

creating
hope.



We all dream.
We live for the
“What ifs” and
the “Why not.”
We **create hope**
by trying things
we haven’t
tried before.

And every time we give a new idea a shot, take a different angle on a nagging problem, stretch a little, grow a little, we replace a “what if” and a “why not” with fresh hope. For example, we begin to view our alumni list as an untapped resource. Each year’s college graduating class becomes a recruiting opportunity for teachers and staff. Today, we see kids with learning differences as an opportunity to challenge our programming skills. We convert a group of fired-up kids into a motivated teen auxiliary board. Come with us on a quick tour of fresh programs and new ideas. Watch us push the boundaries and create hope.



Creating collaboration.

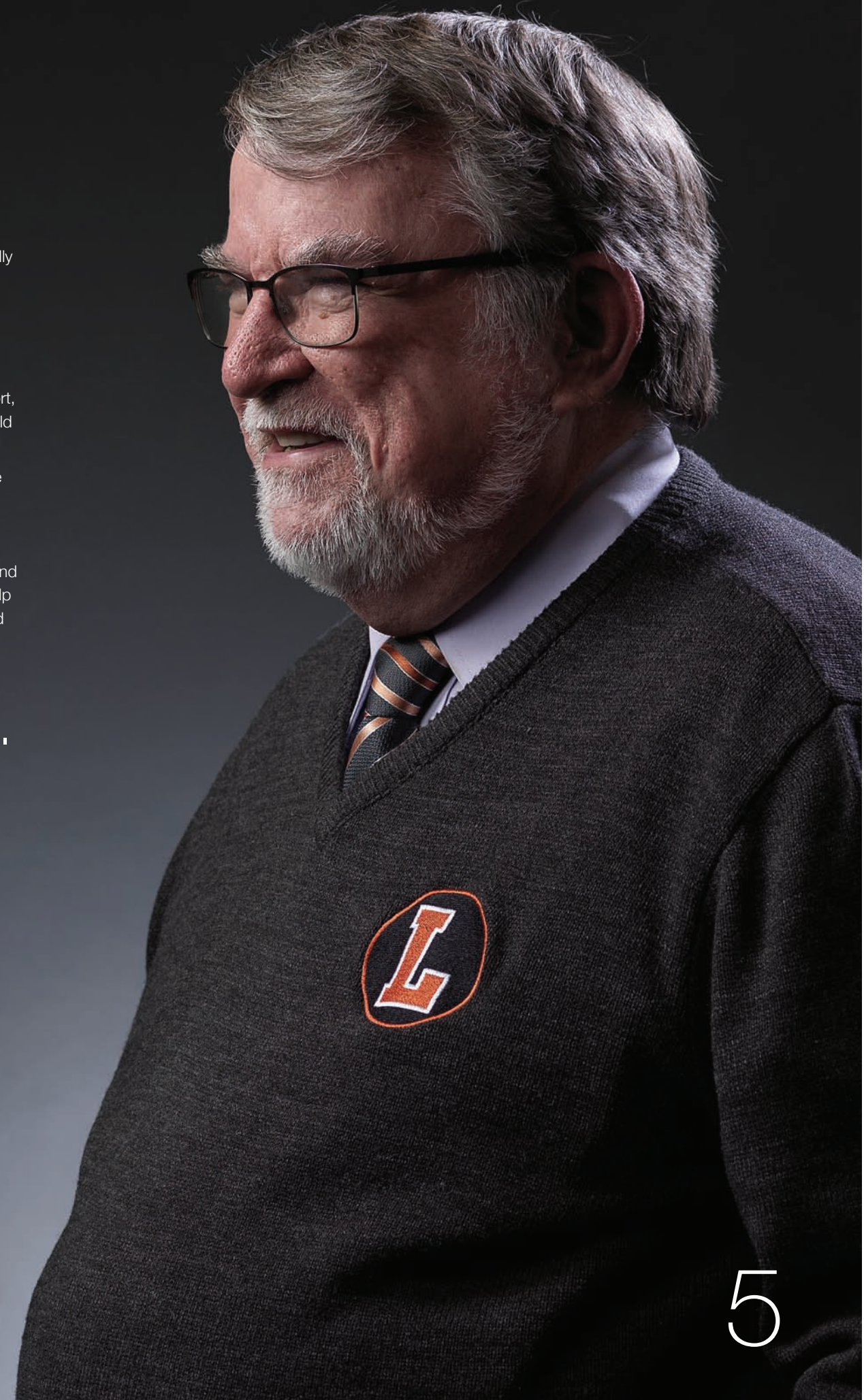
At left, Shaka Rawls, Leo High School alumnus, master's in education, PhD candidate, brand-new principal. At right, Dan McGrath, president and alumnus, Leo High School, Chicago landmark for 91 years.

