



# GESU SCHOOL

Educational Excellence in North Philadelphia in the Jesuit and IHM Traditions

## Speak up and be Heard

### INNER-CITY STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR VOICES ON GESU'S NEW FORENSICS TEAM

"This year we went for the experience. Next year we're going to win," laughs 3<sup>rd</sup> grade girls teacher Shirley Bright, coach of Gesu's brand new forensics team and member of Gesu's oral communication curriculum committee. This spring Mrs. Bright led a group of eleven 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to their first four forensics competitions.

The initiative is one component of Gesu's oral communication program, part of the Strategic Plan created during the Middle States accreditation process. The program addresses inner-city students' struggles with appropriate verbal communication.

For a novice team, the forensics students' record is impressive: 6<sup>th</sup> grader Kimberly won 1<sup>st</sup> place and 3<sup>rd</sup> place for her original oratory, while 7<sup>th</sup> grader Taahira and 8<sup>th</sup> grader Kina each won 4<sup>th</sup> place twice in the poetry category. In a field of 20 schools and numerous individual competitors, Gesu students broke into the final round in three out of four competitions.

After judging a few competition rounds for other schools, Gesu 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Andrea Keeler had the opportunity to observe Gesu's team in action. "I was really astounded by the level of competition," she says. "The *courage*, in particular, our students had to get up there, was impressive." Mrs. Keeler attributed the progress Gesu's students had made to the time and talent Mrs. Bright dedicated to the team.

"I'm really proud of all of them. They did so well, took it so seriously, and had fun at the same time," says Mrs. Bright, who notes that she could track the students' progress from



*Kimberly, a poised, confident Gesu 6<sup>th</sup> grader who took first place among 200 participants in a forensic tournament, recited with conviction her award-winning original oratory, "I am ME" – a powerful, deeply moving speech about believing in yourself and finding beauty from within – at the Gala on April 29<sup>th</sup>.*

the first meet to the last through the judges' comments. "It's just a testament to how hard they worked." The students' team spirit was also a highlight for Mrs. Bright. Although they could have "dressed up," the Gesu students wore their uniforms—they felt like a team; they wanted to look like a team, too.

Mrs. Bright recounts a number of breakthrough moments over the season – like the day when Taylor delivered her original speech to the Board of Trustees at their May meeting, and finally accepted Mrs. Bright's help to overcome the challenges that had been holding her back in competition. "In the beginning, if someone told me to do something, I would go around doing the opposite," Taylor explains. By the end of the season, Taylor heeded her coach by slowing down, speaking correctly, using the right tone, and standing still. "I learned skills that can help me when I grow up," she asserts.

### I AM ME An Original Award-winning Speech by 6<sup>th</sup> Grader Kimberly

How do you define beauty? According to Webster's Dictionary, beauty is a quality in a person or thing that makes it pleasant to look at, listen to, or talk about...

Do you think size matters? Is it clothes that makes a woman? Or is real beauty more than just skin deep? Well here is my perspective on the matter. Beauty lies within. Why did I think... why did I think you looked better than me? I thought that because I always imagined myself with bright, yellow golden eyes, with a pointy nose, and short, black spiky hair. Every time I saw someone with a feature I wished I had, it made me think, "She's prettier than me. She's better than me." But I know, God made me this way for a reason...

Read Kimberly's full speech at [www.gesuschool.org/iamme.htm](http://www.gesuschool.org/iamme.htm)

Summer 2010

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

In April, I informed Win Churchill that I plan to step down in one year, in June, 2011. Of course, any decision like this produces mixed feelings. However, by next June I will have completed my eighth year in this position, following six years on Gesu's Board of Trustees.

My decision has nothing to do with health, energy or my unwavering commitment to Gesu's mission and social justice. Personally, it's simply time for a change; in addition, every organization benefits from a change in leadership. It brings new energy and opens new doors – as long as it is carefully planned. With a Search Committee already at work, there is ample time to find the next person to lead this special school.

Truly, it is a privilege to walk into Gesu's building every day to work with such a committed team as the Gesu family – and with such beautiful, deserving children. Every day brings unexpected challenges and decisions. Every day presents a mixture of joy and sadness, of satisfaction and frustration, of rewarding moments and awareness of the most unimaginable circumstances in the lives of some of our children.

A safe haven and beacon of light in this neighborhood, Gesu's non-selective admissions policy, both academically and financially, continues to confirm a



clear commitment to mission. Led by the charisms of the Jesuit and IHM orders, this cause of social justice attracts teachers, volunteers and donors and will continue to do so. An inclusive, ecumenical group is united by the belief that a solid cornerstone in early education helps empower children to close the door on the lure of the street and to break the cycle of poverty, violence and drugs.

Finally, Gesu's grounding in faith helps give our children the strength to overcome their many obstacles to success. It also enables us to trust that resources will continue to be found to support Gesu's vital mission.

