Nia Aspires to Be a World Leader
Dear Friends of Gesu School,

This year has challenged all of us with the unexpected. As our Gesu community reflects upon this time, we are filled with gratitude and resolve to remain rooted in our mission. Together, we confronted the challenge of shifting to a virtual learning landscape, within days. Our teachers responded swiftly to the pandemic, adapting to new instructional methods to meet students’ learning needs. Together, we collaborated to ensure that families’ material and emotional needs were met. Gesu addressed food insecurity, provided access to technology, and offered counseling support. Together, we continue to advocate for racial justice. Gesu teaches our students to understand this nation’s history of racism and to tackle current issues resulting from this enduring oppression, while embracing their heritage and culture with pride. Gesu embeds Black history into our curriculum—all year. Counselors hold class discussions as a space for students to express their feelings and experiences. Faculty, staff, and trustees participate in educational programs to better engage in open dialogue around antiracism.

I often use the phrase “Gesu Works” to describe our school community and our extended community of volunteers, donors, trustees, and friends. Now, more than ever, I can attest to its truth. “Gesu Works” because we care for each other. “Gesu Works” because we stand up for justice and equality for all. “Gesu Works” because we are united in faith and hope. “Gesu Works” because our holistic, innovative education empowers students to transcend poverty.

The pages that follow showcase what makes Gesu special and celebrate our 450 students’ growth, from Pre-K–8th grade. In this year of transitions, we recognize their grit and heart.

Thank you for being part of our Gesu School community.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter
President and CEO

P.S. I welcome you to experience our community in action and stay current on Gesu news. Visit gesuschool.org and click “Visit our school” or “Join our email list.” To schedule a conversation, contact the Development Office at 215-763-9077 or development@gesuschool.org.

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Gesu Responds to 2020 with Care & Adaptability

March 2020 transformed learning. While Gesu temporarily closed for our community’s safety, creative learning and social support persisted for the school year’s duration and into summer. Gesu embraced our model of holistic education and continued to do what we do best—build community and care for each other. See highlights of our Gesu family’s extraordinary efforts.

Within days of the state’s order to close schools, Gesu’s nimble, dedicated teachers shifted to new instructional modes. Teachers devoted hours to compiling learning packets and introducing virtual classes on platforms like FlipGrid and Google Classroom. Creative projects abounded. Meeting curricular guidelines continued. Weekly faculty meetings centered on professional development in remote learning strategies and ensuring student wellness. The counseling team supported teachers by immediately contacting families whose students were absent from virtual learning or did not turn in assignments.

Our 8th graders completed discussions on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Our 1st graders formed online reading groups to reinforce essential skills and play memory games. Our Kindergarteners earned IXL math certification for building 100 skills. Our 6th grade boys started each morning by sharing individual “smiles and frowns”—happy moments and frustrations—in their supportive community. Administrators executed an online graduation ceremony celebrating each student.

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“Gesu teachers have used this crisis as an opportunity to reevaluate our own teaching methods—adapting them not only for the current crisis, but for the modern world. Being forced into virtual education has given us the opportunity to target varied learning styles in the classroom. The virtual setting has allowed us to accommodate the needs of introverts and extroverts differently, and to target individual student interests more specifically.

The skills we have gained as teachers during this time will continue to serve our Gesu students long into the future.”

—Kevin Price
8th Grade Boys Teacher

Gesu’s full-time social worker and counselors conducted immediate outreach to families on availability of resources. Gesu quickly mobilized as a food distribution site, providing meals for the week via the Archdiocese of Philadelphia’s Nutritional Development Services program. Administrators offered grocery gift cards to 100 families and organized computer allocation from Gesu’s classroom supply of 300 laptops and Chromebooks. A grant provided an additional 64 computers for students in need. Teachers and staff volunteered to distribute laptops.

