



Pawsitive Press

The latest in good news & announcements from Outreach Christian Education

In This Issue...

**Meet Mrs. Trnka:
Quirky, Math-y
Servant of God**

**Thank You
Sponsors!**

**Dr. Bullard:
Thanking God for
OCE's Past, Present
& Future**

Fundraising Updates

**Forming Now:
Parent-led
Committees!**

Outreach Christian Education

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Meet Mrs. Trnka: Quirky, Math-y Servant of God



By Shannon Santschi

Mrs. Mary Lee Trnka, teaches Algebra I & II and Geometry to high school students at OCE. As one of the school's two math teachers, she has a full load supporting students in math-related courses offered for grades 7-12. So when she's at the school, she's in demand All.The.Time.

She traces her love of mathematics back to her middle school years when her teacher, Sis. Marie Paul introduced her to algebra. Although most of her classmates simply yawned at the subject, "I was fascinated," she exclaims. At some point, a claim was made that boys were naturally better at math and science than girls. But looking skeptically around the room at her 7th grade "competition", young Mary Lee thought, "I know I'm better at math and science than a lot of these dufuses!"

cont'd p.3



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Meet Mrs. Trnka... cont.



It was at that point that she began to really engage in the subject, at first to prove something to herself and her teachers, but at some point, she genuinely fell in love with all things mathematics.

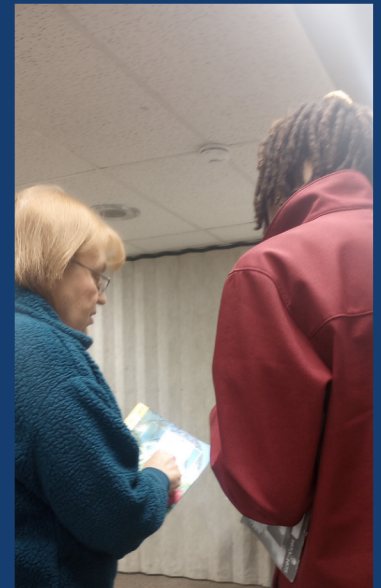
When she graduated from high school, she pursued a degree in Mathematics at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, MO. Speaking on the rarity of women working toward a degree in that field in that time period she says, “I was one of the 500 women in a total student body of 5,000. It was an interesting experience coming from an all-girl high school.”

While she was in college, she was urged to get her teaching certificate, but she wanted nothing to do with that field. “I didn’t like the bureaucracy or the politics of teaching in public education...I didn’t want to be in a situation where I was basically a zookeeper of people who didn’t want to be there. I don’t have time for that kind of nonsense.”

Following marriage to her husband, Chuck, and a lengthy period of work for the federal government, Trnka entered her 2nd career – full time mothering—and later found herself fully engaged homeschooling her son. “That began my teaching in earnest,” she says. Because her son did not learn in the ways she had or expected him to, Trnka says she really had to dig into learning how children learn.” That was a very enlightening time, and I learned a lot about meeting a student where they are.” Actively discerning what was not working and then necessarily figuring out what would work, was at that heart of that process.

In 2006, Mary Lee and her husband decided to enroll their son at the Christian school just down the street—OCE. “He did really well [at OCE]...and I felt really confident—spiritually, emotionally, academically— [placing] him here.” In 2019, Mrs. Kathy asked if she’d be interested in providing a math lab to students on a part-time basis. She agreed to. One day, as she was walking up the steps to OCE, she sensed the Holy Spirit saying, “This is your home.” Her response was, “Okay, God, if this is my home, you’ll have to work it out, because I’ve got these other obligations.” Shortly thereafter, her employer, Metropolitan Community College, shifted their agenda for instructors and Mrs. Trnka decided not to continue on. (MCC closed the Business & Technology campus permanently within 2 years.) The next year, she began teaching Algebra at OCE. Later Geometry was added to her schedule.

Although she only works on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at OCE, Mrs. Trnka is often seen attending Monday chapel with her students. “I go because it’s important. And I want my students to see me there. I want them to know that this is important.”



Mrs. Trnka reviewing work with a student.

cont'd p.4

Mrs. Trnka, cont.

Mrs. Trnka has fully embraced her title “The Terrifier”, a title recently given to her by one of her beloved senior students for the subject matter she teaches, and for the expectations she has of her students. When one of her students offered to make her a bracelet, she insisted the title be spelled out on the beads. She wears the bracelet proudly. But make no mistake, Mrs. Trnka’s students LOVE her. “I’m old school,” she explains. “My students know I’m not going to put up with any garbage.”

