

Shoulder **to** Shoulder

FALL 2014

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Big Shoulders Aims to Maximize Student Opportunities by Keeping Schools Open

Fourth grade students from St. Margaret of Scotland, one of the schools participating in Big Shoulders Fund's Math Initiative, participate in a marshmallow STEM challenge.

Serving families in Chicago's low-income communities comes with an inherent financial challenge, and the Big Shoulders Fund is instrumental in helping Catholic schools address this challenge and continue their mission. Circumstances at several Big Shoulders Fund schools, combined with financial hurdles within the Archdiocese of Chicago, have created the need to do more.

The Big Shoulders Fund recognizes the need to keep these schools open, as they often represent the best option for providing children with a quality education. Big Shoulders Fund schools help realize the vision that there are educational outlets throughout Chicago where children can "charge up" and maximize their potential. Further, research shared in *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools' Importance in Urban America* demonstrates that closing a Catholic school decreases

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Enrollment at St. Margaret of Scotland, one of seven schools Big Shoulders is focusing on with extra support, is experiencing an upswing: the student body has reached more than 230 students for the 2013–14 school year and added a second preschool classroom for the first time in years.

...continued from cover

Keeping Schools Open

social cohesion and increases violence in the surrounding community (2014: Margaret F. Brinig and Nicole Stelle Garnett).

Big Shoulders has committed to working with seven schools that would likely have otherwise closed, affecting nearly 1,100 students: 70 percent live below the poverty line, 63 percent are African American, and 24 percent are Hispanic. Each school needs more financial support to meet operational needs that exceed its resources. To fill the gap, Big Shoulders is providing approximately \$1.5 million in operating funds to these schools and helping each school create and implement a three-year tactical and strategic plan to address school-specific issues. Big Shoulders and the Archdiocese of Chicago have agreed these schools will remain open for three years as long as each meets key financial metrics and aims to secure its long-term viability. Early success increases the likelihood that Big Shoulders will be invited to add more at-risk schools.

“The next three years are critical in the life of St. Margaret of Scotland School, and we’re committed to becoming more self-sustaining while also improving how we help students achieve,” said Principal Kevin Powers.

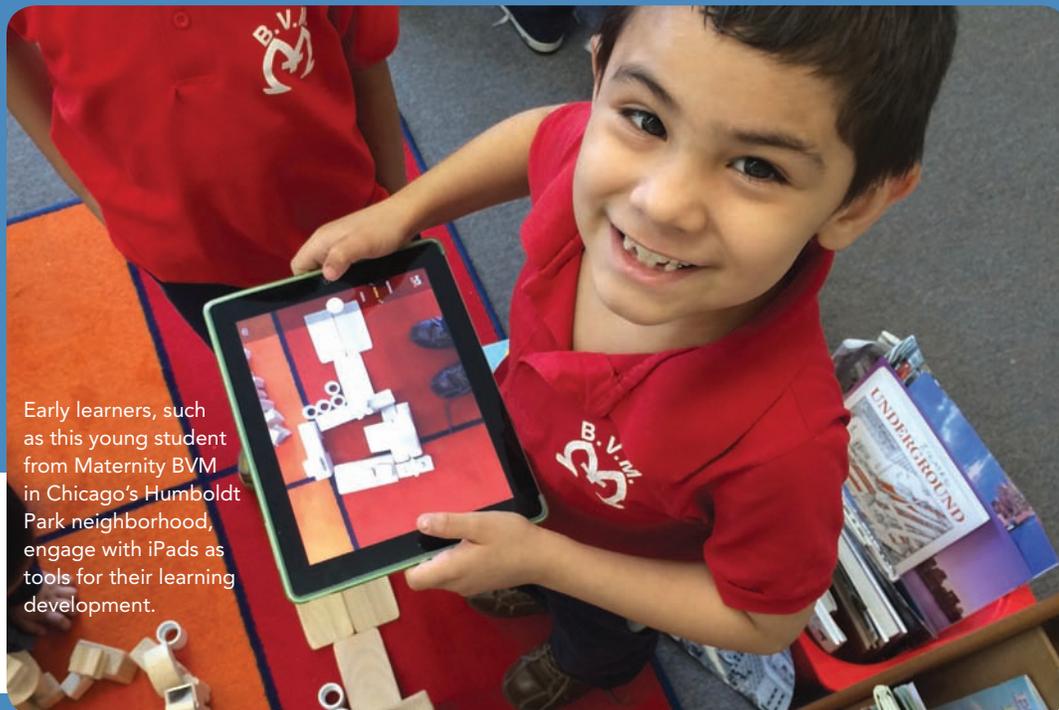
Each school’s transformation plan addresses key operating areas, including financial management, enrollment, tuition collection, fundraising, and improved academic outcomes. To promote advancement, Big Shoulders is adding full- and part-time staff to support implementation of each school’s plan and hosting monthly meetings at the schools to review progress. The goal is to ensure that children can continue plugging into these schools, which serve as important charging stations in their communities, and that they are effective and more financially sound.

