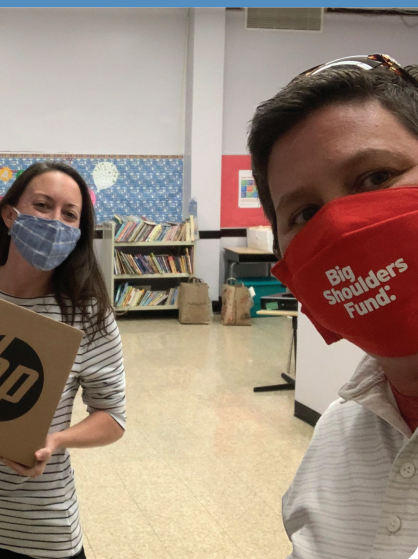


# Shoulder **to** Shoulder

FALL 2020

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**Big  
Shoulders  
Fund.®**



## Future Forward for Students

(Above R) Academy of St. Benedict the African students stayed socially distant during a reading activity using sitting pods.

(Above L) St. Gall School Principal Caitlin Lee (L) welcomed Big Shoulders Fund Senior Director of Academic Programs and External Affairs Rebecca Lindsay-Ryan, who delivered Chromebooks.

*by Kristin Ziemke, Big Shoulders Fund Learning Innovation Specialist*

When schools closed March 13, Big Shoulders Fund embraced a future-ready approach. On day one, we held a system-wide meeting for principals to offer strategies and support for remote learning. We thought we'd need adjustments to instruction for a few weeks or maybe a month, but after watching school systems worldwide adapt to COVID-19, we proactively anticipated an increased demand for technology and purchased devices. When shipping and supply chain delays occurred widely in August, Big Shoulders had devices to deploy to our schools so they could start the year with the necessary technology.

Our world-class teachers and principals pushed the learning needle ahead. As summer progressed, we learned many families favored remote learning within their local school communities. Their preference for continuity of instruction from their chosen schools illustrates the strong relationships and sense of community principals and teachers have

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Big Shoulders Fund  
Learning Innovation Specialist  
Kristin Ziemke delivered  
devices to the Big Shoulders  
Fund network of schools.

## Future Forward for Students

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nurtured. Within days, principals developed an instructional model that allowed students to attend school, in person or remotely, instructed by the teachers they know and love. Teachers balanced their focus on students in the room and online, which required increased flexibility and novel instructional strategies. Learning in a COVID-19 era has demanded that teachers adjust schedules to meet safety protocols, switch grade assignments due to fluctuating numbers of remote and in-school learners, and become more responsive. From anytime video lessons, digital partnerships, and classroom websites for ease of access, our teachers met—and continue to meet—the challenge.

**Each day, principals and teachers  
persevere and plan regardless of current  
or changing learning conditions.**

Today, 100% of Big Shoulders Fund schools, from preschool to 12th grade, have upgraded their technology and shifted to digital learning platforms. Each school offers a combination of in-person, socially distant, hybrid, and remote learning options. Recognizing that teachers and principals need new strategies for remote, hybrid, and socially distant instruction, Big Shoulders provided 130+ professional learning opportunities for educators this fall and developed a website that hosts reopening and quarantine plans, in-school and remote digital learning supports, and access to professional development, including a webinar library for on-demand learning. Our team has created online enrichment courses for students and expanded mentoring services. We've refined instruction for 25,000+ students, and we continue to strive forward.

Each day, principals and teachers persevere and plan regardless of current or changing learning conditions. Families adjust to a new way of learning and living while expressing gratitude for affordances each school provides. Big Shoulders Fund leadership works tirelessly to procure resources for high-speed Internet in students' homes and teachers to adapt instruction seamlessly if schools must go fully remote again.

While we did not choose this pandemic, and remember how school used to be, we see opportunity. Opportunity to provide more personalized learning for all students. Access to a global network of resources, including authors, scientists, designers, and specialists. Devices in the hands of every child. New modes of communication. Unexpectedly, the ease of video conference has allowed caregivers to participate in events without having to find child care, causing attendance rates to quadruple for adult education meetings, open houses, and teacher conferences in some schools. Students who couldn't access books in their homes before the pandemic now can read 40,000 titles in a digital library available at the click of a button. We are thrilled with these new advancements and already are planning to maintain them after pandemic-required remote learning concludes.