In regards to expectations and challenges, Trnka says, “Students have a difficult time ‘gutting through’ something...many times I’ll help a student at school, and while they are with me, they ‘get it’, but once they get home and are doing the homework, they forget and feel completely lost.” Mrs. Trnka tells her students, “it (math) will not overcome you if you don’t let it win. You simply must work at it ‘until’.” And until means pushing to the point of breakthrough –when you get it. “Math,” she says, “is a lot like playing basketball...instead of giving up when it’s hard, if you practice it, you’ll develop muscle memory.”

Mrs. Trnka strives to help students “make a better connection” with what can be a challenging subject. “I can’t just go into a math class and just speak ‘math’, I have to translate it by giving examples that are significant to the student,” she says. And even though her subject is required



Mrs. Trnka with OCE students.



“Math is a lot like playing basketball...if you practice it, you’ll develop muscle memory.”

and is a challenge for many, she affirms that “most of the students enjoy being here.” Equally importantly, she relishes the opportunity to teach them. “This experience allows me to be my quirky self,” she says with a laugh.

When she’s not at school, Mrs. Trnka enjoys spending time with her husband Chuck (who regularly volunteers at the school), playing computer games, singing (she is an alto), taking care of their cat, Atticus, and dog, Buck. Most of all, she enjoys spending time with her granddaughter.

But more rewarding than teaching is the trust she’s earned from her students. Recently, one of her charges approached her privately asking her to pray for a friend who was going through a difficult time. “It was humbling, really. I was moved that that student thought enough of me and trusted me with something that was really weighing heavy on the heart...it was God letting me know that I am to use this gifting (math) to affect people’s lives for His kingdom. I don’t know why God made me a ‘math-y’ person, a nerdy math girl, but the ability and the curiosity I have about mathematics is not anything I made in myself...and I’m blessed to have a platform where I can just stop and say [while teaching], ‘God’s Word says this.’ Whatever we do in life,” she concludes, “we are to be imitators of God.” (Ephesians 5:1)



Thanking God for the Past, Present & Future of OCE.



By Dr. Jessica Bullard

When OCE closed school in 2009, many thought that was the end. But God. This ministry has been serving families and meeting the needs of students since long before its inception, and we couldn't imagine a world without Outreach. So, in 2011, we reopened our doors—with just a kindergarten class of 8 students. We then added a grade each year, trusting God along the way to build a strong foundation that would transcend generations.

In 2013, we had roughly 23 students in kindergarten through 2nd grade. Fast forward to today, and we now have 140 pre-k through 12th grade students, including our enrichment group. In addition to growing our student population, we have been blessed to add so many things for the benefit of our students, such as:

- A fine arts program that now has a full orchestra and band implements
- Academic offerings to include more science labs and STEM offerings for our students
- Revamped theater/drama programs which have conducted numerous plays and musicals
- An athletics program that includes elementary soccer, basketball, volleyball, and cheerleading
- Athletics at the secondary level that includes volleyball, cross country, basketball, and track, and a flag football team
- And in 2020, for the first time ever, we became accredited by the National Association of Private Schools.

In 2022, we were blessed with exponential growth that facilitated the need for a second campus. Solid Rock Bible Church graciously opened their doors to us and have afforded us so many opportunities to expand our secondary program. Through dynamic partnerships like this, our students have also had the unique opportunities of meeting with best-selling authors and benefiting from their book donations, as well as having works published through print media such as the Metro Voice. Other connections have produced recognition and visits from well-known individuals like Pam Tebow, who poured into our students and loved who OCE is.

In 2022, we also graduated our first student since our reopening, a student who was told she could never achieve academically and would never attend college. That student is now graduating with her associate's degree in one week and will be continuing on to obtain her bachelor's degree from Liberty University. I say this because this is what OCE does. Since its inception, Outreach has had this incredible gift of taking unique individuals, whether they be the highest academic achievers or those who have been told were hopeless lost causes, and empowering those remarkable individuals to achieve all that God has created them to be. To uncover all the amazing gifts He has placed within them. To reveal purpose. Future. Hope.

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OCE: Thanking God...continued

We have added another 5 graduates to her number and fully believe these students will go on to do the most incredible things, despite any obstacles that come their way.

All of this is rooted in the rich heritage of our phenomenal founder, Margie McCartney, who sees the beauty in the broken, the challenge in the accelerated, and serves selflessly without question or thanks.

As she enters her 85th year here in a couple of weeks, we are blessed and forever grateful that she continues to demonstrate her vision and servant leadership to us and our students. She is still sweeping floors, listening to students read, encouraging the one who feels they just can't do it, quietly cheering in the audience, organizing, guiding, directing, and serving the students and families of OCE, and her mark on our hearts is indelible and indicative of who we want to continue to be, a school that cultivates spiritual growth and produces defenders of the faith who will transcend time and eternity.



