

# Newsletter



RITE OF PASSAGE

Winter 2011 - 2012

*Improving the lives of youth*

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## Community, Commitment and Charitable Hearts

Silver Oak Academy recently hosted its Third Annual Open House event. Members of the community, local business owners and government officials were there to celebrate the Academy's third year of operations. Students were given the opportunity to showcase their musical talent and other accomplishments from the year.



The Silver Oak Academy Education Team  
presents  
"A Year In Review 2011"

The Silver Oak Jazz Band, under the direction of Mr. Tim Andrulonis, kicked off the event with two wonderfully played ballads, which energized the crowd to a point where everyone was singing along in harmony. The education staff then presented "A Year in Review 2011," led by Mrs. Tracy Bennett-Joseph's educational team. The school recognized the 21 students who graduated from Silver Oak Academy during the year and praised the student body for the 3031 outstanding community service hours performed in 2011.

Staff also recognized the football team for their victory at the 7-on-7 passing competition during the summer, along with their other competitions held at various sites including Towson State University and the University of Maryland. Adding to the accomplishments of 2011, the medical department, led by Nurse Beth, was acknowledged for sponsoring Silver Oak's first health fair, an event that was successful in large part due to the community's participation and support.

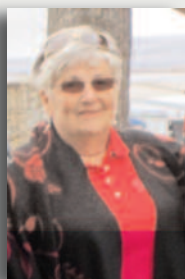
Taneytown, as the *Volunteer of the Year*. Many accolades were bestowed upon Mrs. Betsy given her tireless commitment to the boys at Silver Oak Academy. She has been instrumental in providing assistance to the boys with employment opportunities, gifts and donations, and numerous community activities where they have participated. She has been serving as an active member of the campus services committee that helps develop and host all activities on campus from homecoming to graduation ceremonies. Mrs. Betsy was presented with a plaque as an expression of appreciation for her service to the young men and staff at Silver Oak Academy.

The Open House ended with the Guest Speaker, Ambassador Blango Ross, providing a motivational speech to the students, encouraging them to persevere and reach to achieve their dreams in life, despite negative stereotypes others may have of them. He wrapped up by reminding everyone to work hard and exhibit through action, the traits identified in that special adage, 'love your neighbor as yourself'.

A special thanks goes out to Ms. Davis and the Culinary Arts Program at Silver Oak Academy for a professionally prepared meal, which was enjoyed by all.



The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them. ~ Mark Twain



Mrs. Betsy Baker  
2011 Volunteer of the Year

Recognizing how important volunteers are to Silver Oak Academy's success, staff took this opportunity to honor Mrs. Betsy Baker of

## CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS THROUGH EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMMING

As students arrive to Ms. McCauley's READ 180 class, each one brings a certain motivation to learn something new. The students come in, retrieve their notebooks, pencils, and take their place around a central table. The Student Athletes begin the class by completing the bell work, an opening activity designed to engage students with the lesson. First, their curious eyes read a question on the board. Slowly, engaged pencils begin scratching down several minutes of opinion. These students are the first that are being offered a READ 180 class at Silver Oak Academy.

For 120 minutes, students are engaged in a comprehensive language arts curriculum that has proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers. READ 180 is designed to increase student engagement through the use of both contemporary and interactive resources. As the students complete the bell work, Ms. McCauley begins preparing them for the block of activity. She asks guiding questions to provoke the recall of information. Seamlessly, she transitions to the next lesson, titled "Survivors" which introduces various reading and writing concepts through stories about people who made it through difficult situations.

READ 180 is designed to be delivered through whole group, small group, modeled and independent reading, and instructional software. This format instructs numerous aspects of language acquisition, and allows for continuous progress monitoring. "One thing that we like about READ 180 is that we are able to measure progress on a regular basis." Once a month students receive their Scholastic Reading Index (SRI) and Lexile Score. The data that is received indicates where students have improved in word fluency, levels of meaning, and knowledge of topics. By collecting multiple data points of assessment, Silver Oak Academy demonstrates with measurable evidence that students are closing the achievement gap.



READ 180 is proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers

When asked how well her students are doing, Ms. McCauley beams, "Great, they are doing great. All of my students are improving." She reaches for a set of classroom folders and begins showing both student work and computer based data. "The students really enjoy the computer portion of the program, because they get daily feedback about how and where they are improving."

Ms. McCauley and READ 180 are beginning to make an impact on students at Silver Oak Academy. By incorporating evidence based programming, the school is investing in its commitment to utilize what works in order to help students get to where they need to be. "I've seen growth in every student in my class," Ms. McCauley says, "I want to do more to keep helping them. It's working, and it feels good."

