

# The Oakwood Times

21<sup>st</sup> Century Journalists • Reporting the News... VIRTUALLY! • November Edition



## Mayor Dwayne Warren – Helping the City of Orange Virtually Written by Tobi Ndubuisi



The Mayor of Orange Township working hard to help the City of Orange virtually.

The job of being the mayor is already difficult enough, but during a pandemic, it becomes increasingly difficult. Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, Esq., the Mayor is the Chief Executive of The City of Orange Township sat down with The Oakwood Times journalists and spoke about what it has been like to help the city of Orange, virtually.

After shutting down and going virtual in March, the public asked what school might look like during the 2020-2021 school year. Families wanted to know if school would be different and how they could get assistance. When asked what the mayor's office has done to assist children and families with adjusting to virtual learning, Mayor Warren stated, "the most important piece was to make sure that families had access to technology. We worked with cable companies, the school district, and parents to ensure that everyone had the technology to make this first phase of virtual learning, work." The mayor and his office have been making families the top priority during these times. During these times, it has been extremely challenging because parents have had to stay home with their children or change their work schedules to be with their children. (Continued p. 4, Mayor)

## Superintendent – The Virtual Experience Written by Taiwo Abatti

With all the talk about returning to school; there have been many reports of how teachers and students will work virtually. We have heard how different classrooms will look. We have felt how students and teachers will miss the in-person interaction. We have learned the struggles and rewards of virtual learning, but all of this was through the eyes of teachers and students.

Our question at The Oakwood Times is, "How does a district with a Superintendent who loves visiting classrooms and who makes supporting students a top priority make it so that the connection is still there?" The Oakwood Times journalists sat down with Dr. Fitzhugh, II to ask him what it was like to be a Superintendent during these times.

When asked about doing his job virtually, Superintendent Fitzhugh, II said, "It's hard because I love being in the classrooms, but there are so many tools that allow me to feel like I am still in classrooms." He continued by saying, "I still feel connected because Principals have given me the Google Meet codes, so I am able to pop into classrooms and I can still take notes and give teachers feedback. I can tweet while I am in classes to show what is going on in classrooms and I can attend meetings virtually. Not much is different except now, I am behind the camera." (Continued p. 4, Superintendent)



Superintendent, Dr. Gerald Fitzhugh, II sat down with The Oakwood Times for an interview about what it has been like being the Superintendent during Virtual Learning.



## **The New Face of Oakwood – Principal Gaines**

### **Written by Kenny Abatti**

Everything for this school year was planned differently. For Oakwood Avenue Community School, that meant a different Principal, too. Who is the new principal? Principal Dana Gaines.

One thing that Principal Gaines implemented to improve school climate is the Student of the Week Award initiative! Every Monday morning, Principal Gaines creates a Flip Grid where he reads the Student of the Week for every grade level. The teachers are the ones who nominate the student of the week, but the students are saying, “they feel involved.” They know the expectations, and they hear the students who have been chosen.

Another quality that students enjoy about Principal Gaines, “he is always there, popping into different classes and events to make sure he knows what is going on with his students and staff.”

A new school year and many new things! The students and staff at Oakwood School are finding Principal Gaines to be very influential. Students are happy to have a Principal who makes being a great student and working hard a part of making Oakwood proud.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century**

### **By Brielle Garner**

Are you always bored after school and want something COOL to do? At Oakwood, we have the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program which gives students an opportunity to joyfully engage in after school activities of their choice. Keep reading to find out more about how you can enroll.

First, let me tell you about the unique and fun-filled classes. Oakwood’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century includes: Health and Fitness with Coach Vicki Wright, Bridge with Ms. Venable, Journalism with Miss Hrabar and Drumming.

In Health and Fitness you have an opportunity to engage in a variety of exercises, proper nutrition and peer led discussions on past and current sports and recreation.

In Bridge, get a chance to play cards competitively. You will learn how to strategize, make bids and defeat your opponents.

In Journalism you will present the launch of “The Oakwood Times” newspaper. Miss Hrabar’s mission is focused on reporting information about Oakwood Avenue Community School’s goals, initiatives, accomplishments, and to focus on current events through great journalism. Her goal is also to empower, educate, and entertain each reader’s life, and bring more unity in the Orange Community.

Last, but not least Drumming. In Drumming you will compose and arrange your own rhythms via speech, body percussion and whatever you find around the house that your parents/caregivers agree to. The teacher’s inspirations will be poetry, art and music that you will view, listen and discuss.

I am sure you will enjoy any one of these engaging clubs. How do you JOIN? Click on the link below and complete the enrollment form created by Dr. Morrisroe, the Education Coordinator. She will then place you on the student list. 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a great way to have fun and learn at the same time!