“In a year marked by incredible challenges and stress, we are humbled by the love and generosity of the extended Gesu School family. From grants for technology to financial assistance for struggling families during the holidays, we are grateful to the organizations and individuals who provide much-needed support for our students and their families. We are truly blessed!”

—Rob Weinstein
Vice President of Development

Distributing Emergency Resources
Emphasizing Wellness

“When Gesu transitioned to remote learning, the four-person counseling team responded by providing students and families with what they needed to succeed: resources on COVID-19, housing, technology access and affordable internet, and counseling. We made virtual counseling available and offered ‘lunch bunches’ to check in and share space for students to socialize with classmates. We provided over 150 social-emotional learning lessons on topics like feelings, grit, transitions, diversity and inclusion, and gratitude. These lessons help equip students with coping mechanisms and navigate these difficult times.”

—Amanda Rice
Gesu Counselor

Gesu’s core value of educating the whole child became even more of an imperative during virtual learning. To engage students in critical social-emotional learning (SEL) and help process the sudden change in routine and learning environment, counselors visited every Gesu class weekly. They remained in regular contact with teachers and families to facilitate a smooth transition. Classes integrated mindfulness and movement breaks, like yoga and breathing techniques. The team built online resource rooms, accessible to families. They offered individual student counseling sessions and extended that care to families and staff, even in summer, ensuring our community remained supported.

Advocating for Racial Justice

“The Gesu counseling team has responded to the challenges of a public health pandemic and continues to address the pandemic of racial injustice and its effects on the Black community. To respond to the experience of racial injustice in students’ lives and its prevalence nationwide, the team provided sustained support with individualized ‘check-ins’ and class discussions. Gesu’s Lead Counselor, Jonathan Jackson ‘99, and Director of Graduate Support, Jose Gonzalez, also held an alumni discussion group to reach high school students.

“The counseling staff pulled together resources on mindfulness, self-care, social-emotional learning. We talked about how students are, how they feel about the pandemic, and how they feel about George Floyd. We’re doing preventative work—sharing tools and giving coping mechanisms. We spend a lot of time on, ‘How can you make your voice heard? Where is the power that you have?’ We’re going into classrooms virtually and having those difficult conversations on race, getting the pulse of where students are and how they feel, and dealing with the social-emotional part of what’s happening. Together, we can bring about change, even if we first start in Gesu School.”

—Jonathan Jackson ‘99
Lead Counselor

On May 4, Gesu celebrated a virtual spirit day to stay connected and positive, even when we were apart. Gesu families submitted photos of their virtual learners. Vice Principal Alana Lee created a “We are Gesu strong!” slideshow to strengthen community.

Celebrating Virtual Spirit Day
Thriving as Summer Scholars

**Pre-K and Kindergarten Graduation**

Gesu’s Pre-K and Kindergarten students celebrated online graduation with their teachers and classmates. Gesu recognizes how much they have grown and learned this year, from vowels and numbers to building friendships.

**Girl Scouts**

Staff came together to celebrate students with an online badge ceremony and slideshow for Gesu’s Girl Scout Troop 9043. Students earned badges for community service, taking action, being their best selves, and cookie sales. Gesu is proud of these girls for exhibiting ingenuity and leadership, especially at Gesu’s MLK Day of Service.

**Sharing Student Success**

Gesu’s Youngest Scholars program sharpened students’ skills for five weeks. Rising 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders completed advanced study of Philadelphia: Then and Now, with focus on liberty and diversity. Virtual trips included landmarks such as the African American Museum. Students engaged in project- and performance-based learning and researched topics from the Constitutional Convention to role models like Patti LaBelle.

Youngest Scholars embodies Gesu’s mantra to educate the whole person, pairing academics with wellness, prayer, even dance breaks for self-care and socialization.

“Youngest Scholars were changemakers in the midst of a global pandemic and civil unrest. Each committed to learning not only about Philadelphia but also mindfulness, cultural diversity, and social-emotional learning. The students built confidence in a virtual learning environment and shared their knowledge. All demonstrated a growth mindset.”

