



GESU SCHOOL

Educational Excellence in North Philadelphia in the Jesuit and IHM Traditions

Gesu Spirit Medal Awarded to Mark Solomon

DARYL SHORE, Star Graduate

The chain reactions of kindness make Mark Solomon's impact on the community immeasurable. There is no better example of this than the life of Daryl Shore, who was himself recently honored by the NativityMiguel Network of Schools as the first recipient of the Guiding Star Graduate Award. The award is presented to a graduate who reflects the authentic mission and embodies the hopeful spirit of the NativityMiguel Schools, of which Gesu is a member. Daryl came from a difficult home situation and struggled as a young student during his years at Gesu. Through Mark's guidance and the support of Gesu's faculty and staff, Daryl transformed from an unmotivated child into a successful, generous young professional and graduate student.

Daryl currently works as a financial analyst with Fannie Mae while he pursues his MBA at Clark Atlanta University. He has gone on to emulate his mentor's generosity by guiding his teenage nephew on the path to college and beyond. In addition, Daryl developed and manages several properties that he rents to people of moderate income to address a lack of affordable housing. Daryl truly has become a Guiding Star, giving direction and meaning to all of us involved with Gesu. On June 13th, Daryl will give the keynote address at Gesu's 8th grade graduation.

EMERGENCY FUND ESTABLISHED

Gesu's students and their families face many more challenges than affording tuition and focusing on their studies. Inevitably, students encounter other hardships outside our walls that affect their well-being, and often their ability to attend and perform in school. Trustee Mark Solomon has taken a step to help by establishing an emergency fund for Gesu families who experience crises such as evictions and problems making utility payments. The fund will bolster Father Neil's ongoing efforts to assist families and neighbors in crisis.



Daryl Shore '94 presented Mark Solomon with the first Gesu Spirit Medal. Photo/©2006Edward Savaria Jr./Suzanne Savaria Photography Services

“Mark, I want to thank you for giving me a second chance at life. When my time on this earth comes to an end, my prayer is that I will have made half the impact on this world that you have made.” With these

words, Gesu graduate Daryl Shore of the class of 1994 presented the first Gesu Spirit Medal to trustee Mark Solomon, a man who embodies the mission of Gesu School – to give a hopeful future to Philadelphia's inner-city children.

The Gesu Spirit Medal honors individuals such as Mark, who have shown extraordinary commitment to Gesu School through their loyal advocacy and actions while making a significant contribution to Gesu School's success as a model inner-city

elementary school. Mark's involvement with Gesu goes back to 1993, when he was one of the first to join the coalition to save the school when Gesu Parish was closed. Since then Mark has led fundraising campaigns, introduced numerous friends to the school, and given Gesu graduates summer jobs. He has responded generously to the needs of the children of the inner-city, going as far as to adopt student Daryl Shore when he was in need of a stable home.

Mark initially declined the Gesu Spirit Medal, until it was agreed that the dinner in his honor would be used to raise scholarship money for the school. Mark's partner Paul Silberberg and his wife Aviva hosted the awards dinner at their home. Mark's friends and colleagues, including CMS partners, responded generously with over \$270,000 in gifts and pledges for Gesu School scholarships. Mark's kindness to Gesu has continued with his recent donation to establish an emergency fund for Gesu's families.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

With curiosity, many visitors and volunteers are asking, "Well, what's next?"

We've just completed a challenging \$12 million campaign. A major renovation project has transformed the school with bright light, beautiful colors, and 20,000 new square feet of space that's already being fully used. And these renovations have made a difference in the quality of our learning environment – and in the pride of our children.

Time to rest on our laurels? I don't think so. There is still much to be done, especially as we keep striving, in our Jesuit tradition, for magis, a restless pursuit of excellence – and justice.

The ongoing violence and drug abuse in our inner-city neighborhoods continue to take a toll on our children's stability. Although our walls provide a safe haven, our counselors, teachers – and all of us – experience daily the troublesome impact on our children of these societal problems. We try to offer meaningful support.