Link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf2nPpLjsuV7KzC5dOEo63J5nFzNowgMyZkNdHeMnSWhrhRfQ/viewform>

## **Halloween During Covid-19**

**Written by Kenny Abatti**

Everything is quite different this year and that includes the Holidays. Students and teachers understood that this Halloween was going to be interesting because of Covid-19. As a result of Covid-19, everyone was expected to wear masks, gloves, and stay six-feet apart. How did this work for Halloween?



Normally, Halloween is a holiday where people gather. People usually grab treats from the same bowl as all the other trick or treaters. That was not the case this year. This year, those who celebrated had to social distance and wear masks. When giving out candy or treats, one had to wear gloves or find a tricky way to hand out candy without transmitting germs. (Continued p. 5, Halloween)

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## **Oakwood Celebrates the Fall Harvest**

**Written by Brielle Garner**

The Oakwood family was part of an exciting event to celebrate Fall – The Fall Harvest! On Friday, October 30, from 1:00 – 2:25 pm, Oakwood families, teachers, and Principal Gaines joined in on the Fall festivities.

The Oakwood staff wanted students to participate in The Fall Harvest because they wanted to give their students something to come out and celebrate. One teacher stated, “We know that students want to see one another, and this event gave us all an opportunity to spend time with our Oakwood family.” (Continued p. 5, Celebrate)



Mr. Hou setting up and ready to give out pumpkins.

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## **What's Up with Virtual Learning?**

**Written by Taiwo Abatti**

The Oakwood students and teachers have been learning virtually for a few months now (this is grammatically incorrect). Some may like it and some may not; it is one's opinion. Either way, we do know that it is much different this year for everyone involved.

On Tuesday, September 8, virtual learning began. Instead of book bags and school supplies, students were picking up their Chromebooks and headphones. Teachers could not give classroom tours, high-fives, or hugs. Instead, they welcomed students with smiles and waves, and complemented students virtually. Families are staying home or changing their work schedules to make time to help their children during virtual learning. (Continued p.5, Virtual Learning)



**Mayor Continued...**

Staying home is an important part of virtual learning and because of this, Mayor Warren tells our journalists, “he is constantly in touch with the schools to make sure that parents do not have any issues.” He also has “been working with parents’ jobs and writing letters for parents resolving any work-related issues due to the need to be home with students.”

Our next big question was when the Mayor thought we might return to school. When asked, the Mayor said, “WOW! That’s a tough one!” He continued to say, “Covid-19 case numbers will be a big factor in that decision to make sure we can re-enter safely. We are working hard with the Superintendent and Board of Education Members, as well as our committees to look at all the facts to ensure a safe return. We also are making sure there is a cleaning schedule and that everyone is following the rules of social distancing. Everyone must do their part. We are doing everything we can to get back, safely!”

We realize that The Oakwood Times asked many questions about school related issues; however, we know that a big job for the Mayor is taking care of the city, therefore, we asked about the impact of Covid-19 on the city of Orange. The Mayor responded by saying, “the biggest effect is that we have had to really look at the way we do things. We have a lot of nursing homes and senior citizen buildings, which meant, a high percentage of elderly people in a small area. We also had families who did not have food. It was our goal to help the city of Orange and everyone had to chip in and do their part and we find that they did.” It was very clear that Mayor Warren cares greatly about the community members of Orange and has worked around the clock to make sure that every decision that effects the city is planned with everyone’s safety in mind. We appreciate the time that Mayor Dwayne Warren spent with us at The Oakwood Times in educating us in his tireless efforts in assisting the city of Orange, virtually.

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**Superintendent Continued...**

The Superintendent has made improvements to his day to be able to feel connected to the schools, but how did he get there? Before students and teachers returned to school, Dr. Fitzhugh had a great deal of work that had to get done. Another one of his many jobs was to make decisions in how we would return virtually in September and eventually, re-enter the buildings. The Superintendent knew that this would not be an easy job and that many factors came into play when making this important decision. What does virtual learning look like? What type of schedule will we follow? Most importantly, how would he keep everyone safe? Thinking about all of this, the Superintendent worked hard with different teams to come up with a plan. He states, “we learned a lot about virtual learning in the Spring and the Summer. We looked at what worked and what did not work by analyzing different parent surveys. Our goal was to give our students an optimal experience while making sure that they would be safe.” Dr. Fitzhugh worked with the Mayor’s office, the Board of Health, the School Business Administrator, and many other personnel to make sure that he had, “real time facts about Covid-19 from doctors and to make sure that we had time to get our buildings ready for students to return. Everyone is working together to ensure that our re-entry plan, to brick and mortar, is fluid in Orange.”

