



# Oxford Circle

Christian Community Development Association

## Virtual Social-Emotional Learning Helps Kids Talk About Trauma



*Pictured: Carnell Family Resource Center Staff*

The following story comes from Mary Fox, a case manager who teaches Social-Emotional Learning at Carnell Elementary. It is a true testament to the hard work and perseverance present in the Oxford Circle community throughout the past year and a half.

While I have experience teaching Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum in schools, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated me to teach SEL virtually for the first time. While I was initially unsure how well this would work, the whole experience reminded me just how resilient children can be.

One story I would like to share from the past year comes from my time with the 5th grade class at Carnell Elementary School. At the start of one particular session, I wasn't feeling very optimistic about how well my planned lesson would go over in a virtual setting. However, when one student shared, "Did you hear about the person that was shot near Carnell a few days ago?... He was my friend," I instinctively knew I needed to set everything else aside and focus on supporting this young man and helping him process the death of his friend.

Throughout the lesson, he shared details of how they met, the things they used to do together, and the funny memories they shared. I asked him how he felt about his friend's death and praised him for his willingness to be vulnerable and share his emotions. As other students in the class listened, they became eager to share their own stories about the loss of their loved ones. One student even shared photos with us and had his father join in so they could reminisce together. The 5th grade teacher also shared his own story of losing 2 grandparents during the pandemic.

The sheer amount of loss represented in this one classroom was more than a little staggering; however, it was very touching to see how the class rallied around each other and listened to one another share the losses they had experienced. As we continued to share stories, the class was able to recognize central SEL practices by asking questions and using their body language to show active listening.

At the end of our session, I shared my contact information with the class for anyone that wanted to continue the discussion at a later time. While this was a difficult experience, I believe it reiterated the need for SEL instruction in our schools – whether through in-person or virtual instruction. I am optimistic that moving forward, this 5th grade class is better prepared to handle not only their own emotions, but to also understand the emotions of others that they interact with throughout middle school, high school, and beyond.

To learn more about The Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association's Trauma Therapy & Social-Emotional Learning Program and to see program highlights, [click here](#) for the September 2019--June 2021 Success Report.

## Community Literacy Activities Program



*Images courtesy of Read By 4th.*

Despite the rain, OCCDA's Community Literacy Activities Program kicked-off on August 28th. Food, books, backpacks, and school supplies were distributed to children in the community. A special thank-you to Representative Jared Solomon, Gary Barbera, Neshaminy Warwick Church, Calvary Church, The Block Church, the office of Councilwoman Chelle Parker, the William Penn Foundation, Tree House Publishers, Read by 4th, and Reading Promise for making this event possible.

### **A note from Program Coordinator, Raúl Padró:**

"Every little bit of help goes a long way. The CLA program will implement monthly play parties, book distributions, street libraries, and book clubs in convenient community locations for up to 150 children with the help and partnership of the community block captains. These monthly events will have multiple stations offering activities designed to facilitate adult-child interactions and the development of early literacy skills. Each station will also provide a tip sheet for families on how to extend learning at home."

Community Literacy Events are open to all children ages 3-9. The next event will be on Saturday, September 25, 2021 at 11:00 AM. Doors open at 10:30 AM.

## We're Hiring!

OCCDA is seeking **Bilingual Community Literacy Activities Staff** and a **Grant Manager**. For a full list of employment opportunities, please visit [our website](#).

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to minister holistically in our community.

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