## Silver Oak Academy and Associated Builders & Contractors

Silver Oak Academy (SOA) is consistently looking for partnerships that will enhance and enrich program offerings and opportunities for employment to the young men attending the academy. The goal is for all students to exit SOA with one of the 3E's- enrolled, enlisted or employed. Vocational programs in the fields of Culinary Arts, Barbering, Technology (IT) and Building Trades expose the students to work-readiness skills and industry experience.



Community Partnerships  
Making a difference one life at a time

Silver Oak Academy has formed a partnership with Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC). ABC Inc, a National Trade Association founded in 1950 in Baltimore, MD, represents over 23,000 general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and associates. Officials on both sides are looking forward to this long-term partnership and great opportunities for the students. This partnership will award industry recognized credentials to the students. Silver Oak Academy's Building Trades Instructor, Mr. William Sipes, will attend a three-day training on ABC's curriculum (NCCER) and their methods of teaching.

# Silver Oak Academy Spotlight

## Christian Sifuentes, Site Trainer



Silver Oak Academy  
Site Trainer  
Christian Sifuentes

Silver Oak Academy is pleased to announce Christian Sifuentes, former employee of Canyon State Academy, as the official Site Trainer for SOA. Mr. Sifuentes, his wife Jennifer, and their three children are excited about the move to Maryland, which allows them to be closer to their family who live in New Jersey.

Mr. Sifuentes began his career with Rite of Passage five years ago as a Coach Counselor and he worked his way up to Acting Director of Group Living at Canyon State Academy. He came to Rite of Passage with nine years of experience in the industry. Ms. Sifunetes holds a Bachelors of Arts (BA) degree in Criminal Justice from Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut, and a Masters of Arts (MA) Degree in Organizational Management from University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona. Additionally, he is certified in evidence based practices including, *Motivational Interviewing*, *Positive Skills Development*, *Thinking for a Change (T4C)*, *Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART)*, and recently obtained his certification in *Safe Crisis Management*.

Since coming on board, Mr. Sifunetes has made great strides in the training program at SOA. He has focused his efforts on making tasks easier by looking at processes and offering practical solutions for efficiency through technology resources. His down to earth style and approach have allowed him to connect with student athletes and staff making him a true asset to SOA.

## EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

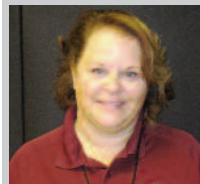
### Nicole Plunkert – Case Manager

Ms. Plunkert continues to be an instrumental member of the student service team. She is the ultimate team player and a resourceful employee that was nominated as the department's representative for the site safety committee team. In a most recent audit completed by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, her youth records and treatment plans scored 100% compliance in seventeen separate standards that were reviewed. Over the past year, Ms. Plunkert's dedication, devotion and work ethic have helped establish and stabilize a department that was in the process of reconfiguration.



### John Jefferson – Cook

John Jefferson (a.k.a. Chef Jeff) has been with SOA since September 2009. With over 6 years of industry experience, Chef Jeff is dedicated to making quality food for students and staff. Not only does he make every effort to go the extra mile to assist anyone, regardless of their department, Chef Jeff also works diligently in working with his team members, using his sense of humor whenever the situation calls for it. Through his professional development and growth, he has proven to be an asset to the ancillary department and SOA.



### Deborah Davis – Culinary Arts Instructor

Deborah Davis joined SOA in March 2011 with over 14 years professional culinary experience. Since joining the SOA team, Ms. Davis has cultivated the culinary program and taken it to another level. Through her hard work and dedication, the culinary department hosts many events, both on and off-site, including but not limited to, monthly breakfast events at the Taneytown Chamber of Commerce, onsite meetings for state agencies, and campus events such as SOA's summer graduation. Time and time again, Ms. Davis goes above and beyond to ensure the success of her program and students.



### Carroll Skipwith – Coach Counselor

Carroll Skipwith is an outstanding Coach Counselor. He trusts the judgment and decisions of his supervisors and is always respectful and professional when dealing with difficult situations that arise. His willingness to accept constructive criticism and try new techniques contributes to his successful approach when dealing with a student in crisis. As a key member of the SOA team, Coach Skipwith is always available to assist when help is needed.