This year Big Shoulders Fund has once again seen that struggle is the heartbeat of innovation. Together, we accept the struggle and use it to rethink teaching and learning. Thank you for your ongoing partnership in this work. ■



# Scholarships Provide Urgent Support to Families During Pandemic

St. John de la Salle Catholic Academy Principal Sally Santellano greeted students who were able to enroll with the support of Big Shoulders Fund scholarships.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the security and well-being of families. At its onset in March, Big Shoulders Fund's leadership strategized quickly, preparing academic programs, facilitating schools to shift to virtual learning, and inviting the community to assist families, and their schools, through the COVID-19 Emergency Fund.

In the months that followed, the community's generous response helped Big Shoulders exceed the Fund's \$3 million goal. Big Shoulders has helped ensure students have food and learning opportunities and schools maintain operations. In the spring, Big Shoulders distributed nearly 600 scholarships totaling \$400,000 through its COVID-19 Emergency Scholarship. The Fund also established two scholarships to help families continue at Big Shoulders Fund schools despite significant personal and financial challenges caused by the pandemic.

**Access** is a three-year renewable scholarship aiming to provide new students with the opportunity for a high-quality education, as well as retain existing students. Nearly 500 children, about half of them new recipients, have received support through Access, with Big Shoulders estimating nearly \$2 million in awards during the three-year period beginning with the current academic year.

**In This Together** has awarded nearly \$300,000 in onetime scholarships to 243 recipients attending 44 Big Shoulders Fund schools. All these families had specific COVID-19-related hardships, such as job loss or illness.

## Leadership and Staff

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John A. Canning, Jr.  
Monsignor Kenneth J. Velo  
Co-Chairmen

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President and Chief Executive Officer

Kamilah Anderson  
Accounting Project Coordinator

Elizabeth Bartley  
Lead Instructional Coach, Data Analysis

Dan Bennett  
Director, Leadership and Scholarship Support

Eliza Bryant  
Director, Academic Programs and Enrichment

Luis Calderon  
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Samantha Clark  
Senior Accountant

Amanda Conley  
Administrative Assistant

Vicente Del Real  
Latino Outreach Coordinator

Malcolm Douglas  
Chief Financial Officer

Amelia Drozda  
Senior Director, Philanthropy, Partnerships, and Engagement

Sheila Fenn  
Assistant Director, Scholar Access and Support

Gisele Jones  
Director of Community Partnerships and Engagement, Northwest Indiana Initiative

Matthew Katzfey  
Director, Alumni Outreach and High School Development

Dan Kozlowski  
Regional Director, Northwest Indiana Initiative

Kate LaMantia  
Scholarship System Coordinator

Rebecca Lindsay-Ryan  
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John Moran  
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Meika Slotsema  
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Kyra Strzelczyk  
Coordinator, Grants and Donor Relations

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Christine Sweeney  
Director, Development Operations and Donor Services

Sarah Tang  
Coordinator, Donor Services

Elizabeth Tracy  
Assistant Director, School Marketing and Operations

Thomas Zbierski  
Senior Director, Scholarship Programs and School Relations

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## Scholarships Provide Urgent Support to Families During Pandemic

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This summer, as principals prepared to start a school year like no other, they partnered extremely effectively with Big Shoulders and their school communities to further support families facing incredible financial challenges, allowing their children to focus on their studies.

Indeed, the hardships produced by the pandemic have been wide-ranging, affecting families' ability to put food on the table and ensure their children have a quality education. Many are struggling with drops in income, due to reduced hours or job loss—an even more dire situation for families with only one parent. Some have coped with severe illness and death, whether COVID-related or otherwise, at times affecting several members of the same household and further endangering the family's physical and financial health. Compounding the difficulties for some families is the need to combine households with elderly relatives who also may be struggling with illness or reduced income.

The Access and In This Together scholarships have helped ease the burdens families are confronting. Applications that Big Shoulders received bear witness to the difficulties of families, many of whom have been the hardest hit by the pandemic. Some families had only one working parent before the pandemic, and a number of those single working parents have seen their hours reduced or lost their jobs entirely. Another family who owned a restaurant, which used to donate food to their children's school, has suffered severely reduced revenue. In yet another family, the single mother of three transitioned from college to full-time work before the pandemic to keep her children at a Big Shoulders Fund school; COVID-19 caused a reduction in her work hours.

