

# 'Oyler: a documentary film' puts spotlight on Lower Price Hill school once again



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**BOB DRIEHAUS WCPO**

CINCINNATI -- Beginning in 2012, Oyler School in Lower Price Hill started offering its community a comprehensive approach to education and neighborhood involvement.

Grade levels expanded from kindergarten to eighth grade to K through 12th grade. Health and dental clinics, and a food bank were added to assist its students. It fed them free breakfasts and lunches. The school's doors stayed opened year round and late.

Oyler School, under the leadership of Craig Hockenberry at the time, also gained national attention.

The school was selected to be featured in a year-long radio documentary project on [American Public Media's Marketplace called "One School, One Year"](#) . The documentary chronicled the day-to-day activities of Oyler from the 2012 to 2013 school year.

Now Oyler will gain national attention again as "One School, One Year" journalist and filmmaker Amy Scott, is finishing up a film documentary focusing on one student who thrived at Oyler under Hockenberry's tenure before he left Cincinnati Public Schools in July 2013 to become superintendent of schools in Adams County, Ohio.

**RELATED: [Oyler principal, Craig Hockenberry, leaving CPS for Manchester superintendent job](#)**

Scott said she was almost instantly captivated by the school when she visited for the first time in February 2012. At that time, Oyler was at a temporary location as the old school building was still under renovation.

"Before I left, someone encouraged me to drive down to Lower Price Hill to see the original school building, which would be reopening in August of 2012 with a brand new vision clinic, early childhood center, and other new services," Scott said of her first experience covering the school. "It was the golden hour, and I was struck by the beauty of the 1930 school building against the backdrop of its troubled surroundings. I had studied documentary filmmaking in graduate school at UC Berkeley, and I felt strongly that there was a documentary to be made about what Oyler was trying to achieve. While I am very proud of the radio series I produced for Marketplace, I felt that there was a strong visual story to be told as well."

On a Kickstarter crowdsource funding page for the project, Scott and her documentary production crew describe the subject of the film as follows: "OYLER takes viewers through a year at the school, focusing on Hockenberry's mission to transform a community, and on senior Raven Gribbins' quest to become the first in her troubled family to finish high school and go to college. We're there for the setbacks, as two murders close to home and a worsening heroin problem erode the school's progress, and as budget problems threaten Principal Hockenberry's job. We also see the triumphs, as Raven reunites with her father—a recovering addict—and gets recruited by an out-of-state college that could be her ticket to a better life."

So far that Kickstarter campaign has met its \$25,000 goal for group funding and is continuing to accept pledges until Wednesday, Aug. 20 to help pay for additional items such as an original music score.

As the end of primary filming and fundraising comes to a close, Scott explains to viewers in the documentary's trailer why she's continued to cover the school and its students.

"Every now and then you come across a story in this job you just can't do justice in 4 minutes on the radio," Scott says. "For Me Oyer was one of those stories . . . I got hooked so I did a whole series of stories for Marketplace. And I've spent the last two years making this documentary film. We are really close to finishing."

Scott has already won a Gracie award presented by the Alliance for Women in Media for her work on the Cincinnati School.

"Oyer: A Documentary film" has a tentative local screening for next fall, Scott said.

"When the documentary is completed, I will be submitting it to film festivals throughout North America and hosting screenings in Cincinnati and in Baltimore," she said. "Ultimately we hope the film will be broadcast on television and distributed on DVD and via digital download."

For more information on [the Kickstarter campaign, visit here](#) .

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