



GESU SCHOOL

Educational Excellence in North Philadelphia in the Jesuit and IHM Traditions

“Gesú taught me to believe in myself.”

In her first year coaching the Gesu girls’ varsity basketball team, sixth grade teacher Andrea Carter ’98 led the team to victory in their CYO regional championship, but Carter’s contributions to Gesu go far beyond any addition to the school’s trophy case.

A 1998 graduate of Gesu School and later of John W. Hallahan High School, Carter majored in education and played basketball at Chestnut Hill College, which she attended on a partial scholarship. She had turned down an offer to play for Drexel University because the school didn’t offer a major in education at the time, and teaching was in her blood. As a child she spent an entire summer playing school using old handouts to teach the public school kids on her block. In 2009 Carter fulfilled a childhood dream and returned to Gesu School with a desk in the front of the classroom—not that she spends much time actually *sitting* there.

Carter is a ball of energy in her 6th grade class, doing whatever it takes to motivate her students and to make learning fun. From down the hall, you can hear her ask her class, “Piece of cake?” “Piece of pie!” they shout, indicating that they understand the concept she just taught. Three to four times a day, the students get a review—and Carter gets confirmation that they understood her lesson—with a game of trash can basketball, which gets the students out of their desks and thinking on their feet. Most importantly, the kids in her class are NEVER AFRAID to make a mistake. She always celebrates their efforts.

After the school bell rings, Carter has more on her plate than just coaching the girls’ basketball team. Carter is also busy pursuing her Master’s Degree at Saint Joseph’s University and raising her three-year-old daughter. In addition, she always makes herself available to her students; she remembers her own sixth grade teacher doing the same. All the while, Carter maintains an enthusiastic—and contagious—positive attitude. Carter credits Gesu with molding her into the person and the teacher that she is—especially with regard to her work ethic.

Gesu School isn’t the only place Carter has made her mark. As a collegiate basketball player, Carter made All Conference 3 years, the nationwide



(Left) Amir takes a shot at the trash can after answering a question correctly in a game of trash can basketball in Andrea Carter’s 6th grade class. (Right) Carter reads a review question to one of the teams. A 1998 graduate of Gesu herself, Carter passes on the lessons she learned—like the value of hard work and dedication—to a future generation of Gesu students.

Division 3 Hoops Team of the Week twice, and was the number eight rebounder in the country as a junior. Unfortunately, a serious knee injury sidelined her for a year. Those were especially tough times; just getting to class on crutches was a challenge, let alone balancing the burden of rehabilitation with keeping up her grades and paying for school. But with perseverance, determination, and the support of her coach and the college staff, Carter returned to the court the following season for her senior year.

Before coming to teach at Gesu, Carter taught for two years in another Catholic school in the inner city. She coached high school basketball for a number of years, and still mentors three girls from one of the teams she coached. Carter strives to be of service to her mentees and players, chipping in with extra support, like giving someone a ride home from practice so she doesn’t have to take the bus, or giving her mentee an opportunity to earn some money by babysitting. When people ask her why she goes out of her way for the girls, she says, “They need someone, too. People did that for me.”

“Gesú School taught me to believe in myself,” Carter explains. Now she’s passing that sense of self-worth and determination forward—to her students, her colleagues, her peers, and her athletes – in the very same halls where it all started.

CARTER CAPTURES ATTENTION OF ACTION NEWS AND HOSTS MAYOR NUTTER FOR A GAME OF TRASH CAN BASKETBALL.

Sixth grade teacher Andrea Carter developed trash can basketball to keep her students engaged in the learning process. “They can’t learn if they’re bored, and I can’t teach if I’m bored,” Carter explains. She recently hosted Mayor Nutter for a round of the game, garnering the attention of all four major news networks in the city. Reporter Shirleen Allicott from *Action News* even got into the excitement. Visit www.gesuschool.org/news.html for a link to the feature story that aired on ABC 6 *Action News*.



The Mayor takes a crack at trash can basketball. Andrea Carter’s unique teaching methods exemplify the creative learning environment you foster with your support of Gesu School.

