



# icsf

Newsletter of Inner-City Scholarship Fund  
Winter/Spring 2011

## CONTENTS

AWARD DINNER 1,3

LETTER FROM  
OUR EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR 2

SPECIAL EVENTS 3

*BE A STUDENT'S  
FRIEND* 4-5

VOLUNTEERS 6

SCHOOL  
HIGHLIGHTS 7

## \$1,400,000 RAISED AT 34TH ANNUAL AWARD DINNER



Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, All Hallows High School senior Ralph Reyes and ICSF honoree Virginia P. Ruesterholz.

Overlooking Columbus Circle and Central Park in New York City, the trustees of ICSF had the pleasure of honoring Virginia Ruesterholz, EVP & President of Verizon Services Operations, at our 34th Annual Award Dinner on Monday, December 6th, 2010.

The Mandarin Oriental Hotel provided fine food and service for 475 guests who thoroughly enjoyed the comedic talent of ICSF Trustee Mo Rocca, host of Foodography on the Cooking Channel and a panelist on NPR's "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me."

(continued on page 3)



inner-city scholarship fund

*A Child. A Chance. A Future.*

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**Susan George, Executive Director  
of Inner-City Scholarship Fund**

Dear Friends,

Inner-City Scholarship Fund is fortunate to have donors and volunteers who believe financial hardship should never prevent a child from receiving a quality education. I am inspired every day by our dedicated supporters who help us keep students in schools where they get an opportunity to thrive and beat the odds. I truly believe investing in the life of a student is simultaneously an investment in our community and the future.

I was recently contacted by a young woman named Sharifa James, a former *Be A Student's Friend* scholarship recipient. She wanted to reconnect with the man who had sponsored her to attend Catholic school in the Bronx for a number of years. Sharifa told me she wanted to thank him because without his generosity she "would not have benefited from the superior education that Catholic schools offer." Sharifa is currently pursuing her doctorate degree at the University of South Carolina. She was kind enough to share her experience with us in this newsletter.

ICSF's students and their families recognize the amazing opportunity they receive from our committed donors and volunteers. They are so grateful for a chance to realize their potential. On behalf of them, thank you for allowing our inner-city boys and girls to remain in schools where their minds are continuously stimulated and their values shaped.

With warm regards and sincere  
gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Susan George".

Susan George  
Executive Director



**All Hallows students celebrate their school being selected a "Top 50" High School in the nation.**

## ALL HALLOWS HIGH SCHOOL NAMED "TOP 50" HIGH SCHOOL IN THE U.S.

On October 15, 2010 the National Catholic High School Honor Roll announced its selection of the top 50 Catholic secondary schools in the United States. Among those honored was ICSF-supported All Hallows High School in the Bronx.

The purpose of the Honor Roll is to recognize and encourage excellence in Catholic education. It is a valuable resource for parents and educators that identifies those schools that meet the core criteria sought by the National Catholic High School Honor

Roll: academic excellence, Catholic identity, and civic education.

"I was really over the moon about this," said proud principal Sean Sullivan. "They made the standards even tougher this year so we were really surprised." The announcement was made at All Saints Day Mass to thunderous applause from the students. This is the seventh year in a row that All Hallows has earned this distinction. Congratulations to the staff and students at All Hallows for this well deserved recognition.

## MANHATTAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SPEECH BEE HIGHLIGHTS ELOQUENCE AND POISE OF INNER-CITY STUDENTS

On May 11, 2010 students from inner-city Catholic schools across Manhattan gathered to compete in the Manhattan Catholic Schools Speech Contest. The competition took place at the Interchurch Center located across Broadway from Columbia University. Sister June Clare O.P., the Manhattan District Superintendent of Catholic Schools, hosted the event which featured twelve top speakers ranging from grades six through eight. They were the winners of qualifying contests in districts throughout the borough.

Before the final, the competitors were each asked to deliver a concise presentation themed "If I were President of the United States." The contest was judged by Susan George, the Executive Director of Inner-City Scholarship Fund, Aileen Debost, Director of Schools Finance at the Archdiocese of New York, and Andrew Woods, Principal of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School. Maureen McElduff, Principal of Guardian Angel School, kept time for the candidates.