Big Shoulders Fund is also strategically investing in enhancements to mathematics instruction by implementing a high-quality, research-based curriculum along with professional development and coaching at two schools. In addition, Big Shoulders Fund’s Kristin Ziemke (see page 3) is leading professional development initiatives to integrate inquiry and technology at five schools and raise the bar on student achievement.

“School improvement happens locally,” said Patrons Program Senior Director John Moran. “This effort builds on the experience and relationships we’ve developed in the Patrons Program and our outbound approach to working directly with schools. These schools face real challenges, and if we want them to remain a vibrant option in Chicago’s inner city, we must work with the Archdiocese and school leaders to actively confront these issues.” The heightened focus and strategic support to these schools is already having initial positive results. As of September, enrollment in five of the seven schools had increased, up by more than 100 students as compared to the same time last year.

“We are lucky to have principals, teachers, and community members who are so committed to these schools, which are true anchors in the community and life changers for children,” said Big Shoulders President and CEO Joshua Hale. “The Big Shoulders staff and board leadership also bring incredible talent and resources to this work. I look forward to reporting on our progress as we continue with this critical effort.” ■

Teachers Use Technology to Inspire Student Learning



Early learners, such as this young student from Maternity BVM in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood, engage with iPads as tools for their learning development.

Big Shoulders Fund works to provide teachers with professional development opportunities that help schools continue offering current and high-quality academic programs. During the past 10 years, Big Shoulders has invested heavily in technology for schools, such as interactive white boards and iPads, as well as professional development for effective use of these tools. Since the 2013–14 school year, the work of consultant Kristin Ziemke has been a key addition to the professional development programs managed by Senior Director of Academic Programs and External Affairs Rebecca Lindsay-Ryan.

Co-author of *Connecting Comprehension and Technology*, Ziemke has spent her career teaching and learning from children in urban and suburban schools. As a first grade teacher, she engaged students in authentic learning experiences, with reading, thinking, collaboration, and inquiry at the heart of the curriculum. She has spent the past few years pairing best practice instruction with digital tools to capture thinking, foster creativity, differentiate instruction, and increase collaboration. An Apple Distinguished Educator, National Board Certified Teacher, and Chicago's 2013 Tech Innovator of the Year, Ziemke seeks opportunities to transform education through technology innovation.

“This study group was transformational for teachers; they could really ‘see’ the impact of these instructional practices on students.”

Ziemke is beginning her second year working with Big Shoulders schools, particularly the seven schools receiving special focus (see cover story), as well as Maternity BVM Elementary School. She provides educational support in technology and differentiation—using various approaches

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Initial Success Spurs Expansion of Alumni Outreach Program

“Our alumni have appreciated learning about the day-to-day happenings at school through Facebook. I have spoken to some people who have had fantastic ideas to help move our school forward.”

(L–R) Patricia Podlasek '69, Kathy Florence '65, George Speck '55, Barbara Bedus '59, and Leo Merenda (on behalf of Richard Guzior '59) attended the St. Bruno alumni breakfast. Bedus said, “I’m really impressed with how St. Bruno has evolved over the years. I’m looking forward to seeing more wonderful things happening at the school in the future.”

Institutions of higher learning have long recognized the value of alumni as a resource for support and an opportunity to enlarge their communities. Taking a cue from colleges and high schools, Big Shoulders Fund launched an Alumni Outreach Program at 16 schools in fall 2012, with support from the McCormick Foundation and its chairman, Dennis FitzSimons. The program’s initial success prompted expansion to include 12 additional schools in fall 2013, with more joining the program this fall.

