



Required Reading

Newsletter of the Children's Scholarship Fund

Volume VII, Issue I

CSF Goes to Buffalo

More than a thousand guests recently came out on a snowy Buffalo night to support the tenth annual "Making a Difference – Celebration of Catholic Education Dinner." CSF President Darla Romfo addressed the group speaking about the importance of Catholic schools as part of the education infrastructure, especially in our inner cities.

with far fewer financial resources than their public school counterparts—often at half or a third of the cost. Another important point is that graduation rates at Catholic high schools - even those serving poor and minority students - are in the 90 plus percentile," she said. And the U.S. Department of Education has also found that a child who finishes 8th grade in a private school is twice as likely to graduate from high school and attend and graduate from college.

In contrast, public high schools have a four-year graduation rate of around 75%, and only about 50% of African-American and Latino students graduate high school on time – in many cities the number is even lower. However, Harvard evaluations of the Children's Scholarship Fund in New York, Washington, DC and Dayton which serves primarily blacks and Latinos attending parochial schools show that the achievement gap between blacks and whites in reading and math was cut in half.



CSF President Darla Romfo (second from left) with (l-r) teacher Denise Amato and BISON Scholarship Fund staff members Cynthia McDonald and Kathleen Christy at the Buffalo dinner.

In Buffalo, CSF's partner program, the BISON Scholarship Fund, has awarded more than 14,000 scholarships to low-income children over the past fifteen years. This year, almost 1,000 children are using CSF-funded BISON awards, and 815 of them attend Catholic schools.

Buffalo is representative of many other CSF cities where a large percentage of CSF recipients choose to attend parochial schools with their CSF scholarship. Darla spoke about the positive effects these schools have had on improving the future prospects of children served by CSF scholarships and the importance of these schools remaining as a viable choice.

"First of all it is important to note that Catholic schools generally perform far better academically



Darla Romfo begins her speech after an introduction from emcee William Collins.

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giving
parents
a choice

giving
children
a chance

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Spotlight on the Puello Family

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Children's Scholarship Fund

::

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*CSF Co-Founder
In Memoriam
1946-2005*



Giselle Puello always wanted to send her children to private school, so when it was time for her eldest son, Joel, to start kindergarten, she chose St. John's Elementary School in the Bronx. St. John's is one of the top-performing elementary schools in the city. Last year, 100% of its 4th and 8th grade students were proficient in both math and reading.

Unfortunately, Joel had to transfer to public school a few years later because Giselle couldn't afford tuition payments on the salary she earns as a secretary. But then Giselle heard about CSF and decided to apply. "I know Joel liked the structure and discipline [at St. John's], so I was eager to send him back," she said. When Joel won a CSF award last year, Giselle was thrilled and ecstatic.

This year, Joel is in 7th grade, and his younger brother, David, just started Kindergarten at St. John's. Giselle is very impressed with the concern and dedication the school's teachers and principal have shown her sons. "Once again, thank you all for assisting me in providing a good education for my boys," Giselle told us.



Joel himself wrote to us saying, "Thank you for the scholarship that I received. It has definitely helped my mom with the tuition. It's giving me a better education and an appreciation for school. I promise I won't take this opportunity for granted." ●

Joel (top) and younger brother, David (left) use CSF scholarships to attend St. John's Elementary School in the Bronx.

School Choices at Harlem Education Fair

Children's Scholarship Fund is proud to be a sponsor of the Harlem Education Fair, which takes place on Saturday, February 27th at the Harlem Armory in New York City.

The Harlem Education Fair allows families to meet teachers and administrators from schools of all types – private, public, and public charters – and educate themselves on the various school choices for their children. Choosing where to send a child to school is one of the most important decisions a parent makes, and parents should have as much good accessible information as possible and a diversity of high quality schools to select from when making this decision. CSF scholarships are the only way that private schools remain an option for many families.

Last year's fair attracted 6,000 parents and representatives from more than 50 schools. Harlem Parents United, which organizes the annual event, expects up to 8,000 interested parents to attend this year! ●

*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.*

Upcoming CSF Event to Feature Whitney Tilson

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, April 20th, 2010. That's when CSF will host our next conversation at the English-Speaking Union in midtown Manhattan. This time our guest will be hedge fund manager and education reformer Whitney Tilson.

Whitney Tilson is the founder and Managing Partner of T2 Partners LLC and the Tilson Mutual Funds. He is also the co-founder, Chairman and co-Editor-in-Chief of *Value Investor Insight*, an investment newsletter, and he co-authored the book, *More Mortgage Meltdown: 6 Ways to Profit in These Bad Times*. He is also the co-founder and Chairman

of the Value Investing Congress, a biannual investment conference in New York City and Los Angeles. His columns and articles have appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines, and he has been featured on CBS's *60 Minutes*, CNBC, Fox Business Network, Bloomberg TV, and many others.

Before business school, Mr. Tilson worked for Teach for America when it first launched in 1989 and has remained involved in education reform efforts since then. He is a founder of Democrats for Education Reform and a board member of KIPP Academy, a South Bronx charter school. Tilson also founded an innovative pay-for-performance initiative that rewards



Education reformer Whitney Tilson will speak at CSF's April 20th event.

low-income NYC high school students with up to \$500 for each Advanced Placement exam they pass.

Mr. Tilson's blog, www.edreform.blogspot.com, and his weekly emails are followed closely in education reform circles. He recently highlighted Mount Carmel-Holy Rosary School in East Harlem, where close to 50% of the student body relies on CSF scholarships to attend. He referred to CSF as a "wonderful charity," and spoke about the value of diversity in education options for low-income families.

"A lot of what I write about relates to charter schools, but by no means do I think charters are THE solution – they're one of the 100 1% solutions that are necessary. In many cities and states, there are few/no charters schools and the public schools are terrible, so what alternatives are available? In many cases, the answer is Catholic schools. I think it's nothing short of insane to, for example, spend nearly \$20,000/student for a NYC public school that's failing miserably, while a Catholic school right down the block shuts down due to lack of funds despite achieving real success with the same students spending only \$5,000/student. Thus, I am a big supporter of carefully targeted voucher/tax-credit scholarship programs..." Tilson wrote.

If you would like more information about attending, please email Angelica Zamudio at azamudio@scholarshipfund.org. ●

CSF Goes to Buffalo

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She also noted some of the qualities long recognized as hallmarks of Catholic schools which have been adopted by successful charter schools.

"There is a lot of order and structure and discipline and a lot of respect and love. All of those things factor in together. I go into Catholic schools all the time, and no matter how bad the neighborhood is, you always walk into a place that is incredibly clean and well ordered, the children stand up and say good morning to the principal, good morning, visitor. They are excited to learn," she added. ●



At the Buffalo dinner, front row (l-r): CSF President Darla Romfo; Rev. Msgr. Dino J. Lorenzetti; Bishop Edward U. Kmiec, and Ann Swan. Back row (l-r): Auxiliary Bishop Edward Grosz; John and Betsy Sullivan; Marsha Joy Sullivan; William Collins, and Carol and Paul Kostyniak.

The Last Word:

“In the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education. And in this country, the success of our children cannot depend more on where they live than on their potential.”

- President Obama, during the State of the Union Address, January 27, 2010



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