The need for assistance continues, with a flood of applications arriving this fall. "At Big Shoulders, we have always admired the determination of families who want their children to receive a high-quality education, despite the challenges in doing so," said Big Shoulders Fund President and CEO Josh Hale. "The pandemic has intensified the need to help even more families achieve that goal. We are so grateful for the generosity of those who contributed to our COVID-19 Emergency Fund and made it possible for us to offer this level of support." ■



Our Lady of Grace School created marketing collateral for the Access scholarship.



Big Shoulders Fund's Northwest Indiana Initiative Regional Director Dan Kozlowski (L) and Director of Community Partnerships and Engagement Gisele Jones (R), with Bishop Noll Institute Principal Lorenza Jara Pastrick, have achieved much in the Initiative's first year.

## NWI Program Has Productive First Year

A year ago, thanks to a fully funded gift from longtime supporters Beth and Bruce White, Big Shoulders Fund expanded its network to Northwest Indiana. The program accomplished much early in the academic year; then, when the pandemic struck, the team successfully collaborated with schools and the community.

Regional Director Dan Kozlowski and Director of Community Partnerships and Engagement Gisele Jones shared some highlights, including new programs, community partnerships, and increased support:

- Arranged for student teachers from Purdue University Northwest (PNW) School of Education to serve as substitutes and assistant teachers
- Improved annual budget planning and financial reporting
- Supplied grants to purchase or replace technology equipment
- Offered professional development in marketing for recruitment
- Established after-school tutoring program at St. Casimir School
- Partnered with PNW School of Business to offer entrepreneurial workshops at Marquette Catholic High School

During the pandemic, additional support has included:

- Providing more than 220 emergency scholarships to 200 families in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Gary
- Coordinating a Father's Day Project that distributed 10,000 meals across six communities, aided by partnerships with PNW School of Hospitality, Boys and Girls Clubs of NWI, and Community HealthNet, which also set up a nutrition program for Aquinas Catholic School
- Assisting schools in applying for the Paycheck Protection Program and acquiring Personal Protective Equipment

Looking ahead, Kozlowski and Jones hope to create a school counseling partnership with PNW, work with schools to examine and refine their mission statements, establish the 5Essentials at NWI schools, and, having joined the Northwest Indiana Regional Opportunities Council, strengthen relationships in the business community. ■



Students focused on cataloguing things that delight them with summer enrichment course instructor Bill Healy.

## Virtual Summer Enrichment and Fall Extended-Day Programs Engage Students

With families facing a summer of physical distancing, canceled camps, and closed playgrounds due to COVID-19, Big Shoulders Fund's academic programs team wanted to find ways to engage students. The result: Big Shoulders Fund's first-ever virtual summer enrichment program series.

During two four-week sessions, more than 500 students participated in nearly 50 courses, ranging from piano and guitar lessons to adventure world travelers, from medical career exploration to film studies. Students from 100 schools in the Big Shoulders Fund Chicago and Northwest Indiana (NWI) network gathered online to share their interests, and high-performing teachers reached more children across the region. To design and implement the program, Big Shoulders benefited from the expertise of Antoinette Greengard, a Big Shoulders instructional coach who provided summer enrichment courses for gifted students at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development and taught elementary school for nine years.

Some examples:

- Mesirow Financial Managing Director Leo Harmon, a teacher in Big Shoulders Fund's Stock Market Program, led a new course on starting a business.
- Veterinarian Dr. Gery Herrmann and his colleagues at the Wildlife Discovery Center of Lake Forest offered an intimate look at animals and nature.
- While studying the American Girls series, students wrote books about themselves as American students in 2020, played historical games, and made historical crafts.
- Mary Casey, lead teacher for Big Shoulders Fund's Brush Creek Ranch Summer Enrichment Program and science teacher at St. Bede the Venerable School, piloted resources from the John G. Shedd Aquarium to expose elementary school students to aquatic and marine mammals.

