

J O Y F U L  
**Echoes**

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*Welcome!*

*Joyful Echoes* is an Alumni Newsletter published by the Onondaga Central School Education Foundation for the purpose of keeping alumni and friends of OCS engaged with the Onondaga community and informed of current activities happening at OCS.

**P1 Alumni Spotlight**  
 4&5 *Compiled by Tim Pierce & Jim Molloy*

**P2 Student Council Update**  
 &3 *by Dylan Price*

**P6 NY Basketball Hall of Fame**  
*by Phil DeSaw*

**P7 Forever in Our Memories**

**P7 Tigers on the Bookshelves**

**P7 OCSEF Update**

**P8 Request for Submissions & Info**

**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:**  
**HOWARD HOUSER**

CLASS OF 1955

**FROM SOUTH ONONDAGA TO BEIJING**

*Compiled by Tim Pierce & Jim Molloy*



Many of the more senior readers of *Joyful Echoes* may recall the Houser family. The editors have heard from Dr. Howard Houser, a graduate of the class of 1955.

Howard, born in July 1937, has happy memories of his days at OCS, where he served as yearbook editor and the senior class president. He remembers being an avid reader, but when he had more leisure during summer recess, he worked at Pfeiffer's Drive-In, located on Seneca Turnpike, now the Finally Ours restaurant.

*Continued on page 4*

**About the OCSEF** The Onondaga Central School Education Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, all-volunteer 501(c) charitable corporation whose purpose is to provide support to students, staff and academic programs at Onondaga Central through charitable donations. The OCSEF was founded in 1984 with a vision of growing an endowment over the years. Please visit our web page: <https://www.ocseducationfoundation.com/>

# STUDENT COUNCIL

## UPDATE

by Dylan Price

Throughout the 2019-20 school year, there have been many changes at Onondaga Jr.-Sr. High School. Despite school being canceled for months and classes being transitioned to distance learning, there is even more news!

## SPIRIT WEEK

Spirit Week is always in February, the week before Winter Break. During Spirit Week, there was a talent show, a presentation from the SECNY Tiger Branch about financial literacy, a hypnotist, and a pep rally. The Pep Rally included OCS Trivia, Hungry Hippos with balloons, and Knockout between boys and girls varsity basketball teams. The OCS Trivia game was hotly contested with seniors beating the freshman in double-overtime.

## POSITIVITY PROJECT

This year, Onondaga has implemented the Positivity Project. The Positivity Project is an initiative to strengthen character and instill virtues in OCS students. At the heart of the Positivity Project are twenty-four character strengths. In the first week of school, students at OCS took the personality quiz for the Positivity Project. Each of the student's character traits was listed from strongest to weakest based on how students answer questions on the quiz. To take the quiz for yourself go to: <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register> and create a free account.

There is a different character trait as the focus for each week of school. Students watch a video made by staff and students to learn about the importance of that particular trait. Additionally, as students walk through the hallway of the high school, different Positivity Project traits and symbols are displayed on the walls for students to see as they travel between classes. Every week students watch a new video about a certain character trait. The videos are created by the Broadcasting Class that also produces the daily announcements on Tiger TV.

## NEW SCHOOL WEBSITE

In October Onondaga launched a new school website. The new website link is <http://www.onondagacsd.org/>.

## WEIGHT ROOM EQUIPMENT

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Onondaga Jr.-Sr. High School received new weight equipment last summer that students have been enjoying. The new equipment included four treadmills, two different types of hybrid elliptical / cross-trainer Adaptive Motion Trainers, and two stationary bikes called Espresso Bikes. The two stationary bikes have screens on them which allow students to choose different courses to ride on, set a race pace, create an account to record all of their workout times, and even race another student on the bike next to him or her – or race against people online.

## NEW OCS CHRISTMAS TRADITION

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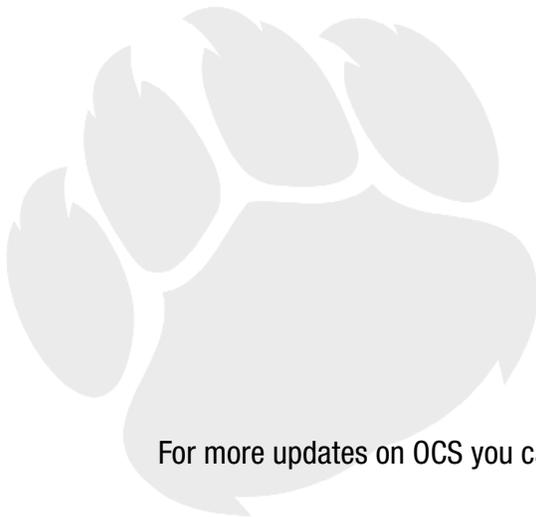
At Christmas, Student Council started a new tradition at OCS which can also be explained as a version of Tiger Day but for Christmas. In the afternoon before Christmas break, students were able to choose different activities to partake in. In the auditorium, students had the chance to watch *Home Alone*. There was an open gym which included basketball, volleyball, and scatter dodgeball in the wrestling room. There were board games in the library. One of the English teachers, Mrs. Reid, hosted a poetry gallery. All students were able to get hot chocolate and cookies.

