In March the National Liberty Museum honored 20 teachers out of nearly 100 nominations from across the Mid-Atlantic as the heroes they truly are at the “Teacher as Heroes” Awards. The shining star among them was Gesu’s ten-year-veteran phy ed teacher Sean Deal. Mr. Deal was recognized for the countless hours he dedicates to Gesu’s and the region’s athletic programs, his generosity in mentoring students both past and present, his perseverance, his creative teaching approach, and his contribution to defusing violence.

Born several months premature, Mr. Deal has had serious physical challenges as well as a learning disability to overcome throughout his life. Despite the tremendous difficulties he faced, practice, determination and hard work enabled him to play basketball in high school and to persevere academically through college to earn his bachelor’s degree in education. For the last ten years, much of his persistence has gone into helping Gesu students overcome their own obstacles in order to realize the same success that he has achieved.

While healthy exercise and eating habits may be the core subject matter in Mr. Deal’s phy ed class and on the court, RESPECT is equally emphasized in Mr. Deal’s gym. Mr. Deal’s lessons in respect begin with showing students and athletes respect himself. But for this “extremely competitive” crowd, Mr. Deal also stresses how to win with dignity and how to lose with dignity, to show humility and shake hands when they’ve won a competition, and that hurtful words can stay with people for a lifetime.

Before Gesu School had a gymnasium, Mr. Deal had to be quite inventive to come up with activities that would work in the school’s basement multi-purpose room. He took a lot of that outside-of-the-box thinking with him to the school’s new gym (which he thanks you for!). He’s always looking for creative ways to teach proper eating and exercising habits, and finding ways to incorporate music into the activities he’s developed to tap into our students’ love of music. Because of Mr. Deal’s rapport with the students, other teachers often turn to him for help with a student whose grades are slipping, who isn’t doing homework, or who is having other challenges. Such trust and respect speaks for itself.

The award, presented for the first time this year, will be given annually “to a Philadelphia or regional educator who has made exceptional advances in innovation and efficacy for Catholic schools—capturing the essence of the magis—to do something of greater worth, in the current moment, for the most pressing need.” Congratulations, Sr. Ellen, and thank you, from everyone whose life you’ve touched!

Redefining Inner-City Education

GESU SCHOOL
Educational Excellence in North Philadelphia in the Jesuit and IHM Traditions

Summer 2013
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Gesu School,

As we come to the close of the 2012-13 school year, I think of the Gesu mantra and African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child.” Each September, 450 children begin the school year and our objective is to “raise” the children in academics, in spirituality and in character—to educate the whole child.

I want to emphasize the character formation aspect of our school year. In line with the Jesuit tenet of being Men and Women for Others, the children, many of whom reside in the most impoverished areas of Philadelphia, collected canned goods for the needy, donated nearly $2,000 in mission collections and conducted an anti-bullying service project with the Need In Deed organization. As a result of the work of our children, Gesu School will receive the designation of a No Place for Hate school from the Anti-Discrimination League of Philadelphia. We are “raising” the children in character and spirituality!

Of course, we are proud of the academic accomplishments of the students and our eighth grade students, in particular, who will attend top high schools such as Shipley, The Baldwin School, Friends Select, Central, and St. Joseph’s Prep in September. We are “raising” the children academically!

So, I say to the volunteers, benefactors and friends of Gesu School, thank you for continuing to be part of the “village” that “raises” our students. Your support, financial and otherwise, is critical to the ongoing success of Gesu School and our children.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter
President and CEO

THREE CHEERS!

Alumna and trustee *Nyree Lyons ’95 made Level Four Clinical Nurse at the Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania... Alumna and trustee Daryl Shore ’94 was promoted to Vice President at JP Morgan Chase... The Good Shepheder Meditation Center recognized trustee Rev. George Bur, S.J., with the Shepherd of Peace Award... The American Catholic Historical Society recognized trustee Rev. William J. Byrnon with the Barry Award... The Support Center for Child Advocates honored trustee Mark Solomon with the Judge Lois G. Forer Child Advocacy Award... 8th grader Jadja placed 4th in the nation in triple jump and 6th in the nation in the 800m run at the recent Junior Olympics... Our 8th grade team of Denzell, Derrick, Janiya, and Sahara placed 1st in English and 2nd in history at the West Catholic Academic Challenge... Kindergarten teacher Cristina Byrne completed her M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education at Chestnut Hill College... and technology teacher Sallie Michalsky completed her M.S. in Education at Saint Joseph’s University...