All of the candidates gave ardent performances worthy of praise but

Mark Williams Jr., an eighth grader from Saint James/Saint Joseph School in Chinatown, persuaded the judges most with his formula to improve America's educational system, the economy, and the environment. He was awarded first prize. Second prize was awarded to Victoria Testa of Epiphany School on 22nd Street for her wide-ranging speech and knowledgeable views on American democracy and freedom in our society. In third place, Jacob Rivera of St. Ann School in East Harlem delivered a spirited address on the need to improve education and his proposals on various issues if he were to be elected the first Hispanic U.S. President.

The twelve students in the speech bee represented the diversity of Manhattan's inner-city schools including three competitors who are receiving financial support through Inner-City Scholarship Fund's Cardinal's Scholarship Program and *Be A Student's Friend*. Among the families, teachers and fellow students observing the contest was Mr. Amadou Diallo, whose daughter Salimah Diallo was one of the speech bee finalists. She attends Saint Joseph of the Holy



**First place speaker: Mark Williams Jr. of Saint James/Saint Joseph School in Chinatown**

Family School in Morningside Heights with help from the Cardinal's Scholarship Program. Mr. Diallo is quick to show his appreciation for the opportunity Salimah has been given to participate in all the educational activities that Saint Joseph and the other inner-city Catholic schools have to offer. He is very proud of Salimah who is excelling at Saint Joseph and currently is in seventh grade. She will have another chance to hone her public speaking skills during this year's Manhattan Catholic Schools Contest. Congratulations to all of the speech bee finalists!



## IN THE NEWS

DONOR OF THE DAY | By Shelly Banjo

## Brokers, Hedge-Fund Managers Spruce Up Schools

Yes, Michael Caponiti does windows. The founder of Artichoke Capital Group, who can usually be found in front of a computer screen trading commodity futures, is part of a group of hedge-fund managers, real estate brokers and investment bankers who are bringing the glory of gains and large gifts to inner-city schools in Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens.

Called Project YESS, or Young Executive Scholarship Schools, the program is part of the Inner-City Scholarship Fund

and brings together young professionals to spruce up schools, as well as raise funds for larger capital projects. Brokers, such as Goldman Sachs partner Jeff Madan, Tishman Realty managing director Thomas Madden, and Griffin Linn, a managing director at Morgan Stanley, have raised more than \$2.5 million for 122 capital projects across 101 schools in Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens Island.

"This isn't glamorous work," says Mr. Caponiti, who is on the group's grant committee and visits dozens of schools a year to assess the damage and what

can be done to help. "Schools are on tight budgets and don't seek every \$10,000 a year for capital improvements, which is where we come in."

Head of the Catholic schools in the city were built between 70 and 120 years ago. Mr. Caponiti says, as Irish and Italian immigrants came to New York and raised money from their parents to build new churches and schools.

Although some of the buildings were made into New York City landmarks, many more were made to disarray with broken stained glass windows, leaking

roofs and cracking steps.

For the Inner-City Scholarship Fund, which receives the necessary charity, Project YESS helps the group bring in the next generation of inner-city donors.

"Project YESS allows donors to make donations of all sizes that mean a great deal to the children who spend their days in these 100-year-old buildings," says Susan George, executive director of the Inner-City Scholarship Fund.

The way the program is used for young professionals who typically visit the school

and want to physically see their donations put to work. For instance, one school which had received government funding for a new computer lab couldn't operate the computers because the electricity in the building could not support the technology.

Through a grant from Project YESS, the school was able to replace the electricity and wire the computer room. "They really understand first-hand how important it is to have children learning in safe and updated structures," she says.



Michael Caponiti

DONOR OF THE DAY | By Shelly Banjo

## Family Foots Tuition Bill for High-School Students



Claudia Gerbas

His high school students who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford a Catholic education will begin classes Wednesday, for free.

Picking up the tuition bill is Claudia Gerbas and Mark Ruggieri, who created a scholarship fund through New York's Inner-City Scholarship Fund in honor of their late husband and brother Bart Ruggieri, who was 32 years old when he died in the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attacks.

A trader at Citicorp Financial and a product of Catholic education, Bart Ruggieri had donated to the scholarship

Fund but had never told his wife. After his death, Mr. Gerbas found a receipt and also that Mark Ruggieri decided to leave the Bart J. Ruggieri Memorial Fund, sponsoring a group of new high school students, or what they now call "Bart's Scholars" every four years.

The Ruggieri family donated \$2,700 per student per year through the Inner-City Scholarship Fund, totaling \$162,000 a year. The family also builds houses with the students and principals and arranges summer internships for the students.

The first six students graduated this spring from colleges such as St. John's University in Queens and Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, N.Y.