The initial group of 16 schools received assistance in collecting and verifying data from school records and training in advanced solicitation techniques, such as writing and sending appeal letters, and developing ongoing alumni programs, including strategic plans, reunions, annual reports, and electronic solicitations. This group achieved significant results in the program’s first year: the schools found more than 26,000 alumni and raised nearly \$50,000 through direct appeals, and a second appeal raised more than \$45,000. Big Shoulders provided access to similar donor management tools and training in alumni program strategic planning to the second group of schools during the 2012–13 academic year; these 12 schools raised \$34,000 in their first appeal to nearly 14,000 newly found alumni.

“It has been a great learning experience, both in terms of what I know now about marketing the school to alumni and also from the alumni themselves,” said Peggy Forgione, principal at St. William School, which was part of the second group. “Now I have email addresses to notify our alumni about school events. Our alumni have appreciated learning about the day-to-day happenings at school through Facebook, too. I have spoken to some people who have had fantastic ideas to help move our school forward. One recently ‘re-connected’ alumnus is going to be a part of our new School Development Board.”

St. Bruno School participated in the Alumni Outreach Program during the 2013–14 school year. “The training provided a vision and great ideas on how to better connect with our alumni,” said St. Bruno Marketing Director Lily Diaz. “It is refreshing to know our alumni have great pride in their roots and have been generous in giving back.”

Heading into the Alumni Outreach Program’s third year, Big Shoulders has received \$100,000 from the GHR Foundation to add 12 to 14 new schools to the program as well as support the previous 28 schools.

Combined with ongoing support from the McCormick Foundation and FitzSimons, the GHR Foundation funding is assisting the new schools

with creating or expanding alumni databases, validating and updating data, and executing annual appeals, while the schools from years one and two are receiving ongoing training to employ more complex fundraising and alumni outreach techniques via in-person training and webinars.

Linda Ricchio, a St. William class of '72 alumna, reported, “This past spring we hosted the Blue and White Ball to bring school parents, parishioners, and alumni together to benefit our school children. We had a very positive response from all who attended and donated to our raffles and silent auction. St. William alumni have always been very supportive and look forward to coming home to the parish, whether it be attending mass, walking through the halls and classrooms of the old and new school buildings, or reminiscing about dodge ball games and jump roping on the large parking lot. Many have made lifetime friends and some even found their soulmates from their early years here at St. William. We reflect about the important adults who helped to seed values that have lasted our entire lives.” ■

Alumni Survey and Academic Research Show Positive Returns

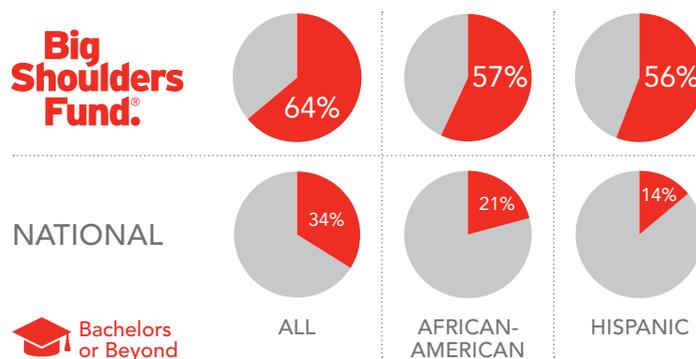
The Big Shoulders Fund has benefited from the Ronald H. Ringer Foundation's support for scholarships and its investment in third-party research efforts to better understand and measure the impact of Big Shoulders Fund schools on the students they serve (see *Shoulder to Shoulder*, Spring 2014).

Overseeing the research projects was the Data, Outcomes, and Research Committee, chaired by Big Shoulders Director Stephen King. Committee members include Kerryann Hasse, Don Johnson, Liam Krehbiel, Marisela Rosales Lawson, John Livingston, Lisa McClung, and Farhan Yasin. The committee's goal is to understand Big Shoulders' impact through external and internal evaluation and support the organization in making data-driven investment decisions.

The Committee recommended that Big Shoulders conduct two distinct but complementary research projects. The first involved contracting with IPSOS, the world's third largest market research firm, to survey a sample group of alumni, ages 24–38, of Big Shoulders Fund schools. The survey asked alumni about long-term life outcomes related to college attendance, work achievement, civic engagement, and more. The results, even after controlling for childhood income, race, and age, indicated that Big Shoulders alumni are more likely to graduate from college (see chart) and find employment, compared to national and local rates. Significantly, more than 80 percent believed teachers held high expectations for them during their schooling.