## DISTANCE LEARNING AT ONONDAGA

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The coronavirus pandemic forced changes at OCS. OCS teachers use Google Classroom to assign work and students use Google Classroom to turn in work. Google Classroom is the primary form of communication between students and teachers. Email is also used and some teachers use an app called Remind, which is similar to texting. For students and teachers to talk verbally, the options are Zoom or Google Hangout. For students in A.P. classes, the format of many of the tests was modified to include the essay writing portion and eliminate the multiple-choice and short answer part. The tests will be taken online at a specified time and date.

For more updates on OCS you can visit the school newspaper website: <https://ocstigerprowl.weebly.com/>.



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: HOWARD HOUSER

## CLASS OF 1955

### FROM SOUTH ONONDAGA TO BEIJING

*Compiled by Tim Pierce & Jim Molloy*

*Continued from page 1*

He names South Onondaga Methodist Church minister, the Reverend Donald Moody, as one of his inspirations, but Howard's interest turned to medicine. He recalls observing OCS school physician Dr. Ernest Gak, who helped Howard believe that medicine would be a good career choice.

Howard recalls being the first OCS graduate ever to attend Hobart College in Geneva, N. Y., which was a good choice for either pre-medical or pre-theology course work, but ultimately he turned to medicine. Howard concentrated specifically on hospital administration, which combined both the business and medical fields. He did graduate work at the University of Iowa in 1961, where he earned a master's degree in hospital administration.

Eligible then for the military draft, Howard applied for a commission in the USAF Medical Service Corps. Transferred to Alabama by the Air Force, he resided for the first time in the state where he

would spend most of the remainder of his career. He completed his doctoral work at the University of Iowa, but later returned to Alabama to help start the School of Health Administration. (By 2018 the master's degree program in health services administration that he started at the University of Alabama in 1965 became the #1 program of 75 evaluated by U. S. News and World Report.)

**HE RECALLS OBSERVING OCS SCHOOL PHYSICIAN DR. ERNEST GAK, WHO HELPED HOWARD BELIEVE THAT MEDICINE WOULD BE A GOOD CAREER CHOICE.**

Howard's biography includes a number of career highlights. In 1975, he studied the Finnish health care system, learning what could possibly be imitated or adapted to improve the American system. In 1984 he worked in China and was instrumental in establishing education programs in health services administration in Beijing and Shanghai.

In recognition of a career enhancing medical administration in the United States and abroad, a University of Alabama fundraising group in 2004 was dedicated to raising a half-million dollars of capital to create the "Howard W. Houser Professorship in Health Services Administration." In 2009, UAB announced financial commitments had been made to establish the endowed professorship, and

in 2017 the first professor was named to hold that endowed position. The most recent accolade for Howard in his long and distinguished career was being named to the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame, Class of 2020.

Dr. Houser had a special connection with a student named Chen Hua, a Chinese



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**- HOWARD HOUSER**

graduate of Project Hope at UAB, who became successful in the wide-open entrepreneurial capitalism China adopted in the 1990's. Dr. Houser describes a very

Dr. Houser's retirement avocation is family ancestry. He "returns" to Syracuse, South Onondaga, and OCS through the internet and digitized records. At age 82, he reports

**IN 1984, HE WORKED IN CHINA AND WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION IN BEIJING AND SHANGHAI.**

close relationship; Chen Hua was the "son he never had." Chen Hua has become a billionaire in China, and to honor Dr. Houser he made a "six-figure" contribution to another endowed scholarship at UAB named The Chen Hua Endowed Scholarship Fund in Honor of Dr. Howard W. Houser. Dr. Houser notes that just as the OCSEF endowment is not depleted by current-year awards but invested for the future, the UAB scholarship is funded by 80% of the earnings of the endowment. The first scholarships were awarded to UAB MSHA students in 2018.

that he is the last surviving member of his generation of Housers, though many cousins and friends survive. His brother Harold, OCS 1958, predeceased Howard, as did his dad, Ernie, whom many alumni remember as a custodian at OCS for many years.