Being Superintendent is a huge job and it makes us wonder if Dr. Fitzhugh ever gets a chance to sit down. After planning our schedules and re-entry plan, popping into classrooms daily, going to meetings, making sure our buildings are safe, communicating with families, updating our social media to show what students are learning, and all of the other tasks that we did not even touch on; Dr. Fitzhugh is in the middle of planning one of the most important decisions yet. He is now putting strategies and protocols in place for students to return to school in person. The Oakwood Times most pressing question is...how do we keep everyone safe when we return? Dr. Fitzhugh responded by saying, “social distancing and wearing masks will be the most important. Before entry, there will be cones to social distance students. In addition, security will check temperatures before coming through the doors. No one will enter without a mask; every student will get two masks and will be expected to rotate and wash the masks each day. When in classrooms, there are partitions at the desks so that there is a safe area to sit. If students get sick during the school day, they will be watched by the nurse in an isolation area. Lastly, there are waivers to be signed saying that if you are sick, you shouldn’t come to school.”

The Superintendent’s job is not easy, but The Oakwood Times feel that our Superintendent, Dr. Fitzhugh, II is working diligently and tirelessly to make sure that learning continues every day and that all students and staff are kept safe.

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## **Halloween Continued...**

Some people are planning on packing the candy in a bag to send home with trick or treaters. Others are laying the candy on a table or taping it to their doors. Parents are being asked to check the candy that is given and if the candy is opened, they should throw it away because people do not want to get sick.

Halloween will look a little different this year, but I say that you can still celebrate Halloween even though you might be celebrating different. You might not be out trick or treating with a lot of people, but you can have fun celebrating at home!

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## **Celebrate Continued...**

Everybody who attended wore masks and safely practiced social distancing. Teachers were giving out grab and go goody bags which included pencils, candy, snacks, and pumpkins. Some teachers dressed up, some decorated their cars, and a few of them did both!

The event was a big success despite the weather. Students who attended the event, said, “it was fun seeing the different decorations and it was nice to get fresh air!” Of course, students also said, “it was nice getting goodies even if we had to take them home!” Students and teachers had a lot of fun seeing each other during the Fall Harvest festival. Maybe we can get the weather to cooperate for the next event and have more families get together, safely.



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## **Virtual Learning Continued...**

Regardless of your stance, encounters may occur. One of the biggest challenges for some are computer issues. Quite often students and teachers have camera or microphone problems where teachers cannot hear students or vice versa. Also, a big problem is the Internet connection where the computer can freeze, or you accidentally get logged off.

There are times when things are not easy, but we get through them. And virtual learning is the same. It is not always easy, but everyone is working together to remove the challenges. Teachers, students, and parents have all been doing a great job during these times, but I bet many cannot wait to get back to real school!

Oakwood Shines Bright  
Written by Tobi Ndubuisi

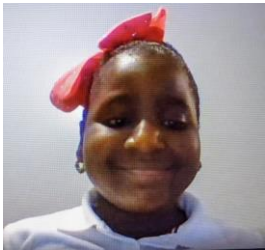
Everyone knows that when we are in school, it is important to be a model student. When you are learning virtually, it is even more important to do the right thing. Principal Gaines knew that it is very important for students to come to school prepared and ready to learn. As a result, a great initiative Oakwood School adopted during virtual learning is for teachers to nominate a star student, weekly. He was determined to make sure students were not skipping a beat at Oakwood. Every Monday, Principal Gaines creates a Flip Grid morning announcement for all of Oakwood to hear while announcing the star student’s full names. Students are saying that “it makes working hard super exciting because you never know when you are going to get picked.” It has definitely been a way to motivate students to shine bright and to be a good student.

Teachers are noticing a difference, too! Miss Hrabar, a new third grade teacher at Oakwood, says, “it was amazing to see the results after the first week. They wanted that recognition that they were doing the right thing. During a time when so many of the students could be getting frustrated, and having a hard time with virtual learning, Principal Gaines, made it fun and exciting to make Oakwood proud!” This year is going to be an important year to make sure we are paying attention and doing our very best. The Oakwood Star Student of the Week is an exciting way to keep students motivated to come to class, complete their assignments, complete tasks, and to be a model student.

The Oakwood Times Staff

We would like to thank our journalists who are working tirelessly to report the news at Oakwood Avenue Community School. We are extremely excited to print the first edition of the Oakwood Times! We look forward to reporting all year round on the best stories at Oakwood School.

Journalist



Taiwo Abatti

Taiwo is a Fourth Grader at Oakwood. Her favorite color is pink. She loves to write because it is fun.

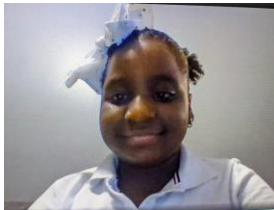
Journalist



Tobi Ndubuisi

Tobi is a Fifth Grader at Oakwood. Her birthday is on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Her favorite hobby is to draw. She loves journalism because she loves writing about different topics and people.

Journalist



Kenny Abatti

Kenny is a Fourth Grader at Oakwood. Her favorite color is blue. She loves writing because it gives her inspiration to talk about different things.

Journalist



Brielle Garner

Brielle is a Fourth Grader at Oakwood. Brielle’s favorite color is Red. She enjoys writing because she can write about different topics.

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