—Colleen Comey
Youngest Scholars Program Director

**Sustaining Spirituality**

Our Mission and Ministry team and faculty support committee initiated virtual daily Mass and a weekly “Magis moment” email with reflections and discussion starters on topics ranging from praying for racial justice, to commemorating Earth Day, to staying hopeful. The goal remains to keep our faith-based Catholic foundation in focus during virtual education.

**Philadelphia: Then and Now Essays by Rising 3rd Graders**

*My name is Demi. The year is 2020. Today I went to a Black Lives Matter protest. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, but not everything changed. Many people, like Martin Luther King, worked to make sure everyone was treated equally. We must continue to make our voices heard, like he did.*

*Hi, My name is Camryn. The year is 1965. I am so excited. Today my family is going to the Divine Lorraine Hotel. It is the first racially integrated hotel. Many leaders are working on Civil Rights, and I think a change will come soon!*

*“Youngest Scholars were changemakers in the midst of a global pandemic and civil unrest. Each committed to learning not only about Philadelphia but also mindfulness, cultural diversity, and social-emotional learning. The students built confidence in a virtual learning environment and shared their knowledge. All demonstrated a growth mindset.”*—Colleen Comey
Youngest Scholars Program Director
Gesu is proud to be designated a No Place for Hate® school by the Anti-Defamation League for eight consecutive years. To earn this designation, Gesu students, faculty, and staff engage annually in school-wide initiatives that create an environment where all are respected and where diversity is celebrated.

Over the years, these efforts have included the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service project, Stomp Out Bullying Day, and school mural projects that encourage respect and acceptance. Gesu also participates in programs directed by the ADL Philadelphia, such as the yearly Read for Respect Day and the Walk Against Hate®.

The partnership between Gesu and the ADL Philadelphia blossomed under the leadership of Vice Principal Alana Lee, featured in the ADL’s 2019 No Place for Hate® Coordinator Handbook and Resource Guide. Our thanks to the ADL, especially Lisa Friedlander, Education Director of No Place for Hate®, and Lindsay Shafer, Associate Education Director, for their collaboration and their role in ensuring that inclusivity permeates Gesu’s school culture.

“Gesu values the knowledge and resources that the Anti-Defamation League provides. As a school community, we try to live out the No Place for Hate® mission: learning to respect and celebrate each other’s differences and challenge each other’s bias. Rather than just saying that we are an anti-bullying school community and hanging a few posters, our students, faculty, and staff model ways to show empathy and kindness to build a more respectful community.

We enjoy participating in Read for Respect Day with our ADL friends. One of our favorite programs is representing Gesu in the ADL’s Walk Against Hate®. It is truly a day filled with love.”

—Alana Lee
Vice Principal

Along with over 30 Gesu students, families, and staff, Gesu Pre-K Teacher Aides Desirée Porter (left) and Andrea Warner (right) participate in the 2015 ADL Walk Against Hate®.

Volunteers with the ADL and Gesu School celebrate Read for Respect Day with Gesu students in March 2020. They read Suliwe by Lupita Nyong'o, The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson, and Lillian’s Right to Vote by Jonah Winter and discussed themes of understanding social justice and what it means for everyone to have equal rights.

For National Bullying Prevention Month in October 2017, Gesu students signed a pledge to advocate for bullying prevention. Students and faculty wore blue to commemorate World Bullying Prevention Day.

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—Alana Lee
Vice Principal
With the support of Teacher Sojourner Truth, presents on her hero, Before an audience of family and classmates, a second grader shares why she admires her Black hero, Sojourner Truth.

Keith Pension

Gesu students, and even some gone many years, pop in for a quick hug.” place she holds in her teaching and her former students, that former students, routinely visit regularly. Older Gesu students, and even graduates, routinely pop in for a quick hug.”

