



GESU SCHOOL

Educational Excellence in North Philadelphia in the Jesuit and IHM Traditions

The Call to Teach



(Left Photo) 6th Grade Teacher Miki Nicholson leads an actively engaged class. (Right Photo) Pre-K Teacher Sarah Weir engages in hands-on learning with Kerrstan and Jayda. Gesu's faculty members exhibit an incredible enthusiasm for their vocation, often making personal sacrifices on behalf of the children to whom they've dedicated their lives.

LIFE-LONG CALLING DRIVES KNETZGER TEACHING PRIZE WINNER.

Miki Nicholson's engaging classroom approach springs from student-centeredness and a love of learning.

Becoming a teacher "was part of a childhood dream" for Gesu's 2009 Knetzger Teaching Prize winner Miki Nicholson. "It's more of a vocation – a call to what I want to do in life," the 6th grade teacher explains. "I thought it was fun to learn. As an adult, I wanted to share that gift with someone else."

The love of teaching and the effort that goes into each of Nicholson's lesson plans are strikingly apparent. Her lessons are comprehensive, target a variety of learning styles and abilities, and are fun. Yes, FUN. Whether she's using a YouTube introduction to prime factorization on the Smart Board or a soap-opera style presentation of the week's Bible story in Religion, Nicholson's captivating approach makes it hard NOT to be engaged. Her engagement extends to the home through PDF snapshots and PowerPoints of the day's lessons, website resources, and other homework information that she emails

daily to any parents or guardians with email.

In addition to focusing on academics, Nicholson guides her students' growth into responsible individuals of character. She encourages them to establish goals, to cultivate a positive attitude, and to demonstrate punctuality. She reminds her students to be honest and upright in class because "the consequences are bigger out on the street" for deviating from the straight and narrow.

On her nomination as the Knetzger Teaching Prize winner by her fellow faculty members, Nicholson admits, "It was certainly flattering to have your colleagues think that much of you." Earlier this year, she was also voted to be the faculty representative on the Board's Faculty Support Committee. But Nicholson's focus on what's really important is obvious – she emphasizes, "You can't buy the moment when you see a kid get it."

CULTIVATING TEACHING CORPS EMERGES AS THEME AT 12TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM. Complete transcript now available online.

"Part of the solution for inner-city education, for urban education, is continuing and building a robust teacher corps, interesting young people from very good schools in seeing this as part of their life's mission," asserted Jane Dammen McAuliffe, President of Bryn Mawr College and a panelist at Gesu's 12th Annual Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education. Gesu President Christine Beck agreed. "Nothing is more important, obviously, than the quality of teachers."

Moderator Win Churchill, Chairman of Gesu School's Board of Trustees added, "The people who decide they're going to dedicate their lives in these classrooms, whether it's the inner city or elsewhere – but particularly in the inner city – have vocations. This is way more than a job."

The importance of strategies to cultivate a quality teaching corps – ranging from programs like Teach for America to the Alliance for Catholic Education – was one of several themes raised by this year's panel, which also included Dr. John J. DiIulio, Professor of Political Science & Director of the Robert A. Fox Leadership Program at Penn, the Hon. Bruce W. Kauffman, recently retired from the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of PA, and Benjamin Rayer, Associate Superintendent for Charter, Partnership and New Schools with the School District of Philadelphia. Over 170 people attended the event. Find the complete transcript at www.gesuschool.org/2009symposiumrecap.htm.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It's hard to get used to certain things in North Philadelphia – like gun violence, incarceration, hunger (yes, hunger), and the power of addiction. They keep popping up and continue to impact our children, their emotions and their behavior.

How do we break these cycles of violence and drugs? Although I sound like a broken record, I don't know any other way but through early education. If we start early enough, our children can receive the tools they need to reach grade level by the all important 4th grade. They learn to love learning, and quality education gives them options.

Gesu's safe haven, faith-based essence, and quality, enriched education empower our

students to make good choices.

Of course, since lots of schools face similar challenges, what makes Gesu so special? We have an exceptionally good track record of success. In short, Gesu works!