Summer 2012

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Fr. Neil says a special marriage blessing for Assistant Dean of Students Troy Sams and 1st grade teacher Kirsten Echelmeier Sams.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Gesu School,

As my first year as president of Gesu School comes to a close, my key learning was that our children want and need our help in creating a bright future. Sixth grade teacher and alumna Andrea Carter commented in an article in the newsletter that "Gesu taught me to believe in myself." Beginning in the pre-kindergarten classrooms, Gesu instills confidence in the children—I cannot tell you how many of our young students stop by my office to share their work, show off their reading ability, and, then, ask for a sticker—CONFIDENCE!

Gesu's mission is to provide a quality, innovative education to our neighbor children to empower them to break the cycle of poverty and violence. Consider the following evidence of our neighborhood's extreme need for the hope and confidence Gesu instills:

Philadelphia's three poorest zip codes fall within Gesu's primary service area. In these three zip codes, 43%-56% of the population lives at or below the federal poverty line (*2011 Philadelphia: State of the City* by The Pew Charitable Trusts).

As Mayor Michael Nutter stated during the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce's



annual Mayoral Luncheon, "the poverty reduction strategy for Philadelphia is education." Childhood poverty has a profound impact on learning. Achievement gaps for disadvantaged children begin before they start school and widen throughout their school careers. But, research shows that change is possible.

Gesu shows that change is possible!
Thank you for helping us to transform the lives of our children.

Peace and blessings,

Bryan H. Carter
President and CEO

THREE CHEERS!

Alumni **Leya Egea-Hinton '02**, **Desmond Shannon '02**, and **Shakeeta Parker '02** completed their M.Ed.'s at Saint Joseph's University this spring while participating in the first cohort of SJU Alliance for Catholic Education. Ms. Hinton taught at Gesu for two years as part of the program, and will be returning to teach 4th grade at Gesu next year... Alumna **Catera Rivers '02** completed her M.Ed. at Penn this spring while teaching at Mastery Charter School through Teach for America... First grade teacher **Kirsten Echelmeier Sams** and Assistant Dean of Students **Troy Sams** were married in October. (Yes, to each other!)... Advanced writing teacher **Dr. Eileen Erwin** gave birth to baby Laurel in January... Gesu thanks and will miss: **Mike Gondos** of the Development Office, who accepted a new position as the Director of Institutional Advancement at Conwell-Egan High School; **Germaine Hendon**, Assistant to the President, who is relocating to Phoenix, AZ; and pre-K teacher **Jane Berna**, who is focusing on finishing her Master's Degree next year.

TRUSTEE NOTES

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

Christopher C. Fallon, Jr., *Cozen O'Connor member*; **John Krzeminski**, *philanthropic consultant*; **Eilise Rouse**, *community volunteer and former Gesu faculty member*; and **Paul M. Welch**, *PENN Capital Management partner*.

IN MEMORIAM

The Gesu community is saddened by the loss of two important members of our circle. **Paul Cannon, Jr.**, volunteer coach of the boys JV basketball team and a Gesu parent, passed in August 2011. The team honored Coach Cannon's memory at a regular season game by presenting his family with a framed T-shirt and a framed sweatshirt from the 2010-2011 undefeated season.

Rev. James Devereux, S.J., former provincial of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, passed this winter. Fr. Devereux was instrumental in Gesu's establishment as an independent school in 1993. He first introduced our founding board chairman Win Churchill to Gesu School, and, as provincial, made the decision to allocate \$1,000,000 to help Gesu School begin the renovations of the old Prep building we currently occupy. Thanks to Fr. Devereux's leadership, Gesu is celebrating its 20th anniversary as an independent school in 2013.

PHILADELPHIA CHARITY BALL RAISES \$50,000 TO BENEFIT GESU SCHOOL, TRIPLING THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S CONTRIBUTION.

The Philadelphia Charity Ball's mission is to raise funds for nonprofit organizations in Philadelphia, while inspiring young people to make philanthropy part of their lives. Gesu School is fortunate to have been chosen as a five-year beneficiary of the Charity Ball. Under the leadership of Peter Cooke, the 2011 Ball raised \$50,000 for Gesu School, tripling the previous year's contribution. In addition, 7th grader Sahara was named the Bryn Mawr Trust & Philadelphia Charity Ball Scholarship Award Recipient.