—Keith Pension

Gesu Trustee and Volunteer

“As a near weekly volunteer in Mary Ryder’s classroom for six years, I saw firsthand the special place she holds in her students’ hearts. Her current kids adore her. It’s a testament to her teaching and her capacity for nurturing that former students, some gone many years, visit regularly. Older Gesu students, and even graduates, routinely pop in for a quick hug.”

―Keith Pension

Gesu Trustee and Volunteer

The annual blubber experiment. Class chants. “Think Outside the Box” Thursdays. For nine years, 2nd Grade Teacher Mary Ryder has infused her classroom with interactive, hands-on learning. In 2020, Mrs. Ryder’s colleagues awarded her the Knetzger Outstanding Teacher Award. Endowed by a gift from Jay and Kathy Sherrard in memory of Gesu Trustee Edwin Knetzger, the award is presented annually to that faculty member demonstrating the highest quality of teaching ability and commitment. Mrs. Ryder also received the 2015 Jimmy Medal from the SpeakUp! organization for her resiliency, empathy, humility, and loyalty, and for making a difference in others’ lives by recognizing their goodness and potential.

Recently retired, Mrs. Ryder reflects on her time at Gesu in this interview.

What is your teaching style and philosophy of teaching?

It leads to a sense of community and empowers students. They have increased trust to take risks. I can also see decreased behavior issues. I did team-building activities at the beginning of each year and would continue. On “Fun Fridays” we did STEAM (science, tech, engineering, art, math) team-building activities to solve a problem. That is life-work together to figure out how to get things done.

Second graders present reports on Black heroes. Why is this assembly so important?

I want them to see there are Black people like them who have accomplished important things and to know their history. After all, Black history is American history. To add to this discussion, I invited guest speakers, such as parents, to talk about Black heroes and share their personal history. We discussed race and racism multiple times a week, prompted by books, current events, and personal experiences. It’s important to have this continued conversation.

What do you hope students hold with them after 2nd grade?

I want them to know that they are enough. They have proven they can overcome challenges by learning to say “yet” and by developing grit. I also want them to have authentic memories of me and their classmates and to know that they will always hold a place in my heart.

Describe your Thursday “Think Outside the Box” activity.

It’s a wonderful way to get kids outside of their comfort zone. I would post a partial image on an easel, like a half of a plus sign. After moving it to different angles, students would have 15 minutes to think and draw something that was, in fact, not a plus sign. The goal was having fun while taking their brains to a different place. The answer isn’t right or wrong. It’s about perspective.

Why is working at Gesu meaningful?

The camaraderie. Once you’re in the door, you don’t ever want to leave. What I love most is the sense of support from administration, teachers, staff, as well as the parents, and students’ extended families. I teach a student one year, a cousin the next, and a sibling three years later. I really feel like Gesu is a family.

Second Graders Think Outside the Box
Cierra ‘16 embraced her Gesu foundation to become a changemaker. She grew up in North Philadelphia, near Gesu School. A vibrant, close-knit community, the neighborhood nonetheless experiences systemic issues common to inner-city areas, including high rates of violence and poverty.

Cierra reflects: “Growing up in urban North Philadelphia, many kids like me sometimes feel there is little or no hope. Gesu changed that course for me. It gave me the foundation to innovate, to imagine, and to act!”

Gesu School provides a transformative education for our 450 Pre-K–8th graders, helping them to transcend all forms of poverty. We empower our students to develop their strengths, overcome challenges, and become positive, engaged members of the community and the world. Cierra personifies this mission.

At Gesu, Cierra built leadership skills in Model UN and as a SpeakUp! peer leader. She sharpened academic skills in advanced writing classes and as a Lenfest Scholar. She engaged in community service and explored her talents in the Gesu Gospel Choir.

Cierra earned a full scholarship to Merion Mercy Academy, a top girls Catholic school. She arrived poised to be a changemaker: “I knew my potential and had the confidence to get involved.”