Howard, proud of his OCS connections, notes that, "OCS is a great place to be from, especially for the values and goals each person develops while there."



Teaching at UAB to international medical students  
July 2019

# LARRY BEHM

## NY BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

by *Phil DeSaw*

If you lived in Nedrow during the early 1960's, you may remember having seen a tall, skinny kid dribbling a basketball all over town. He could be found playing basketball at Rockwell School, Kelley Park, or in any driveway in town that had a basketball hoop. Basketball was, and still is, his passion, first as a player and then as a coach.

In fact, Larry Behm, a 1967 Onondaga graduate, is still at it. After 24 years as the boys' varsity coach at OCS, Larry has spent the last eleven years coaching at Pasco-Hernando State College in New Port Richey, Florida.

The hard work, dedication and loyalty displayed over the years by Larry were rewarded on March 22, 2020, when he and twelve other honorees were inducted into the New York Basketball Hall of Fame. A ceremony and banquet will take place during the 2021 State Basketball Finals weekend.

Larry will be remembered as one of the best basketball players ever to play at Onondaga. He played varsity basketball for three years under OHSL Hall of Fame coach Earl Fletcher. During his junior and senior seasons Onondaga compiled a record of 35 wins and only 6 losses while winning two league titles. Larry was a two-time OHSL First Team All-League selection. Larry averaged 15 points and over 15 rebounds per game during his career, and an unbelievable 19 rebounds per game during his senior season. Coach Fletcher called him "the best 6'1" high school rebounder he had ever seen."

After graduation, Larry ventured out to Hobbs, New Mexico. He played basketball for two years at New Mexico Junior College. He earned a BS degree from Eastern New Mexico University.

After leaving New Mexico, Larry returned to the Syracuse area and began working for the US Postal Service. He married his wife Rita

and they had two daughters, Jennifer and Laurie. He also got started with his coaching career and gained some valuable experience coaching the Sacred Heart CYO team and one of the modified teams at West Genesee.

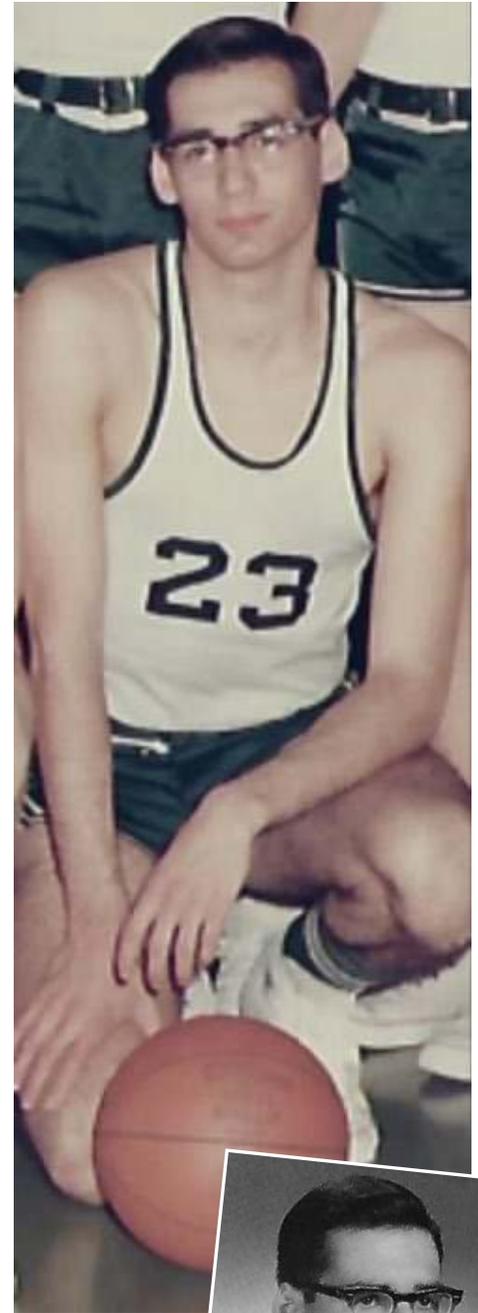
Larry's goal was to one day coach at the varsity level. He got that chance in 1986 when Onondaga AD Earl Fletcher offered him the JV basketball job. It quickly turned into the varsity job when the head coach abruptly resigned. At that time, Larry had no idea he would be Onondaga's varsity coach for the next 24 years.

Those 24 years resulted in 335 wins for Larry and the Onondaga program. His teams won eight league titles, five sectional championships, and a regional title that earned the 2008-09 team a trip to the New York State Final Four Championships in Glens Falls. In the final eight years of Larry's tenure at Onondaga, his teams won over 75% of their games. Many of his teams were state ranked. He coached four 1000-point scorers, and nine of his former players went on to play college basketball.

