the improvement of civics knowledge. At Middle School 534 in Brooklyn, students have embarked on a voter registration drive. They use their communication skills to interview community members, learning what problems are not being addressed by their civic leaders. Later, students will write letters to local officials, and then make presentations to their city council person.

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