During the coming year, I intend to give my full energy to serve Gesu School, its children, its mission and its goals – and raise as much scholarship money as possible! I hope you will join me.

Thanks to each one of you and God bless,

Christine S. Beck  
President and CEO

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Friends,

As you know, the rebirth, growth and continuing success of Gesu School has been one of the great passions of my life. It was that passion that gave me the courage, some would say *hutzpah*, to approach and prevail upon each of you to participate in realizing the dream of providing the children of one of Philadelphia's toughest neighborhoods the knowledge and skills necessary for a meaningful life. We can all be very proud of what we have accomplished at Gesu, as we contemplate the lives that we have helped changed for the better, and the prospect for that continuing long into the future.



Photo © Christine S. Beck

It remains a fantastic experience to be associated with all of you at Gesu, and I am truly grateful to each of you for the time, thought and money that you have so generously donated to making Gesu the success that it is. Without you, Gesu would not be the beacon of hope that it is today.

Now, it is time for a younger person to take on the role of Chairman and lead Gesu boldly into the future. We were indeed fortunate to have many qualified candidates for this role already present on the Board, but it gives me great pleasure to report that Gordon Cooney was offered and did in fact agree to become the new Chairman of Gesu School. With the help of all of us, I am confident that he will take the school to a new and higher level.

All the best,

Winston J. Churchill  
Co-Vice Chairman & Immediate Past Chairman

## GESU CELEBRATES BOARD LEADERSHIP

Win Churchill, who has served Gesu School as founding Chairman of the Board of Trustees for over 17 years, stepped down to the office of Co-Vice Chairman on May 7, 2010. J. Gordon Cooney, Jr., Esq., was elected the new Chairman of the Board of Trustees at that time. Gesu thanks Win for his many years of service.

### WINSTON J. CHURCHILL, ESQ.

Win's connection to Gesu School began in 1991, when prompted by a fellow Georgetown University Trustee, he visited the school to examine the roof top playground. There he reconnected with another St. Joseph's Preparatory School graduate, Rev. George Bur, SJ, then pastor of Gesu and later President of Gesu School. Almost immediately, the two joined forces to save and sustain this inner-city school, a powerful stabilizing force in a marginalized neighborhood.

A successful venture capitalist, Win ventured his own funds and enlisted accomplished friends from all walks of life and all religious traditions to join him in this fight for justice in education. Two years later, when Gesu became an independent Catholic school, Churchill was the first Chairman of the new Board of Trustees. Now, almost 20 years later, he leaves a legacy in his wake.

Over the years, Win has overseen Gesu's growth from a struggling neighborhood school to a national model. He helped to conduct the school's four campaigns to provide scholarships, build the endowment, and most recently, to expand and renovate the

school in 2006. Win's wife, Ellen Churchill, also a strong advocate for Gesu, has created a once-a-week salad bar for our students.

"To identify Win Churchill simply as Chairman of the Board is like saying Willie Mays was a baseball player," writes Jerrold Footlick, author of *A Model School: How Philadelphia's Gesu School is Remaking Inner-City Education*. "But for his enthusiasm and his understanding of the school's needs and how to fulfill them, Gesu would not have succeeded, perhaps would not exist."

According to Chris Beck, "It's been an honor to work with Win, especially due to his visionary, out-of-the box thinking and his highly intelligent approach to problem solving. His willingness to take risks, to try new things, has helped Gesu develop into what it is today."

### J. GORDON COONEY JR., ESQ.

J. Gordon Cooney has been involved with Gesu School since 1997 and has been a member of Gesu's Board of Trustees since 2002. Prior to his recent election as Board Chairman, he served as the Board's Co-Vice Chairman.

Cooney is a partner in Morgan Lewis's Litigation Practice and Managing Partner of Morgan Lewis's Philadelphia Office. Among Cooney's many professional accomplishments, he is a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and has been regularly listed in "The Best Lawyers in America" and "Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business." Although Cooney has won

numerous high-profile cases for Fortune 500 companies, perhaps most recognized is his more than 20 years of work with a fellow Morgan Lewis partner that resulted in the exoneration of John Thompson, a Louisiana man who had been wrongly convicted of a capital offense in 1985 and imprisoned for 18 years.

Cooney is a 1981 graduate of Wesleyan University and a 1984 *magna cum laude* graduate of Villanova University School of Law.

Cooney and his wife Gretchen participate in the Sponsor A Child program. They provide a scholarship for a child the same age as their own son, Jack, and the boys meet biannually at the scholarship luncheon and on other informal social occasions.



