

THIS IS ONEIDA
THE SMALL JOYS OF SERVING AT ONEIDA

We face many challenges each and every day at Oneida. Often times we are disappointed or heartbroken over decisions our students, current and former, have made, but our greatest joys and rewards are often those little moments when we see our students succeed and make a difference in the world or in someone's life. The following article was written by one of our staff members:

Working at OBI has numerous benefits. None of them are better than the memories of students who have attended here. One of the more enjoyable memories for my wife and me involves a young man from Rosedale, New York named "Joe." I didn't have the pleasure of working with him in the classroom, but he was part of a group of young men my wife and I drove to a nearby town. We took these boys to be fitted for tuxedos to wear to the upcoming senior banquet. Joe was a joyous spirit and immediately developed a relationship with the store's seamstress. Her nickname was "Sitter" and she was probably in her mid- to late eighties.

All the boys in this group were very big. The owner of the men's store was a retired coach of the local high school and he tried to convince the boys to play football for the local high school since OBI didn't have a football team. He had an answer for every reason why they felt they couldn't play for another school. He was very convincing, but of course, it isn't something that ever happened.

The boys went to the banquet and ate like you've never seen boys eat. We returned the tuxedos the following Monday. It wasn't very long after that weekend that we got word that Sitter was in the Corbin hospital and not doing well. When we gave Joe the news, he immediately asked if we could visit her. A few days later we took Joe to see her. Although she was failing badly, you could see her spirits improve with Joe's appearance and again with the conversation they had. We left after about a 30-minute visit. On the way back to OBI, Joe said something like, "Boy, that was fast. When we do hospital visits at home, we spend three or four hours singing, praying, and chatting. This was really quick."

At the end of that school year (2007), my wife and I retired to Florida. Ben spoke French fluently. During the following school year, while relaxing in sunny Florida, we returned from grocery shopping and found a message on our phone. The message was about six or seven sentences in French, some deep laughter, and then "Joe called." What a joy it was for us to hear his voice.

I don't know where Joe is today or what he is doing, but I know he is making a difference in someone's life.



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OBI President

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