When the bell rings for the first time at New Bedford’s new independent middle school for girls, students will file into a freshly-renovated building at 145 Brownell Avenue, across from Buttonwood Park on the corner of Hawthorn and Brownell Streets. The school building, which is being leased from Tifereth Israel Congregation of New Bedford, includes classrooms and offices, as well as a large multipurpose room and athletic fields.

“The site on Brownell Avenue is ideal in many ways and will be a wonderful place where our girls can learn and grow,” said OSS Executive Director Lisa Yates. “We are so appreciative of the opportunity presented to us by Tifereth Israel Congregation, and we believe that this move is a ‘win-win’ for both of these important New Bedford organizations.”

By leasing an existing space that is well-equipped and centrally located, OSS has been able to meet one of its primary goals -- using the majority of current funds for programming and curriculum. This arrangement also allows the

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**News of Note**

**The Women’s Fund of Southeastern Mass. Awards Scholarship for OSS Student**

The Women’s Fund, part of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, has announced the award of a four-year scholarship for a student at Our Sisters’ School. The Fund’s Executive Director, Kate Fentress, stated, “We are delighted that New Bedford will soon have a free, single-gender school for inner-city girls. Our Sisters’ School will significantly contribute to raising expectations for all young women in New Bedford, not just the ones who will be students there.” Several members of the Women’s Fund have also made individual contributions and pledges to support OSS. We are honored and grateful for their support.

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**Greetings from the Executive Director**

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. Our goal with “Voyages” is to communicate with our supporters and community partners on a regular basis. This pioneer issue provides updates on our progress as we prepare for the opening of Our Sisters’ School in September 2008.

As the school’s Executive Director, I am privileged to be working with so many wonderful people here in the New Bedford area who are filled with hope and optimism for the city’s girls. I am equally excited to be working with the students, families, teachers and administrators who will soon make up our OSS family.

I first began visiting New Bedford seven years ago as a consultant at the Education Development Center working on the opening of the

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With our building being readied, our students enrolling and our teachers signing on, Our Sisters’ School is well on track for its September ‘08 opening. On behalf of the Board of OSS, I am pleased to say that this recent flurry of activity and accomplishment only adds to our faith in and our excitement for this wonderful new endeavor.

Our Sisters’ School is an independent, tuition-free middle school for New Bedford girls from low-income families who are seeking an alternative, enriching academic environment. The school was developed by a group of concerned women and men from the Greater New Bedford community. Their idea grew from a clearly unmet need to focus specifically on the education of adolescent girls -- to provide for these girls the skills, mentoring and inspiration they need to become strong citizens and community leaders. As with every good idea I have ever known, timing and fate played a role in how we got where we are today.

As a life-long South Coast resident, I have known and supported many efforts aimed at the revival of New Bedford, a city both beloved and beleaguered. And it has seemed to me that the most successful of these efforts have generally involved education. One shining example is Nativity Prep, New Bedford’s innovative and independent private school for low-income boys. Nativity is terrific, I thought. But what about our girls?

Not surprisingly, several community leaders -- people like Bernardette Souza of the Boys and Girls Club, Gail Fortes of the YWCA, Helena Marques of the Immigrant’s Assistance Center, Doreen Lopes of Nativity Preparatory School of New Bedford and JoAnn Clarke of Trips for Kids -- were asking the same question. JoAnn tells the story of how, one day a few years back, a group of 5th- and 6th-grade girls returned from an outing that included boys from Nativity Prep. The girls were so impressed with what the boys said about their learning and their opportunities for the future, that they asked JoAnn, “Why can’t we have a school like that?” JoAnn had no answer, but resolved to find one. A few days later, she and Doreen heard that I was pursuing a school for girls. That was the beginning. We have never looked back.

Today, thanks to the enormous generosity of donors -- including two challenge grants in 2007 that encouraged giving with a dollar-to-dollar match -- we have raised over $1 million. We have also hired an incredibly talented Executive Director, Lisa Yates, whose enthusiasm, experience and tenacity have made real our vision for the school.

In September of ‘08, Lisa, her staff and our Board will welcome 30 students into grades 5 and 6. In our second year, we will have 45 students in the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. And in our third year there will be a total of 60 students in grades 5 through 8. Our fundraising efforts continue in earnest as we seek an additional $1 million to underwrite our fully-enrolled operating budget. We urge one and all to contribute by donating money, providing an in-kind donation, or sponsoring a girl for a tuition year.

As vehemently as we ask for help, we thank those who have already contributed. Mere words are inadequate to describe the gratitude and pleasure all of us on the Board feel at being able to say to the deserving girls of New Bedford: “Yes, we do have a school for you! And here it is!”

Sincerely,

Lisa School Ahead
Greetings from the Executive Director

Continued from page 1

Global Learning Charter School. As I drove south on Route 18 in the early morning watching the birds wheel in the air and the sun rising on the water, I was often overcome with a sense of possibility – the potential of this city – and the hope and promise for its future and that of the children who live here. My desire to join others working toward the education of New Bedford’s young people compelled me to leave Boston and plant my roots here on the South Coast.

Now, at the beginning of a new educational endeavor in the city, I am humbled by the energy, enthusiasm and support of the regional community in helping to launch Our Sisters’ School. Thank you to everyone for supporting Our Sisters’ School in this exciting voyage!

