

St. Ethelreda School

Patron: Bill Krieger

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St. Ethelreda School in the Auburn Gresham community on the far south side of Chicago has a clear mission: to educate tomorrow's leaders today. This mission goes beyond a mere "tag line" to a personal commitment to helping students achieve success in life through academic success, with a focus on increasing student achievement in math and science.

St. Ethelreda School serves approximately 250 predominantly African-American students in preschool through eighth grade. Fully 80 percent of the students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program, and a majority are not themselves Catholic.

For the past 17 years, Principal Denise Spells has proven a remarkable leader for the school. "It is our utmost priority to encourage our students to reach their full potential – academically, spiritually, emotionally and socially – giving them the resources they need to make a positive contribution to the world around them," she said.

The Big Shoulders Fund paired the school with a Patron, Bill Krieger, to advance its efforts. The Patron relationship has allowed the school to take important steps to build enrollment and enhance its standing as a community resource. The relationship has also brought resources and energy to build a strong math and science base, address building improvements, and leverage technology as a learning tool for the students.

Since the Patrons relationship began in 2007, Ms. Spells and Mr. Krieger have:

- Purchased new math textbooks for the school

- Implemented marketing strategies to increase enrollment, raise funds and increase the overall visibility of the school's contribution to the community
- Worked on installing a new computer lab and aggressively incorporating technology in day-to-day learning
- Created the school's first Web site (www.stethelreda.org) to communicate with existing families, new students and donors
- Replaced lighting to become more energy efficient

"With the support of the Patrons Program we are on the road to successfully attaining our goal to become a premier school of mathematics and science," said Spells. "Our students are our future. We must provide them with the knowledge, tools and skills necessary to compete globally when they graduate from St. Ethelreda. Understanding that it truly takes a village of parents and teachers working together to build on our Catholic faith and tradition, our students will become positive role models to lead us into the future."

Already the school is seeing their students achieve success in math and science. A team from St. Ethelreda recently finished third in the Illinois FIRST LEGO League Championship Tournament – a robotic Lego competitive program – a real achievement for a first-time participant.



"I was immediately struck by the positive feelings and attitude when I first walked through the door at St. Ethelreda, and especially as I've interacted with students, parents, faculty and our Principal. I've come to appreciate that this positive culture comes directly from the school's three main tenets of a) providing a quality education, b) providing a safe and caring environment, and c) emphasizing faith-based values. We're building on this foundation to increase enrollment and to strengthen our offerings in science, technology, engineering and math."

- Bill Krieger, Patron, St. Ethelreda School