Nicole Warden (right), one of the participants in the upcoming Philadelphia Charity Ball, tests her knowledge of the Olympics in a game with Gesu School's Youngest Scholars at summer camp. She and others from the 2012 Charity Ball visited Gesu in June to get better acquainted with the Ball's designated charity. Photo/Sabina Louise Pierce

DEATH ROW EXONEREE JOHN THOMPSON, STATE TREASURER ROB McCORD, MAYOR MICHAEL NUTTER, AND OTHERS CAPTIVATE STUDENTS WITH THEIR STORIES. Students hear first-hand accounts of the lives of wise and influential individuals through the Gesu Speaker Series.

Standing before 80 riveted 7th and 8th grade students, John Thompson captivated his audience with the story of his life, his wrongful conviction for a carjacking and an unrelated murder, and the legal proceedings to clear his name. Thompson was exonerated in 2003 after 18 years of incarceration, including 14 on death row in Louisiana's infamous Angola prison. Gesu's board chairman J. Gordon Cooney, Jr., one of the Morgan Lewis attorneys who helped prove Thompson's innocence, joined his client on stage for the presentation. Their incredible story was captured in the book *Killing Time: An 18-Year Odyssey from Death Row to Freedom* by John Hollway and Ronald M. Gauthier.

Thompson's ordeal was the culmination of the injustices of urban life he had faced as a young man. Thompson offered this advice to the students: "That environment out there (pointing out the window to Gesu School's North Philadelphia neighborhood)—it isn't real... It's not how we're supposed to live."



Death row exoneree John Thompson and one of his attorneys, Gesu board chairman J. Gordon Cooney Jr., held their young audience captive. Their powerful presentation on the morality and legality of the death penalty provided students ample food for thought to complement the social justice component of the students' religion curriculum.

He explained, "I had good people come into my life... and that changed my attitude..." Today, Thompson works as the founding director of Resurrection After Exoneration, an organization that helps exonerated individuals reclaim their lives, often after years in prison.

Thompson and Cooney's powerful presentation on the morality and legality of the death penalty provided the students ample food for thought to complement the social justice component of the religion curriculum. Their visit was part of a series of speaker presentations that brought textbook lessons to life for Gesu's 7th and 8th graders this year. The impressive lineup also included State Treasurer Rob McCord, introduced to Gesu by board chairman emeritus Win Churchill; Mayor Michael Nutter; and Alexis Moore, daughter of local civil rights activist Cecil B. Moore.



Robert J. Birdsell, President and CEO of the Cristo Rey Network, participates in the panel discussion at the 2011 symposium. Several Gesu alumni will attend the new Cristo Rey High School in Philadelphia this year. Mark your calendar for our upcoming symposium on November 1, 2012.

GESU TO LEAD DISCUSSION ON TRANSFORMING INNER-CITY EDUCATION AT 15TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM. Date set for November 1st, 2012.

This year you can join in the discussion tackling the tough issues in inner-city education at Gesu's 15th annual symposium on November 1, 2012. Join our email list for the latest updates by scanning the code below or by emailing karen.rueda@gesuschool.org.

Scan to join our email list.



Did you miss the discussion at last year's symposium? Visit www.gesuschool.org/2011symposiumrecap.html to access a recording and transcript.



Brett Bender colors with several students in a coloring book he created himself. Bender and a number of his colleagues from Prudential Fox & Roach, Realtors and The Trident Group observed the Fox & Roach Charities Community Service Day at Gesu School. In addition, Fox and Roach Charities provides an annual student sponsorship. We at Gesu are grateful for our many community partners!

LED BY A \$10,000 GIFT FROM TRUSTEE JIM HIGGINS '45, ALUMNI SPONSOR THREE STUDENTS. Collectively, alumni have contributed \$20,990 to the campaign to support the young people who one day, too, will call themselves Gesu alumni.