Sincerely,

Lisa Yates

Opening of School in 2008

Continued from page 1

school to stay in the same location as it grows to full capacity of 60 students in 2010.

The School's location, across from Buttonwood Park Zoo, provides a unique opportunity for science curriculum as well as for community-service partnerships with organizations like Friends of Buttonwood Park and Operation Clean Sweep.

Yates adds: “Being a central part of the community through our presence, and our partnerships with other community groups, is very important to Our Sisters' School.”

Matching Challenge Grant for 2008

Due to the generosity of an anonymous donor, 50% of every donation received during the 2008 calendar year will be matched. Please help us to fully utilize this tremendous gift to launch our school at this critical stage in our evolution!

OSS Board Members tour the new school.

Donation Appreciation: for 2007 Donations

“THANK YOU” from OSS to:

Lisa Schmid Alvord and Joel Alvord
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Arcadia Charitable Trust
Trish and Chris Arnold
Talbot Baker
In Honor of Talbot "Toby" Baker
David A. Barrett Fund
Christina and Charles Bascom
Jewelle and Nathaniel Bickford
Mary Jean and Bill Blasdale
Nancy Braitmayer
Tia and Peter Bullard
Mrs. Carleton Burr
Gaellen and Peter Canning
JoAnn Clarke
Community Foundation of Southeastern Mass. - Acushnet Foundation Fund
Community Foundation of Southeastern Mass. - Women's Action Fund
Janie Coolidge
Mary Coolidge and daughters
Coolidge-Boreiko Family Fund
Elizabeth Coxe and David Forney
Evelyn Crocker
Cindy and Doug Crocker
Croll Foundation
Victoria and Robert Cunningham
P. Christopher Cutler
Rose P. Cutler
Katherine and Frederick Dabney
Rose C. Dana
Helen DeGroot
Susan Eldredge Mead
Enable Hope Foundation
Sally Fallon
Kate Fentress
Barbara and Paul Ferri
Finn Family
Janet and Jim Fitzgibbons
Gail Fortes
Frisbie Family Foundation
Garfield Foundation
Evelyn C. Goodhue
Lois and George Grubbs
Hannelore and Jeremy Grantham
Marjorie and Nicholas Greville
Calla and Ralph Guild
Heidi and Arthur Huguley
Elizabeth Huidkoper
Gerald R. Jordan Foundation
Priscilla and Bill Kennedy
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Albert Lees
Margaret and Per Lofberg
Doreen and Luis Lopes
Ludes Family Foundation
Dora and Peter Macdonald
Michelle Taipale and Lloyd MacDonald
Helena Marques
Leigh and Jean Mason
Maurice & Anne Makepeace Family Foundation
Barbara McManus and Anne McManus Hurlburt
Rose Mendoza
Faith and Richard Morningstar
Nau Family Charitable Fund
Varick and Nick Niles
Joan and Jonathan O'Brien
Emily and Anthony Pantaleoni
Mrs. Dorthy Parmer
Ann Parson
Celeste and Jack Penney
Susan and Daniel Perry
Suzanne and Bill Prescott
Cynthia and Jerry Pyle
Robbins Family Fund
Bernadette Souza
Ginny and Steven Spiegel
St. Aidan's Chapel
Lynda Surdam
Elizabeth Taylor
Pam and Charlie Trippe
Mrs. Walter H. Trumbull
Joan Underwood
Charlotte and William Underwood
Dagmar and George Unhoch
Jane and Robert Walker
Stephanie Warburg
Elizabeth and Summer Waring
Anna L. Waring, Ph.D.
Sally and Bill Wyatt
Lisa Yates
Mary and Anthony Zane

www.oursistersschool.org
Why "Our Sisters"?

During New Bedford's storied past, it was not uncommon for young wives to join husbands on extended whaling voyages. These brave young women were known as "Sister Sailors" and in their way, they were seeking then, on the oceans of the world, precisely what the brave young "sisters" of New Bedford are seeking today, in the classrooms of tomorrow: to sail beyond familiar horizons, into unknown oceans of adventure and possibility, of growth and learning and accomplishment. Our sisters then, our sisters today, and a whole world waiting...

Curriculum at Our Sisters' School - “Excellence Inspired by Vision”

The Curriculum Committee of Our Sisters' School has been hard at work developing a curriculum that will challenge and inspire our future students. “We started with a vision of the characteristics and competencies of our ideal graduate,” says Kate Dabney, chair of the committee and an independent school educator. “With that goal in mind, we then developed a profile for what we hope our girls will know when they leave us after 8th grade.”

After establishing these objectives, teams of committee members have visited curriculum centers across Massachusetts to speak with experts in specific disciplines and to gather information about specific curriculum products that meet OSS standards and needs. The committee is currently reviewing these materials and developing recommendations for the Board, and will soon finalize an overview of the curriculum to present to prospective families.

Take the Voyage of a Lifetime

Our Sisters' School is now accepting applications for its pioneer classes for girls entering 5th & 6th Grades in September 2008. Families interested in enrolling their daughters at OSS should call 508-994-1255, email info@oursistersschool.org, or visit the web www.oursistersschool.org.

We can’t wait to hear from you.