When asked, Larry declined to mention any individual players. He felt it would be unfair if he left someone out. He was quick to give credit to every player he ever coached. "Without the guys who didn't get a lot of playing time but worked their tails off every day to make those that did better, we never would have achieved the success we had over the years."

Larry did want to thank all the coaches he has worked with over the years, especially Johnny Davis. Johnny was with him for many years as both the JV coach and Larry's assistant.

Nowadays, when Larry is not coaching in Florida, he spends his time at home in Baldwinsville with Rita, Jen, Laurie, Laurie's husband Jay Johnstone, and his grandchildren: Ava, 10, and Jack, 6.



On March 22nd, Larry joined some very well-known members in the New York Basketball

Hall of Fame. They include Jim Boeheim, Lou Carnesecca, Larry Costello, Billy Cunningham, Connie Hawkins, and Dolph Schayes, to name a few. Visit [www.nybasketballhalloffame.com](http://www.nybasketballhalloffame.com) to read profiles of every Hall of Fame member.

Congratulations, Larry! The OCS community is proud of you.

## Forever IN OUR MEMORIES

### Richard Stewart

Class of 1953  
November 30, 2019

### Bette Jones Lambert

Class of 1956  
January 29, 2020

### Sally Perkins

Class of 1967  
January 25, 2020

### Richard J. Dickinson, Jr.

Class of 1979  
August 15, 2019

**Tom LaClair**  
Industrial Arts Teacher  
April 18, 2020

### David Littlefield

English Teacher  
March 29, 2020

### Lester Teeter

Class of 1972  
July 3, 2020

## TIGERS ON THE BOOKSHELVES

A Word From the Author, Amy Baker (Class of 2001) aka author Erin Kelly:

For those in the class of 2001, the fact that I became an author may not be so surprising. I was known for my drawings and stories that I wrote. I remember writing stories as far back as my time in Rockwell, and have always loved to create new, fantastic characters and worlds. What may be surprising to my fellow Tigers is the fact that I chose a pen name. Erin Kelly is my tribute to my late stepfather, Tim Kelly, who passed away in 2003 from cancer.

I have written dozens of stories through the years but *Tainted Moonlight* is my debut novel, which was published in 2016. Since then I have published two more books in the series, *Captured Moonlight* and *Infected Moonlight*, with more planned in the saga. I am currently working on a fourth book, *Awakened Moonlight*, and a prequel story. Recently my first book was selected in a nationwide contest through TaleFlick to be optioned as a movie, and placed in fourth out of forty entries. While this is my first published series, I do plan on writing more stories in the future.

*Tainted Moonlight* is available on Amazon, at Barnes and Noble, and more sites coming soon. For a sneak peek at the first chapter, local signing events, and more, please visit Erin/Amy's website, [taintedmoonlight.com](http://taintedmoonlight.com) and follow her social media on the links posted there.



## OCSEF UPDATE

Despite the recent economic downturn, the OCSEF endowment funds held strong, and the Board is pleased to announce that scholarship awards for 2020 remain at the same high level as in 2019. This reflects the outstanding generosity of the OCS community as well as many years of sound investment strategy by the Education Foundation. Twenty-one OCSEF scholarships totaling \$26,250 were awarded to graduates of the class of 2020. To review the list of scholarship winners, see the OCSEF website at: <https://www.ocseducationfoundation.com/scholarships/>

### VISIT THE NEW OCSEF WEBSITE!

To learn about the OCS Education Foundation, scholarships, fundraisers, and alumni services, please visit <https://www.ocseducationfoundation.com/>. Feedback is welcome!

# REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS & INFO

This newsletter is a product resulting from submissions made by our alumni. Please send us your stories and news! Do you have a favorite memory? An interesting story idea? Or an alumni announcement - wedding, birth, obituary - you would like to share?

For submissions of news, ideas and/or stories, please contact us at [ocsalum34@gmail.com](mailto:ocsalum34@gmail.com) or send to:

**OCSEF Alumni Coordinator**  
**2598 Kamm Road**  
**Marietta, New York 13110**

The OCSEF has established an Alumni Database. It contains contact information of OCS alumni, community members and current and former staff members. If you know of someone who would like to receive future issues of Joyful Echoes and other alumni-related

communications, please forward the Alumni Data Form to him or her. You can find it on the OCSEF Web Page: [www.ocseducationfoundation.com](http://www.ocseducationfoundation.com)

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*Echoes*