A year ago, Leo High School was closing. Definitely. But Dan McGrath had a vision to save the only Catholic high school in Auburn Gresham: hire Shaka Rawls and turn his drive and enthusiasm loose on the school's 130 predominantly African-American male students.

However, Leo High School, long on tradition, was chronically short on financial resources. Dan turned to Big Shoulders Fund. Would Big Shoulders consider collaborating with Leo—investing not only in scholarships and overall support, but specifically helping Dan build a winning leadership team?

A new challenge for us. But we answered, "Together we can do this." We worked with Dan and Shaka, as well as famous alumnus and Big Shoulders Fund Founder Andy McKenna, to help fund the right infrastructure and leadership, creating hope for Leo's future.

And preserve a priceless treasure in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood.



Ana Cortes, Big Shoulders alumna, DePaul senior, future teacher, guitar player.



Chris Antwi-Nsiah, accounting professional at PricewaterhouseCoopers, chose his career path because of his Gallagher Scholarship mentor and currently mentors Big Shoulders Fund students.



Creating engaged adults.

This year Big Shoulders Fund partnered with IPSOS, the international research firm, to track the performance of our alumni. This new project gives us a vitally important picture of the impact Big Shoulders Fund is having on our students and their communities.



John Czerwionka, Regional Director Foundation and Institutional Advisors at Northern Trust, Big Shoulders Fund volunteer, teaches the Big Shoulders Fund Stock Market Program at his alma mater, St. Constance.



Elizabeth Agront-Houlihan, master's in education from UIC, director of programs in UIC Office of First Year Initiatives, mentoring other first-generation college students. "Big Shoulders Fund gave me the choice to create my own narrative."

What we found was amazing.

60% of our African-American students achieve a college BA or beyond vs. 23% nationally.

57% of our Hispanic students achieve a BA vs. 16% nationally.

75% of our alumni are employed vs. 65% of adults in the Chicago area.

38% volunteer for community service vs. 26% of adults nationally.

60% have saved for retirement, twice the national average.

Reaching out. Staying engaged. Creating hope.



Creating community.

Introducing our Big Shoulders Fund Teen Board. Let's have the Board's chairperson, Grace Swanson, describe its work in her own words:

"Not so long ago, I reached out to Big Shoulders Fund with an idea to create a board for students like myself so that we could contribute to the community. A few months later, we created the Big Shoulders Fund Teen Board. I was very drawn to Big Shoulders because of its call to help in many aspects of students' lives: first, to provide them with supplies in the schools, but also opportunities to travel and create relationships with the Big Shoulders staff. For example, every month the Board has dedicated a Tuesday night to the children of St. Malachy. Teen Board members interact with students in after-school activities ranging from tutoring and reading stories to helping lead school activities. Today I've learned how much of an impact even I as a student can make. I'm proud to lead the Board's Executive Committee."

Thanks to the 80 members (and growing) of the Big Shoulders Fund Teen Board.

Creating hope by creating community.



Creating choice.

For the first time in a sustainable way, 22 Big Shoulders Fund schools will offer occupational therapy and physical therapy to students with special needs. Our goal is to broaden school choice in our inner-city neighborhoods by making these critical services available to families whose children need them. Through an inclusion-focused partnership with Aspire and the Greeley Center for Catholic Education at Loyola University, Big Shoulders Fund's All Are Welcome Program will provide help with fine motor skills like handwriting and tying shoes, as well as mobility and the ability to be more independent.

Creating hope by making all students welcome.

Creating leaders.

Leo High School senior John Harris is ready to lead. Last year, he participated in the Big Shoulders STEM program at Brush Creek Ranch in Saratoga, Wyoming. John quickly excelled in Big Shoulders Fund's new Outdoors Bound program, a paid internship for potential student leaders created by ranch owners Beth and Bruce White. This year, he will return as a veteran showcasing his leadership skills to a fresh set of students.

