

summer  
2024



OPEN CONNECTIONS™

Volume XVII | Issue 85

Cover: Aminah, Eliza, Norah, Ruby, Hannah, and Ella pose for a group photo before their graduation in May.

Right: Mara takes a turn swinging on the tire swing. To get to the tire swings, young people can climb up past the top of climbing rock and up through the woods!

## Open Connections Magazine

Issue 85 | Summer 2024

### Mission

The goal of this *Open Connections Magazine* is to inspire and connect, both with the Open Connections community and beyond. We hope to entice a wider community to get engaged with Open Connections by telling the stories of our community in these pages. As a small and established nonprofit, located just outside of Philadelphia, PA and centered on the mission of empowering people to live their lives full of purpose and fulfillment, we firmly believe that we can have an impact beyond our physical campus. Our hope is that the stories depicted in this magazine will inspire a connection of some sort. Maybe you'll feel connected to your own purpose. Maybe you'll find a connection that resonates with your values. Maybe you will spark a connection with a friend or family member as you have a meaningful conversation about what you've seen printed here. Maybe you'll connect with a story that brings to mind a meaningful memory of growth during your own youth.

At Open Connections, we focus on process over product, and put the learner at the heart of the experience. We value respect, freedom, and responsibility. With the strong belief that people are natural learners, we provide an environment and community that allows for individuals to learn in a way that works best for them, at a pace that is comfortable for the learner. With this magazine, we aim to share some of the enchantment that occurs on campus. In these pages, look at how happy, how focused, and how intentional people of all ages are. Open Connections has been and will continue to be a place of great growth and exceptional warmth.

Through this magazine we invite you to connect with us, and explore what a life full of purpose and fulfillment can look like.

Additionally we welcome artwork by adults and youth who are striving to find a voice in photography (or in other forms of artwork that can be photographed clearly for publication).

### Staff

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LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN: Jacey Lucas

We want to hear from you: To contact *Open Connections Magazine*, e-mail us at [oc.magazine@openconnections.org](mailto:oc.magazine@openconnections.org). Unsolicited articles and photography submissions are welcome. A word about photography: Unless specified by a caption, photographs are independent of articles and do not illustrate their content. Sign up to receive *Open Connections Magazine* free as a PDF e-magazine at: [www.openconnections.org/support-oc](http://www.openconnections.org/support-oc). Keep grandparents, friends, and neighbors up to date on OC articles, news, and events by encouraging them to sign up too! *Open Connections Magazine* is published and distributed by Open Connections, Inc. 1616 Delchester Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073, (610) 459-3366, [www.openconnections.org](http://www.openconnections.org). Open Connections is a 501(c)3, tax exempt non-profit organization.

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## FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Sarah Becker



Dear Friends and Fellow Perpetual Learners –

It has been another magnificent, fun-filled, and powerful program year at Open Connections. I am getting ready to celebrate three years as a part of this community, and with every passing day, I adore this campus and community even more! The days that I spend at Open Connections push me to expand my horizons and explore, play, and learn alongside the young folks. As we forage for wild edibles, we read books, we watch presentations from our friends, perhaps what pops up as the most important thing we do, we collaborate on these endeavors together, supporting each other along the way.

I feel honored to be stewarding the Open Connections magazine since our previous Managing Editor has started a new chapter in her life, and wow is this truly an expansion

of my horizons. I am really enjoying getting to work directly with the staff that write the articles contained in these pages!

The articles featured in this issue center on how collaboration shows up in the programs, events, and spaces on campus. I hope that you enjoy these vignettes that highlight some of the radical collaborations that members of the Open Connections community partake in as much as I do.

Our wish is that this magazine can inspire some new perspectives on collaboration, illuminate some of the powerful moments we see in programs, and energize your drive to continually expand your own horizons in the company of others! Enjoy!

Warmly,



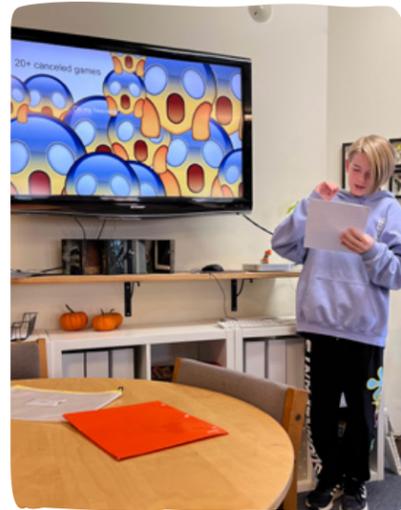
Group III members collectively delivered a bouquet to Margaret on her last day at OC, one daffodil at a time.



Group I members, Jett, Wally, Leo, Maks, and Lila perform their final rehearsal of "The Wizard of Odd" outdoors. The script is based on a book written by Jett and is set on the OC campus.



Parker uses frosting to hold cake layers together as she begins to construct the 3 tier, decorated cake that she and Cadence are making for the Teen Formal as part of their Shaping Your Life Independent Project.



A passionate and devoted gamer, and fascinated with the development of video games, Trey was inspired to investigate the canceled Sonic games that were not released to the public, the impact play-testers have in a game's success, and the details about why some of them were scrapped.



Tengo hambre! Maggie had us all craving Mexican food as she presented her I-Search to Group III. Maggie's taste for the flavors of Mexico began at Los Gallos, a restaurant in her neighborhood that she frequents with her family. Digging deeper into the culture inspiring some of her favorite dishes, Maggie learned more about some of the festivals in which food is an integral part of the celebration.



Group Time Chicken (a beloved chicken bean bag) had an "injury," so Gracie, Serafina, Savannah, and Mara repaired the bean bag and created some safe restful places for recovery in the Open Program.



Harrison and Heather (facilitator) determine drilled hole spacing requirements to inoculate freshly harvested beech logs with shiitake mushroom spores.



Eliza and Evie examine different sedimentary rocks, comparing particle size and other attributes, during one of a series of Shaping Your Life Geology labs.



Lee, Jude, and Isaac (not pictured) had to search for their GIII leaf pack as a previous rain had sent it downstream with the increased water level and flow of the creek. Careful removal will keep the contents intact, likely holding a host of macroinvertebrates to study and identify.



In the Open Program, a young person expressed a wish to make Dragon's Beard Candy. After a bit of research and planning, the facilitators offered it as an activity. The youth explored the material as it transformed from a liquid to a solid and then into a bunch of strings of little deliciousness.



After using the cyanometers they made during Group III to evaluate the blueness of the sky, Everleigh and Emmy enjoy an opportunity to draft a prompted journal entry, using words and watercolor, out in the fresh air, lying on the grass in the upper field.



Eske and Hazel prepare soil for the many seedlings GIV will start for the food forest. So many plants, pots, trees, and seeds have been generously donated by community members.