The second area of research focused on academic achievement. Logos Consulting analyzed the results of the nationally normed standardized assessment taken by third, fifth, and seventh grade students at Big Shoulders Fund schools. Some key findings included:

Educational Attainment



- Big Shoulders Fund elementary schools on average significantly outperform national averages in absolute terms. The researcher and the Committee find this particularly noteworthy because the Big Shoulders sample has a higher proportion of low-income and minority students than the national sample.
- When controlling for prior year's scores, most Big Shoulders schools also grew at higher rates than national growth averages, except for math scores from third to fifth grade. Big Shoulders already invests considerably in math instruction.
- After defining a demographically similar comparison group of Chicago Public Schools through a process called propensity score matching, research results revealed that Big Shoulders schools outperform similar CPS schools.

The Committee plans to conduct the alumni survey with another sample and repeat academic research with more years of data to further inform investment and identify trends.

To view a video with more information, visit <http://ow.ly/BWGUa>. ■

...continued from page 3

Teachers Use Technology

with students to serve different learning needs and modalities—literacy, and team-building.

Her training in 2013–14 included a series of Technology Integration Workshops, including “Got iPads? Now What?,” “Student Creation on the iPad,” “Classroom Websites and Blogs,” and “Connecting Classrooms with a Global Audience.” Ziemke also worked with teachers on proposals to attend and present at national conferences to ensure learning encompassed best practices from across the country.

In the spring, Ziemke led 16 teachers in a six-week study group, meeting weekly to discuss Stephanie Harvey's *Strategies That Work*. Participants explored these ideas through a professional book study, analysis of student work from classroom-based lessons, and a lab classroom observation of Ziemke modeling these practices with students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Teachers each received \$100 for books and classroom materials.

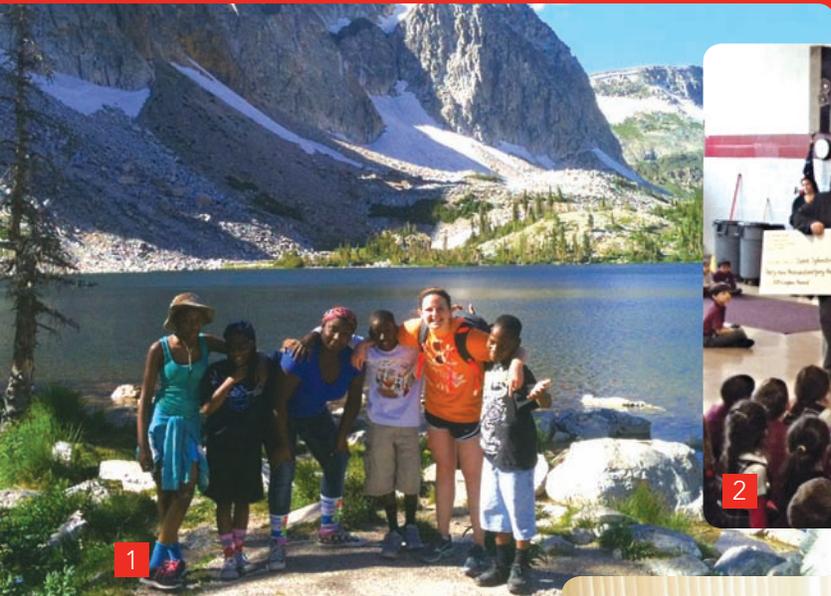
“This study group was transformational for teachers; they could really ‘see’ the impact of these instructional practices on students,” Ziemke said. Participating teachers agreed that Ziemke's training would impact

instruction and they would attend this type of study group in the future. One teacher wrote, “This is just what I needed to end this school year on a very positive note. I loved your lesson last week and am pumped up to finish first grade strong!”

By the end of the school year, the impact of Ziemke's training was evident: 15 classrooms were blogging with students, 19 had developed classroom websites, and seven schools were planning to expand their technology programs.

This year, Ziemke will support Big Shoulders initiatives to leverage technology in classrooms across the city and grow opportunities for teacher development. Lindsay-Ryan commented, “The support Kristin provides to teachers is instrumental in their ability to affect student learning and ensures our schools incorporate updated skills and instructional practices in their curriculum. Building on the success of the study group, Kristin will lead teachers to investigate writing workshops and other inquiry practices that transform student thinking to improve outcomes.”