At Merton, she was elected president of the Black Student Union and served as one of the first students on the inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Eager to grow, she expanded her skill set and articulated her voice on a global scale at the National Association of Independent Schools Student Diversity Leadership Conference.

Because of her Gesu foundation, Cierra continues thriving. As a freshman at Saint Joseph’s University, she has already taken on a leadership role with Be Civil, a diversity leadership training team. After earning her degree in marketing, she aims to specialize in diversity, equity, and inclusion work for corporations.

Gesu School brims with hope-filled leaders like Cierra. We offer a specialized soft skills curriculum to shape their confidence, grit, and social competence. And we provide scholarships and financial aid to every student who qualifies. Each year, Gesu raises roughly $4 million to ensure that students have access to the highest quality education and the agency, like Cierra, to make an impact in our communities.

“Gesu School has made me a better me!”

—Cierra ‘16

“Gesu School for putting me on this path and making me the confident woman I am today!”

—Cierra ‘16
Student Gallery

“Fall Colors”  
By Mikel, Grade 1

“Kente Quilt”  
By Ms. Mack’s Pre-K Class

“I Am”  
By Heilyn, Grade 2  
I am smart and sassy  
I wonder what it is like  
to be in high school  
I hear my mom say  
I love you  
I see birds  
I want a phone  
I am smart and sassy  
I pretend to be famous  
I feel happy when  
it’s nice outside  
I touch my hair  
I worry about my mom  
I cry when I get hurt  
I am smart and sassy  
I understand English  
I say empowerment  
I dream about my mom  
having a big house  
I try to be kinder  
I hope the virus goes away  
I am smart and sassy

“Spin Art”  
By Kindergarten

“Cut-Outs of Geologic Time Scale in Topographic Layers”  
By Grade 6  
Partnership with Wagner Free Institute of Science SNAP Program:  
Science, Nature, and Art in Philadelphia

“Black Pioneers”  
By Grade 7 Girls

Visit Gesu School’s YouTube Channel to enjoy musical selections and other student presentations. youtube.com/gesuschoolworks
Memorable Moments from 2019–2020

August
To create an optimal, multi-dimensional learning environment, Gesu installed 15 new SMART TVs and purchased 115 new Chromebooks. Each Gesu student from Pre-K–8th grade now has access to a personal device—iPad or laptop.

September

Our community celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit, a Jesuit tradition, in the Church of the Gesu. Students reflected on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, offered prayers for the year ahead, and blessed their teachers and staff.

Over 100 friends raised more than $1,500 at the Gesu Junior Board’s rooftop beer garden. Attendees enjoyed outdoor games, good company, and food and drinks from Farmer’s Keep, RR. King Catering, Yards Brewing, and Insomnia Cookies. The PHL 17 Morning Show and reporter Khiree Stewart previewed the event from Gesu’s rooftop playground.

Alumnus Rasheed Stewart ’04 (center), an attorney at a top New York City law firm, shared a motivational talk with 7th and 8th graders. Stewart is a graduate of Germantown Friends School, Temple University, and University of Michigan Law School. He imparted wisdom about the value of education, with special thanks to Ms. Jo-Anne Young (right), his 7th grade teacher. “Anything is possible through education,” he reminded students.

November

On November 7, Gesu celebrated our 15th year of partnership with Jumpstart Philadelphia at Temple University and the organization’s Read for the Record Day. This national day for childhood literacy promotes joy for reading among Pre-K children. Students across the country read Oge Mora’s book Thank You, Omu! Journalist Cherri Gregg visited as our celebrity reader and shared the story on KYW Newsradio. Temple students work with Gesu Pre-K five days per week to build early literacy skills.

Gesu student council spearheaded the annual Thanksgiving food drive, collecting 960 canned goods for the food pantry at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in North Philadelphia. Each classroom had full participation. We are truly grateful to our 450 Gesu students for being young “women and men for others.”