Lucy and Theo work with the feel and find boxes during Open Program. Using the hidden pattern blocks, they work to match the pattern on top. There is no right or wrong way to go about creating their pattern. Each young person create their own plan and strategize.



Shaping Your Life member Indie uses a drawknife to shape the end of the replica gaffi stick (Boba Fett's Mandalorian weapon from the Star Wars series) he is crafting for his Independent Project.



Lila explores painting with concentrated liquid watercolors during self-directed time in Group I.



Reflecting on his recorded data for a seed dispersal investigation in the lab during Group III, Ollie considers any modifications he might make to his design that could impact the duration and/or distance traveled of a seed carried by the wind.



Max and Eve haggle using Spanish numbers. Each of them hopes to end with the biggest pile of pesos.

*“The Latin prefix com-, meaning “with, together, or jointly,” is a bit of a chameleon—it has a tricky habit of changing its appearance depending on what it’s next to. If the word it precedes begins with l, com- becomes col- (as in colleague, collect, and collide). In the case of collaborate, com- teamed up with laborare (“to labor”) to form Late Latin collaborare (“to labor together”).” -MERRIAM-WEBSTER, 2024*

# COLLABORATION

***At Open Connections, collaboration is part of everything we do day in and day out.*** Just like Merriam-Webster outlined in their etymology breakdown of the word collaborate, we notice that we can be chameleons, too! Depending on whom we are working with, we comport ourselves differently. This skill of adaptation is critical in the pursuit of creating our lives full of purpose and fulfillment.

Collaboration can look like a group of Open Program youth working in the sandpit to create a moat around an elaborate castle construction. It can also look like partners in Group I working together on the construction of a resilient tower. Group II folks might be supporting one another, and the entire campus, in a campus-wide open-eye challenge. Group III young people are putting their heads together to create a full culture from scratch, including a lot of variables and moving pieces. Group IV gets input and participation from many different parties in our community to facilitate the Winter Marketplace. Shaping Your Life teens work together all year to make sure they are able to take a trip, and have it be fiscally responsible, educational, and fun.

Collaboration comes in all different shapes, sizes, and outcomes at Open Connections. We value what interpersonal skills are built up, exercised and honed when we engage in collaborative activities. What follows in these pages are just a glimpse into the different ways that this practice pops up in all the different programs on campus!



During the Open Program, Delilah and Luca use teamwork to carry a heavy bucket of sand from the sand pit all the way to their “shop” (the environment) to use as an ingredient for the imaginary food they are creating.



Shaping Your Life members Karl and Finn are collaborating on designing and constructing a small house made of repurposed materials in the White Pines section of campus for their Independent Project.



Lila, Maks, Jett, and Wally rehearse lines together for Group I’s theatrical play. The group worked together to modify the script and generate ideas for adding more comedic elements to the show.



Uma and Hazel from Group IV offer themselves as canvases after face-painting with Open Program members Mara and Savannah during an all-campus recess.



Nico and Owen coordinate their sawing efforts. Owen designed and started the go-cart project on his own, but he found lots of ways for people who were interested to help him out.

OP

## Developing Key Skills for Collaboration

By Peter Huis, Facilitator

Collaboration, both with peers and those outside of our age group, is one of the skills we hope every OC graduate leaves with. Laying the groundwork for those collaboration skills starts in the Open Program. The opportunities for collaboration within the Open Program are extremely dynamic and varied. All of our time is self-directed so it can be as simple as a joint effort to make the tallest block tower we can, or as elaborate as co-designing a complex woodworking project. No matter the project, we are always working on improving our ability to productively and happily collaborate with each other.

*These are a few of the key skills for collaboration built while in OP:*

**LEARNING TO ASK FIRST:** Working together requires willing participants. This means checking in to see if our help is desired or welcome. Lots of us in the Open Program are vastly different when it comes to our experience and skill levels in any given area. Before we jump in to offer our knowledge and expertise, it is important to ask, “would you like help with this?”

**LEAVING ROOM FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS:** We all love our own ideas, we want to have an impactful role, and to have our efforts recognized. All of these needs can be satisfied if all collaborators are willing to make allowances and be attentive to the needs and ideas of all the other group members.

**ASSUMING GOOD INTENT:** Working or playing together does not always mean that we are on the same page. We might each have separate and distinct goals for what we are hoping to get out of our collaboration, which can cause friction. When we aren't seeing eye to eye, it is important that we're at least assuming that the other person has good intentions. From that point we can re-evaluate and move forward without tearing down our progress.

**MAKING YOURSELF HEARD:** In the Open Program we have lots of youth who are still finding their voice. Positive communication with our friends requires that we speak in words that are not only friendly, but also specific. It is tempting and easy to shout “STOP THAT” when we are bothered, but words like that don't satisfy either requirement. What action should they even be stopping? We instead try to pause (which is not easy!) and find more suitable words that can express our needs more adequately.

We also get opportunities for growth in working with other groups on campus. In addition to our group capture the flag games, we have joined or been joined by other groups for games, songs or just spending time together by the sandpit. One of the special parts of spending time with other groups is to see other examples of how older groups work together. It is even more special when we get a chance to join them, after all they are spending time with from a program they may soon be joining in the next part of their OC journey. ©



We love cooking and any food related projects in the Open Program. Not only are the delicious, but there are usually lots of opportunities for everyone to get involved in the process. Here are Kairo, Liberty, and Nova prepare apple slices for dehydration

“

All of our time is self-directed so it can be as simple as a joint effort to make the tallest block tower we can, or as elaborate as co-designing a complex woodworking project.

”



Crosby and Nico collaborate on making a book together. First they staged the pictures, now they are gluing them onto the pages and adding captions.



The Open Program and Group I youth collaborated on a winter sing-along. They reviewed the song lyrics together and looked for patterns in the words and sounds.

GROUP  
I

# The Lively Buzz of Collaborative Energy

By Jane Sleutaris, Facilitator

The lively cheerful chatter and busy hum that permeates the Group I program space in the midst of collaboration is palpable. The collaborative energy surging through the room can be felt by both participants and observers alike and has an infectious quality. Collaboration can **LOOK** like a furrowed brow or an ear-to-ear grin. Collaboration can **SOUND** like agitated voices trying to figure out why a strategy isn't working or celebratory cheering for a design that worked. Collaboration can **FEEL** like frustration when something isn't going as planned or deep satisfaction upon the successful completion of a project.



On day three, the final day of the challenge, all three towers stood up to the sustained high winds and earthquake simulations! To scale up the simulation challenge, one of the youth suggested the clever idea to simulate hail using ping pong balls and wiffle balls. There was lots of excitement in the room as ping pong and wiffle balls pummeled the towers. To everyone's pleasant surprise, all of the towers stood up to the hail simulations and none sustained any damage!



