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, spent a day with Gesu’s students 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. “We all stand on somebody’s shoulders,” Moutoussamy-Ashe explained to the students.

Moutoussamy-Ashe’s visit highlighted 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 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 Breaking Barriers, a companion curriculum, which was introduced during the first week of February at Gesu School and at middle schools in five other cities.

- Contributing writer Lauren Somers
BOOK DRIVE SURPASSES HOPES

Countless angels donated nearly 4,000 books to Gesu School through the Devon Barnes & Noble’s holiday book drive, coordinated by: Gesu Volunteers Pat Murphy and Barbara Hildenbrand; the Conestoga High School Key Club; and Barnes & Noble’s Community Relations Manager Maureen Montecchio and Store Manager Brad Wary.

Throughout the year, each of Gesu’s 460 students will receive books to celebrate special holidays and occasions. So far, the gifts have delighted the children on Christmas, Inauguration Day, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. In addition to encouraging book donations, the Barnes & Noble employees donated their own time to staff a gift wrap station that raised over $333 for the school to purchase additional books. Thank you to Barnes & Noble and to the many of you who contributed to the drive!

THREE CHEERS!

Ashton Miller ’04 was elected President of his freshman class at Princeton University... Ashley Tinsley ’06, a junior at Springside, was awarded the Vera Logan Essay Scholarship from Thankful Baptist Church to be used for college books... Teachers Chris Harris, Janet Maldonado, and Sarah Weir, and trustee Scott Miller all recently welcomed new babies to their respective families... Gesu’s new Youngest Scholars Program, spearheaded by trustee John Difallo, Jr., Ph.D. and his wife Rosalice Difilo and coordinated by teacher Colleen Comey, was featured in the fall issue of Momentum magazine. Copies of the article are available through the Development Office... 8th grader Ernie Ross received a full scholarship from North Carolina Outward Bound to attend a 2 week wilderness course in July... And thanks to publicist and friend Charlene Goyer and writer Lauren Somers, Gesu’s story is well known throughout the region.

CHILDREN’S SCHOLARSHIP FUND PHILADELPHIA HELPS PARENTS AFFORD TUITION

This year, 37 children received a total of $28,932 from the Children’s Scholarship Fund towards their Gesu tuition. CSF is the largest provider of Kindergarten – 8th grade scholarship money in Pennsylvania and has served over 5,800 children. Its mission is to provide educational alternatives to low-income Philadelphia families, who use their CSF scholarship awards at the schools of their choice. Gesu is honored to be the chosen educational alternative for our Children’s Scholarship Fund students.

“WAG TALE” WOWS YET STUDENTS

Who are these amazing volunteers? They are two West Highland Terriers, a Standard Poodle, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, and a Havanese, accompanied by their owners and equally dedicated volunteers Amy Brenner, Sarah Brenner, Edna Adelberg, and Libby Sherry. “Wag Tales,” as the group calls itself, began coming to Gesu’s YET program after veterinarian Amy Brenner heard about a Chicago-based literacy program for children and dogs called Sit-Stay-Read. Brenner was further encouraged by the research indicating that students who read to dogs show significant improvements in their literacy skills.

This year fifty 1st - 4th graders benefit from the YET program coordinated by teacher Val Haley. YET targets students who are below reading level with one-on-one reading assistance four days a week. The program is possible thanks to a generous grant from the Hamilton Family Foundation, as well as a growing army of volunteers and teachers who read with the children.

NEW “YOUNG FRIENDS OF GESU SCHOOL” GROUP GAINS MOMENTUM

Over 50 young professionals from the Philadelphia region gathered at the Pub & Kitchen in February for the 3rd happy hour sponsored by the Young Friends of Gesu School. Thanks to the efforts of planning committee members Paul Chryssikos, Mary Petroni, Steve Shea, Heather Tashman, Julia Rafferty, and Mike Wham, the group has already raised $1,945 towards their goal of providing tuition for one child this year. Next year they hope to raise the full cost of one child’s Gesu education, $5,800, through regular fund-raising happy hours and other events throughout the city. For more info about the Young Friends of Gesu School, visit www.GesuSchool.org/young_friends.htm.
Students Riveted by Presidential Inauguration, Mark Occasion with Celebration of Their Own

“Obama! Obama!” echoed throughout the student body as our nation’s first African American President appeared on the big screen erected in Gesu’s Sherried Gymnasium. The live broadcast of the historic event provided a real-time lesson in civics and government for Gesu’s 460 students, who came to school in dress attire for the celebration. Following the broadcast, the students enjoyed their own Inaugural Ball to commemorate the occasion. “Our goal is to make this day a day they will always remember,” stated Principal Sr. Ellen Convey, IHM.