TRUSTEE NOTES

We welcome to our Board of Trustees the following new members:

Marie T. McCormick, Ph.D., co-president, InSyte Partners; Sr. Stephen Anne Rodriguez, IHM, principal, Saint Aloysius Academy; Sr. Mary Ellen Tenney, IHM, congregational leadership, Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; and Dr. Janet Mary Walters, IHM, principal, Mary, Mother of Peace School.

We gratefully thank the following former members for their service: Sr. John Evelyn DiTrollo, IHM, Sr. Patricia Padden, IHM, Ed.D., Sr. Margaret Gradl, IHM, D. Daniele Hager, Peter Morse, and Babette Snyder.

IN MEMORIAM

The Gesu community is saddened by the loss of two important members of our circle. G. Davis Greene (died 8/2/2012) was one of Gesu’s founding board members and served as board treasurer for a number of years. His support in Gesu’s early years as an independent school were critical to our success today. Bette Saul (died 1/6/2013), Gesu supporter and wife of founding board member Ralph Saul, was much beloved by all at Gesu School and her cheerful presence at many of our events will be missed.

EACHTHING YOU NEED IS JUST A CLICK AWAY! Gesu is thrilled to debut our NEW website, thanks to the generosity of trustee John Backe and the tireless work of his talented team at Backe Digital Brand Marketing.

Student artwork, the latest news stories, profiles of our teachers, upcoming events, the school handbook, registration information, ways to get involved—you’ll find it all right here at www.gesuschool.org in a beautiful new user-friendly format. You might just find yourself calling Backe to say “thank you” for their great work, too!
Eleven college students and eleven Gesu students are spread throughout the multipurpose room, focusing on various lessons. This scene has repeated itself weekly since the beginning of the school year, when the Saint Joseph’s University education majors taking Dr. Bill Murphy’s assessment course and subsequent instruction course came to Gesu School to put theory into practice. They began by assessing Gesu’s students for high incidence disability and need. “It’s such a rich experience for my students,” explains Dr. Murphy, who says his goal is to open up his students to the idea of teaching in urban education. It must be working—at this point he believes a third of his class would come to teach at Gesu in a heartbeat, and he already anticipates an enrollment of 20 for next year’s course.

Murphy has been teaching this class for six years, but worked with a public school for the field component. This year he decided to start bringing his class here to Gesu. It was a logical choice given the two schools’ shared Catholic, Jesuit missions. “There’s something special here. I could feel it the first day I arrived,” he explains.

In the end, the arrangement is a win-win for Gesu students, Saint Joseph’s University’s education majors, and the future of inner-city education.

**STOCK MARKET SAVVY EMPowers STUDents.** Eighth graders enjoy investment simulation project with Gesu trustee Paul Welch of PENN Capital Management.

“Residents in the inner-city are not as involved in the stock market,” Gesu trustee Paul Welch explains to the library full of 8th graders. “As you grow, you can help others learn about it. It’s about giving back—helping the community and your neighbors.”

This year, Welch, a senior research analyst and partner at PENN Capital Management, brought a variation of a Chicago-based school investment education program to Gesu. In November, Gesu’s students began with a $2,000 investment. Each “investor” selected a stock of interest to them with the goal of making money as a class gift to Gesu School. Over the course of the project, Welch tracked the simulated performance of the students’ portfolio, and taught the students ins and outs of investing.

At the end of May the students learned that their portfolio earned a 14.2% rate of return for a grand total of $2,285 to be donated by Welch. In honor of the students’ work, PENN Capital Management is donating an additional $2,000 to the school.

The class and the topic captivated the students. “It’s preparing me for when I get into the real world,” asserts 8th grader Sahara. Her classmate Monique was proud to learn that H & Block, the stock she had chosen for the portfolio, finished with a 57% rate of return despite low expectations for its performance among her fellow students. “Everyone can do this. Listen to yourself,” Welch told the class.

**NEW SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM LAUNCHes.** Students sink teeth into research project to serve the community.

