



# Required Reading

Newsletter of the Children's Scholarship Fund

Volume VII, Issue II

giving  
parents  
a choice

giving  
children  
a chance

## Whitney Tilson Headlines CSF Event

In April, Whitney Tilson, founder and manager of T2 Partners LLC and Tilson Mutual Funds, briefed CSF supporters with his presentation, "A Right Denied: The Critical Need for Genuine School Reform."

Whitney's presentation, also a documentary of the same name, provided a sobering look at the achievement gaps in American K-12 education: both between low-income, minority students and more affluent students and between American and international students.

Mr. Tilson, a co-founder of Democrats for Education Reform, presented many sobering facts regarding the dire consequences of dropping out of high school. He cited the national graduation rate of 69%, but noted that while the graduation rate for white students is about 76%, only 51% of African-Americans and only 55% of Latino students graduate on time. In some inner cities, the numbers are



Whitney Tilson begins his presentation, "A Right Denied," at CSF's April event.

promising initiatives such as high-quality charter schools, public and privately funded school choice programs (like CSF), and new efforts in teacher training and recruitment that signal future improvements.

We at CSF know that everything from the achievement gap to graduation rates improves dramatically if a child is fortunate enough to receive a CSF scholarship. Studies have shown children using CSF scholarships have significantly higher graduation rates than their public school peers. In Philadelphia, a study found that 96% of CSF 8th grade scholarship recipients in 2004 graduated high school on time – compared to the Philadelphia public school graduation rate of only 62%.

The audience also saw evidence of CSF's work first-hand when Briana Santiago, a 7th grade CSF scholar, gave a short speech. (For more on Briana and her family, see the story on p. 3.) Briana spoke convincingly about the adjustment she made moving from public to private school and about the positive difference that CSF has made for her and her family.

Continued on page 2. See photos on page 5.

***We at CSF know that everything from the achievement gap to graduation rates improves dramatically if a child is fortunate enough to receive a CSF scholarship.***

even worse. For example, the dropout rate for African-Americans in Detroit and Indianapolis is 80%. High school dropouts can only expect to earn half the average salary of a high school graduate, are several times more likely to be incarcerated, and experience poorer health and shorter lives. Whitney also highlighted

Spring 2010  
In This Issue:

Whitney Tilson Event

Tilson cont'd

New Website Courtesy of  
Taproot Foundation

CSF Sisters: Briana and Emily

CSF of Omaha Welcomes

Chicago Cubs GM

Tutoring Opportunity

Dr. Dorothy Height

Tilson Event photo page

The Last Word

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CSF Co-Founder  
In Memoriam  
1946-2005

# Tilson Event

*continued from page 1*

"I know that I should be a good student and get good grades as a way to prove that I deserve this scholarship. It is a way to say thank you for the opportunity," she told the audience. "It has opened up a whole new world of learning for me."

For video clips and more photos of the event, please visit the CSF website, [www.scholarshipfund.org](http://www.scholarshipfund.org).



Emily and Briana Santiago, with their proud mother, Stephanie Ramos.

## New Website Courtesy of Taproot Foundation

Children's Scholarship Fund recently unveiled a brand new website, thanks to a Taproot Foundation service grant worth \$50,000.

The new website was designed by a team of six Taproot volunteers: Priya Aggarwal (Marketing Manager); Diane Gauld (Account Director); Jennie Keinard (Designer); Anna Kumanan (Developer); Tracey Matley (Project Manager), and Josh Riman (Copyeditor). The volunteers, all professionals providing their services pro bono and guided by the Taproot Foundation staff, worked with



CSF to refresh the look and feel of our website and make it more effective in informing and inspiring our visitors.

Through the fall and winter, the Taproot team carefully researched CSF, interviewing staff, board members, donors, and friends to pinpoint the changes our web audience would like to see, incorporating what they learned into the finished product.

As well as a fresh new look, the site now includes more stories and videos of our families, an interactive program map, and a Spanish version of our "how to apply" page for interested parents. See for yourself at [www.scholarshipfund.org](http://www.scholarshipfund.org).



**THE CHILDREN'S  
SCHOLARSHIP FUND AIMS TO  
MAXIMIZE EDUCATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITY AT ALL INCOME  
LEVELS BY OFFERING  
TUITION ASSISTANCE IN GRADES  
K-8 FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.**

## CSF Sisters: Briana and Emily Santiago

Briana and Emily Santiago, two sisters from Brooklyn who were CSF's special guests at our recent event, are avid readers and big fans of the Harry Potter books. Emily likes to dance and Briana plays soccer on the weekends. Both sisters love going to school – and they are doing well there – but that wasn't the case at the school they attended before they were first awarded CSF scholarships in 2005.