Combined with second-semester enrichment and leadership development activities, Outdoors Bound will provide travel expenses, lodging, and three weeks of ranching experience coupled with hiking, rafting, and camping. John must take to the western life. Next year he hopes to pursue a sports management major at University of Wyoming.

Creating individuals who create their own hope.





Creating smoother transitions.

Big Shoulders students face two huge obstacles in their careers. One is the transition from 8th grade to high school, and the other is the transition from high school to college.

Through the new Mazza High School Support Program, Big Shoulders Fund works with schools, families, and students to navigate Chicago's admissions process, one of the most complicated in the country. The program is designed to increase the number of our students who enroll in quality high schools by building the capacity of elementary schools to provide counseling, readiness programs, and transition support.



The Big Shoulders College Access and Success Program provides college counseling resources, offers information on scholarship opportunities, stays in touch with our scholars in college, and links graduating seniors to employment opportunities through our partnership with CareerBuilder and other key stakeholders.

**Creating a path to bridge the gaps.
Creating hope.**



Joshua Hale
President + Chief
Executive Officer

"If there's one big lesson to take from the great privilege of working with our staff and all those teachers and students at the schools we support, it's that there's a never-ending circle that begins with enthusiasm and leads directly to hope, which only breeds more enthusiasm. It just keeps going. This is soul-filling work and hope is the main ingredient."



Monsignor Kenneth Velo
Co-Chairman

"When I look at the map of Big Shoulders Fund schools, I see a city of dots, each a turning point in hundreds of lives. No one can take away the education these children receive in these sacred buildings. No one can imagine the grace that touches us all in this work."



James J. O'Connor
Founding Co-Chairman

"The schools we support absolutely change the lives of 20,000 kids in the inner city. And they've made a measurable difference with the generations of success living on every street in our inner city. So many times I've felt a swell of gratitude when another inner-city neighborhood keeps the school at the center of its life."



John Canning
Co-Chairman

"So many times I've seen the relief in a mom's eyes when she found out her child qualified for a scholarship. The joy of a whole family at a graduation ceremony. Sometimes I have to admit I'm a little overwhelmed with gratitude when I'm with the kids at a Bulls game or just hanging out getting to know these brilliant individuals, so full of promise."

**Big
Shoulders
Fund.®**

You've seen some of the work we do every day. Now keep going. Turn the page to see some of the new ideas we're continually creating, keeping inner-city Catholic schools open and growing and vibrant...

sustaining
hope.



Sustainability
is all about
persistence.
You can't get
bored, you can't
get tired, you can't
put your feet up
and put it off until
tomorrow.

That's why we're always talking "blocking and tackling." Tweak last year's STEM program and give it a push. Professional development, leadership training, recruiting the best and the brightest never ends. The core elements of the most successful programs bear endless repetition. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. But do repeat it. Again and again. And always, always, scholarships. Bricks and mortar. Fundraising. Still serving, still succeeding, still at the center of what we do. Year in and year out, fueling ambition, realizing goals, **sustaining hope.**

Sustaining excellence.

Nobody stays at the top by standing still. The people you see here participate in the new Sullivan Fellowship, part of the Big Shoulders Fund Leadership Development Program. For years, the Leadership Development Program has provided ongoing professional development for teachers who aim to be licensed as administrators. School leaders benefit from opportunities to fine-tune their organizational and fiscal management skills and deepen their instructional leadership capacity.



Now, the program also provides training for current Big Shoulders principals on high-level administrative topics such as growth mindset development, progress monitoring systems in schools, technology infrastructure planning, and teacher leadership cultivation. Last year, schools retained 80 percent of our Leadership Development Program principals and 100 percent of assistant principals.

Excellent results. Excellence sustained.

Sustaining peace.

Englewood can be a dangerous neighborhood. So every day for the last 10 years, Officer Michael Cleary has stopped by the Academy of St. Benedict after roll call just to make sure everybody's safe. He patrols the parking lot and makes himself visible inside and outside the school. He says, even after the roughest days on the beat, just seeing the kids in a safe place protected from gangs and violence brightens his heart.

The Academy of St. Benedict is one of the neediest Big Shoulders Fund schools. Yet they still find time to promote peace in the Englewood community with daily prayers, peace marches, and close cooperation with the District Police Commander.

Last year, the teachers and kids invited all the officers in the district for a barbecue to thank them for their service. And gave Officer Michael Cleary a special award as a thank you.