2019 Symposium: Social Justice & Education

Gesu hosted our 22nd Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education on November 1 with nearly 200 attendees. The symposium featured keynote Pedro Noguera, Distinguished Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies and Faculty Director for the Center for the Transformation of Schools at UCLA. He is the author of 11 books and over 200 articles and monographs. He appears as a regular commentator on educational issues on CNN, MSNBC, National Public Radio, and other national news outlets. Noguera’s keynote centered on equity and the role educators play in building a school’s capacity to meet student needs.

Gesu hopes that the symposium will prompt a wider conversation on how to improve education in all of America’s urban schools. We thank Presenting Sponsor, The Maguire Foundation, and symposium supporters Glenmede, Commonwealth Foundation, Craig & Sandy White, and James J. Clearkin, Inc.

December

Gesu earned renewal of our Jesuit sponsorship after completing a year-long self-study that addressed required benchmarks and hosting a four-day visit by a team of educators from Jesuit schools. Every six years, Gesu engages in this sponsorship review process to assess and improve these areas: Jesuit and Catholic mission and identity, governance and leadership, educational excellence, spiritual formation, and faith that does justice.

Gesu Sponsor a Child supporters and students spent an afternoon together enjoying board games and sharing lunch. Sponsorship covers the majority of the annual cost to educate one Gesu student. We thank our 118 sponsors for their life-changing generosity and supporting 221 students in fiscal year 2020.

Santa stopped by Gesu School with a special delivery of new books for Pre-K and Kindergarten. Gesu extends our sincere gratitude to our Jesuit neighbors at Old Saint Joseph’s Church for sharing Christmas joy, year after year.

Visit gesuschool.org and our social media channels for videos and more photos. Read our blog on the homepage. Or, click “News & Events.”
January

Students and families from Gesu and St. Joseph’s Preparatory School gathered for the MLK Day of Service to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his commitment to justice, equality, and peace. Nearly 125 volunteers served our community through a block clean-up, packing hygiene kits, and creating decorative placemats for Meals on Wheels. Participants also watched the film Selma and engaged in a universal prayer service and Examen.

February

Gesu alumnus Rev. Msgr. Federico Britto ’69 celebrated Mass for Black History Month with our Gesu community. The Monsignor inspired students with his Gesu story and his homily on praying to God to understand our vocations, do good for others, and become compassionate listeners and strong leaders.

The Gesu Gospel Choir and members of our Catholic student union presented a prayer service for Black History Month. Students shared the gift of song and reflection with the retired Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Camilla Hall Convent Home and Healthcare Center.

Gesu alumnus Rev. Msgr. Federico Britto ’69

Congratulations to the Gesu girls varsity basketball and JV boys basketball teams, champions of their CYO leagues! We are proud of their determination and hard work. Thank you to the coaching staff for their leadership and encouragement. Coach Joe Caraway (varsity girls) and Coach Corby and Coach Isiah Wilson (JV boys).

The Gesu Junior Board hosted its first “quizo for classrooms” fundraiser with nearly 75 attending at Urban Saloon. Mike Talvacchia, 5th Grade Boys Teacher, hosted as emcee. The event raised $2,450 to support Gesu students’ education.

March

An incredible 720 donors nationwide supported Gesu’s One Day Challenge, raising $68,188.41! Our sincerest gratitude to The Z Foundation for sponsoring their 6th consecutive One Day Challenge and donating $15,000! We thank each donor for supporting 450 students’ education, especially Tim & Ellen Foster, Mary Kate Leonard, and a generous anonymous sponsor. We acknowledge our students, who contributed $1,377 in “Change for Change.” Over the past six years, the One Day Challenge has raised $360,792.41.

April

The Gesu Class of 2020

Thank you to all who supported the 2020 Gesu Gala! Your generosity enables Gesu to deliver critical educational programs and resources that ensure our 450 learners become tomorrow’s leaders. The 2020 Gala raised more than $200,000, including $33,000 from our online auction!

