

# Shoulder **to** Shoulder

SPRING 2014

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Ernst & Young LLP is expanding learning opportunities for students at Big Shoulders Fund schools.

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## Access is the Key to Student Success

Access Scholars at St. Ethelreda School.

There are countless studies pointing to the value of education as instrumental to future success. But learning opportunities are like charging stations: they invigorate and empower but access to them can vary greatly. Big Shoulders Fund has worked hard to increase access to powerful charging stations—the 90 Chicago schools it serves—so more children benefit from a high-quality education.

Responding to the closure of 48 Chicago Public Schools and the Archdiocese of Chicago's \$10 million decrease in operating support to its schools, Big Shoulders established the Access Scholarship, a three-year scholarship for students who transferred to Big Shoulders schools and demonstrated financial need. With the help of generous donors, the Access Scholarship matches the family contribution toward tuition.

Hitting the ground running last summer, Big Shoulders set an ambitious goal to recruit 1,100 new students for its schools, hiring outreach coordinators to spread the word to as many families as possible.

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**Big  
Shoulders  
Fund.®**

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## Access is Key

The results surpassed expectations. With only three months of active recruiting, Big Shoulders approved 1,620 applications. For the fourth consecutive year, enrollment across all Big Shoulders elementary schools grew. For the first time in years, enrollment in historically African-American schools grew by four percent. More than 88 percent of Access Scholars are African American or Hispanic; the average household income is \$28,500 for a family of four, which indicates families are living right around the poverty line.

The Hernandez family, seeking a more rigorous education, transferred their daughters to Maternity BVM School, which serves Chicago's Humboldt Park community. Evelyn is excelling in first grade, and Marilyn is an honor roll student in fifth grade.

"The school they used to go to had so many students in one class, and the teachers were not able to give the students a lot of attention," explained Mrs. Hernandez. "Maternity BVM has been our community, and I wanted my daughters to be in a family environment where they get more attention and care.

"It has been a lot better since my daughters started at Maternity BVM. They are much happier; they love their teachers. The teachers prepare the students very well and make the subjects easy to understand. My daughters like school and are preparing much better for high school, college, and life."

Though school closures were part of the driving force in causing families to change schools, the majority of students transferred from Chicago Public Schools that remained open but were underperforming. Families that would have liked to enroll previously, but could not afford to do so, sought more stable and vibrant programs, reinforcing the great demand for the quality of education that Big Shoulders schools offer.

Lashaunda Brown had been dissatisfied with the school her three children attended, then heard about St. Malachy School, located on Chicago's West Side, from a friend of a friend. After hearing what St. Malachy had to offer, and with help from the Big Shoulders Access Scholarship program, she decided to transfer her children, who are in third, seventh and eighth grades.

"I can tell it challenges them more," Brown said. "They want to be successful as students, and they are more into doing their homework. I appreciate the school because they take the business of education seriously; you can't go wrong in that kind of environment. They're instilling the commitment to learning in my children that I try to encourage at home."

Another opportunity for Brown's children was a new music program at St. Malachy; eighth grader Ealexis had played clarinet at her previous school and wanted to join this new program. Brown acknowledged the essential help Big Shoulders has provided to her family. "Without Big Shoulders, my children wouldn't have been able to attend St. Malachy."

Big Shoulders continues to invest in academic programs to ensure students succeed and is actively raising funds to help families like these remain in Big Shoulders Fund schools. ■



The Hernandez family at Maternity BVM School.

**"It has been a lot better since my daughters started at Maternity BVM... [They] like school and are preparing much better for high school, college, and life."**



# Ringer Foundation Supports Transition to High School

The Ringer Scholars of St. Columbanus School on Chicago's South Side; three plan to enroll next year at De La Salle Institute, a Big Shoulders Fund high school.

Scholarship programs are a critical tool for ensuring that deserving children have access to an effective and safe education. During the past six years, the Big Shoulders Fund has supported a growing number of scholarship students—from approximately 2,500 students in the 2006–07 school year to more than 6,000 children during the 2013–14 school year.