Art, music, computer instruction, phys ed, writing and after-school enrichment give our children important creative outlets and opportunities to



shine outside of the academic classroom. These programs continue to require adequate funding. This spring we look forward to partnering again with Urban Nutrition Initiative to emphasize healthful habits and meals.

Although we are keeping the annual cost of educating each child to a low \$5,400, we still have to raise almost \$2 million each year – just to keep the doors open. Even our low tuition of \$2,010 is beyond the means of most of our families. Already this year, we have awarded 77 full tuition scholarships through our Sponsor A Child program and endowed scholarships. In addition, through Pennsylvania's tax credit EITC program, 305 scholarship grants, ranging from \$200 to \$2010, have been awarded. And we know more will be needed.

As we try to integrate the Jesuit goals of service of faith and promotion of justice into our works, the challenges continue. We are deeply grateful and touched by your support and generosity.

With thanks and blessings,

Christine S. Beck
President and CEO

REACHING THE ROOF FOR THE HOMELESS

Gesu's 7th and 8th grade students reached out to others in need by collecting over 400 canned goods to help the homeless at Thanksgiving. The four classrooms competed to see which group could "reach the roof" by putting a canned good on every step of the staircase from the basement to the roof-top playground – a total of 99 stairs. One class responded with exceptional generosity, reaching all the way to the 5th floor!



Niara, Patty, Gerald, and Rochelle are 7th graders who "reached the roof" with canned goods for the homeless.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS

We have not only reached but exceeded our \$12 million Capital Campaign goal, thanks to Al Martinelli who helped drive the campaign to its completion by pledging to match new campaign gifts dollar for dollar up to \$1 million. Save the date of May 16th from 6-9 p.m. for a campaign thank you celebration!

STUDENT FEATURE

Ivory welcomed guests to the 9th Annual Symposium on Inner-City Education. A bright talkative 2nd grader, Ivory is an example of the benefits of an early childhood education, the topic of the day's discussion. Ivory loves learning and is very proud of her reading skills. She is quick to tell a listener that she read one of her favorite stories, *Hurry Furry Feet*, all by herself. Ivory also enjoys math and is fascinated by basic arithmetic operations. She lives with her mother, who is a graduate of Gesu School and is currently a full-time student.



CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY BARRY AWARD

This year the Catholic Historical Society presented the prestigious Barry Award to the leadership of Gesu School. Principal Sister Ellen Convey, I.H.M., trustee and former president Father George Bur, S.J., and board chairman Win Churchill were honored at a dinner on November 18th at the Union League, where they were lauded for their enthusiastic dedication to this little Catholic school in Philadelphia that has beaten all the odds.

HEARD IN THE HALLS

Gesu students, faculty, grads, and trustees in the news....**Nia Davis '03**, won first place in the Philadelphia Young Playwrights' 2006 Playwriting Festival for her work "Poetic Life." Nia studied advanced writing with Dr. Erwin during her years at Gesu...

Dr. Eileen Erwin, Gesu's advanced writing teacher, was inducted into the National Honor Roll's Outstanding American Teachers. Teachers are selected based on student nominations for teachers who have had the greatest influence on their lives...

Trustee Gordon Cooney received the Robert F. Drinan, S.J. Award from Boston College Law School for his *pro bono* work to free a man from death row.... **Former trustee Jim Brown** is the newly appointed Chief of Staff for recently elected U.S. Senator Bob Casey, who taught at Gesu School during his year in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps...**Trustee Michael Nutter** announced his candidacy for the 2007 Philadelphia mayoral election.



Trustee and former Gesu student Drake Haskins and his wife Shirley '72, met with Governor Schwarzenegger. Drake sent a copy of the photo so today's Gesu students could see the possibilities in store for them.