"Bart's death there was such an outpouring of support, the family decided to start a scholarship with the proceeds going to the Inner-City Scholarship Fund," says Ms. Gerbas, who has since remarried. "Now, watching these kids graduate college—it's amazing to think that something good could actually come from Bart being killed."

Average yearly tuition for Catholic education in inner-city schools can run about \$6,700.

in high school and \$12,000 in college, says Susan George, executive director of the Inner-City Scholarship Fund.

Last year, the organization saw a 50% increase in requests for help with tuition, grants for field trips to families that have been paying tuition but lost a job or incurred medical financial emergency.

"It's definitely a sign of the times, the need is there," Ms. George says. "We could provide double the amount of scholarships than we already do. If we had the money."

The Inner-City Scholarship Fund supports more than

35,000 students, 90% of whom are minorities and 12% of whom are non-Catholic, in 104 Catholic schools in Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens Island.

About 90% of the Bronx high school seniors graduate and 90% attend college.

"The kids truly understand the magnitude of the scholarship money and connect the sacrifice their uncle with them being able to have this education," Mark Ruggieri says. "We are able to keep Bart's memory alive, while seeing results from our situation in the children who stay off the streets, stay in school and go off to college."

Three members of the ICSF family received well-deserved media attention in the Wall Street Journal. Claudia Gerbas and Mark Ruggieri were profiled in Shelly Banjo's "Donor of the Day" column on September 8. Banjo's article explained how the Bart Ruggieri Memorial Fund was formed in honor of their late husband and brother Bart Ruggieri, who was 32 years old when he died in the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attacks. Through ICSF's *Be A Student's Friend* program, the fund has supported 20 students since its inception.

On October 12, 2010, ICSF donor and volunteer Mike Caponiti appeared in WSJ's "Donor of the Day." The article described Mike's involvement with ICSF's Project YESS Leadership Committee. Project YESS, made up of industry representatives from organizations across New York City, raises funds and gives grant awards to inner-city Catholic schools for necessary capital improvements. In addition to Project YESS, Mike and his wife Meghan currently sponsor four children in the *Be A Student's Friend* program.

Much media attention was attracted by the release of Davis Guggenheim's

"Waiting For Superman." The film portrays a country worried with the current state of public school education, yet optimistic about the developing Charter school system. In his NY Daily News op-ed *Could Superman be Catholic?* Archbishop Dolan took the opportunity to remind Mr. Guggenheim that "Superman is here and he's waiting in the classrooms of New York's Catholic schools!"

To receive a copy of a published article about Inner-City Scholarship Fund, please contact Daniel Mileno at **646-794-3351** or **Daniel.Mileno@archny.org**.



**Junior Committee volunteers and students relax after a hard day's work of painting at Our Lady Queen of Angels Elementary School.**

Through the efforts of the Junior Committee, inner-city children from ICSF supported schools continue to engage in activities that enrich their lives and compliment the high-quality education they receive in our schools. The Junior Committee provides students with the opportunity to study with skilled tutors, participate in a basketball league with students from other schools, and visit various New York landmarks with young professionals. There is hardly a

## ICSF JUNIOR COMMITTEE: ENRICHING THE LIVES OF OUR STUDENTS

Saturday that goes by without a field trip, community service project or holiday party. Recent field trips include Manhattan by Sail, Queens County Farm, Children's Art Museum, and Ice Skating at Chelsea Piers. The Junior Committee has already completed three community services projects, including painting computer labs and hallway murals. "It's all about the kids," said Community Service co-chair David Shluger.

It's not just elementary students benefiting from the Junior Committee projects. This year, ten seniors from All Hallows High School in the Bronx received College Application Process mentoring from Junior Committee volunteers. These students and their mentors are eagerly awaiting acceptance packages to top colleges and universities.

All Junior Committee projects are made possible through their fundraising and social events. In October, a Wine Tasting Benefit at Vintage Irving raised over \$14,000 and the annual "Spring Fling" fundraising event in April will undoubtedly be equally successful.

To learn more about volunteering with the Junior Committee please contact Janelle Hengeveld at **Janelle.Hengeveld@archny.org** or visit our website at: **www.icsf-nyc.org/jc**.

"I have never seen students from three different schools come together like this – the Juniors make it possible and that is what makes them so special," commented Joanne Walsh, Principal at Our Lady Queen of Angels School.

## 2010 LAWYERS LUNCHEON



Archbishop Dolan looks on as 2010 Saint Thomas More Award recipient, James W. Quinn, makes his acceptance speech.