Congratulations to our 2020 Spirit Medalists Saint Joseph’s University and Trustee Rosemary Español for their dedication to Gesu School. We also honor Imani Briscoe ’09, inaugural recipient of the James F. Higgins ’45 Distinguished Alumni Award, as highlighted in Catholic Philly. Gesu also pays tribute to the St. Joseph’s Prep Mother’s Club for their 65-year commitment to philanthropy and service, especially their annual Christmas gift project, which supports hundreds of families.

View the interactive Gesu Gala tribute book here: gesuschool.org/2020gala. Listen to the Gesu Gospel Choir, learn about our alumni award recipient, and watch video tributes to Spirit Medal honorees. Step inside our Gesu classrooms and community!

May

2020 Gala

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June

Gesu celebrated a virtual graduation ceremony, including awards, speeches, and a slide show tribute to each graduate. The Church of the Gesu served as a backdrop. Staff and trustees planned socially distant deliveries of diplomas and alumni association welcome gear to congratulate the Class of 2020 on their resilience and achievements.
Gesu School recognizes our leadership-level donors who have made gifts of $50,000 and above with membership in the Pierre Toussaint Society. Venerable Pierre Toussaint, the society’s namesake, is a hero from our Catholic heritage. Born into slavery in Haiti in the early 19th century, Pierre Toussaint was brought to New York City, where he became a successful hairdresser. He used his earnings to free many slaves and finally himself. Once a free man, he performed many acts of charity, including the establishment of an orphanage and a school for Black children. When most fled the city during a yellow fever epidemic, he stayed to nurse the sick. His dedication to the well-being and education of the poor makes Pierre Toussaint a fitting patron for Gesu and our donors.

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*Donor lists include gifts made July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020.
**The Magis Society: Planned Giving**

Members of the Magis Society impact children’s lives by including Gesu School in their estate plans. For more information about how you can help secure Gesu’s future through your estate plans, or to notify us of inclusion in your will, please contact Rob Weinstein, Vice President of Development, at 215-763-9077 or rob.weinstein@gesuschool.org

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Jonathan Detwiler
We will sorely miss Jonathan’s infectious smile, enthusiasm, and love for Gesu School. His generosity and kindness helped touch the lives of so many Gesu students for more than two decades.

In Memoriam
In the last year, Gesu mourned the loss of these members of our community.

Mary Louise Caraway
Nadir Nafs Holloman, Jr. ’16
Salvatore Nuzzo
Rodney L. Pickett, Sr.

Vivienne served Gesu School in multiple capacities for 14 years. Elected to the Gesu School Board of Trustees in 2002, Vivienne championed Gesu’s mission and educational model. Committed to Gesu’s students, Vivienne sponsored a student from grades 1–8 through our Sponsor a Child Program. In 2006, Vivienne began volunteering full time as Gesu’s Librarian. In addition to leading classes and encouraging students to read, Vivienne computerized Gesu’s entire library, cataloging over 4,000 books by hand. To expand the library’s reach and ensure that 450 students enjoyed weekly library classes, she recruited and managed a volunteer team. Gesu was blessed to recognize her in 2013 with our highest honor, the Gesu Spirit Medal. In 2016, Gesu officially dedicated our library to Vivienne in honor of her extraordinary service as a leader, mentor, and friend.

The Eth family has generously made an endowed gift to sponsor a child in perpetuity in Vivienne’s memory.

Frances M. “Frannie” Maguire
Frannie and the Maguire Foundation, of which she is a founder, have been friends of Gesu School and our students since 2012. Frannie and the Maguire Foundation support students as Maguire Scholars during middle school, high school, and college.

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Inspirational Excerpts by Kimberly Baxter ‘12

“Gesu had a strong community of teachers and mentors that took the time to invest in me, support me, and guide me into becoming a strong individual. They saw the potential in me even during times when I did not see it in myself. Even though it’s been eight years since I graduated, Gesu continues to support me and my endeavors and still serves as a place I call home.”