GESU IN THE JOURNALS

Gesu School was featured in the November/December issue of *Momentum*, the official journal of the National Catholic Educational Association. President Chris Beck's article entitled "Redefining 'Community' to Benefit Inner-City Students" described how the larger community has come together to support this little inner-city Catholic school. The article has already generated interest in Gesu School from as far away as Kansas City! In addition, Gesu's book *A Model School: How Philadelphia's Gesu School is Remaking Inner-City Education* by Jerrold Footlick received accolades in Sharon Zogby's review in the December issue of the journal *Catholic Education*. Reprints of the *Momentum* article are available on our website at www.GesuSchool.org or by calling the Development Office at 215-763-9077. Copies of Gesu's book are available through the Development Office.

NOTRE DAME PICNIC

The Academy of Notre Dame's administration and students hosted a picnic for our Kindergarten through 3rd graders on a pleasant Saturday in October. Our students had a fabulous time and are looking forward to another picnic next year! Thank you, Notre Dame!

Remember, our United Way Donor Choice Number is 7408 (Gesu Community Service Project).

ART AWARE

For one week in autumn, Gesu students were “transported” to famous art collections around the world, thanks to their imaginations and the engaging presentations of Barbara Pfeiffer of the Art Aware Program. Ms. Pfeiffer challenged the students to “read the stories” in reproductions of famous pieces of art, such as Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* and Johnson’s *Café*. Students also learned how to tell their own stories through creative activities inspired by the works of the masters. Gesu is one of only two Philadelphia schools that enjoys Ms. Pfeiffer’s Camden-based Art Aware Program on an annual basis.



PANEL TACKLES EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Moderator Dr. John DiIulio discusses early childhood education with panelist Michael Gerson, Former White House Senior Policy Advisor, at the 9th Annual Symposium on Inner-City Education held in the new Sherrerd Gymnasium.

“Kids who don’t walk in [to school] knowing how to count, knowing shapes, perhaps even knowing how to add... are already behind. Imagine being behind when you’re in Kindergarten,” stated Jackie Rivers, founder of MathPower and panelist at the Gesu School and the Gesu Institute’s 9th Annual Symposium on Inner-City Education. “Transforming Inner City Education: Can an Early Start Change the Outcome?” was the topic of this year’s symposium. Panelists discussed a growing recognition of what educators have known for years – a quality preschool education is critical for later success in life, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Susan Urahn, Director of State Policy Initiatives at The Pew Charitable Trusts referred to a study by the Federal Reserve Bank

in Minnesota that showed that society earned a 16 to 1 return on money spent on early childhood education. The distinguished panel also considered funding concerns, delivery models, and recent socioeconomic research. Dr. John J. DiIulio, Jr., the Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion and Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania moderated the panel. Other panelists included Brigit Beyea, Executive Director of NY/Mid-Atlantic Region of Jumpstart; Chris Beck, President/CEO of Gesu School, Dr. John Fantuzzo, Director of the Penn CHILD Research Center and Michael Gerson, Former White House Senior Policy Advisor. CD Audio recordings and transcripts of the symposium are available by contacting the Development Office.

ATHLETIC CORNER

Twenty-two students signed up for Gesu’s new soccer team started by Father Ray Donaldson. The team’s scrimmages at Fairmount Park included a fun game against Gesu’s faculty and staff, which ended in a 5-5 tie after the student team rallied from behind. In addition, Gesu is fielding three teams in the CYO basketball league: both JV and varsity boys teams and a varsity girls team. The basketball teams are enjoying their first true homecourt advantages this year in their new Sherrerd Gymnasium. Track is slated to begin in the spring.



Photo courtesy of Kwadre, Grade 7



GOSPEL CHOIR GOES TO D.C.

New U.S. Senator Bob Casey invited Gesu’s Gospel Choir to sing at his inaugural reception in Washington on January 7th. Forty-three choir members under the direction of H.L. Ratliff performed at the event. In addition, the students were treated to a tour of the Capitol, a stroll through the National Botanical Gardens and lunch before their performance.