## D.A. SETH WILLIAMS INSPIRES AT GESU GRADUATION

After listening to the aspirations of Gesu's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders one cold February day, Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams told the students, "You can't do ANY of those things if you don't finish school." On June 9<sup>th</sup>, Williams again addressed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, this time as the 2010 Graduation Speaker. Graduation marks a milestone on the students' paths to completing their educations and fulfilling their dreams.

### CLASS OF 2010 HIGH SCHOOL ACCEPTANCES

Academy of Notre Dame de Namur  
Academy at Palumbo  
The Baldwin School  
Bishop McDevitt High School  
Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School  
Central High School  
Charter High School for Architecture & Design  
Creative & Performing Arts High School  
Delaware Valley Charter High School  
Eastern University Academy Charter School  
Friere Charter School  
Imhotep Institute Charter High School  
John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School  
LaSalle College High School  
Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls  
Mercy Vocational High School  
Merion Mercy Academy  
Monsignor Bonner High School  
Philadelphia Electrical and Technology Charter H.S.  
Philadelphia Mennonite High School  
Roman Catholic High School  
Saint Andrews School  
Saint Joseph's Prep  
The Shipley School  
Springside School  
Wyncote Academy  
West Philadelphia Catholic High School

## IMMACULATA UNIVERSITY HONORS PRESIDENT CHRIS BECK WITH THE IMMACULATA MEDAL

At Immaculata University's Commencement Exercises on May 16, Immaculata's President Sr. R. Patricia Fadden, IHM presented Gesu President and CEO Christine Beck with the Immaculata Medal. Established in 1976, the medal recognizes "Men and women who have publicly exercised creative leadership or given evidence of sound scholarship in the arts, letters, sciences, or professions or served the college in an extraordinary manner...." Past recipients include Mother Theresa and Grace Kelly.

## NOW ONLINE AT [www.GesuSchool.org](http://www.GesuSchool.org)

President and CEO Christine Beck delivered the keynote speech at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Central City Ministry Urban All-American Celebration in Toledo Ohio. Read Chris's full speech at [www.gesuschool.org/urbanallamerican.htm](http://www.gesuschool.org/urbanallamerican.htm).

*(Right) Kindergarten Teacher Kathy Asta, pictured here with President and CEO Chris Beck and Principal Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM, was selected this year's Knetzger Teaching Prize winner. The Knetzger Teaching Prize, endowed by a gift from Jay and Kathy Sherrerd, is presented annually to that faculty member demonstrating the highest quality of teaching ability and commitment.*

## THREE CHEERS!

President and CEO **Christine S. Beck** was elected an inaugural member of the Queens University of Charlotte Athletic Hall of Fame... Trustee **Susan Shea** led several **Gesu Alumni** Ballroom Dancers in a center-court performance prior to the start of a 76ers game in March... Co-vice Chairman **Win Churchill** was honored by the America-Israel Chamber of Commerce as the 2010 recipient of the Yitzhak Rabin Public Service Award. The Gesu Gospel Choir performed the Israeli National Anthem in Hebrew at the dinner... Trustee **Leon Ellerson** and the Mann Music Center's Connecting Arts-N-Schools Program brought the Kulu Mele African Dance & Drum Ensemble to perform for Gesu's students... Trustee **Rosemary Español** was inducted into Farleigh Dickinson University's "Pinnacle Society" 8<sup>th</sup> Graders **Jasmine and Jewell** won 2<sup>nd</sup> Place and Honorable Mention in Gesu's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Writing Contest for North Philadelphia Middle Schools. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners were from John G. Whittier Elementary School... **Kwadre '08** was elected Junior Class President at Mercy Vocational High School.

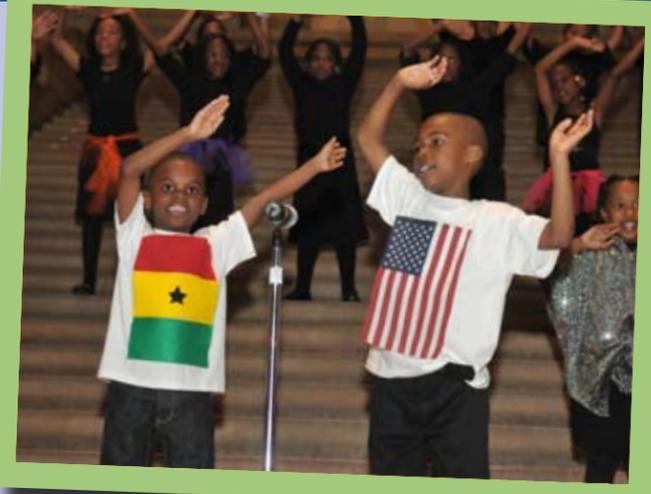
## TRUSTEE NOTES

Welcome to Leon Ellerson, President of Keystone Computer Associates; D. Daniele Hager, community volunteer; Kenneth Phelan, Executive VP of Fannie Mae; and Rev. Stephen D. Thorne, Director of the Office for Black Catholics, who joined the Board of Trustees in 2009-2010. We thank departing Trustees Letitia Biddle, Karen Earley, Drake Haskins, H. Scott Miller, and Michael Rouse for their dedicated service.