Thanks to Senator Bob Casey, Jr., 5th grade boys’ teacher Chris Harris and his son Devon, an 8th grader at Gesu, received tickets to attend the inauguration in person. When asked about the experience, Mr. Harris described it as “life changing.” Senator Casey’s generous support of Gesu School began after college, when he taught at Gesu as a Jesuit Volunteer in the 80’s.

By the Numbers

123 - the number of students with scholarships through the Sponsor-A-Child Program this year.

98.5 - the percentage of Gesu families who require some form of tuition assistance. (Stated tuition is $2010 per year). Last year, tuition covered only 12% of the school’s expenses.

70 - the percentage of Gesu students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.

220 - the number of Gesu students receiving EITC (PA Earned Income Tax Credit) scholarship money this year, thanks to the generous business owners who support the program.

460 - the number of students growing towards their full potential at Gesu School, thanks to your generosity.

Now Online at www.GesuSchool.org

Gala Information

Performer bios and additional Gala ticket options are now available online. This is a party you don’t want to miss! And it’s all for a good cause! 

Symposium Recap

The transcript, photos, and more from the 11th Annual Symposium on Inner-City Education and Phillies Rally are now available online.

Email Subscriptions

Do you want to receive periodic emails from Gesu with news and event info, such as announcements for the Symposium, Dr. Seuss Day, and more? Email us at information@GesuSchool.org to sign up!

New Initiative Promotes Wise High School Selection for Gesu’s Inner-City Students

Navigating the complex process of selecting and applying to an appropriate high school can be daunting for students with ample resources at hand, let alone for our students in North Philadelphia. But help has arrived! Starting this year, Gesu’s 7th and 8th graders are receiving additional assistance with the high school selection and admissions process through the help of volunteers Mary Klein, a retired school counselor from the Philadelphia Public School District, and Kristin Hayes, a retired attorney. The two volunteers have worked in cooperation with the students’ parents and with M.M. O’Neill and Sr. Pat McGrenra in Gesu’s counseling office to give Gesu’s students the best possible edge on the high school selection process.

High School Acceptances to Date:

- Academy of the New Church
- Bishop McDevitt
- Cardinal Dougherty
- Charter H.S. for Architecture & Design
- Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA)
- J.W. Hallahan
- Mercy Vocational
- Merion Mercy Academy
- Mount Saint Joseph Academy
- New Media Charter
- North Catholic
- Roman Catholic
- Saint Joseph’s Prep*
- Shipley School
- Springside School
- West Catholic

* All three Gesu students participating in the Saint Joseph’s Prep Buddy Program qualified for admission and received full tuition scholarships. An additional student received conditional admission.

Athletic Corner

Basketball: Girls Varsity won the CYO Region 8 Championship and advanced to the Final Four in the Archdiocesan CYO Tournament. Boys Varsity lost the CYO Region 8 Championship in a toughly contested game, but advanced to the Final Four in the Archdiocesan CYO Tournament. Boys JV also put forth a respectable season. But possibly the biggest win is the overall improvement in discipline the players have shown in school since the beginning of the season, which highlights the role of sports in students’ social and moral development.

Students Run Philly Style: This year, 16 Gesu students have signed up for the citywide running program that helps students train for the Philadelphia Half Marathon. The students and coaches also compete in the Broad Street Run and other local races. Congratulations to Rachael Baxter and coach Erica Asalka, who capped last year’s Students Run season with the Rothman Institute 8k race held in conjunction with the Philadelphia Marathon.

Track: Over 71 students have turned out for this year’s track season. Coach Leaf could still use volunteers to help on Saturdays or after school. Call the school office at 215-763-3660 for more information.

Did you know, over 90% of Gesu’s graduates complete high school in four years, a rate well above the citywide average of 51%? Gesu School admits students from the six zip codes closest to the school on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no selective academic admissions to attend Gesu.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam, for the Greater Glory of God
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**Charity Navigator Recognizes Gesu’s Sound Fiscal Management, Awards Gesu Coveted 4-Star Rating for 3rd Consecutive Year**

“Only 10% of the charities we’ve rated have received at least 3 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating the Gesu School consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way, and outperforms most other charities in America. This ‘exceptional’ designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Gesu School from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust,” wrote Ken Berger, Charity Navigator’s President & CEO, in a letter to the school. Learn more at www.charitynavigator.org.

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Does this newsletter look expensive to you?  
**Did you know it only cost $0.51 to print?**

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Address correction requested