

JEANNE MOUTOUSSAMY-ASHE TO TALK WITH GESU SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT THE LEGACY OF ARTHUR ASHE AND OTHER PIONEERS DURING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

Distinguished photographer will discuss the lasting achievements and impact on today's youth made by her late husband and other African Americans highlighted in the new book, "Breaking Barriers"

WHEN: **Friday, February 6, 2009**

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Talk with 7th and 8th graders

1:15 p.m. – 3 p.m.: Visits to classrooms of 3rd through 6th graders

WHERE: **Gesu School**, 17th & Thompson Streets, North Philadelphia

WHAT: **Gesu Speaker Series** – informal talks between students and honored guests

WHO: **Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe**, the widely published professional photographer and widow of Arthur Ashe, a tireless civil rights advocate and mentor who was the first African American to compete in international tennis at its highest levels

DETAILS:

It may be hard to imagine, but many of today's youngsters who have grown up seeing the Williams sisters dominate international tennis have never heard of Arthur Ashe – an unparalleled role model in life and a trailblazer who paved the way for future generations of African American athletes. Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, an accomplished professional in her own right, will spend the day with children at Gesu School to help educate them about the talents, achievements and altruistic endeavors of both her late husband and other well-known and less familiar African American leaders from all walks of life – including innovators, educators, mentors, political leaders, entertainers and philanthropists.

Moutoussamy-Ashe's visit will highlight the new book "Breaking Barriers," a compilation of material culled from The Aetna Foundation's well-known annual African American History Calendar. The book celebrates African American accomplishments in community service, healthcare, education, science, business and government and presents significant African Americans as role models for the next generation. Activities to engage students with material from the book (dedicated in Ashe's memory) have been developed through a partnership between The Aetna Foundation and the Arthur Ashe Learning Center. Gesu teacher Shirley Bright helped create the lesson plans for a "Breaking Barriers" companion curriculum, which is being introduced this week in middle schools in six cities.

The Gesu Speaker Series has been well-received by students, who welcomed Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter in 2008. Upcoming speakers include Claire Lomax, director of the Lomax Family Foundation, which provides funding for health, educational, cultural and art-related nonprofit organizations in the African American community.

ABOUT GESU SCHOOL:

Since its 1993 rebirth as an independent Catholic school serving 450 mostly non-Catholic children in grades pre-K through 8, Gesu has been recognized as a national model for urban education, earning the 2007-2008 Catholic Schools for Tomorrow Award for Innovations in Education. Despite an open admissions policy and the fact that most Gesu children face significant obstacles to learning, more than 90% of its graduates complete high school in four years in a neighborhood where graduation rates are under 50%.