New partnerships with individuals and foundations have helped make this growth possible. The Ronald H. Ringer Foundation, which launched its scholarship program in the 2011–12 school year, targets seventh and eighth grade students who wish to attend a Catholic high school but cannot afford it, focusing on an area of Chicago's South Side where families have limited options for high school. The Ringer Scholarship thereby facilitates the long-term impact of a rigorous elementary school education: a student's ability to continue on to a quality high school.

Big Shoulders Fund President and Chief Executive Officer Joshua Hale explained, "When The Ronald H. Ringer Foundation informed us that it wanted to expand its support and asked us to identify the area of greatest need, we proposed this scholarship program. Ringer said to go

**"Going to Fenwick was a dream of mine and my mom...I would not be here if I was not a Ringer Scholar."**

for it, and we were thrilled. This support enables Big Shoulders to reach even more students and help them through the critical transition from elementary to high school. In addition, it is a great vote of confidence from a foundation that does important work, focusing on Chicago-area schools of all types with an established track record of providing educational opportunity to children in need."

When asked why the foundation has chosen to support Big Shoulders, Ringer Foundation Trustee Daniel Swett commented, "The Ronald H. Ringer Foundation, throughout its brief history, has focused its grants on schools that provide primary grade education to underprivileged children in the Chicago area. For that entire period, nobody has carried out that mission better than the schools Big Shoulders supports."

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## THE GIFT OF TIME: Volunteers Make A Difference at Big Shoulders Fund Schools

Volunteers of all ages paint the hallway of St. Margaret Scotland School at a Give Back Day in November 2013.

With technology taking over so much of communication, face-to-face contact is a treasured opportunity. An important example of this is the volunteers who support Big Shoulders Fund schools. The schools benefit from the sheer hours the volunteers provide—as board members, coaches, tutors, mentors, or service day workers—and these interactions evolve into relationships that positively affect both sides of the equation.

Big Shoulders offers a variety of ways to get involved in the good work of Chicago's inner-city Catholic schools, whether a person has one Saturday a month or several hours each week available.

Big Shoulders engages professionals in volunteering at schools and recruiting new volunteers, many of whom serve on the Auxiliary Board or the Chairmen's Advisory Council. Other volunteers help plan the annual Big Shoulders Fund Golf Classic, which raises scholarship funds. School-based volunteering might involve serving on a school board, sharing financial knowledge as a teacher in the Stock Market Program, providing guidance to students as mentors, assisting on the academic side as tutors, or coaching a sports team. Periodic service days invite volunteers to spend a Saturday morning cleaning, painting, landscaping, and/or organizing projects around a school, while the annual Lend A Shoulder Day welcomes volunteers for a half-day school visit.

### The number of volunteers has more than tripled since 2007.

Patrick Dillon is in his fourth year coaching basketball at St. Helen School, spending two nights a week running practice and Saturdays coaching games. "I started volunteering as a coach because it worked with my time commitment at work," Dillon explained. "It was a great fit because I grew up playing basketball in Indiana, a state where the sport is revered." Auxiliary Board member Ryan Lee has since joined Dillon as a coach.

The impact has gone beyond winning games. "Coaching has helped create positive relationships within the school community. The notes from parents expressing their gratitude for not only teaching the basics of basketball, but also the positive impact I had on their family was something I was not expecting."

Like Dillon, Jennifer Wyatt got involved with Big Shoulders because the staff worked with her to find opportunities that fit her schedule. She joined the Auxiliary Board, then participated in several Saturday morning Give Back Days. At one of those events, Wyatt met a fellow volunteer who described the mentoring program. Wyatt liked what she heard and now mentors five sixth grade girls at Visitation Catholic School.

"I meet with the girls at lunch, and we share what we did during the weekend/holiday, upcoming plans, favorite school topics, etc.," said Wyatt. "I play a financial education game called 'Cashflow for Kids' to educate them from a financial perspective.