Right: Wally and Luna's tower also sustained the high winds challenge, which consisted of a fan blowing on the tower at high speed for 30 seconds.



Ollie and Leo pursue the idea of using duct tape to add stability and height to their tower.



Luna and Wally experiment with their collaborative process for adding height to their trash tower.

In GI, the young people engage in collaborative activities during self directed time as well as during structured group times. Collaborative endeavors that might happen during self directed time include creating a block maze for bristle bots, putting together a puzzle, problem solving why a batch of just-made slime is too sticky, creating an imaginative skit, or building with snap circuits. Collaborative activities that might happen during group time include STEM challenges, group music/rhythm routines, and the process of creating, practicing, and performing a play.

The GI Thursday young people recently tackled the "Trash Tower" STEM challenge described below. Before beginning the challenge, we had a meaty discussion about collaboration and

## the CHALLENGE

Using a cardboard base, masking tape, and materials from the recycling center, collaborate with your partner to build a tower that stands at least 6 feet tall and can withstand wind and earthquake simulations.

### CONSTRAINTS:

- 1) Use only one of each type of recyclable item (1 paper towel roll, 1 yogurt container, 1 egg carton, etc. )
- 2) The finished tower must be able to withstand "forces of nature" simulations.

### FORCES OF NATURE SIMULATIONS:

- 1) **Wind Simulation**—Tower must withstand the wind generated by a fan set on high for 30 seconds.
- 2) **Earthquake Simulation**—Tower must remain standing intact, after being lightly shaken back and forth, at the base, for 30 seconds.

what it means. When asked the question "What does collaboration mean to you?", the young people's responses included the phrases working together, helping each other, teamwork, doing stuff with other people, and making things with your friends. Following our discussion about collaboration, we put our collaborative skills into practice with this Trash Tower STEM Challenge. This was a multi-day project involving significant design/engineering tweaking. The forces of nature simulations caused damage to some towers, providing the youth with valuable opportunities to work together to determine how they could improve their designs and make their structures more sturdy.

Collaboration invites a wonderful opportunity to focus on process, so after completing the challenge, the group gathered together to reflect on what worked well in terms of collaborative process.

**Leo:** *Me and Ollie worked together to make the tower really tall. At the end, he had the idea to use duct tape and it helped. I actually think we were a really good pair.*

**Weston:** *Maks collected trash pieces and we would figure out if something was a good fit or not. We would try it on the tower and test it. We were both working on taping. He taped one and then I taped the next one. I was taping and Maks was collecting and then he was taping, and I was also taping at the end. We had this thing that we wanted to put on, and I said, 'Here*

*Maks, you tape this one, and I'll tape this one.'*

**Maks:** *What worked well is that at the end, I taped and Weston builded it. I taped and he holded it for me and then he taped and I holded it.*

**Ollie:** *Leo was holding it and I was taping it and thinking about it, and he was ripping the tape so I could put it on. Then he was getting more trash pieces while I was building.*

**Wally:** *At the beginning, Luna did most of the taping and I was grabbing things to use and stacking them up, so she continued to have things to tape, but*

*by the end we sort of both had to tape because we were securing it—we didn't need to stack up anymore.*

*Something I would do differently is try to straighten the tower out because it's leaning. This would make it straighter and would also make it taller, since it's leaning. It was not quite 6 ft. tall, so if we straighten it out, it will make it taller.*

**Luna:** *It was a really good idea that we had that foam platform, so it wouldn't wiggle a whole bunch. Next time I would try to make the tower kind of straight. ☺*

Group II youth point in the direction of their home. After using compasses to determine precise coordinates, they built this signpost in the woodshop, labeled with each town by a woodburner.



**GROUP II** **NURTURING CREATIVITY AND CONNECTION**  
*The power of "Yes, And" in Collaborative Projects*

By Heather Hurley, Facilitator

In a world teeming with challenges, the ability to find potential in any situation and build innovative solutions is a skill worth cultivating. Early in the fall, Group 2 embarked on a remarkable journey, showcasing the transformative power of collaboration and the concept of "Yes, And."

Open Connections attracts families from all over the Philadelphia suburbs and beyond. Getting to know one another and pondering our hometowns, we went outside and took a guess, pointing towards our houses...or where we imagined they were located. Could we find a way to show this and would it make anyone visiting feel like they might belong here, too? Yes, and...

To kick things off, we dove into the intricacies of reading maps and understanding cardinal directions and degrees. Little did we know this understanding would lay the groundwork for what would become a collaborative display on campus.

The essence of "Yes, And" was embraced wholeheartedly, encouraging young people to build upon each other's ideas and contributions. This concept, often associated with improvisational theater, fosters an environment of acceptance and amplification. Rather than shutting down ideas, group members embraced the affirmative approach, saying "yes" to proposals and adding their own creative twists with the "and."

“ Rather than shutting down ideas, group members embraced the affirmative approach, saying ‘yes’ to proposals and adding their own creative twists with the ‘and.’ ”



Calliope reads a map at Ridley Creek State Park as part of an orienteering challenge with Shaping Your Life.



Group II and Shaping Your Life got to know one another better and shared a morning of orienteering at Ridley Creek State Park.



Chris (facilitator) stresses the importance of planning out lettering, allowing for the cuts youth will make in their signage created in the Woodshop. Each youth determined which direction their town was and cut and burned the wood hung on the post in the driveway circle.

The culmination of these efforts resulted in a striking signpost you may notice as you swing around our parking lot, symbolizing the diverse hometowns of each youth in our program this year. This tangible representation of their individuality became a metaphor for the strength found in unity.

The true magic of this project unfolded on a beautiful fall day when Group II joined forces with SYL to run an orienteering course at Ridley Creek State Park. The air was filled with excitement as the two groups navigated the woods and creeks and some prickly overgrown trails, putting their map-reading skills to the test and relying on one another for guidance.

The collaborative spirit that permeated the project not only made the experience more enjoyable but also sparked innovative thinking. We discovered that by embracing diverse perspectives, we could uncover solutions and ideas that might have remained hidden in a more individualistic approach. And, best of all, each group navigated the course successfully, with energy left over for some rousing games of Eagle Eye.

Our signpost and day at Ridley Creek reminds us of the joy and excitement that arises when individuals come together to create something meaningful. The "Yes, And" philosophy, combined with a commitment to collaborative creation, not only fosters innovation but also strengthens the bonds between people from different backgrounds. ©



## TRAIL CLEARING TEAMWORK

By Kelly Dillon, Facilitator

**The more, the merrier.  
Many hands make light work.  
None of us is stronger than all of us.**

These adages all ring true when Group III heads out for some trail clearing. Whether we are here beyond the fence lines of the Open Connections campus, or across Delchester Road, and tending to a section of trail that OC has volunteered to help maintain in Ridley Creek State Park; there is collective joy in collaborative outdoor work. This joy is accompanied by an immediate, and growing, sense of accomplishment that our actions directly impact our broader community.