*(Right) Eighty students turned out for the track team, which had a successful season this year. According to Physical Education Teacher Sean Deal, sports play a crucial role in childhood development because they teach students time management and give them a positive way to occupy their time.*



*(Above) H. Ray Welch, Jr., President and CEO of Mercy Health System, spoke to Gesu's students about his career path as part of the Gesu Speaker Series. The series exposes students to successful African Americans who can serve as role models. Mr. Welch is pictured here with 8<sup>th</sup> Graders Malik and Garrison and Gesu President and CEO Chris Beck.*



*First graders Quadir and Xavier, along with classmates, signal the start of the Gala program with an enthusiastic rendition of "We are the World" in the Great Stair Hall at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.*

## INSPIRATIONAL GALA NETS MORE THAN \$200,000 IN SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

On April 29<sup>th</sup> more than 300 guests attending Gesu School's annual fundraising gala saluted the ability to "Believe!" Co-chaired by Trustee Kay O'Grady and volunteer Cathy Peacock, this year's gala netted more than \$200,000 to support scholarships for Gesu's students.

The event featured Gesu's Gospel Choir with guest soloist Keisha Hutchins; Gesu 2<sup>nd</sup> graders with dancers from the Rock School of Ballet, an incredible story of transformation from Alumnus Kwadre Adams, and a moving presentation of the Gesu Spirit Medal to University of Pennsylvania professor and Gesu Advisory Trustee Dr. John J. DiIulio Jr.



## ATHLETIC CORNER

**Soccer:** Gesu School and St. Malachy's have held three soccer clinics with the goal of establishing a joint team for the fall 2010 season under Coach Vince Riley. Gesu Physical Education teacher Sean Deal explains, "This program exposes our students to a new sport that they don't experience in their neighborhoods."

**Track:** Gesu science lab coordinator Pat Leaf coached a team of 80 students in track this season. A number of students placed at Area A Championships. Eighth graders who took 1<sup>st</sup> place in Areas include: Brandy in girls' shot put; the boys' relay team of Garrison, Tito, Kyree, and Malik in the 4x100 and 4x200; and the girls' relay team of Brittany, Nia, Ambria, and Courtney in the 4x100 and the 4x200. The boys' relay team also placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 4x100 at the Penn Relays this year.

**Golf:** Thanks to Gesu Friend Hettie Herzog, Gesu's students now enjoy The First Tee Program as part of the Physical Education curriculum. The First Tee Program introduces students to the game of golf at a young age.

## Board of Trustees

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\*Advisory Trustee

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Sr. Pat McGrenra, IHM, *Assistant Principal*

## JIMMY COIN AWARDS HONOR OUTSTANDING EVERYDAY PEOPLE

Earlier this year, Gesu friend and advocate Betty Moran honored five members of the Gesu family with the Jimmy Coin, an award established in memory of her late son Jimmy to encourage individuals who exemplify his qualities of resilience, loyalty, humility and empathy. Students wrote essays nominating their classmates for the award, and the following individuals received the Jimmy Coin:

- A talented young lady who battles a congenital disease on a daily basis, 7<sup>th</sup> Grader **Taahira** is an inspiration to teachers and fellow students. She notices the potential in others and lives the spirit of Jimmy with loyalty and resiliency.
- An outstanding student, 8<sup>th</sup> Grader **Jewell** exhibits humility and loyalty. She is a positive

influence on her fellow classmates, and is always willing to help others.

- A peacemaker who always has a smile on her face, 8<sup>th</sup> Grader **Kina** demonstrates Jimmy's empathy and resiliency.
- The "go to" person for classmates in need of help, 8<sup>th</sup> Grader **Rashad** is a humble, loyal, and generous individual who is talented in sports and science.
- A resilient woman with a powerful voice, President and CEO **Chris Beck** was a surprise non-student winner. The presenters cited her ability to constantly spread the "spirit of Jimmy."

Each winner was presented with a plaque, one Jimmy Coin for themselves, and one Jimmy Coin to bestow on another. Prior to graduation, Rashad chose Music Teacher and Choir Director **H.L. Ratliff** to be the recipient of his second Jimmy Coin.



Gathered for the presentation of the Jimmy Coin Award are (Back Row) Betty Moran, George Corrigan, Chris Beck, Mary Corrigan, Martie Gillen (Front Row) Rashad, Taahira, Jewell, and Kina.

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



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*Address correction requested*



Dymon '10 proudly displays her diploma at 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation. Over 90% of the Class of 2010 will go on to graduate from high school on time, compared to the city's 51% on-time high school graduation rate.

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