"I knew the time I spent with the girls mattered when they asked me at the end of the school year if I would be coming back the following year."

For those who are considering volunteering, Dillon offers this advice: "Don't let your work life prevent you from helping out. The Big Shoulders team works to make your schedule match the school/team/student that is the best fit for your personality and skill-set.

"One more thing: Go St. Helen Knights!" ■

## ERNST & YOUNG LLP: Expanding Learning Opportunities for Students



Second graders at St. Nicholas of Tolentine School engage in a mathematics application thanks to Ernst & Young's generous donation of an iPad lab.

Ernst & Young LLP (EY) has been an important supporter of Big Shoulders Fund. Assurance Partner Lee Henderson joined the board in 2011, and he and the firm have recruited individuals to serve on Big Shoulders' Chairmen's Advisory Council and Auxiliary Board. EY volunteers also are mentoring and serving on school boards across the city.

In its most recent show of support, EY has committed \$75,000 during the next three years to fund the purchase of 90 iPads along with professional development to integrate digital tools and technology into classrooms. This year the program is providing iPads to St. Gall, St. Nicholas of Tolentine, and Northside Catholic Academy. During the next three years, the initiative will enhance math education for up to 2,500 students at 10 Big Shoulders Fund schools from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.

"EY is committed to helping students prepare for college, and investing in math education is key to college readiness," said Henderson. "I'm thankful to work for a firm that recognizes the important role the business community plays in supporting education, and I'm excited to see how this new technology will make a meaningful difference in these students' lives."

On December 18, 2013, to officially launch the initiative, EY presented an Apple iPad Learning Lab and Everyday Mathematics® tools to the three schools, and EY employees delivered iPads to classrooms and worked alongside students to demonstrate the educational programs focused on improving mathematics skills and knowledge.

This newest initiative builds on Big Shoulders' long-term investment, with support from the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, to improve elementary mathematics education through the adoption of high-quality curriculum, ongoing professional development for teachers, development of teacher leaders, and support for administrators and classroom coaching led by the University of Chicago's Center for Elementary Math and Science Education. ■

...continued from page 3

## Ringer Foundation

From the 2012–13 school year, 98 percent of scholars continued with the program in 2013–14, demonstrating that the Ringer Scholarship is providing stability and enabling students to remain enrolled in high-quality schools. During the 2013–14 school year, the program is supporting 30 students at 12 Big Shoulders Fund schools located primarily in far South Side communities. Of those Scholars, 28 are now in eighth grade and applying for scholarships at Catholic high schools. They have test scores above the national average from seventh grade, thus making them eligible for competitive scholarships.

Two students are enrolled as freshmen at Fenwick and Our Lady of Tepeyac. One shared, "Going to Fenwick was a dream of mine and my

mom. Fenwick is hard for me but they have a summer program that helped prepare me for my classes. It is still a struggle with some of my classes, but I know I came to the right school. I would not be here if I was not a Ringer Scholar."

Big Shoulders is tracking each Ringer Scholar through high school and college to demonstrate the long-term impact of this scholarship. In addition to scholarship support, The Ronald H. Ringer Foundation is investing in third-party research efforts to better understand and measure the impact of Big Shoulders Fund schools on the students they serve and ensure the program's continuation and growth. ■



