

**THIS IS ONEIDA
THE STAFF KIDS OF ONEIDA**

I often speak of the challenges and sacrifices associated with serving in the Oneida ministry. Our staff members not only change employment and careers when they come here, they uproot their entire lives and families. Often this change or move is most difficult for the children of our staff members. I grew up as an Oneida staff kid, but my parents were working here before I came along. I never knew anything except life at Oneida.

When I returned to Oneida with my family last year, it wasn't especially difficult for my children because they are pretty young. Many of our staff members have middle and high school age children when they come here to serve. This can be very challenging for the parents and children. I caution the folks I hire about making sure their own kids come first. Oneida can be an all-consuming ministry. It could be easy to unintentionally neglect your own children while ministering to our other students.

We currently have 54 faculty and staff children. They are as much a part of Oneida as any kid who comes to us from around the country or world. On a recent Saturday, Angie held a birthday party for our daughter. We had 13 staff kids at our house for cake and ice cream, and then shuttled them to the school's indoor swimming pool for some fun in the water. Although I hadn't planned to do the swimming portion of the party, I was informed by Angie that I would be needed to help supervise. I figured I could better supervise from the water than on the sidelines, so I jumped right in. I had little guys hanging all over me, and quickly retreated to the deep end of the pool.

As I viewed the fun and chaos from the far end of the pool, I began to think about my time as a staff kid and what it must be like for our staff kids now. There weren't nearly as many staff kids here when I was a student, but Oneida was a great place to grow up. I didn't ever really wonder about having to drive a long distance to eat out or see a movie. I simply had fun fishing, playing ball, and hanging out with my friends.

There is a unique bond amongst our staff kids. They seem to genuinely like each other and enjoy each other's company. When we have staff outings, they bring life to the gathering. This past summer, a friend of the school gave some money and asked me to use it on our staff children. I haven't yet spent that money, but plan to provide a little surprise for our staff kids at Christmas time. Thank you for investing in the lives of our faculty and staff children.



**Larry A. Gritton, Jr.
OBI President**

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