Even though Gesu has non-selective admissions, both academically and financially, our students grow and achieve. Regular testing and assessment help target each child's need, and a wide range of after-school activities and literacy programs motivate their interests.

As always, thank you for your generous support of our mission and children. I am particularly pleased at this year's growth of our appealing Living Endowment/Sponsor A Child program which enables us to give vital scholarships and to support our mission.



Please come visit! It will affirm the value of your investment – whether you donate your time, talent or dollars.

God bless!

Christine S. Beck
President and CEO

THREE CHEERS!

8th graders **Kameron, Matthew, Payton, & Taahira** won 1st place in the English Round at the West Catholic Academic Bowl... **Shirley Bright**, 3rd grade teacher, received an Honorary Alumni Award from Saint Joseph's Prep and completed her Roman Diploma Program at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary... **Saeed Briscoe '05** won 1st prize in Advanta's *Cezanne and Beyond: Art of Inspiration Contest*. **Trustee Rosemary Español's** company IEL was named among *Interior Design Magazine's* "2009 Interior Design Giants"... **Trustee Byron McCook '73** earned his Ed.D. from Saint Joseph's University... **H.L. Ratliff**, music teacher, was honored with the Points of Light Foundation Award... **Laura Weatherly**, 8th grade teacher, received the St. Peter Claver Award for Education from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia... **The Devon Barnes & Noble** collected over 2,600 books for Gesu students through their book drive... **Mercy Health System** generously sent nurses to administer 120 H1N1 vaccines... **Darlene Piazza, R.N.** administered the second dose of H1N1 vaccine to the children 9 and under... **Old Saint Joseph's Church** donated Christmas gifts for Grades Pre-K through 2nd grade... and **The Zoo** provided the Youngest Scholars Program with complimentary tickets!

STUDENTS APPLAUD KYW-COMCAST LAPTOP AWARD.

The addition of 10 laptops to the Advanced Writing room will make class more productive, students say.

Gesu's Advanced Writing Program now benefits from the prize of 10 laptops awarded the school by the KYW-Comcast "Laptop Daily Double" contest. The school was nominated for the award by Karen Gaffney, mother of a Saint Joseph's Prep grad who had tutored at Gesu. Several Advanced Writing students attended KYW's presentation of the laptops, and shared their enthusiasm for the impact the laptops would have on their learning and their research. They stressed the increased productivity that would result from the ability to compose and edit right on the computer. Advanced Writing teacher Dr. Erwin facetiously suggested she might just increase the number of assignments the students complete per year.

BALLET "ROCKS" GESU

STUDENTS. Inner-city children expand horizons through classes and performance by Rock School of Ballet

Every Friday afternoon, Gesu's 2nd graders enjoy an hour ballet class courtesy of the Rock School and Trustee Randi Zemsky. While ballet class and other enrichment activities may be something other children take for granted, Gesu's students often have few opportunities to participate in such programs outside of school.

On December 4th, the entire school attended the Rock's School's performance of *The Nutcracker 1776* at the Mirriam Theater, thanks to Trustee Peter Gould and his wife Robin Potter. "Now, my students are all writing about the performance in their journals. They all want to be ballerinas," says 4th grade girls teacher Andrea Carter.

LONG-STANDING CITY TRADITION STEPS UP TO SUPPORT STUDENTS. Gesu School honored as beneficiary of 2009 Philadelphia Charity Ball.

The Philadelphia Charity Ball, a tradition for over 125 years, graciously chose Gesu School as its 2009 beneficiary. In addition, 8th grader Brandy was awarded a Bryn Mawr Trust Scholarship at the ball, which took place at the Union League in November under the leadership of Charity Ball President D. Christopher LeVine. Gesu Ballroom Dancers from the Class of 2009, under the direction of Trustee Susan Shea, performed before the Cotillion.



Firefighter and Gesu Pre-K Parent Kim Bacone demonstrates how she crawls to stay below the smoke. Pre-K student Mikayah and her classmates enjoyed the presentation. In January, the Pre-K and Kindergarten parents were treated to a program of their own, presented by the Council for Relationships over breakfast.