On November 29, 2010, over 450 attorneys from the New York legal community gathered for the 2010 Lawyers Luncheon at Cipriani 42nd Street. This enormously successful event raised nearly \$400,000 for scholarships to make Catholic school education available to children in New York City. At this event, the Saint Thomas More Award is given annually to members of the legal profession who exemplify the virtues of scholarship, leadership, loyalty to God, country, and service.

His Excellency Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan presented this year's award to James W. Quinn, Esq. An active member of the 22-year-old Lawyers Committee, Mr. Quinn has been a dedicated supporter of the Archdiocese of NY and Inner-City Scholarship Fund for years. He currently sponsors a high school student in the *Be A Student's*

*Friend* program and his firm has provided nine high school students with summer internships through ICSF's Job Opportunities Program. Mr. Quinn is a Partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP and co-chairs Weil's 500-lawyer global Litigation practice. He lives in Armonk, New York with his wife. They have four children and five grandchildren.

The 40-member Lawyers Committee, comprised of the most esteemed members of New York's legal community, have dedicated themselves to raising money for inner-city schools of the Archdiocese of New York for decades.

If you are interested in being a part of the Lawyers Committee, please contact Meghan McGuinness at **Meghan.McGuinness@archny.org** or call **646-794-3270**.

## AWARD DINNER (CONT.)

Trustee Fred Salerno, who served as dinner Co-Chair along with Ivan Seidenberg, Chairman and CEO of Verizon, introduced our honoree, commending Verizon for implementing its inclusion policy so successfully in the person of Virginia Rueterholz. She is credited with the development of numerous game-changing innovations over the course of her career with Verizon and its predecessor organizations.

Upon receiving the ICSF Award from Archbishop Timothy Dolan, Ms. Rueterholz reflected on the impact her Catholic school education had on her personal development and extolled the group of young "Hayesmen" she met recently at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx.

As guests moved into the dining room, they were treated to Christmas songs performed a cappella by the MSU Vocalists, a group of talented high school students from the Academy of Mount St. Ursula in the Bronx.

Later in the evening, Ralph Reyes, a senior at All Hallows High School, spoke to the audience about the crucial difference attending Catholic school has made in his life: teaching him to set an example for those who are struggling and giving him the extra support he needs to accomplish his dreams and achieve success. Mr. Reyes hopes to attend John Jay College and major in criminal justice.

The night was a success, raising more than \$1.4 million to keep Inner-City Scholarship Fund's initiatives going at full speed, giving thousands of students the golden opportunity to realize their dreams.

Next on our event roster, the FRIENDS of ICSF will host their Spring Gala at Cipriani 42nd Street on Monday, May 16, 2011. **Please Save the Date.** For further information on the GALA, contact Marion Whiting at **Marion.Whiting@archny.org** or call **646-794-3332**.



Award Dinner Host Mo Rocca



ICSF Honoree Virginia Rueterholz

## AN EVERLASTING GIFT: A MESSAGE OF THANKS FROM A FORMER BASF STUDENT

On September 1, 2010, a day inseparably linked with "Back to School," an unexpected email arrived in the in-box of Inner-City Scholarship Fund. Sharifa James, about to depart from her home to begin a Ph.D. program, felt compelled to sit down and send a note of gratitude to Inner-City Scholarship Fund and her *Be A Student's Friend* (BASF) sponsor Walter Kirkland.

Sharifa was raised in a single parent household with one older sister in the Bronx, NY. Her mother continuously emphasized the importance of education. "My mother sacrificed so much for both my sister and me to attend Catholic Schools," explained Sharifa. "I believe my Catholic

education was a major factor in the work ethic that I now possess." Through her elementary school and high school years, Sharifa benefited from ICSF's *Be A Student's Friend* Program. Because of the tuition assistance she received, Sharifa was able to attend Sts. Philip and James Catholic School from kindergarten through the 8th grade and then to graduate from Cardinal Spellman High School in 2002. "Because of the generosity of my BASF sponsor, Mr. Walter Kirkland, I was able to benefit from the superior education that Catholic schools offered," said a thankful Sharifa. "I would like to thank him for realizing the importance of not just making a financial investment in a

child, but for being a lifelong reminder that someone, a complete stranger in fact, thought that I had the potential to do better and was willing to help me accomplish that by investing in my future."

Sharifa has completed a MA program in Clinical and Counseling Psychology at Columbia University-Teachers College and is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Clinical-Community Psychology at the University of South Carolina.

