

2011 Gesu Spirit Medal Honorees



The Gesu Spirit Medal honors individuals who have shown, through their loyal advocacy and actions, extraordinary commitment to Gesu School, and who have made a significant contribution to Gesu School's success as a model inner-city elementary school. Gesu is honored to present this year's Spirit Medal to Christine Beck and Rev. George Bur, SJ.

Christine S. Beck

2nd President of Gesu School

An acclaimed advocate of inner-city youth, Chris Beck has been President & CEO of Gesu School since 2003. She previously served on the Board of Trustees from 1996 to 2003. Under her leadership, Gesu undertook and concluded a twelve million dollar campaign, completed a major renovation, and increased its endowment from \$5 million to almost \$13 million. Mrs. Beck also spearheaded a new three-year campaign for scholarships to conclude with the school's 20th anniversary in 2013.

Mrs. Beck has held many volunteer leadership positions, and, most notably, co-founded the Arthur Ashe Tennis and Education Center in Philadelphia. In recognition of her commitment to inner-city youth, she has received numerous local and national awards. Most recently, she was awarded the 2010 Immaculata Medal from Immaculata University.

Currently, Mrs. Beck serves on the Boards of Saint Joseph's Prep and the Arthur Ashe Learning Center in New York City, as well as the Advisory Board of the Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education Center.

She holds a B.A. degree, with Honors, from Queens University of Charlotte, where she is an inaugural member of the Athletic Hall of Fame, and an M.A. degree from Bryn Mawr College, both in German Literature.

Mrs. Beck is married, has three sons and is a member of Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church.

Rev. George W. Bur, S.J.

Founding President of Gesu School

Rev. George W. Bur, S.J., a leader in educational access for the poor, has spent most of the last quarter century serving the people of North Philadelphia.

Fr. Bur started his tenure in North Philadelphia in 1985 as assistant pastor of the Gesu Parish, focusing his work on neighborhood housing issues. In 1988 he became pastor of the parish until it was closed in 1993 due to financial challenges and dwindling membership. However, Gesu School did not follow the same fate as the parish under Fr. Bur's watch. With the support of the Jesuits, Principal Sr. Ellen Convey and the IHM sisters, and a number of key champions, especially Win Churchill, Fr. Bur skillfully managed the transition of Gesu School to a fully independent institution. In its new incarnation, the school is governed by a Board of Trustees and financed by a rigorous development program.

In 2003 Gesu School, once teetering on the edge of extinction, was on solid footing when Fr. Bur was reassigned as rector of the Jesuit Community at Saint Joseph's University. There Fr. Bur also acted as a special assistant to the Rev. Timothy Lannon, President at Saint Joseph's University, initiating a program called Ignatian College Connection (ICC). The program's goal is to make Saint Joseph's University more attractive as a college choice for local minority students and has helped make the university an option for several Gesu graduates.

Fr. Bur currently serves as president of his *alma mater*, St. Joseph's Prep, a position he has held since 2008.