MITCH ALBOM, DERRICK PITTS, AND OTHERS QUENCH STUDENTS' THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE AND CAREER EXPOSURE. Gesu's students overflow with thoughtful questions for the guests of the Gesu Speaker Series.

"Your questions reveal an understanding beyond many adults," asserted Derrick Pitts, Chief Astronomer for the Franklin Institute, who answered students' questions ranging from how his faith intersects with science to whether the 2012 Theory was actually the prediction of a pole shift. A product of North Philadelphia himself, Mr. Pitts spoke to students as part of the Gesu Speaker Series for 7th and 8th graders at the invitation of trustee Susan Shea.

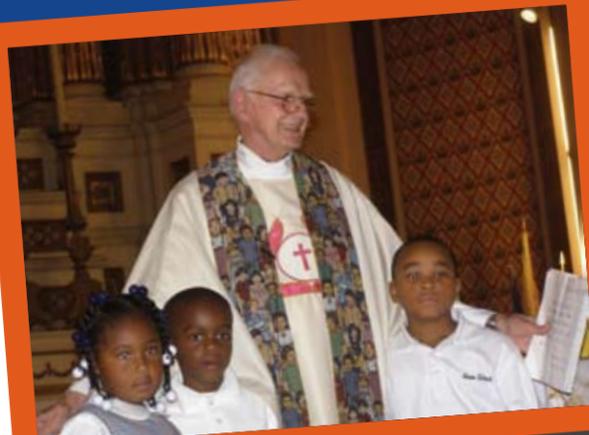
The Speaker Series was created to give students exposure to successful individuals, especially African Americans, in a variety of fields. Throughout the series Gesu's students have been ripe with questions. Here's a sampling of what Gesu's inquiring minds wanted to know, and

the speakers who addressed their questions:

- "What inspired you to write the book?" students asked Mitch Albom, author of *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *Have A Little Faith*. Albom was brought to Gesu School courtesy of the Taggart Cultural Series at Saint Joseph Joseph's Prep.
- "Are there other jobs in the Secret Service where people don't have to risk their lives?" a student asked John Roberts, Secret Service Agent to Michelle Obama, who was introduced to Gesu through teacher's aide Andrea Warner.
- "Have you ever fired anybody?" another queried Taj Scott, headwaiter at Squires Golf Club, who came to Gesu courtesy of Win Churchill.



Eighth grader Dymon poses with speaker Mitch Albom after extending him an invitation to her graduation in June. Dymon, who was taken by Albom's book, personally wrote Albom's welcome and introduction. Gesu's aspiring writers enjoyed the insights into the life path of an acclaimed author.



AFTER TWENTY YEARS AT GESU, REV. NEIL VER'SCHNEIDER, S.J. CONTINUES TO "TOIL AND NOT TO SEEK FOR REST." Community celebrates Father Neil's selfless contribution with Mass and luncheon in his honor.

In 1989, Rev. Neil Ver'Schneider, S.J., arrived in North Philadelphia to work with the African American community as Assistant Pastor of Gesu Parish. In 2009, he's still hard at work in the neighborhood as Assistant Principal of Gesu School. The Gesu community celebrated Fr. Neil's 20th anniversary of selfless service with a Mass concelebrated by Msgr. Federico Britto, Rev. George Bur, S.J., and Rev. Stephen Thorne, followed by a luncheon attended by many from the community.

Over the years, Fr. Neil has been a bedrock of Gesu's North Philadelphia community, not only lovingly disciplining students in Gesu School's Time-Out Room – for which he is most famous – but also assisting families in crisis, helping young men find work, and offering spiritual guidance and friendship to any soul who appears at his door, from the littlest children to the neighborhood matrons. He inspires those around him with his frugality (nobody dares throw anything out as long as Fr. Neil's around – he'll find a new home for it!), his humble demeanor, and his mastery of technology. Gesu is grateful to the New York Province of the Society of Jesus for sharing this treasure with us!

GESU LAUNCHES ITS 1ST HIGH SCHOOL FAIR. Alumni return as high school representatives.

