

Our Lady of Victory School unveils tech lab 2.0

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STAFF REPORTER

Over the next five years, more than 1,000 children are expected to learn computer and engineering skills at Our Lady of Victory Elementary School. These skills will prepare students for careers that have not even been invented yet. This is thanks to the Susan E. Brvenik Foundation.

Brvenik's foundation gave OLV a \$10,000 grant to remodel the Lackawanna school's technology lab. The Nov. 8 ribbon cutting revealed laptops, iPads and a new SMARTboard. Brvenik's mother, Amelia Szmansky, was educated in this very elementary school by the Sisters of St. Joseph and she devoted more than 80 years of her life to being a member of the OLV parish.

"Our Lady of Victory National Shrine and Basilica and Elementary School have been fundamental cornerstones of my family for decades," said Brvenik. "My mother was a parishioner for more than 85 years and she was educated by the Sisters of St. Joseph at OLV Elementary. When I found out about the digital divide the students faced on a day-to-day basis and the need to update the technology lab, I was more than happy to provide financial assistance to ensure that the children attending the school would benefit from state-of-the-art technology resources that would allow them to expand their skills and further their academic careers."

The new technology lab combines two classrooms into one larger room allowing students more workspace to build and create. A new IT infrastructure was installed, along with 30 HP laptops and a new state-of-art SMARTboard. Ergonomic tables replaced the desks that all faced the front board, allowing better communication. Even the chairs have a bit of technology. They're shaped like mushrooms



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Alongside a model of R2-D2 created by Our Lady of Victory School students, Tech Integration Specialist Rebecca Roussev works with with sixth-grader Sophie Judasz and eighth-grader Matt Viverto in the school's new tech lab.

and allow kids to bounce up and down as a way of controlling excess energy. The room has an airplane motif with sky blue walls, and a motto of "Your wings already exist, all you have to do is fly."

"It was something that we really needed to have done. Our school was behind in technology. When I came here (in 2016), I knew it had to be first priority," said Principal Carolyn Kraus.

The \$10,000 donation, part of the \$80,000 remodeling project helped pay for the new furniture, computers and activities like droids and Little Bits inventor kits.

"From last year, it was definitely a big improvement. Now, we have so much more thanks to Miss Brvenik," said Matt Vivetro, an eighth-grader at the school. "We have more of an opportunity to improve. We have new laptops. We have a new board. We have iPads. We have Little Bits, which are kind of the best thing ever."

Little Bits are circuitry units that work like Legos. They can be snapped together to create space rovers, arcade games and other electronic gadgets, with units that work as microphones, USB ports and motors. Matt and his friends built
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