“It's an exciting time in education.” Ziemke commented. “We have the opportunity to meet the needs of all our learners better than ever. We have new tools that yield new opportunities for kids to capture thinking, create content, and connect with the world.” ■



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In the Community



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1: Staddle Camp at Brush Creek Ranch in Saratoga, Wyoming welcomed 163 students, including these St. Malachy students and their chaperone, with support from Big Shoulders Fund Directors Bruce and Beth White. This annual trip is often the first time many students travel beyond the city limits and on a plane. The scholars engage in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) learning throughout the school year on Saturdays, culminating with the week-long trip to Staddle Camp.

2: The Croghan Teachers' Award, founded by Rosemary and John Croghan, recognizes and encourages progress at Big Shoulders Fund schools. The Award honors faculty who exhibit marked improvement in their students based on anticipated and obtained standardized test scores. This year, St. Sylvester School received more than \$30,000, half supporting scholarships and half for faculty and administration to use at their discretion.

3: Big Shoulders Director Dave Dury and his wife Wendy attended the Big Shoulders Fund Cubs Rooftop event, hosted by Wrigley Field Rooftops, which treats longtime Big Shoulders supporters to a night of baseball, drinks, and food as a thank-you for all they do for the schools.

4: The sixth grade class of St. Pius V School, Principal Nancy Nasko (L), and sixth grade teacher and Technology Coordinator Sean Mundy (R) enthusiastically received a set of new iPads for the classroom. Mundy was the winner of the Big Shoulders Fund iPad Award for demonstrating an acute understanding of how to incorporate technology into everyday learning. Big Shoulders provides professional development technology workshops, led by Kristin Ziemke, to teachers at Big Shoulders Fund schools.

5: More than 100 GATX employees joined Big Shoulders Fund for two days of service at St. Margaret of Scotland in Chicago's Washington Heights neighborhood. They spent the day painting the school halls and classrooms, providing more than 300 hours of service to the school.

6: Students put together a Ferris wheel as part of the two-week Summer Engineering Camp at Maternity BVM School in Humboldt Park. Teacher Claire Pritch led the program, and the Museum of Science and Industry provided the curriculum through the Big Shoulders Fund Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Initiative.



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7: The Summer Dance Program, partially funded by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, brought the Joffrey Ballet to three schools—Maternity BVM in Humboldt Park, St. Angela in the Austin neighborhood, and St. Malachy (pictured) on the Near West Side—to teach dance to nearly 100 inner-city children for four weeks. This program not only impacted the students enrolled, but also the schools, their families, and the surrounding community through performances.

8: (L–R) Big Shoulders Fund President and CEO Josh Hale, Director John Podjasek, Rita Canning, and Co-Chairman John A. Canning were among the more than 300 golfers who attended the 14th Annual Golf Classic, raising \$577,000 for the Friends of Big Shoulders Scholarship Fund. Please save the date for the 15th Annual Golf Classic on Monday, August 3, 2015!

9: St. Helen School in Chicago's Ukrainian Village celebrated its centennial with a gym dedication to the Krzyzewski brothers. Joining Coach Mike Krzyzewski, better known as Coach K (R) and as the "winningest college basketball coach," is Big Shoulders Fund Auxiliary Board member Patrick Dillon, coach of the St. Helen's 2013–14 North Central Parish League Champions team.

10: Nicole Zaleski (L) and Kellie Bylica joined the Big Shoulders Fund Auxiliary Board and more than 170 guests at the Godfrey Hotel for the Big Shoulders Fund Ball Kick-Off Party on July 31, when tickets to the main event on Friday, September 26, went on sale. Ticket sales benefited the Auxiliary Board Scholarship Fund.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Classroom at St. Philip Neri School, 1964



St. Philip Neri School has been a strong presence in the South Shore community since 1913. This year, the school is participating in Big Shoulders Fund's Alumni Outreach Program (see page 4) to re-engage with its many alumni. St. Philip Neri continues to serve families looking for a quality school option; today its students are predominantly African-American, with 80 percent at or below the poverty line. Andrew J. McKenna, Sr., one of the founders of Big Shoulders Fund, is a proud

alumnus of St. Philip Neri—one of many Big Shoulders Fund directors who are alumni of Big Shoulders elementary schools. More than 10 years ago, Director Charles Bobrinsky established at St. Philip Neri what became the Big Shoulders Fund's Stock Market Program. Under the leadership of Bobrinsky and Jim Hoeg, the Stock Market Program continues at St. Philip Neri and has expanded to serve more than 40 Big Shoulders Fund schools across the city. ■