If you would like more information about *Be A Student's Friend*, please contact Ginine Cilenti at **646-794-3357** or **[Ginine.Cilenti@archny.org](mailto:Ginine.Cilenti@archny.org)**.

### BE A STUDENT'S FRIEND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

**OVER 68%** of the students come from households existing near or below the federal poverty line

**OVER 50%** of the students come from single parent households

The average household income for a BASF student is **\$24,000**

Minority enrollment is **90%**

**AND YET...OVER 90% OF BASF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION**

at schools such as Boston College, Trinity College, Dickinson College, Penn State University, and Cornell University. Despite the challenges they endured, our students persevered and continue to achieve remarkable goals, striving to create a better world for themselves and for those around them!



## BE A STUDENT'S FRIEND SPONSORS SPEAK OUT

*Be A Student's Friend* (BASF) sponsors often express to us the satisfaction that comes from being involved in the program. More often than not, the fulfillment they receive is a result of the life changing help they are providing and through the special relationship they develop with their student. A few comments showcasing the rewards to be reaped from the sponsor and student relationship:

**"My husband and I have been sponsors for over twenty years. We read and keep every letter each child we support sends and, in fact, have saved them all!! When my husband died in 2005, I wanted to honor him as he was a person of such strong values and honor and I wanted to create a lasting legacy in**

**his memory. Knowing his great love of the BASF program, I created the John A. Weisz Scholarship. We have maintained 15 students due to the generosity and support of over 100 family and friends. The joy I receive from the John Weisz scholars is beyond words. I thank all the wonderful students and their families, gifted teachers and principals that keep the system going. We do make a difference, and as one of the John Weisz students told me last year as he graduated, 'Being a John Weisz student has made all the difference in my life.' My husband often said, you help one child, and you have changed the world."** – Barbara Weisz

**"Over the past 18 months I have been so privileged to visit my student in her classroom to assist with various art projects. The smiles and laughter from all of the children are contagious, and the person who benefits the most from each visit is**

**me. I am greeted by a hearty chorus of happy voices when I enter the room. Each child eagerly participates and is SO proud to show me his/her masterpiece. These 32 students show a level of respect, maturity and social grace that surpasses their age. They are smart, inquisitive and very much aware that education is their gateway to a brighter future."** – Debbie Oulvey

Cecilia and Richard Fabbro sponsor four students through the *Be A Student's Friend* program. This past spring, Mr. Fabbro visited his student Adrian Liberato for the first time. He explains, **"This is one of the most satisfying experiences I have had this year...you can hear thank you's from the kids and there's nothing better than that."** To see Richard meet Adrian for the first time, go to [www.innercitysf.org/videos.html](http://www.innercitysf.org/videos.html) and view ICSF's 2010 Award Dinner video.

## MEET A STUDENT ON OUR WAIT LIST



Kyle, 4th grader at Incarnation School

Kyle is a 4th grader at Incarnation School in Washington Heights. Like over 50% of our families, Kyle comes from a single parent household and is being raised by his mother, Gloria. Recently, Gloria lost her job and in an effort to improve her employment opportunities, she enrolled in college on full scholarship while also working part-time. Kyle's mom often has to leave very early in the morning to get to her classes, so Kyle volunteers in the office at Incarnation until the school day begins. Despite the extra long day, Kyle always has a smile on his face. His principal reports that he is a well-mannered, respectful and courteous young man who gladly volunteers his time to help others. Gloria is trying to manage the household expenses and tuition for Kyle but she is struggling. Briana Pechin, the principal at Incarnation helped Gloria apply for a *Be A Student's Friend* scholarship.

The family has been on the wait list for six months. Kyle and his mom are anxiously awaiting news that a sponsor has been found to assist them with tuition.

Currently 152 students are on our wait list—105 are elementary school age and 47 are high school age. Sponsors contribute \$2,200 towards an elementary student's tuition which covers 80% of the annual cost, and \$3,700 towards a high school student which covers 50% of annual tuition.

Please consider becoming Kyle's sponsor and ask a friend or colleague who might want to become his friend. By giving Kyle a scholarship to continue his studies at Incarnation, you are providing him with the tools to achieve. That gift is priceless.



**inner-city scholarship fund**

*A Child. A Chance. A Future.*

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## Save the Date!

The FRIENDS of  
Inner-City Scholarship Fund  
**Gala Dinner Dance**  
Cipriani 42nd Street  
Monday, May 16, 2011