Jim Higgin's gift of \$10,000 leveraged support from fellow alumni to further Gesu's three-year campaign, *Gesu Isn't Gesu Without You*. To date, the campaign has raised \$5.7 million, 71% of its \$8 million goal, and has expanded the number of sponsorships and endowed scholarships to cover the education of 250 students. The campaign is set to conclude with the celebration of Gesu's 20th anniversary as an independent school in 2013.

For more information on the campaign, visit www.gesuschool.org/campaign.html or contact Seán Lavelle at (215) 763-9077 or sean.lavelle@gesuschool.org.



Two students hope to return to the shelter as volunteers this summer.

Vaughn, 7th grade, slides a handmade toy into the cage for a dog at the PSPCA. Students at Gesu not only learn about the world around them, but seek out ways to give back. We hope they make you as proud as they made trustee Keith Pension!

ANIMALS AT THE LOCAL SPCA ENJOY A SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM CONCERNED STUDENTS.

A unique after school class inspired the idea to assemble the 750 handmade toys for the dogs and cats at the shelter.

The story began last fall, when trustee Keith Pension began teaching the Humane Society's anti-dog fighting curriculum in the afterschool program, making Gesu the only school in Philadelphia to complete the program and Philadelphia just the third participating city. The course included a visit to the local SPCA, where students conceived the idea of making enough toys for every animal in the shelter.

On June 4th students delivered the fruits of their labor—over 750 toys for the dogs and cats, as well as other comfort items. The students also had the opportunity to observe in the shelter's Operating Room.

"I was actually a bit unsure of the kids' capacities for observing invasive surgery," Pension admits, "but all thirteen were remarkably poised and attentive, asking thoughtful and rather advanced questions. A few politely excused themselves, but two stayed to watch a post-op dissection. They impressed both surgeons and interns with their knowledge. They couldn't have made me more proud."



Sixth graders Rhyann and Mya and 5th graders Nadia and Semaj are recovered from racing in the Archdiocesan Junior Girls 4x100m competition at the Penn Relays earlier in the day. Eighty-nine students found positive outlets for their energy on the track team this year.

ATHLETIC CORNER

Track: Coach Pat Leaf and her volunteers trained 89 students on the track team this year. The boys' team won the Area A Championship and made a strong showing at the Archdiocesan Championship, where Gesu athletes won several medals. The relay team of RaShaun (grade 5), Jashir (grade 5), Hanif (grade 5), and Kyier (grade 4) took 1st place in the novice 4x100m; Javier (grade 6) took 1st place in the minors long jump; and Rashaun (grade 5) took 3rd place in the novice 100m and 6th place in the novice 200m. The girls track team also had a great season, placing 5th out of 31 teams in the Area A Championship.

Basketball: Girls Varsity and Boys JV both brought home Region 8 CYO Championship trophies, capping an undefeated season for the Boys JV team. Special thanks to our basketball coaches, Ms. Carter, Mr. Deal, and Mr. James for instilling good sportsmanship and the value of discipline in our student-athletes throughout the exciting season.



In this issue...

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- Death row exoneree speaks to 7th and 8th graders..... p. 3
- Animals at local SPCA enjoy a special delivery from concerned Gesu students..... p. 3

And much more!



Kindergartner Maurisha admires a strawberry fresh off the bush before she tastes it. She and her classmates raved over the fresh produce they sampled in May on their visit to Christa and Calvin Schmidt's Blue Elephant Farm. The 6th grade and Kindergarten students, who were amazed by the sheer amount of green grass on the farm, also enjoyed visiting the animals, collecting fresh eggs, planting seeds, transplanting plants, and participating in some fun outdoor games. Gesu students benefit tremendously from such experiences outside the confines of North Philadelphia.



Architect Chuck Capaldi treats 8th graders to a hands-on lesson. Volunteers expose our students to a wide range of career and life possibilities. Perhaps a member of the class of 2012 will follow in the footsteps of Joshua Kent '07, who currently majors in architecture at Hampton University!



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Philadelphia, PA 19121

Address correction requested

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2012!