Sustaining peace to keep hope living.



Learned

Defined



CHICAGO VENTURES



Sustaining partnerships.

It's impossible to overstate the value our many corporate partners bring to the students at Big Shoulders Fund schools.

Last year, for example, Ernst & Young stepped up to support the First Annual Entrepreneurship Challenge. Students from nine Big Shoulders Fund schools worked with the help of an EY employee mentor to develop a product or service that would improve the Chicago community. To prepare, they visited 1871—Chicago's center for technology and entrepreneurship—and met with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Chicago Ventures, and more, all thanks to the support of Omar Duque, Jim O'Connor, Jr., Mark Tebbe, and Kevin Willer.

In another partnership, Honey Can Do and supporters Catherine and Steve Greenspon invited our students to see the latest innovations at the International Home and Housewares Show.

Treasured partnerships. Together we sustain hope.





Sustaining infrastructures.

Nothing happens without a roof over our heads. It's that simple. But with tight budgets, strained staffs, and 100-year-old school buildings, inner-city Catholic schools are faced with a huge challenge just to keep these vital institutions open.

Enter the literally thousands of participants in Give Back Day events every year. They clean, paint, and handle maintenance projects. Some also participate in Corporate Service Days, when companies send employees to a school for particular purposes, like reading initiatives or financial literacy sessions.

Sustaining hope simply by staying open.

Sustaining STEM.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Short version, the future. Shorter version, hope.

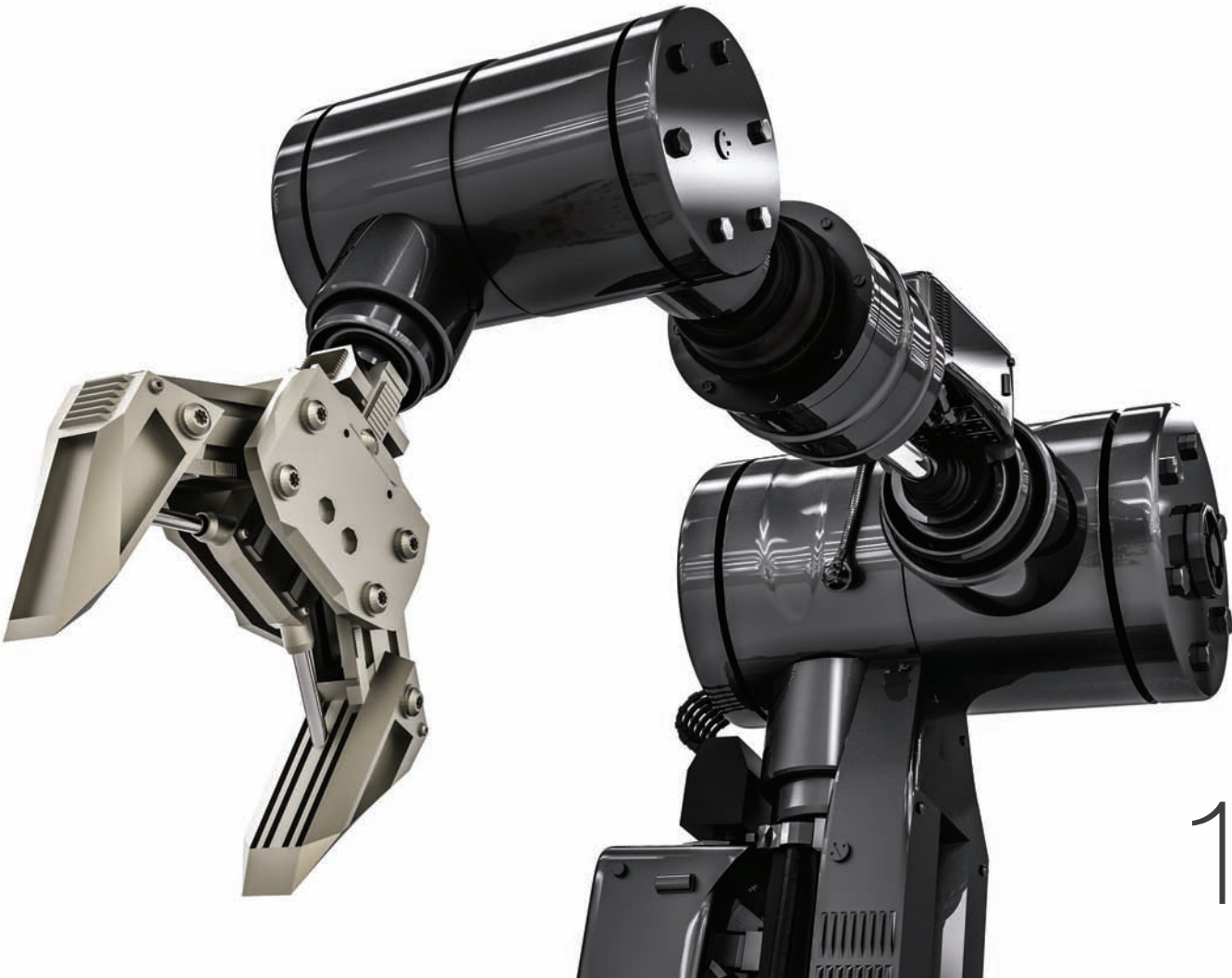
The Pew Research Center anticipates a 28 percent increase in jobs that require high-level proficiency in math and a 12.5 percent increase in jobs that require high-level proficiency in information technology during the next 10 years.

