

For Immediate Release

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**“WE THE PEOPLE,” A GESU SCHOOL CELEBRATION OF EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE,  
MAY 5 AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER**

**Supporters will commemorate North Philadelphia school’s impact on thousands of children and honor Rev. George W. Bur, S.J. & Christine S. Beck with the Gesu Spirit Medal**

PHILADELPHIA (February 2011) – In the heart of America’s birthplace, Gesu School supporters and friends will gather May 5 at the National Constitution Center for “We the People,” a salute to educational justice for all.

At the benefit – a celebration of the renowned school’s past, present and future impact on thousands of inner-city children – Gesu current president Christine S. Beck and founding president Rev. George W. Bur, S.J. will be honored with the Gesu Spirit Medal for helping empower children to break the cycle of poverty and violence through education.

“It’s easy to talk about freedom, justice and the American way but much harder to make it happen for all children, especially those who face difficult circumstances,” says Beck, who is retiring in June. “As a society, we need to ensure that every child is well-prepared to play a part in our country’s future. We do that at Gesu by providing the kind of life-transforming education that helps our children make their dreams come true.”

A long-time advocate for inner-city youth, Beck has held many volunteer leadership positions, co-founded the Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education Center and served on Gesu’s Board of Trustees for seven years prior to becoming its president in 2003. During her tenure as president she has been integral in ensuring the school’s long-term viability and reputation as a national model for inner-city education by developing innovative programs and spearheading technological improvements. She has created valuable partnerships with businesses, nonprofits and community organizations, overseen a \$12 million capital campaign and major renovation, increased Gesu’s endowment and launched a new three-year scholarship campaign.

Fr. Bur, who has spent most of his life working on housing equality and educational access for the poor, served as the Gesu Parish pastor and mobilized an impressive array of business and community leaders to help convert the former parish school into an independent Catholic school in 1993. In his 10 years as president he was instrumental in assuring the school’s future, building awareness and developing support networks. After leaving Gesu he initiated a program to make Saint Joseph’s University a more attractive college choice for local minority students and now serves as president of his alma mater, St. Joseph’s Preparatory School.

This year’s benefit is being organized by committee co-chairs Keith and Frank Pension and Eilise and Bill Rouse, with Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter as honorary chair. The event will feature

cocktails, dinner, dessert and inspiring entertainment by Gesu's children and special friends. For more information, call 215-763-9077 or visit <http://www.gesuschool.org/wethepeople.html>.

*Gesu School accepts students regardless of academic level or ability to pay and provides a quality, innovative education to 455 mostly non-Catholic children in grades pre-K through 8. In a neighborhood where only 34 percent of adults over 25 hold a high school diploma, more than 90 percent of Gesu alumni graduate high school, and many go on to college.*

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