Group II and Group III folks gather for a photo following an afternoon of spring trail clearing and maintenance at Ridley Creek State Park.

Reflecting on feedback that has been invited from Group III young folks over the years, there are two things that reliably come up: “more time outside” and “more time with my friends”. Who would argue with these relatable requests? We simply can’t get enough! Maybe this begins to explain the collective enthusiasm and satisfaction in maintaining trails together: fresh air, greater freedom beyond the walls of the Farmhouse, all while in the company of our Open Connections friends. In addition to the sense of camaraderie is the opportunity to grow valuable life skills. As folks engage with nature together, they can learn the importance of teamwork, collective responsibility, and environmental stewardship among other countless benefits and lessons.

**“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”**

*(William Shakespeare)*

All the youth are coached and/or reminded how to safely and responsibly use the tools required for the mission. Other practical skills are learned as they discover their particular favorite tools may not be the best one for the task at hand (we’re looking at you, machetes). Sometimes agreements or time contracts need to be made, and honored, so that folks can trade tools to more effectively tackle the job.

Working together to clear trails encourages teamwork and collaboration. As they tackle various tasks in maintaining the path, like trimming overgrown vegetation and removing debris, they are practicing how to communicate effectively, delegate responsibilities, and support one another. Problem-solving skills support creative solutions in overcoming obstacles they encounter on the trail. These collaborative efforts make it easy to work efficiently, while it can also be an opportunity to strengthen bonds and foster a sense of unity.

We head out to clear trails with the primary purpose of clearing the invasive plant species. Identifying native and invasive plant species, in addition to learning some basic ecological principles, holds the potential of igniting connections with nature and fostering an understanding of the importance of preserving the natural environment. By actively participating in clearing trails, young folks can gain a deeper appreciation for the outdoors and learn about the delicate balance and interconnectedness within ecosystems. This hands-on experience allows them to witness firsthand the impact of human activity

on natural habitats, and the significance of conservation efforts. As they begin to see the clear and tangible results of their efforts, they historically tend to develop a sense of ownership over the trails that they help maintain. This sense of responsibility holds the potential to extend beyond the trail clearing experience itself, and encourage them to take care of their surroundings in other aspects of their lives!

All of this good work can have a lasting impact on the immediate and broader community. Maintaining accessible and well-kept trails invites more people to enjoy the restorative outdoor activities like hiking, biking, and birdwatching. This promotes physical and mental health while also strengthening the community bonds and fostering a meaningful and well-earned sense of belonging.

By working together to maintain trails, young folks not only contribute to the preservation of natural habitats but also develop important life skills and forge meaningful connections with nature, their peers and their community. By navigating this shared experience, they emerge with a deeper understanding of the natural world and their role in protecting it for future generations. ©

**“In the spring, at the end of the day,  
you should smell like dirt.”**

*—Margaret Atwood*



Emmy and Lyla, of Group III, set down their tools for some fun among friends during a recent trail clearing experience with Group II at Ridley Creek State Park.



Several Group III folks team up to move a tangle of branches just pruned, to clear the area at the base of climbing rock, a popular destination for all ages.



GROUP  
IV

THE SERIOUS WORK of  
*Collaborative Play*

By Michelle West, Facilitator

Eva, Uma, and Hazel begin to create a graph to share the results of lab work earlier in the day.

For the teens in Group IV, spending time with friends is a huge part of the excitement that OC offers. They want to work with each other in every possible arrangement—pairs, teams, the whole group, and joining with other programs. One of our goals is to provide many opportunities for them to join forces and develop the skills that make collaboration effective, fulfilling, and fun.

SCIENCE EXPO

The Science Lab is often the site of deep collaborative work. In preparation for this year's Science Expo, which will feature youth-designed research projects related to a theme of forces and motion, Heather Gosse (facilitator) has carefully laid the groundwork for their individual and paired projects with many group experiments and challenges. Again and again they have been called to wonder and practice together—how to design a meaningful experiment? How to record data? How to communicate about data and make graphs that are easy to interpret? They each bring different background knowledge and experiences to these exercises, and they support each other as they develop existing skills and practice new ones.



Danny, Sam, Max, and Eva read the recipe for Malva Pudding and decide together where to begin.



GAMES

When we introduce a new game in GIV the first clarifying question is often, “can we help each other?” Make no mistake! A game of Set can be very competitive up in the Map Room, but the first instinct is often to win together. Offering and really listening to one another's suggestions, seeking agreement before answering, and laughing together when they didn't get it right are all part of the serious work of collaborative play.

Max, Danny, Thomas, Eske, and Uma puzzle together over some rebus challenges.



Maks and Danny plan together what the final design will look like during a joint Group I/Group IV LED circuit jewelry workshop.

PARTNERING WITH  
OTHER PROGRAMS

Nothing elicits hoots and hollers from this group like the announcement that we will be working with another program. The novelty of mixing ages and switching up teams is always welcome, and it provides new opportunities and collaborative challenges. Sometimes the challenge is how to meet much younger youth where they are and allow their voices to be heard. Other times the collaboration requires that a lot is accomplished quickly, with limited time to find consensus. There is always so much joy in the team-building, even though it requires a lot of listening and flexibility.

COOKING

Collaboration in key when GIV dives into an ambitious cooking project. Teams are decided quickly, and youth take on the task of assigning jobs and divvying up the workload. Everyone has a turn doing the fun bits and no one is exempt from dishwashing duty. Each time they enter the kitchen it provides another opportunity to improve their communication skills, not to mention their culinary prowess.

Group IV is always up for a team challenge, a group game, or a partnered project. They value time to work and play together, and they grow from every opportunity to learn from each other. Their ability to make space for the unique voice and individual interests of every group member makes collaboration an easy promise to deliver on with every program day. ☺

SYL

## THE SHAPING YOUR LIFE SILENT AUCTION

# A Masterpiece of Collaboration

By Shaping Your Life group members and Facilitators

In the Shaping Your Life program, we embark on many projects that require us to efficiently work together to accomplish our goals. The group trip and Silent Auction are a few examples of major projects we do in SYL that would not be possible without the group members being ready and willing to collaborate. An event like the Silent Auction involves a considerable amount of teamwork and individual responsibility going on behind the scenes. Each person has specific roles during the planning process as well as the night of the auction. The success of the event is due to the group members being focused, flexible, and collaborative. The Silent Auction is one of the biggest learning experiences anchoring the SYL year.

### ELEMENTS OF COLLABORATION

Leadership and collaboration are very important skills which SYL used to run the Silent Auction this year. The elements of collaboration are: cooperation, assertiveness, autonomy, communication, coordination, mutual trust & respect, and responsibility & accountability. These elements are important for completing projects as a team to ensure that everyone can have their own input and feel good about the completed project. SYL members honed these skills together before the auction by playing team building games and having discussions that showcased leadership and explored each of the elements.