Now they attend Guardian Angel School in Manhattan, where Briana is a 7th grader and Emily is finishing up 5th grade. Their mother, Stephanie, who works as a criminal investigator, tells us that she applied to CSF because her daughters were getting “lost in the system” at their conventional public school. Briana was reading at a third grade level in first grade, but she wasn't being challenged and her grades didn't reflect her abilities. Meanwhile, Emily, who had always enjoyed preschool, had a difficult time in Kindergarten, and her teacher thought she needed a social worker.

When Briana and Emily enrolled at Guardian Angel, their mom saw a huge difference. The girls benefit from the school's culture, which encourages one on one attention from their teachers and principal, and they are happy going to school each day. In fact, Briana never wants to miss a day of school so she will have perfect attendance when she's applying for high school next year. She's already identified Notre Dame High School as her top choice, and wants to become a lawyer, a vet or a dentist. Emily hasn't nailed down her career plans yet, but she



*Briana and Emily Santiago.*

would like to follow her sister to Notre Dame High School.

Their mother is very pleased with the choice she made to apply to CSF. “My kids have been on the honor roll every year,” Stephanie said. “I don't care if I have to pay more. My kids are doing great and it's worth it.” ●

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## CSF of Omaha Welcomes Chicago Cubs GM



*Eight CSF of Omaha scholars were honored at the annual CSF Omaha CHANCE (Children Having an Advantage in Nebraska for Choosing Education) luncheon this March. Here they model baseball caps with special guest Chicago Cubs General Manager Jim Hendry and CSF of Omaha Chairman J. Peter Ricketts. A record number of 420 guests raised more than \$102,000 for scholarships in Omaha, where more than 2,000 low-income children receive CSF awards.*

# Tutoring Opportunity for Volunteers

The halls of Our Lady Queen of Angels School (OLQA), a CSF school in East Harlem, are normally quiet between the hours of 6:30 and 8pm, when most students have long left the school. But, one night every other week, a passerby will find the OLQA cafeteria full of students from three different neighboring schools being tutored by young professionals.

The group organizing the tutoring sessions is the ICSF Junior Committee, an affiliate of one of CSF's partners, the Inner-City Scholarship Fund. The goal is to help students with their homework and prepare upperclassmen for their high school entrance exams.

Family members drop students off at 6:30pm sharp, and pick them up at 8pm. Several CSF scholarship recipients attend the tutoring, including Ashley Soto and Tamia Lewis from Mt. Carmel Holy-Rosary School, Priscilla Norton and Kevin Rosado from St. Ann School, and Gabrielle Uribe from OLQA.

Gabrielle, a current 7th grader and CSF recipient since 3rd grade, recently participated in a city-wide speech contest in which students were asked to prepare



Xiarra and Priscilla, St. Ann School 4th graders, studying for an upcoming state science test.

a speech detailing what they would accomplish if they were President of the United States. Her speech focused on creating more jobs. Gabrielle won first place at her school and went on to compete at the city level.

If you would like more information about joining the tutoring group, please email Angelica Zamudio ([azamudio@scholarshipfund.org](mailto:azamudio@scholarshipfund.org)), who by the way is also a tutor and can tell you first-hand how rewarding it is. ●

## In Memoriam: Dr. Dorothy Height

The Children's Scholarship Fund is saddened to note the recent passing of our board member, Dr. Dorothy Height, on April 20th, just weeks after her 98th birthday.

Often called the godmother of the civil rights movement, Dr. Height was Chair and President

Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), an organization she served as president for forty years. At the NCNW she worked on everything from voter registration and home ownership initiatives to establishing the Bethune Museum and Archives for Black Women and organizing the annual Black Family Reunion Celebration. Her memoir, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*, was published in 2003.

A friend and advisor to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and African-American educator Mary McLeod Bethune and to many U.S. presidents, Dr. Height received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Bill Clinton, the Congressional Gold Medal, the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, and many other awards and numerous honorary degrees.

Her funeral, held at Washington's National Cathedral, included a eulogy from President Obama.

Dr. Height joined Children's Scholarship Fund's board of directors shortly after its inception in 1998 and served as an active board member until her death. Her life and work will continue to inspire us in our efforts to give children the opportunity of a better education. ●



Dr. Dorothy I. Height with the late John Walton, at a 1998 CSF event in Washington DC.

# Whitney Tilson Event photo page:



*CSF President Darla Romfo with Whitney Tilson.*



*Josh Riman and Diane Gauld of the Taproot Foundation team responsible for CSF's new website. See p. 2 for more details.*



*Kathleen Verderosa and Dimitri Steinberg discuss the presentation.*



*At the CSF event: Deirdre Sullivan, Margot Pfohl, and Colin Moran.*



*Anthony DiLauro and Krista Hahn chat with CSF President Darla Romfo.*



*Principal Maureen McElduff with Stephanie Ramos and daughters Emily and Briana before the event.*

# The Last Word:

“We have to improve life, not just for those who have the most skills and those who know how to manipulate the system. But also for and with those who often have so much to give but never get the opportunity.”

- **Dr. Dorothy Height**



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