



Meet Your Neighbor: Joseph A. Pacelli

By Cathy Padilla

A six-decade resident of Middletown Township, he has made a career of educating young minds. Having founded Oak Hill Academy in Lincroft in 1981, he serves as Head of School. Married to Jo Ann for 59 years, they have raised four children and enjoy eight grandchildren together. Meet your neighbor, Joseph A. Pacelli.

CM: Why did you choose a career in education?

Mr. Pacelli: In 1963, I was on a military deferment and going to graduate school at Stevens Institute and was looking for something to keep me busy, so by chance I interviewed for a teaching position at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City. At Washington & Jefferson College I majored in math with a minor in physics. My first year I taught Algebra I, Algebra 2-Trig and AP Calculus. I also coached the freshman football team since I played football in college.

CM: What sets you apart from others doing what you do?

Mr. Pacelli: I have a never-ending passion for learning. Besides my devotion to my family, education is my life. Over the last 42 years I have continually sought what are the best ways for children to learn. I believe that every child is different, but each carries a desire to learn. Our job as educators is to help them find their way.

CM: What is the most rewarding part of your career?

Mr. Pacelli: The most rewarding part of my career is to see our graduates become the persons they were meant to be. With the help of my family (seven members work with me at Oak Hill), we have educated students who have ended up all over the world in almost every profession imaginable.

CM: What is your next goal, or future goal?

Mr. Pacelli: My goal in life remains to be a kind and understanding spouse, parent, grandparent, friend, and educator. I continue to seek the best ways for children to learn. We are living in a complex, fast moving world and we must continue to provide our children with the capacity to communicate, be creative, think critically, and become productive citizens working together for the good of all people.

CM: What is the most challenging part of what you do?

Mr. Pacelli: I am blessed to have few challenges except for those that affect us all (world tensions, health, and social issues). At Oak Hill we have a staff that is experienced, compassionate, creative, passionate, and caring. Our teachers are remarkable. I would like to start my education all over and be in their classrooms from PreK all the way to 8th grade.

CM: Best life or business tips to share?

Mr. Pacelli: The best is yet to come. Learn from the past. Look for the good in others and plan for tomorrow. Our problems are temporary, and our future is bright. Our children are going to lead us to a better world.

CM: Do you have a favorite quote or mantra?

Mr. Pacelli: "Time and Patience" is what a Jesuit priest once told me during the first year of my teaching. Take problems, analyze, look for solutions, research, ask for help, and move forward with a well-constructed plan.

CM: Who has most influenced your career or life?

Mr. Pacelli: In my youth I was influenced by my parents and two older sisters. My friends, teachers, and coaches always gave me support to achieve. Since I was the first to go to college in my family, I felt that I had to work hard every day to do the best I could. Marrying Jo Ann has been a love affair for almost 60 years. She has supported my ideas and after talking about starting a school for years, she finally said, "Why don't you stop talking about it and just do it!" No more excuses and Oak Hill was born after my 13 years at CBA.

CM: What do you do when you're not working?

Mr. Pacelli: My hobby is reading, studying, and learning about education. However, I do like to fix things and build structures. Recently, I built an augmented reality sandbox for the school's science department. Also, Jo Ann and I get away often to our lake house in Pennsylvania. It is my happy place to relax, and you will often find me with a good educational book in my hands.