### ORIGINS OF THE AUCTION

For several years, SYL youth have done a collaborative group project, and we continued that tradition planning and funding an overnight trip. It is important for us to choose our destination



Karl, Finn, Norah, Hannah & Aminah listen to Ruby describe the layout for the Silent Auction as the group works together to create a display for all of the donations.



SYL Youth arrived early on the night of the final auction event to complete set-up tasks.

as early in the year as possible so we can start planning. After some weeks of research and voting, in which we had to account for everyone's differing opinions, we chose Pittsburgh. We spent several more weeks in smaller groups conducting more thorough research and creating itineraries. We presented each itinerary to the whole group for individuals to choose their preference. We then collaboratively formulated an in depth budget, creating a goal for the auction.

### WHY AN AUCTION?

Funding was a large constraint limiting our ability to bring our Pittsburgh visions into reality. This need made hosting the Silent Auction (our largest fundraiser) a necessity. Committing to going on a trip meant raising adequate funds for that trip, or dealing with the natural consequence of not being able to go on the trip we had spent much time planning and visioning. No



The completed tourist map of Pittsburgh—a collaborative mixed-media project that SYL members created as a way to share their group trip itinerary at the silent auction fundraiser.



Søren arranges donations of artwork to look their best for the evening auction event, and ensured that each item had a bid sheet and a pen. Attention to details like this were essential for the success of the fundraiser.



Brian provided live entertainment during the evening, a wonderful example of how each youth contributed in unique ways to the event.



Cadence takes a break from performing to assist Ruby with logging the winners of each item, an important night-of task for the Auction Mechanics Committee.



Finn greets guests and checks-in auction participants, ensuring that they have a bidding alias. While not as glamorous as other roles, this job is essential for ensuring that the auction runs smoothly.



Guests mingle, peruse, and bid on an abundance of offerings from handcrafted items like scarves and pottery, to experiences and classes, to consumables like gourmet chocolates and locally distilled spirits.

one person could have executed an auction capable of earning what we needed. The ability to rely on and collaborate with peers is credited with our event's success.

### COMMITTEE WORK

The SYL Silent Auction came together due to our collaborative committee work, including planning committees and night-of committees. The Mechanics Committee created systems, spreadsheets and schedules for the auction to function. The Marketing Committee helped create the website and advertisements, while the Food & Beverage Committee planned the menu and replenishment of snacks. The Childcare Committee planned the night-of childcare, and the Guest Interface Committee planned the coat check, announcements, and check out. We all collaborated within each committee to brainstorm ideas, formulate timelines, make decisions, and create checklists to ensure all tasks were completed.

### DONATIONS

The Silent Auction Donation Subcommittee was in charge of soliciting donations from businesses and community members. This task involved collaborating to divide the list of people and businesses to ask for contributions. The group members reached out to many local vendors and institutions—including artisans, restaurants, museums, and theaters, just to name a few—as well as members of the Open Connections community. We received various types of donations, from handcrafted items like scarves and pottery, to experiences and classes, to consumables like gourmet chocolates and locally distilled spirits. Overall, through this dynamic and complex network of collaborative effort, we secured more than eighty donations and surpassed our fundraising goal! ©

# CHOICE PROGRAMS



We are racing towards the finish in Theater! Eli and Isaac improvise details of their fishing trip during a warmup game. They both caught fish “this big!” Creating and assembling sets and costumes were another major focus of the day.

## Choice A: Theater

By Heather Gosse, Facilitator

Improvisation games require the actors to work together in varied and constantly shifting scenarios. Here during Choice A: Theater, Eli and Isaac play “Discovering Who,” a game where one of the players knows the scenario and interacts with the other actor in a way that allows the other actor to figure out and engage with the activity and the relationship between the two characters. Isaac successfully communicated through his actions that he and Eli were friends on a fishing expedition, and they each ended up catching a fish that was “this big!”

The participants in Choice A: Theater chose to write, direct, and act in their own plays. They wrote scripts in pairs, sharing and building on each others’ ideas. The pairs then shifted into the role of joint directors, making decisions about casting and blocking, doing set design, and costuming their plays. Everyone acted in both of the plays, adding their own interpretations and flair as the pieces reached performance time. Truly a group collaboration!

“Mentoring and/or finding support from a peer can be such a rich and meaningful exchange.”

## Choice A: Paper Arts

By Kelly Dillon, Facilitator

The work of the artist, craftsperson or maker is often an independent process, yet invite a group of folks to explore their interest, follow their vision, and engage in their process side-by-side and collaboration often occurs. During Choice A: Paper Arts, different techniques and approaches were featured each week. Folks tested ideas and found their way, encountering successful and less successful moments, in their own time. We all had something to learn from every effort and where it led, whether it was our own process or someone else’s. Mentoring and/or finding support from a peer can be such a rich and meaningful exchange.



Origami instructions are notoriously challenging to follow-am I right?! It can be so helpful to work through the steps of a form with someone else. Here, Madhava and Josh team up to make sense of the arrows, symbols, and pictorial and written instructions for an origami fish during Choice A: Paper Arts.



The basic definition of collaboration is the action of working with someone to produce or create something. While that definition does sum it up, it is so much more than that in the wood shop. It is additionally an opportunity to see a different way of doing something, try a new tool, and engage with someone new. Here, Jay and Jude work together to construct Jude’s new cat house.

## Choice A: Woodshop

By Chris McNichol, Facilitator

In the wood shop, collaboration reigns supreme. Young folks come together to tackle projects, blending their unique skills and ideas to achieve remarkable outcomes. Whether they’re coordinating measurements or providing assistance with intricate cuts, teamwork fosters an environment where learning is both enriching and productive. Beyond honing woodworking skills, this collaborative approach cultivates essential interpersonal competencies, laying the groundwork for success in endeavors extending far beyond the workshop’s confines.

“Young folks come together to tackle projects, blending their unique skills and ideas to achieve remarkable outcomes.”

“Group members gave each other feedback on seamlessness of movement, effectiveness of illusion, wording and presentation.”



Getting the card tricks down takes repeated effort! Youth even practiced at home on family members to prepare our OC performance. Kai helps Isaac practice and perfect the delivery of an original card trick he created.

## Choice A: Magic and Comedy

By Sheila Pai, Facilitator

Magic and Comedy Choice youth learned magic tricks with cards, hands, coins and more. Jokes ranged from puns to more complex setups, learning the anatomy of a joke and the art of delivery. Group members gave each other feedback on seamlessness of movement, effectiveness of illusion, wording and presentation. These youth challenged themselves to come up with their own variations of tricks and jokes, and the majority of the final performance was original!