# In the Community



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- 1: Big Shoulders' Auxiliary Board and friends, including event sponsor RW Baird, celebrated a new school year at the Seventh Annual Big Shoulders Fund Ball at the Chicago Illuminating Company on September 27, 2013. More than 700 guests gathered to raise nearly \$75,000 in support of scholarships.
- 2: Supporters of the Seventh Annual Big Shoulders Fund Ball included three generations of Auxiliary Board Presidents: (L-R) Luis Crisostomo, Alice Keating, and Mark Kirchner.
- 3: GATX employees were on hand at St. Elizabeth Elementary School, one of the two schools they helped prepare for the 2013-14 academic year by participating in a day of service.
- 4: The 2013 Golf Classic on August 12, 2013 at Olympia Fields Country Club welcomed more than 300 golfers, including Big Shoulders Fund Co-Chairman Monsignor Kenneth Velo (R) and Director Chris Valenti, who raised more than \$540,000 for the Friends of Big Shoulders Scholarship Fund.
- 5: Big Shoulders Fund participated in its first Bank of America Chicago Marathon October 13, 2013, supplying a team of 30, including Auxiliary Board member and Stock Market Program teacher Tara Liceaga. The team raised more than \$42,000 to support students at Big Shoulders schools.
- 6: More than 200 corporate and civic leaders joined Big Shoulders Fund for Lend a Shoulder Day November 14, 2013, including Auxiliary Board member Anthony Turano.
- 7: In 2013-14, the STEM scholars program has grown to support more than 100 students, who attend enrichment classes focused on science and math concepts, such as this one at Holy Trinity High School. Students also visit local museums and conduct lab-based experiments and simulations. This program is supported by Wendy and Dave Dury.
- 8: Thanks to KPMG for generously donating 6,703 books in fall 2013 as part of its campaign against illiteracy in America. That's one book for every student in pre-kindergarten 3 and 4, kindergarten, and first grade classes at all Big Shoulders Fund elementary schools.
- 9: Last year's participants in the Alumni Outreach Program continue to lead their schools' successful alumni outreach efforts, including hosting all-school reunions and raising another \$50,000 in subsequent appeals.



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# Big Shoulders Fund.®

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

Clip courtesy of *Michigan Avenue*, Summer 2010 issue.

### Power Players

### Healing Hands

## Heaven Sent

**Bryant Keil** tells us how  
Monsignor Kenneth Velo leads  
through kind example.

**IF YOU WERE EVER** a widow at Rosemont's Our Lady of Hope parish, you may have been touched by the healing words of Monsignor Velo. If you were a kid growing up in public housing, your dreams of attending college may have been realized through the leadership of Monsignor Velo. Or if you were simply suffering from a crisis of conscience, loss of a job or a plain old lousy day, you may have found your spirits lifted by Monsignor Velo. He has baptized countless children, performed scores of weddings and presided over too many funerals. He adheres to a dictum told to him by a fellow priest long ago: Never add to the grief of a funeral and never take away the joy of a wedding.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIA FOKICE

If you were just a guy strolling down North State Parkway, you may have found your spirit lifted by his extended hand of friendship. That's how I met Velo many years ago. But while being a friend of Monsignor Velo's is hardly unique, the friendship he offers is. "I'm a firm believer that kindness changes everything," says Velo. "It's the way you do things, not what you're doing."

Born and raised in the Chicago area, the Reverend Monsignor Kenneth Velo was ordained in 1973. By 1994 he was named president of the Catholic Church Extension Society and in 1996 was named Prelate of Honor of His Holiness with the title of Monsignor. He has been the senior executive for Catholic Collaboration of DePaul University since 2001. In 2003 Monsignor Velo was named president of The Big Shoulders Fund, an organization dedicated to supporting the "neediest areas of inner-city Chicago."

It's no small wonder he's earned almost celebrity-level recognition—he's certainly done far more to deserve it than most celebrities. At a time when it seems most news is bad news, it's of great comfort to have a man like him in this city.



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Big Shoulders Fund will honor the work of Monsignor Kenneth J. Velo at the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Humanitarian Award Dinner on May 22, 2014. Monsignor Velo has been a tremendous force in the leadership of Big Shoulders since its inception and now serves as co-chairman with Mr. John A. Canning, Jr. and Mr. James J. O'Connor. Monsignor Velo's leadership has garnered unprecedented support for students throughout the city.

For more details or sponsorship information, contact Rebecca Lindsay-Ryan at 312.751.3851 or [rlindsayryan@bigshouldersfund.org](mailto:rlindsayryan@bigshouldersfund.org)