Counselors Sr. Pat McGrenra, I.H.M. and Mrs. O'Neill's newest strategy to tackle the challenge of enrolling Gesu's 8th graders in appropriate high schools proved to be an enormous success. At the suggestion of Principal Sr. Ellen Convey, I.H.M., Gesu School hosted its very own high school fair this fall, staffed by representatives from 24 area high schools. The event was well-attended by students and parents from Gesu and other local schools. At three of the tables, Gesu alumni who now attend the Academy of Notre Dame, La Salle College High School, and Saint Joseph's Prep talked with guests about their high schools.



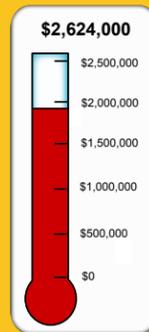
Representing their high school, Saint Joseph's Prep, Gesu alumni DaMontre '09 and Maurice '09 speak with a parent at Gesu School's first high school fair. Over the past two years, Gesu's counseling office, with support from volunteers, has instituted a number of initiatives to help get Gesu's graduates enrolled in appropriate high schools.

CORRECTION TO ANNUAL REPORT

We inadvertently omitted Ed Beckett from the Chaplain's Circle in the 2008-2009 Annual Report. We thank Ed and all Gesu's donors for your past support.

With your help and Gesu's cost-cutting measures, the school survived a difficult fiscal year in 2008-2009 with minimal program cuts. Thank you for your generosity and prayers.

We are 73% of the way towards our fundraising goal for the current fiscal year, which ends in June. If you have not already made a contribution and would like to do so, please use the enclosed envelope or make your gift online at www.gesuschool.org.



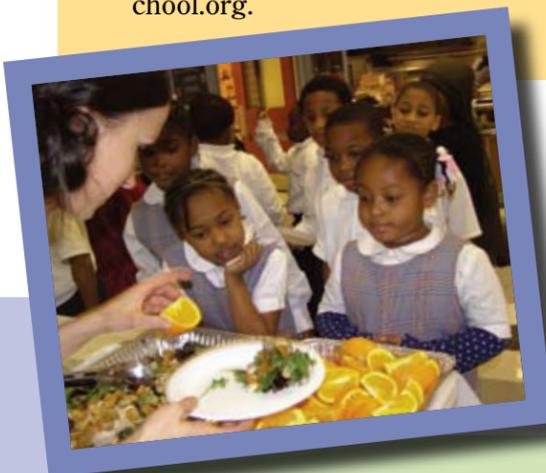
GESU UNVEILS "LIVING ENDOWMENT" PROGRAM. New initiative seeks to secure support from "investors" who cover full cost of one child's Gesu education for one year.

Conceived by Trustee Rev. William Byron, S.J., Gesu School's new "Living Endowment" Program seeks annual financial support for scholarships from donors. In the coming year, the Living Endowment Program will succeed Gesu's long-standing Sponsor A Child Program.

According to Fr. Byron, contributions to this program (\$6,000 apiece for each child) constitute a "living" endowment because they are "annual contributions from people who are alive and alert to the need." It is not an endowment in the traditional sense of a non-to-be-invaded asset base, but a fund to be replenished annually by contributors who are committed to Gesu's mission of justice in education.

Thanks to a coalition of dedicated trustees who provide leadership, the Living Endowment/Sponsor A Child Program is already providing scholarships to 143 of our 453 students (there are also 15 additional Endowed Scholarships). Participants in the Living Endowment Program learn a little about the child or children they support and receive invitations for two special luncheons each year to meet them.

Many more scholarships are needed. For a prospectus on the Living Endowment Program, please contact Kelly Grattan at 215-763-9077 or kelly.grattan@gesuschool.org.



Students line up for salad and fruit at lunchtime on Thursdays, compliments of Trustee Ellen Churchill, who created the weekly salad bar to help address the challenge of childhood obesity. Inner-city students' diets are often lacking in fresh fruits and veggies, a problem this popular addition to lunch has helped remedy. Anyone interested in helping with the Thursday salad bar should contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077.