This process included many new production skills for Uma who learned how to arrange photos and format text in a document as well as to use the laminator and bookbinder for her final product.

### Choice B: Picture Books

By Sheila Pai, Facilitator

In Picture Book Choice we explored a writer's world starting from scratch and taking our ideas into finished products. While some youth chose to draft entirely by hand and include a graphic novel style format, others wanted to type on a computer and use photos. We began and ended our experience in the Open Program, interviewing youth about what makes a good picture book and reading our stories aloud.



Wally reads his time traveling adventure aloud to Open Program youth before proclaiming afterwards, "Now I'm a writer! And illustrator!"



Locke experiments with the tonoscope he made during Choice B: Exploring Sounds. Humming certain frequencies underneath the film sprinkled with salt can cause the film to vibrate in ways that create movement. The salt collects in these "dead" areas and creates different patterns called Chladni figures.



Our program concluded with a collaborative, full group performance of the traditional tune Oh! Susanna played with Boomwackers! From left to right: Søren, Danny, Max, Locke, Rick, Jude.

### Choice B: Exploring Sound

By Rick Sleutaris, Facilitator

In this program we took a deep dive into the world of sound—grappled with the difference between music and noise, built a tonoscope, explored relative pitch, learned how to read music notation, calculated the speed of sound, and much more. One surprising outcome was the group's interest in performing a piece of music together. For some this was an entirely new experience.

### Choice B: Repair Cafe

By Kelly Dillon, Facilitator

Choice B: 'Repair Cafe' (Repair, Repurpose, Reimagine) is inspired by the Repair Cafe (<https://www.repaircafe.org/en/>), whose mission is essentially to create a community that addresses sustainability by hosting regular meetups, centered on learning how to fix stuff together, as an alternative to throwing away and/or replacing stuff, unnecessarily. Each week, youth convene to tinker with an item brought in from home destined for the curb, or a tired and/or broken item from the OC community. They are not expected to be experts in repairs of any kind, and are invited to investigate and research possible solutions, and learn needed repair skills through the real, hands-on work of trial and error. Folks have teamed up to locate serial/model numbers, scoured the internet for owner's manuals, illustrations of inner workings, and/or repair tutorials. They've partnered with peers and put their heads together to consider and test possible solutions with lasting results, using available resources, borrowing or purchasing tools and materials as needed.



Uma, Shep, Max and Jude prepare to repair what's ailing adored, OC campus celebrity, Armeen, during Choice B: Repair Café. Together, they assess the damage and consider possible approaches and materials that will not only fix what's broken, but bolster him for the life and love he has here at OC.



Eske, Locke, and Max race for balls at the start of a round of the cooperative game SpaceTeam, where we attempted to save our spaceship by repairing many odd problems with peculiar-sounding tools like the Gigahole Ectosleeve and the Flangesignal Contraption. Building on a suggestion from this same Choice two years ago, we then started developing our own game—in this case, somewhat of a cross between tag and handball. The group liked it enough to want to play it again the following week.

### Choice B: Games

By Heather Gosse, Facilitator

Choice B: Games collaboratively created their own active game. They started with a suggested list of equipment to use, including two hula hoops, three cones, and a ball. The group started brainstorming and discussing different ideas, adjusting the equipment list in the process to fit their developing vision for the game, which includes elements of team handball and tag.

In Choice B: Games, players often helped each other with gameplay and strategy suggestions, as well as discussing and agreeing on any rule variations. This cooperative dynamic was taken further with team games, where communication and coordination with their teammates was key. The whole group needed to work together in cooperative games like SpaceTeam, where everyone worked together to fix a spaceship under time pressure, and each person needed to fulfill their role in order for the group to succeed.



## 2024 GRADUATES

## FROM OUR GRADS

As I am sure many of you can relate, OC has changed all of our lives. Whether we've been here for 2 years or 15 years, OC has become a part of all of us. We will carry what we have learned from our time here for the rest of our lives and we will strive to lead lives of purpose and fulfillment. OC has become a second home and family for all of us and we could not be more grateful. Thank you OC for the friends you have given us, the skills you have taught us, and the community you have provided for us.

We would like to extend a formal thank you from the graduates to the OC community itself. Half of the things we did wouldn't have been possible without the support of the community. You have shown up for every auction, Symposium, and community day we planned. We are grateful for everything you've given us, from donations towards our trips, to the time you've spent attending our events, to the interest and enthusiasm you've shown in our projects. Shaping Your Life is such a strong and special program because the entire community embraces and supports us, and for that we are so grateful.

Some of us joined the Shaping Your Life program at a time when it was uncertain whether the program would be able to run at all. The community at Open Connections went through many changes in 2021 due to the pandemic, and this led the SYL program to be almost completely reborn. We had the privilege, and the hardship, of questioning and rethinking every aspect of how Shaping your Life worked. As a group of four in 2021 and a group of six in 2022, we were grateful to have been a part of the conversations that made SYL the program it is now. This year we expanded further to a group of 16. Building the program back up over the last three years has been enriching, thought provoking, and rewarding. We are proud of our facilitators and ourselves, and can't wait to watch this program continue to grow and change as we take a step back.

We want to take a moment and say some more specific thank you's. Firstly we want to say a big thank you to Linda! Without you we wouldn't have an SYL program to graduate from. We owe so much to you for being brave enough to step into the position of Lead Facilitator and guide the program through its time of reinvention. You stepped up and took charge of not only SYL but also Group IV for two years and you did such an incredible job.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to our current and past facilitators Heather, Sheila, Sarah, and Lisa. And to Rick, Molly, and Margaret for their constant support. What we've done wouldn't have been possible without your support and guidance. You have all been role models for us and have helped us become the people we are today. Thank you for all you have done for the program and for us!

Lastly, we would like to thank the rest of our peer group. While going from six to 16 people was definitely an adjustment this past year it has been wonderful to experience a larger group. Not only have all of you enabled us to do things that weren't possible with a smaller group, you've also brought so much new and unique energy to the program. In just this past year we've forged friendships that will last us beyond graduation. You are all wonderful people and we cannot wait to see how each of you individually as well as the group as a whole continue to grow after we leave. We hope you all will continue our legacy.

Thank you!  
*Aminah, Eliza, Ella, Hannah, Norah, and Ruby*



Kai proudly displays his skateboard he built in Choice A: Wood Shop. Now he plans on taking it to Rick's MicroBit program and electrifying it! Grab your helmet and lets go!!



After winter sowing seeds in jugs while snow was still in the forecast, Group II uncovered bountiful greens in the spring. Lincoln, Tanner and Asher illustrated their findings in their sketchbooks.



Group I youth, Jett, Maks, Leo, and Luna eat lunch together on the rock wall of the upper terrace while enjoying each other's company on a beautiful spring day.



