

**COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER IN AMERICA'S BIRTHPLACE TO CELEBRATE
EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE SUCCESSES OF GESU SCHOOL**

Supporters gather at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia to raise funds, salute school's impact and honor Rev. George W. Bur, S.J. & Christine S. Beck with the Gesu Spirit Medal

PHILADELPHIA (May 2011) – There couldn't have been a more perfect union of place and purpose as 300 people gathered this month at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia for "We the People" – a celebration of educational justice and the impact nationally renowned Gesu School has had on thousands of inner-city children.

"Gesu's leaders have had an unswerving commitment to social justice and to the notion that every child can learn," said Gesu Board of Trustees Chairman J. Gordon Cooney, Jr., a litigator and managing partner with the global law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, in his introductory remarks. "That is central to its success over nearly 20 years. Gesu works!"

More than \$285,000 was raised at the event, which featured performances from the school's inspiring gospel choir and other students along with thoughts from Gesu alumni, leaders and special guests about what the school has meant to them. The evening also focused on the stewardship of Gesu's first two presidents since its 1993 conversion from a parish school to an independent Catholic school, with founding president Rev. George W. Bur, S.J. and second president Christine S. Beck awarded the Gesu Spirit Medal for helping empower children to break the cycle of poverty and violence through education.

A long-time advocate for inner-city youth, Beck was presented the award by Gesu Principal Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM, for helping ensure the school's long-term viability and reputation as a national model by developing innovative programs, spearheading technological improvements, creating valuable partnerships, overseeing a \$12 million capital campaign and launching a three-year scholarship campaign. Gesu Trustee Dr. Byron Cook presented the medal to Fr. Bur, who has spent most of his life working on housing equality and educational access for the poor, for saving Gesu from closure and helping it flourish in its first decade as an independent school.

This year's benefit was organized by committee co-chairs Keith and Frank Pension and Eilise and Bill Rouse, with Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter as honorary chair.

Gesu School (www.gesuschool.org) 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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