GESU SPEARHEADS COMPETITION TO ENCOURAGE WRITING COMPETENCY IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA MIDDLE SCHOOLS. School's 2nd Annual Writing Contest fires up aspiring writers.

A student from James R. Ludow School won the \$300 first prize from among over 30 entries to Gesu's inaugural Writing Contest for North Philadelphia Middle Schools last year. Again endorsed by Mayor Michael Nutter, Gesu hopes to expand this year's contest, which features the topic, "If I were Mayor of Philadelphia..." This year's judges will be former Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Judith Christian of Saint Joseph's Prep's English Department, and Trustee Rev. Daniel Ruff, S.J., pastor of Old Saint Joseph's Church. Interested North Philadelphia schools should contact Germaine Hendon at germaine.hendon@gesuschool.org for more information.

PHILLY by Nysir, 6th Grade

I look upon the city's streets as the night falls.
 Cats roam the dark alleys without a home.
 The gunshots echo across the city blocks.
 Cops zoom by like herds of wild cattle.
 Hustlers scatter though the trashy lots.
 Mothers cry out for their beloved sons:
 Dead and gone.
 As the sun rises beyond the dark shadows of the killer and drug dealers,
 Kids swim out of their homes.
 Footballs fly like birds in the midnight sky.
 You can hear the joy of a baby's laughter,
 The curiosity of a child's question,
 The importance of an elderly woman's story.
 Parties parade through neighborhoods, joy is among every one.
 As the sun goes down, the moon rises up and the dark shadows lurk,
 But in an instant the rain's wrath sends everyone storming inside.

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"Why do I support Gesu? Simply put, because of the kids. Because our city, indeed our nation, has failed too many kids through schools that don't teach and teachers who don't care. At Gesu the caring is manifest in everything that happens, from Sister Ellen's tough love to the volunteers who give so much, and especially from the teachers whose passion for their profession is transformed into a personal mission at Gesu.

"In the end, this is all for the kids. Gesu can't rescue every lost child in Philadelphia. It can't solve the challenges of urban education. But it can give a future to 450 children every year who otherwise might have none. And in doing so it shines a light for others to follow on what can be done when adults care about kids. And that is, simply, what Gesu is about." **-Peter Gould, Donor, Trustee, and Finance & Audit Committee Chair**

STUDENTS STEP UP TO HELP HAITIANS.

Benefit dress down day raises \$1,481 for Jesuit Refugee Service.

In an act of self-giving, Gesu's students raised \$1,481 to assist the work of Jesuit Refugee Service in earthquake-ravaged Haiti. In addition to the students' compassion for the suffering of fellow human beings, the Gesu community has ties to the island nation through Gesu's spiritual patrons, the Venerable Pierre Toussaint and his wife Juliette. Born in 1766, Pierre Toussaint was a freed Haitian slave who worked as a hairdresser to purchase others' freedom, including Juliette's. Their lives prove to be a fitting model for the acts of social justice at work in Gesu's halls.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Believe! *Gesu's 2010 Gala to Raise Scholarship Funds*
Cathy Peacock & Kay O'Grady, Co-Chairs
Honoring John DiIulio, Jr., Ph.D.

April 29, 2010
6:00 - 9:30 p.m.
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Visit www.gesuschool.org/believe.htm

Conversations with the President

Join President Chris Beck for breakfast and a candid conversation on inner-city education at 9:00 a.m. on the following dates in 2010: Mar. 11, Apr. 8, and May 13. Please contact Suzette Baird at 215-763-9077 or suzette@gesuschool.org to confirm your attendance.

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



GESU
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(Left) Sunny Richman, John Ryan '41, and Trustee Jim Higgins '45 pause for a photo at the reunion for the classes of 1925-2000. Over 100 alumni, faculty, family and friends returned for the event. Alumni interested in joining the mailing list should contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077.

(Right) Kindergartner Kyle and Jenny Silver pose with Kyle's new teddy bear. Jenny donated 268 Build-A-Bears to Gesu students with the money she raised through Bowling for Bears, an organization she founded to provide children in need with teddy bears.