Welcoming and celebrating the milder temperatures and sunshine, Lyla and Everleigh spot Maggie and Cataleia on the mats outdoors.



Leo shares his love for chess strategies with Jax during the Open Program. Mixed age groupings allow for older youth to mentor younger youth.



Max and Thomas work on an independent film project in the iconic Map Room during Group IV.



James Yu, guest facilitator and SYL parent, reviews the form 1040 during his Life Skills session on personal income tax.



Karl and Ruby work together to create a bar graph to illustrate the population of non-white immigrants in Pittsburgh in the 1930s and 1940s. This project combined the Symposium topic of the 1940s with the trip destination of Pittsburgh in a collaborative learning exercise.



Rhian, Madhava, and Cataleia investigate the contents of their Gill leaf pack, and move a macro invertebrate specimen to a petri dish for closer examination.



While Bodhi is writing his word present, Ari works to cut a word present for Margaret that reads, "You are smiling in my mind," which he will add to a book of memories as a way of sharing gratitude for all that she has given to OC.



Pricing product for sale at the OC Winter Marketplace requires some consideration of cost and time. Sarah supports Carter in calculating the cost of materials used to make candles to determine a reasonable selling price.



The Shaping Your Life Yearbook Team (Ella, Ruby, Aminah and Norah) proofread a mock-up of the yearbook prior to sending it to the printer. These youth chose to create an OC yearbook this year as their Independent Project.



Open Program youth, Jax, Daniel, and Delilah wait for the start of a game of Capture the Flag. Young people look forward to this game and Wednesday Open Program has the opportunity to play with the Choice programs several times this year.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF *Maks* By The Sidren Family



Søren and Locke learn to compose music using sequencers in Choice B: Sound Science. An Ableton tutorial took youth through the process and laid the groundwork for more open-ended compositions in the future.



Sam and Sian discuss the inner working of the body of a horse as they sift through a book about the anatomy of horses during Open Program.



Jett offers instruction on the basics of making flipbooks to his fellow peers in Group I, as part of his Partnership Project on cartooning. Youth used lightboxes to assist with the tracing necessary to create each page of their flipbooks.



Jack presents his Symposium research on Interventionism vs. Isolationism in WWII Era America to a group of his Shaping Your Life peers.



As part of Group II's Science Partnership Project, Annabelle and Calliope created a quick mock up of a tri-fold board to be used in the living wax museum presentations.

On a typical non-OC day, Misu (our cat) sneaks into Maks' bedroom, jumps on his bed, and starts "kneading" the blankets and purring loudly in his face. That's when he gets up and gets one of us up to help him feed Misu. Once she is fed, Maks plays video games until it's time to get ready to go to his homeschool co-op (Fridays) or swimming lessons (Saturday mornings).

Afternoons are generally spent at home. When we get home on Saturdays, for example, we will play Pokemon and do laundry. Maks teaches us Pokemon strategies and we teach him laundry strategies. A homeschool session comes next. Lately, we've been using CTC Math online and the Brave Writer program. He then usually plays on his own while one of us makes dinner, unless he wants to help with preparing food.

Maks is the "silverware master" and helps set the table. We all eat dinner together every night and discuss the events of the day. Misu waits patiently and pretends to ignore us while we eat. We always give Misu a treat after dinner before we have our own dessert. Then Marty hangs out with Maks and does the bedtime routine with him, which includes cleaning up his bedroom and taking a bath. Maja usually works in the evenings.

Maks makes sure to review his Pokemon collection before he goes to bed and does some reading; Misu returns and begins kneading his covers once more. We hug and kiss goodnight. Maja and Marty typically watch a StarTrek rerun after Maks is in bed.

Depending on the day, Maks helps us shop for groceries, has playdates, makes a library trip, or FaceTimes with grandparents. Our days are pretty structured because we have learned that Maks thrives on predictability and also because of our work schedules. That said, we make sure to build in unstructured time for him and ourselves. Maks follows a fairly traditional homeschool curriculum, but we prioritize quality over quantity and keep the total number of hours low. We try to combine Maks' interests with our learning goals for him; for example, practicing reading by reading Pokemon stories. We also try to use various experiences that Maks has as extended learning opportunities. For example, when we attended the American Helicopter Museum's astronomy night and got to see the moon and the rings of Saturn through telescopes, we kept the "lesson" going at home by talking and looking up more information on astronomy.

Similar to OC's focus on building interpersonal skills, we include Maks in discussions about daily life, walking through if-then scenarios with him to explain the consequences of various choices, and modeling negotiating different people's needs (as best we can). For example, if Maks wants to finish a drawing project before taking his bath, we tell him he'll have to rush his bath, and ask if he's okay with that choice. We try to honor his decisions whenever we can. We don't use discipline, but we spend a lot of time communicating. ©



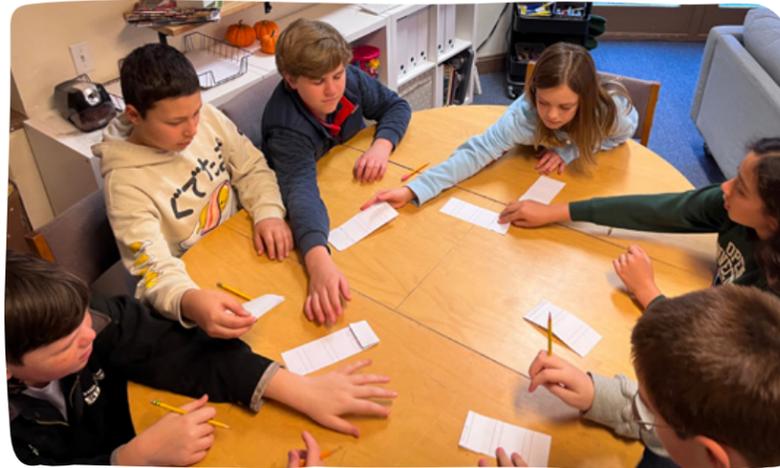
A behind the scenes photo of Everleigh, Ollie, Silas, Shep, and Carter collaborating to create an "educational video" about Group III's civilization, Vativia. Everyone has a role, whether on or off camera.



In Group IV, Danny, Hazel, Uma, Max, and Eske take notes on Science Expo tri-fold boards from previous years' experiments. This took place a week before they began to design their own boards.



Levi takes on a large scale woodworking project during his time in the Open Program. Once his project had outgrown the Open Program woodshop, he transferred it outdoors to make room for alterations. Here Levi hammers his creation together.



Group III enjoys the game, Scribblish, indulging their fondness for silliness, storytelling, and doodles.



Friendships grow all of the time in the Open Program, but one of the times that is always FILLED with conversation is lunch time! Nico, Owen, Daniel, Kellen, and Levon fashioned a table out of two benches to accommodate their group.



