

2009 Gesu Spirit Medal HONOREES

Aline & Al Martinelli



Sue & Bill Shea

Aline and Al Martinelli and Sue and Bill Shea will receive the coveted Gesu Spirit Medal at Gesu School's 2009 Gala, *Reach Out and Touch*. The Medal's presentation will highlight the evening's festivities on May 6th in the Franklin Institute's Franklin Hall and Fels Planetarium.

Aline and Al Martinelli generously support many Gesu endeavors and sponsor two students as well. The couple made a surprise challenge in 2006 that helped raise \$2 million in only three months to complete Gesu's \$12 million "Building for Tomorrow" capital campaign. Gesu's *Debbie Martinelli Resource Room* is named in memory of their late daughter. A former trustee of Fordham University, Al served on many other corporate and non-profit boards. Aline is a recipient of the Angela Merici Award from her *alma mater*, the College of New Rochelle. However, her favorite accomplishment is being "Grandma" to Andy, Steve, Elizabeth, Will and Davis.

Sue Shea, a Gesu Trustee, is a key classroom volunteer in Gesu's Resource Room. She used her many years' experience as a special education teacher to help develop Gesu's Learning Support Program and created the popular *Dancing with the Students* curriculum, a ballroom dancing program for Gesu's 7th and 8th graders, which entralls students year after year. Sue also serves on the Boards of the Please Touch Museum and Boston College.

Bill Shea has a special place in his heart for Gesu School, especially for Ms. Bright's third grade girls, to whom he reads on Dr. Seuss Day. A Board Member of the Franklin Institute, Bill is instrumental in bringing Gesu students to the Franklin throughout the year. One student celebrated her birthday at the King Tut exhibition, where she was the first person in Philadelphia to experience the exhibit. Bill is also a Trustee of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Together, Sue and Bill have chaired two Gesu galas.

Gesu School serves 460 mostly non-Catholic children in grades pre-K through 8. When its parish closed in 1993, the school's leaders took a leap of faith to keep it open as an independent Catholic school. Despite an open admissions policy and the fact that most Gesu children face significant obstacles to learning, more than 90 percent of its graduates complete high school in four years in a city where on-time graduation rates average 51 percent.