Bullying. It’s one of the social problems on the forefront of our students’ minds. Mrs. Keeler’s 7th grade class quickly landed on it as their topic for the school’s inaugural service-learning project, facilitated with the help of the organization Need In Deed. The project, which aligns neatly with the core curriculum already in place, gives students a voice in the community and the opportunity for in-depth research and involvement in a topic that’s important to them. Throughout the course of the year, Gesu students partnered with a class at Mercy Vocational High School to explore the nature of bullying and to develop projects addressing their findings.

One highlight of the year’s project was Community Building Day, which included guest presenters from Saint Joseph’s Prep and the Richard Johnson Center for Anti-Violence, as well as sessions conducted by the Mercy Vocational - Gesu 7th grade team, and phys ed teacher Sean Deal. The project culminated with the filming and production of five public service announcements addressing different aspects of bullying. At their year-end “Shout Out” celebration, Need In Deed recognized our 7th graders with the Transformation Award, recognizing the personal transformation our students exhibited as a result of the program.

**CURIOUS as to where our 8th graders are going next year? Check out this year’s list of high schools at www.gesuschool.org!**

**ATHLETIC CORNER**

**Track:** At the Area A Championships, Gesu’s track team qualified to compete in 13 events at the Archdiocesan Championship later this spring, including the minor and novice girls 4x100m, the minor and novice girls 4x200m, and the minor boys 4x100m and 4x200m. Also advancing are 5th grader Isaiah in novice boys shot put, 5th grader Eva and 6th grader Semaj in the novice and minor girls 100m, 8th grader Audley in the cadet boys 100m, 200m and long jump, 5th grader Caelyn in the novice girls 200m, and 7th grader Javier in the minor boys 200m.

**Basketball:** Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity both advanced to the City Championships after losses in the CYO Region 8 Championships, putting them in the top 32 teams in the city. The Boys JV team won the Region 8 Championship. Congratulations to the students and coaches for a wonderful season!

**Soccer:** New this year, 3rd and 4th grade students had the opportunity to learn about and play soccer on our rooftop playground twice a week with Coach Sylvester Corbie from West Philly.
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And much more!

PULITZER PRIZE WINNER PRAISES STUDENTS,

Acclaimed journalist Kristen Graham encourages aspiring writers in Gesu’s Backe Advanced Writing Program.

Gesu’s 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Backe Advanced Writing students had the chance to reverse the roles on Pulitizer-prize winning journalist Kristen Graham, who visited with the students in February. The students peppered Graham with questions about her life and career, impressing her with their preparedness and attention. Incidentally, Graham loves baseball and “curve-ball” questions. Her favorite curve ball of the day was whether she is right- or left-handed. (She’s right-handed.)

Afterward Graham worked with two particularly talented 8th graders, Ashley and Jelani, on essays they had written and advanced writing teacher Dr. Erwin had submitted for review. “I thought you were definitely high school students,” confessed Graham, who had forgotten Gesu was only an elementary school when reviewing the pieces. “It was really good writing.” As she gave the writers tips to improve their essays, Graham praised their abilities. “You are a very gifted writer. This is just a very vivid essay,” she told Ashley. She also praised Jelani saying, “I’m really impressed with your writing.” Would you like a taste of the incredible work coming out of the Backe Advanced Writing class? Read Ashley’s original essay in the online student work gallery on our new website at www.gesuschool.org/student_work.

OVER 350 GATHER AT THE BELLEVUE TO CELEBRATE THE GREATNESS THAT’S GROWING IN NORTH PHILADELPHIA.

Students enjoy the opportunity to showcase their talents.

Thanks to the gala committee led by co-chairs Jenn & Carter Sims and Margaret Anne & Jim Nolen, the 2013 gala Growing Greatness raised over $340,000 in support of Gesu’s children, James J. and Frances M. Maguire and an anonymous donor were the presenting sponsors for this year’s gala, attended by more than 350 people.

During the evening, trustees Rev. William J. Byron, S.J., and Ms. Vivienne Lambert Ehret were honored with the Gesu Spirit Medal. Gesu’s achievements, its students’ scholarship opportunities, its growing Sponsor A Child program, and its thriving library are living tributes to the volunteer service and leadership of these two individuals.

The program featured performances from Gesu students including ballroom dancing, spoken word and selections from the choir.

Thank you to everyone who made the evening a success. If you missed the event, check out highlights on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/gesuschoolworks or on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/gesuschool.