Leo proudly models the origami bird's beak he made as part of his costume for Group I's theatrical production of "The Wizard of Odd."



Uma and Max work together on a scavenger hunt through the websites created by each member of the GIV group. This project was the culmination of their individual research into ancient African cultures.



Youth in Group I test the strength of four different shapes—circles, triangles, squares, and pentagons by creating those shapes with paper and adding magazines as weights to determine the strongest shape.



During our days in the Open Program youth have time to connect with their peers. We value independent time, small group connections, and community building in larger groups. Fina, Mara, Lucy, Gracie, Violet, Savannah, Lila, Ari, and Delilah group together to decide on next steps for their game.



Annabelle (Group II) presents her Peer Facilitation on mythical creatures, helped along by a tame Cerberus puppet, adding levity and delight to her demonstration.



Leo, Alethea, Nova, and Kairo have all made it to base during an outdoor game of tag on a beautiful Spring day in the Open Program.



Does a watched pot ever boil? Emmy keep an eye on things while using the alcohol fueled camp stove made during Group III to boil water for a ramen lunch.



In Open Program, Vincent attempts to get the ball from Bodhi during a game of soccer to prevent to other team from gaining a point.



"Let's go fly a kite, up to the highest height..." Maggie and Everleigh test their Group III kite designs on a warm, breezy day on campus, possibly discovering the impact of kite size, tail length and launching strategies on flight.



Shaping Your Life Facilitators, Linda (far left) and Sheila (far right), stand with the four SYL Symposium presenters, (left to right) Søren, Finn, Ruby, and Eliza, at the conclusion of a very fascinating and informative symposium on topics pertaining to the 1940's.



Vincent works the apple spiralizer to core and cut apples for making applesauce in the Open Program.



Rhian takes a turn at a sewing machine and finds some fun in it all, despite ongoing technical/mechanical challenges with the machine(s) during Group III's bucket hat project.



Taking a moment for a bit of quiet, Nora takes a look at *Hop on Pop* while cuddled up with a snake that facilitator, Michelle, made.



On a Thursday in the Open Program, two youth requested a potluck lunch. All of our friends in the Open Program brought in a meal to share with friends. This turned out to be one of the highlights of this program year.



Group I youth, Maks, Lila, and Charlie, spend time reflecting on and writing about their year as they insert photos into their keepsake scrapbooks.



Danny begins assembling the bleachers of his Fenway Park model in Choice B: Makerspace Open Studio.



Shep follows tips from Chris, using the grinder Chris brought in for him to carry out the next steps in repairing the handle of a kitchen knife during Choice B: Repair Cafe. Shep completed the repair, grinding the new pins level with the new wood handle, and rounding the edges of it to fit comfortably in the hand.



Liberty and Kairo snuggle up at group time while the Open Program group gets ready to read a book.

# Development Corner

“We make a **living** by what we get.  
We make a **life** by what we give.”

– *Winston Churchill*

I start today's Development Corner with this Churchill quote, because I'm struck by how the ideas expressed speak to OC's mission and the continued need for development efforts in support of that mission.

If you are part of the OC Community, then you likely already appreciate the value in OC's mission of “empower[ing] young people and adults in creating the life they want, full of purpose and fulfillment, by offering a supportive, whole person, learning community.” And, if you are an OC youth or alum, grandparent or parent, facilitator or staff member, or otherwise a ‘friend of OC,’ then you likely recognize that youth are here at OC not just to grow the skills and bolster the talents they will need to make a living in the future, but more importantly, to make the life they want in the future.

By giving to OC, you support OC in better fulfilling this mission. By giving, you really can help “make a life” for the youth of OC, and hopefully for yourself too, both in the selfless act of giving, but also as I would encourage you to take advantage of all the opportunities the OC Community has to offer youth and adults alike.

I understand that when reading about our development-associated campaigns, it's easy to think “oh, I already give to OC” or “ugh, they're asking me for more money!” I'm a parent of three OC youth. I get it. Household financials are not easy. But, I want to relay three thoughts about giving to OC:

**First, thank you.** If you already give—and I fully believe that you already do give in some way, shape, or form—financially and/or otherwise—thank you. Sincerely. In whatever ways you give, in whatever amounts you can give, it really does make a difference. I believe that. I believe your gifts make OC a better place. So, I encourage you to continue to give whatever you can, in whatever ways you can.

**Secondly,** and tied to this, no gift is too small. Every financial gift counts! Every dollar goes toward making OC better able to deliver on our mission. And, you may not think about it, but high giving-participation rates are very important for nonprofit organizations like OC to have. It allows the OC Development Committee members to attract outside funding resources by being able to show metrics that help prove we have a valuable—and valued—offering, supported by our Community members, and in turn which is deserving of further funding.

**Third,** I ask you to think outside the box in the ways that you can give to OC. Yes, direct dollar donations are critical; they are part and parcel to why we have a Development Corner in this magazine and to what we do in the Development Committee, and I will provide sources for giving to OC at the bottom of this page, but there are so many other ways you can give in addition. I want to shine a spotlight on one way you can give to OC—**spread the word! Don't go keeping OC a secret. Shout it from the mountain tops!** Word-of-mouth is singularly one of the biggest and most successful marketing/sales efforts OC can employ; it helps bring in new families and it helps create new philanthropic (re)sources.

So, with that, I hope you'll consider continuing to give to the OC Community, and if you can make a financial contribution, there are a few ways to make your gift (*see right*):

With many thanks,

Craig Rumbaugh  
Parent to 3 OC Youth, OC Board Member,  
OC Development Committee



**Donate online:**  
<https://www.openconnections.org/support-oc>

**Text:**  
ExpandingHorizons to  
610-827-5755

**Or mail a check to:**  
Open Connections, 1616 Delchester  
Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073



Support OC!



Spring is here and a plethora of baby animals have joined in the Open Program fun. Cookie (the bunny) shares love with friends each day of the week. Here, Cookie and Nova spend some time snuggling.



Sian prepares to add the finishing touches to his battleship in the Open Program. His multi-week project included building and painting the walls, roof, cannons, and miniature things that go inside.



Nico winds up the propeller for the next flight of his wooden airplane during the Open Program.



Two Shaping Your Life youth, Indiana and Locke, support visitors to the 1940's Exploratorium at a recent Community Day. Here, Michelle and Lincoln play the Biomimicry Memory Matching game, inspired by Locke's research on how the military used biomimicry to support innovation during the 1940's.



Group I members, Luna, Wally, Leo, Ollie, and Weston practice a collaborative rhythm routine with synchronized footwork set to a Cuban beat.

During outdoor self-directed time in Group I, youth chose to explore Little Pony Creek, the stream that runs through the Open Connections campus. Weston delights in finding a crayfish during creek exploration, while Ollie and Wally look on in wonder.





FREEDOM to  
LEARN and  
CREATE