— Kimberly Baxter ’12

I am a graduate of Gesu ’12, an alumna of Merion Mercy Academy ’16, and a graduate of the University of Scranton ’20. In addition to celebrating your achievements, I hope to inspire each of you to continue on your own paths of success that Gesu has helped you to create.

On Ambition
While at Gesu, I was the student who got good grades, participated in many school activities, including the Gesu Gospel Choir, forensics, and the Akybra theater program, and was class president for student council. I remember all the times I went home at night to study and work hard to prepare for tests, projects, and papers. I remember participating in class and staying active in school because I knew I wanted to do great things in the future.

It was in 5th grade that I decided I wanted to be a United States Supreme Court Justice. Declaring such an ambitious role as a goal at such an early age, not everyone took me seriously. But I always felt strongly supported by my family, close friends, and the Gesu community to continue pursuing this dream. My early ambition was my response to my calling to serve others and lead in ways that make a profoundly positive difference. Gesu helped me set my foundation for the person I wanted to be. I wanted to be a woman who is smart, talented, dedicated to serving others, and committed to making a better future for myself. I was able to acquire the necessary strength and courage to be a great leader who represented and served her school well.

On Service
Gesu prepared me well academically, mentally, and socially for high school. It was then at Merion that I continued to develop my talents and leadership skills through clubs. I got involved in different community service opportunities around Philadelphia, which deepened my desire to be a “woman for others.” The past four years at Scranton, I took the time to learn as much as I could about different social justice issues both internationally and domestically. I participated in two eye-opening service trips, one to Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California and the other to the Kino Border in Nogales, Mexico.

On Action & Advocacy
Experiences like these have only furthered my resolve to contribute to our society and shape it as a better, more welcoming place. My undergraduate experience taught me about service, but this fall when I begin law school at Villanova, I will gain the fundamental tools and skills necessary to take action, because advocacy allows you to change the world. There need to be advocates for social justice, who look to change and improve our systems of law, regulations, and society itself. Service opened my eyes to the problems. My ambition that was instilled in me at Gesu, to study, learn, and apply the law, pushes me to find the solutions.

On Gesu as Home
Gesu had a strong community of teachers and mentors that took the time to invest in me, support me, and guide me into becoming a strong individual. They saw the potential in me even during times when I did not see it in myself.

Even though it’s been eight years since I graduated, Gesu continues to support me and my endeavors and still serves as a place I call home.

Just like Gesu invested in me and my goals, they are invested in helping you each succeed in life and are committed to helping you on your journey to success. Each of you will have a different idea and vision of what that may look like, but it’s important that you know you are capable of achieving it. As you take your next steps into high school, remember that there will be difficult times when you feel like you’re at your lowest or that you’ve failed. But remember, one setback does not determine who you are or your future. Keep your head held high and continue working towards your own path of success. Remember, Gesu is always a place you can call home and that will be there for you.

I congratulate you, the Class of 2020 on your achievements and wish you well in all your endeavors.
The Mission

Inspired by the Jesuit and IHM traditions of social justice, faith, creative hope, and love, Gesu School helps students to transcend all forms of poverty by providing a comprehensive, innovative education. We empower our students to develop their strengths, overcome challenges, and become positive, engaged members of the community and the world.

The Results

In a city where approximately 69 percent of public high school students graduate from high school in four years, 90 percent of Gesu alumni graduate high school on time, and of those graduates, 86 percent go on to college or post-secondary education.

Gesu looks ahead to a bright, hopeful future! Your support helps us achieve this vision for our 450 students.

During this challenging year, your prayers, time, and financial generosity enabled Gesu to continue preparing 450 learners to become tomorrow’s leaders.

A 2nd grader shows off special sunglasses and a homemade t-shirt to commemorate the 100th day of school.