### Elaine Okehie – Coach Counselor

Elaine Okehie has been with Silver Oak Academy for less than a year, but her grasp of the program and her position make others view her as a veteran employee. Her ability to bridge positive relationships with the students enables and encourages them to buy-in to the program quickly. When it comes to dependability, Coach Okehie is always willing and able to complete her assigned tasks, and she has no issue with putting in the extra hours to ensure her job functions are complete.



### Michelle Williams – Coach Counselor

During her employment with SOA Ms. Williams has done an outstanding job in her role as a Coach Counselor. Ms. Williams is very meticulous in her job functions and always engaged in her work, going the extra mile when necessary. She is very dependable and consistently shows up early before her shift starts. Ms. Williams has a good working relationship with each student in her cottage group here at SOA. She has set a high standard in the area of job performance and also holds her students to a high standard.



### Philip Ward – Math Teacher

Mr. Ward is energetic, creative and innovative in his curriculum delivery. He is committed to the social and academic development of the students at Silver Oak Academy. Mr. Ward dedicates his personal time in supporting students by attending sporting events and tutoring students. Under Mr. Ward's instruction, students at SOA no longer fear mathematics but embrace the challenge of order of operations and algebraic expressions. Mr. Ward's positive and professional behavior, and effective communication style has had a positive impact on students and staff. He is a team player and brings an "Attitude of Excellence" to SOA every day.

Collection of comprehensive data is an essential function in implementing Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). Outcome data from EBP aligned with Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) measures presents rich data sets for Rite of Passage to use in quantitative analysis. Every area of at-risk youth programming must be considered, with one of the most important being Incident/Critical Incident Reporting (ICIR). Data in and of itself is insufficient to create and implement needed change. Qualitative analysis and process review

affect every aspect of a program when used to fidelity (Child Welfare League of America Journal, June 2006). Assessment of critical incidents affects the individually placed youth by identifying and quantifying exhibited negative learned behaviors. Tracking this data generates the quantitative data used to target and improve program outcome.

**R**OPSTAT, Rite of Passage's secure, HIPAA compliant, online incident reporting database, was created as a means of automating the incident reporting system across Rite of Passage sites. Researching, choosing and implementing this type of database was especially important as it allowed a larger body of clinical experts to staff incidents, and simultaneously review and analyze trends in incidents specific to individual sites. This outcome data has remarkable implications for Rite of Passage and the industry as a whole. By reviewing and analyzing data at a site level, clinical staff can identify patterns of behavior attributable to culture,

that steps can be taken to determine why they happened and make changes necessary to correct the problem.

**I**mplementing change within an evidence-based program requires proven data collection methodologies. Following the Assess, Plan, Identify and Coordinate process, Rite of Passage leadership has developed an incident reporting process and program accessible to clinical staff to assist them in analyzing situational and global incidents as they occur. This allows them to immediately determine solutions that will reduce incidents and improve programming.

Rite of Passage is committed to improving the lives of youth. By making substantial strides in capturing how a site program identifies, documents and reports incidents, Rite of Passage provides lasting solutions for youth as they transition back into their community. By implementing and utilizing a database that will help reduce incidents while creating better processes and systems, Rite of Passage continues to grow and improve just as our students do.

must be performed with the data collected in order to transfer the robust knowledge into practice.

Through this framework of analysis, Rite of Passage has been able to determine that incident reporting data can be one of the most useful tools in an alternative placement facility's toolbox.

According to an article in the May/June 2006 Child Welfare Journal, "Enhancing the Safety of Children in Foster Care and Family Support Programs: Automated Critical Incident Reporting," automated critical incident reporting programs can

area of placement, similar criminogenic risk factors, etc. and work to find solutions within the program that will have the most positive effect on changing thinking errors and negative behaviors.

Additionally, Rite of Passage leadership staff review data from a macro level so that Critical Incidents such as running away and assaults can be seen from a global perspective...literally.

Within the database is GPS software that lets the reporter identify where the incident took place. This will give a bird's-eye view of where clusters of incidents occur so

### Rite of Passage Applying Verifiable Outcome Data



*Working as a team to continually improve the process*

### Works Cited

Brenner & Freundlich. Child Welfare Journal. Enhancing the Safty of Children in Foster Care. Vol. LXXXV, #3, May/June, 2006.

## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Silver Oak Academy's 2011 Employee of the Year  
Timothy Andrulonis

Mr. Andrulonis was stunned as his name was announced as Silver Oak Academy's *Employee of the Year*. As employees commented on the recipient, it was clear that the staff got it right. "Well deserved" was the phrase most often used to describe this occasion. His wife Janiea, who is expecting their first child in May, was in attendance as he received his award and plaque.