TEACHER FEATURE

Gesu School welcomes its new teachers who have brought fresh energy and enthusiasm. **Tammi Crummy** in pre-K is a graduate of the University of Virginia, as well as the mother of two Gesu students. **Sarah Eager Weir**, also in pre-K, is a graduate of Saint Joseph’s University and brings five years of teaching experience in Catholic schools. **Peggy Moore**, a graduate of Gwynedd Mercy College, brings thirty-six years of Catholic School teaching experience to her Kindergarten class. **Kirsten Echelmeier**, or “Miss E”, joins 1st grade with a year of experience and her degree from Newmann College. **Michelle Nicholson**, also a graduate of Saint Joseph’s University, joins our 5th grade all-girls class with 5 years of charter school teaching experience. **Troy Sams**, a graduate of our neighbors Saint Joseph’s Prep and Temple University, teaches 6th grade. **Michelle Birnell**, a graduate of Loyola Marymount University in California, serves as our computer teacher through the Response-Ability Program. In addition, **Elizabeth Gallagher** has rejoined our team as the part-time librarian after taking a hiatus to raise a family.



The newly formed student committee to recruit speakers on humanitarian and environmental topics poses with its first speaker, returned Peace Corps volunteer Leanne Mangano. Leanne shared her experiences working with AIDS-affected people in Botswana with the 7th and 8th grade students. Pictured here (from left) are Verisha, Leanne, Joy, Jordan, committee organizer Aliesa, and moderator Melinda Barno.

We are sad to report the loss of one of our 7th grade students, Kairo, to a severe asthma attack in the Fall. Please keep Kairo, her family, and her classmates in your prayers.

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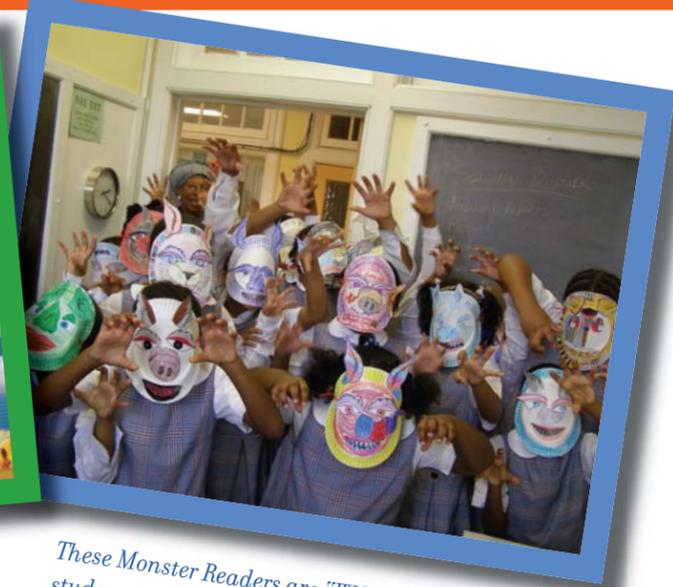
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The kindergartners learned about the origins of our holiday traditions with their own Thanksgiving dinner dressed as Pilgrims and Indians.



These Monster Readers are "Wild About Books!" Every student in Ms. Bright's class of 3rd grade girls read at least ten books in seven days.

WISH LIST

If you would like to make a special purchase for Gesu School, we would deeply appreciate book donations. Our greatest needs are: Coretta Scott King award-winning books, chapter books for eight- to ten-year-olds, science and history books for all ages, and books for our new pre-K class (both read-aloud books and books that four-year-olds can look at themselves).

Thanks to our Sponsor A Child donors, 73 sponsored students received Gesu scholarships this year! If you are interested in sponsoring a child by contributing the full annual cost of a Gesu education, contact Mike Gondos at 215-763-9077 or mike.gondos@gesuschool.org.



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A blank wall in the new school entrance transformed into a beautiful mural thanks to the efforts of art teacher Ms. Hartzell, Anyta Thomas of Journey Home, and several creative Gesu students, including Kareemah pictured here.