Big Shoulders Fund has sustained a long-term investment in STEM education, including two distinct programs:

The STEM Scholars Program for Middle Schoolers, founded by Dave and Wendy Dury, provides hardware in the form of iPads, Chromebooks, and robotics toolkits and a rigorous Saturday curriculum adding nearly 300 hours of instruction in STEM by expert educators. Thus far, all eighth grade scholars in the program have matriculated to rigorous Catholic high schools and other top-quality high school options.

The Exelon Explorers STEM Scholarship Program supports promising students in math and science through middle and high school. In addition to receiving tuition assistance, Exelon Explorers participate in project-based learning focused on science, technology, engineering, and math concepts and methods. The first cohort of Exelon Explorers is now enrolled in 11th grade at high-quality schools and continues to receive support.

Sustaining STEM. Sustaining hope.





Sustaining the digital conversation.

No one needs to be reminded that channels of communication are multiplying at an exponential rate. For educational professionals whose portfolios don't include keeping up with the latest hashtag or Facebook permutation, Big Shoulders Fund provides individual schools with comprehensive assessments of their digital communications plan. This includes marketing and branding efforts, with enrollment as a key component. Schools develop websites, as well as integrated outreach to individual students, parents, and groups within the community.

In addition, Big Shoulders Fund developed the #discoverthedifference social media campaign. As just one example of its powerful reach, this year the Big Shoulders Fund Tax Credit Scholarship Program received nearly 12,000 applications in just 24 hours. An inconceivable success without digital communications.

Sustaining hope through hashtags and URLs.

Sustaining success.

The Covered Schools Initiative provides a financial, management, and educational consultancy for inner-city Catholic schools at risk of closing. Staff and consultants provide expertise acquired from experience with major players like the University of Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program, IBM, American Express, and the Wharton School of Business. The Covered Schools Initiative offers staff and external contractors who can help with specific challenges facing individual schools, setting priorities, tracking progress, and providing active help collaboratively as needed. The core philosophy is "service, not oversight." These schools have seen financial shortfalls decrease and student numbers increase.

Big Shoulders works to leverage the full extent of our programs to help schools succeed. One example, the Big Shoulders Fund Data Analysis Initiative, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, delivered data gathering and analysis for St. Ethelreda School in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood. Denise Spells, celebrating 25 years as principal, attributes the fact that her school was one of the top five improvers in the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2017 to this focus on data-driven education.

Sustaining hope by constantly improving.





Sustaining school ties.

With respect to an old Chinese proverb, “Give a school a fish and they stay open for a day. Teach a school to fish and they stay open for a lifetime.” The Big Shoulders Fund Alumni Advancement Program, with early support from board member Dennis FitzSimons, the McCormick Foundation, and the GHR Foundation, teaches schools to reach out to their alumni for financial support.

Since 2012, participating schools have raised more than \$750,000 and built a database of more than 73,000 digitized alumni records. This gives a school the permanent ability to grow outreach to alumni, bring them in for events, provide volunteer opportunities, develop planned giving programs, and build a vibrant alumni community.

Sustaining hope, casting a line to our alumni.

**Big
Shoulders
Fund.®**

Our job never ends. And
neither does this book.
Turn the page to see some
of what we do every day to
sustain the hope we work
so hard to create...