Mr. Andrulonis serves two roles at Silver Oak Academy - the Human Resources Assistant and Music Teacher. He is a tremendous musician who plays all instruments, but has a special gift for playing the saxophone. His commitment to helping the young men realize their talent and reach their potential, both scholastically and musically, is inspiring to all who work with him.

Mr. Andrulonis holds a Master's of Arts Degree in Music from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Music from Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. He is the recipient of the Marine Corp – Sempre' Fidelis Music Award, and the Residential Life Program of the Year Award. His willingness to assist wherever he is needed makes him a true team player and asset to Silver Oak Academy's program. His optimism and enthusiastic "can-do" approach is encouraging for his students and staff alike.

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Mr. Jones, History Teacher, was recognized at Silver Oak Academy's Summer Graduation as *Teacher of the Year*. He joined Silver Oak Academy's staff as a substitute teacher for English, and the next school year was appointed the History teacher. Mr. Jones and his wife are expecting their first child, a son, in February.

Mr. Jones brings History to life for our students by reenacting great moments of history. He is committed to academic excellence and challenges his students to reach their full potential and not settle for anything less. Mr. Jones is a role



Silver Oak Academy's 2011 Teacher of the Year  
Kimani Jones

model for the young men at Silver Oak Academy. He is highly respected by the students and his peers. He is passionate about education and working with young people to understand how history defines our current era. Mr. Jones is a valuable

employee at Silver Oak Academy and we look forward to his continued professional growth with the company.

## 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Silver Oak Academy would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Tim Gloston, Director of Group Living, for his ten years of dedicated service to Rite of Passage. Throughout the years, Rite of Passage and its students have benefitted from Tim's hard work, dedication and enthusiasm for his job. To show our appreciation for his hard work, Tim was honored at the Silver Oak Academy staff

holiday party and presented with a 10 year ROP anniversary ring and plaque from the students of Silver Oak Academy.



Ten Year Employee, Tim Gloston, was recognized for his dedication to improving the lives of youth

Mr. Gloston began his career at Rite Of Passage as a Coach Counselor in the Colorado-based Ridge View Academy program. Tim showed great promise from the beginning. He advanced quickly as a manager, starting with a group of 12 students to

being accountable for a group of 72 students and supervising twenty one staff. Over the years Tim has served as Head Coach of the Ridgeview basketball team and track team. He has also been recognized by his peers being awarded 2nd runner up as "Employee of the Year" in 2002. Congratulations Tim for your decade of achievement. During the time you have worked with us, you have significantly contributed to the success of Silver Oak Academy and its development as one of the best alternative residential programs for youth. We thank you for your enduring loyalty and diligence. We wish you continued success for many years to come; you are certainly an asset to ROP.



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## 2011 FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS



**RAMS defense takes the field  
and is prepared to stop the run**

This year's football season was another of first accomplishments for the Silver Oak Academy Rams. The team began their summer training at a five-day, four-night off-site football camp where the coaches and group living staff stayed with the students. The team's overall record was 5 and 5, while playing four of the State's playoff teams during their season. Silver Oak Academy is considered a 1-A school and competed against seven other schools that were ranked 2A, 3A and 4A.

The season started off with the Rams playing at Fort Hill High School in front of a crowd that was estimated to be 1,000. Two of their regular season games were broadcast over the radio and streamed over the Internet, a first for the Academy. The team also enjoyed an opportunity to play three home games in the City of Taneytown, hosted by the community, under the lights.

Silver Oak Academy placed two students on the All-Metro All Star Team - S/A Green, wide receiver, and S/A Morris, linebacker. It was an exciting season, most notably the game against Wheaton High School, a 3A opponent that was up 15 to 0 at halftime. The Rams kept their composure, regained control and came back in the second half to score three touchdowns and one two-point conversion, winning the game 20-15.

The Rams also played in their first snow game at Southern Garrett High School. The field had two inches of snow over one inch of mud; needless to say, it was a sloppy game but another first for our students. The accomplishments of a team are always supported by achievements of team members, and the Rams had quite a few including: Longest pass play from scrimmage (92 yards); longest punt (63 yards); most tackles in a single game by one player (14); longest interception return for a touchdown (95 yards); and most sacks in one season by one player (15).

The football team ended their season with a banquet, which highlighted the team's successes. The spirit, enthusiasm and energy of the players was elevated as S/A Boykin lead the squad in one last team huddle football chant. Congratulations to the 2011 Rams football team and a special thanks to Coach Kimani Jones and Coach Phillip Matthews for their dedication to these young men this season.