*Founder,
Mrs. Margie
McCarney*



Year-End Update on Fundraisers

The Chili Supper held earlier this year was a delicious success! For the 3rd year in a row, Noel Osborne's chili was voted best recipe. Along with the raffle held that night, we raised a total of \$2100. The entirety of the funds were dedicated to the purchase of a new stove. In February, our kitchen was graced with a 2-oven stove---a much needed upgrade!

Regarding the 100 for \$15 Challenge, we have 11 monthly contributors. We began this effort last fall and thus far, at total \$767.00 has been made available to aid families who are struggling.

Lastly, the New Bus Fund has received a total of \$500.00.

We are so grateful to those of you who are demonstrating love to our students through these efforts. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you!



Forming Now: Parent-led Committees!

Our board and administrative team see God's handiwork in the growth that we've experienced over the past 4 years. To this end, volunteer parent-led committees are being formed!

The overall goal for these committees is to provide more offerings to more students, upgrade our facilities, enhance our teachers' experiences, and become a more influential member of our community to the glory of God.



Parents and grandparents, we need you to bring your creativity, your experiences, your insights, your connections, and your diligence to the committee table to make this vision a reality.

The following committees are forming now: Donor Development, Community Connections, Student Development and Facilities. Ideally, each committee will have 5 members.

To learn more or sign up to participate, please email Mrs. Kathy at Kathy@outreacheducation.org



The \$15 Challenge for Children!

Each year, at least 20% of OCE families experience a significant financial hardship at some point during the calendar year. The hardship can mean a family will be faced with having to withdraw their child from OCE.

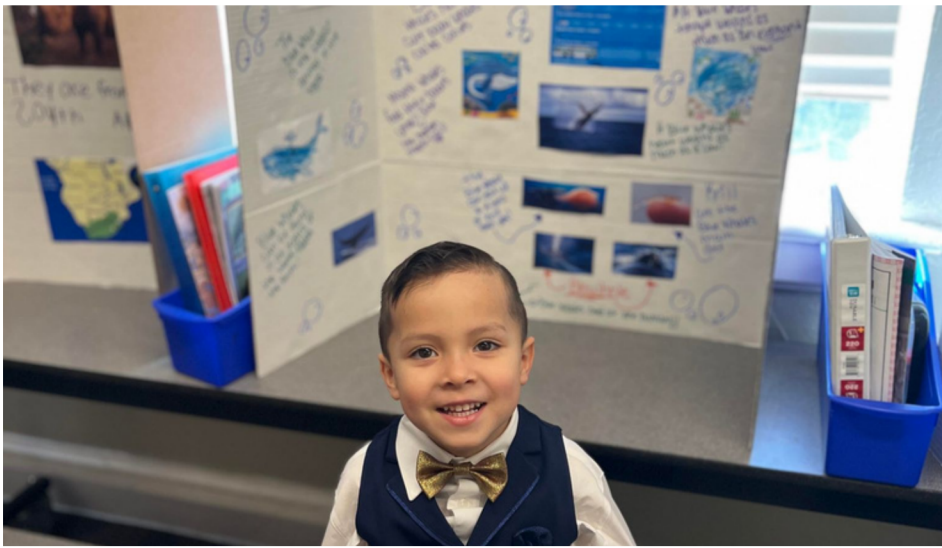
And although we are one of the most affordable private schools in the metro, we often receive calls from parents and grandparents who desperately want their child to attend our school, but find themselves ill-prepared to make the move due to limited financial resources.

THE SOLUTION

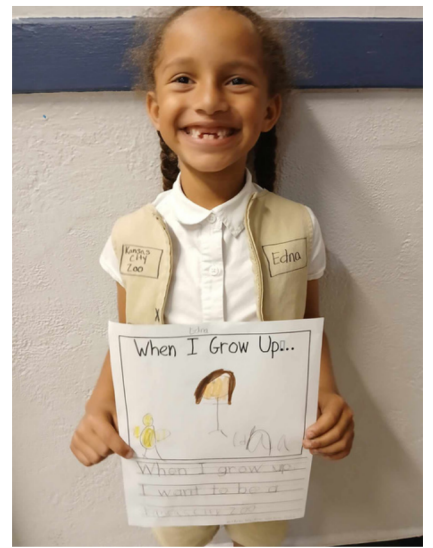
For about the cost of 3 Starbucks drinks, you can become a safety net and a beacon of hope for these students. We are seeking 100 donors to commit to partnering with us for 1 year. As of this mailing, 11 people have partnered with us!

Will you be one of the remaining 89 to partner with us for \$15/month?

You can begin giving today on a monthly basis by visiting [this link](#).



I'm ready for my science project presentation!



I want to be a Zookeeper when I grow up!



Field Day Fun



Spirograph Sophisticate



Eclipse Sun Fun



Iowa testing is over!