Our graduates are headed to the following outstanding high schools:



Nazeim proudly displays an award he received at graduation on June 13th. In the fall he will attend Saint Joseph's Prep, along with classmate Jalen. Other schools the class of 2012 will attend include Merion Mercy Academy, Carver High School for Engineering and Science, and the new Cristo Rey High School. Thanks to you, our donors and volunteers, Gesu is able to dedicate staff resources to ensuring that our students enroll in the best high schools for their individual situations.

- Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School
- G. W. Carver High School of Engineering & Science
- Country Day School of the Sacred Heart
- Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School (6)
- Delaware Valley Charter High School
- Franklin Learning Center
- Freire Charter School (2)
- John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School (2)
- Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls (3)
- Mastery Charter School - Simon Gratz High School
- Mastery Charter School - Thomas Campus
- Mercy Vocational High School (6)
- Merion Mercy Academy (3)
- Multi-Cultural Academy Charter School
- Overbrook High School
- Philadelphia Mennonite High School (2)
- Preparatory Charter High School
- Saint Joseph's Prep (2)
- Sankofa Freedom Academy Charter School
- W. B. Saul High School
- School at Church Farm
- West Philadelphia Catholic High School (2)
- Woodlynde School



After reading "From Seed to Plant" by Gail Gibbons, 2nd graders in Ms. Ryder's class enjoy planting seeds in science lab. They later put their math skills to use charting their plants' growth. When our students get to high school, they are grateful for the lab skills they developed in Gesu's first-rate, staffed lab you helped build and stock.



STUDENTS SHINE AT SUCCESSFUL GALA!

From the basketball team to the art program, students showcased their talents and honored beloved Gesu friend and board vice chairman Bob McAlaine, recipient of the 2012 Gesu Spirit Medal.

Thanks to the gala committee led by co-chairs Jennifer and Kevin Kolmer, Pat and Allan Murphy, Keith Pension, and Eilise and Bill Rouse, the 2012 gala *Yearbook: A Gesu Year in Review* raised over \$300,000 in support of Gesu's children. Budding Gesu artists swelled with pride as they witnessed their work raise \$3,880 in the silent auction of student art, which debuted this year. Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran was the presenting sponsor for this year's gala.

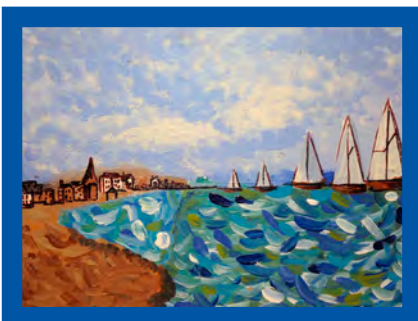
and the choir, an incredible recitation of Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son" by 3rd grader Dhmyni, dance performances choreographed by The Rock School for Dance Education and by the Dancing with the Students program, and a Harlem-Globe-Trotters-esque basketball routine to honor Gesu Spirit Medal recipient Bob McAlaine, who had not missed a Gesu game all season.

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.

The evening's performance included a show-stopping selection by maintenance staff member Vernon Gooseby



Celebrating a spectacular evening on behalf of Gesu are: (front row) gala co-chairs Allan and Pat Murphy, Eilise Rouse, and Jennifer Kolmer; Gesu president Bryan Carter; (back row) Gesu Spirit Medal recipient Bob McAlaine; and gala co-chairs Keith Pension and Kevin Kolmer. (Not pictured: gala co-chair Bill Rouse.)



"Sailing," an acrylic by 4th grader Kaniya, was one of 30 pieces of student artwork that raised \$3,880 through a silent auction at the gala this year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 9/5 First Day of School
- 11/1 15th Annual Symposium on Transforming Inner-City Education
- 5/2 2013 Gala

7408 - United Way Donor Choice Number
Please consider designating Gesu School (Gesu Community Service Project) when making your United Way gift.

CORPORATIONS can make a huge difference in the lives of Gesu children while receiving tax credits for their contribution through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. For more information on corporate giving and the EITC program, contact Kelly Grattan at (215) 763-9077 or kgrattan@gesuschool.org.