"I taught daily trumpet and German," said Ryan Knott, a teacher at Academy of St. Benedict the African. "Big Shoulders helped families rent trumpets

so we could cover history, theory, and playing some basic songs. German students excelled at practicing conversational phrases and comparing/contrasting German and American culture."

St. Ann School teacher Kathleen Fox shared, "Big Shoulders Fund students teamed up with Capital One Coders to learn how to program a whack-a-mole app. Students loved working in small groups and building the app in real time. They were even able to publish it and play!"

This fall, the Big Shoulders team reimaged their longstanding support of school extended-day programs; fortunately, the summer enrichment programs provided a model, inspiring Big Shoulders to offer free virtual extended-day programming to help Chicago and NWI network schools meet families' needs. Nearly 50 clubs are available to almost all grade levels, led by the schools' teachers and outside professionals, including members of the Big Shoulders Fund Next Generation boards.

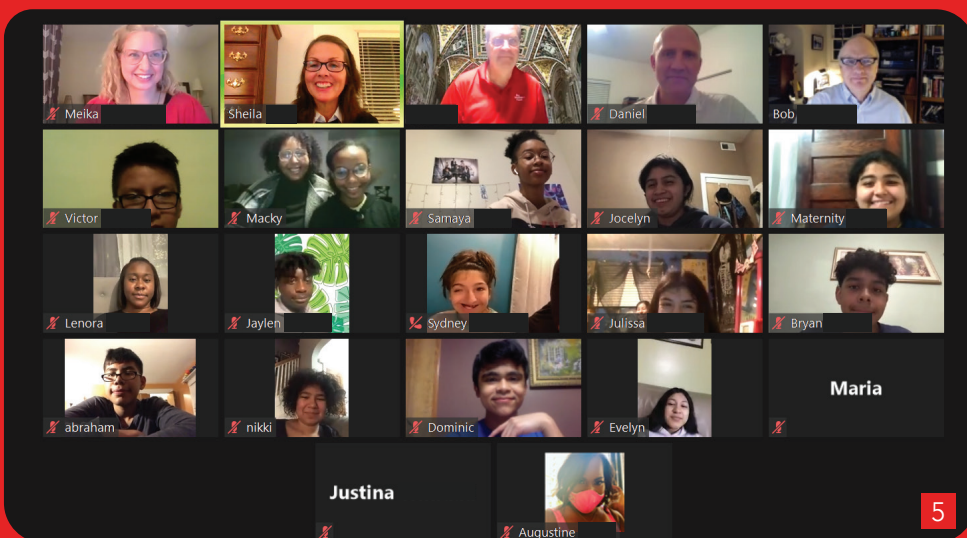
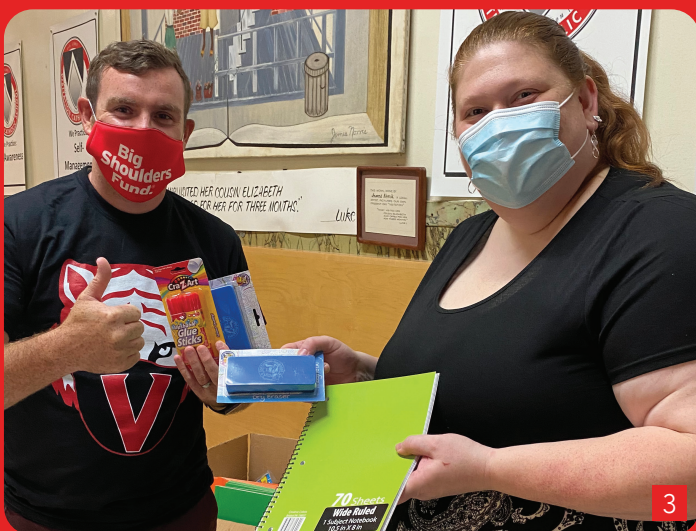
Most clubs reached their capacity within a couple of days, welcoming nearly 630 students. Course topics include improv, dance, coding and robotics, college prep, art and illustrating, STEM projects, women's empowerment, reader's theater, chess, books by diverse authors, and more. In the Careers & Life Skills club, Magnolia Capital CEO Max Peek and Director of Acquisitions Justin Maturo talked about leadership, confidence, and self-advocacy, encouraging students to live their most authentic lives and pursue their goals.

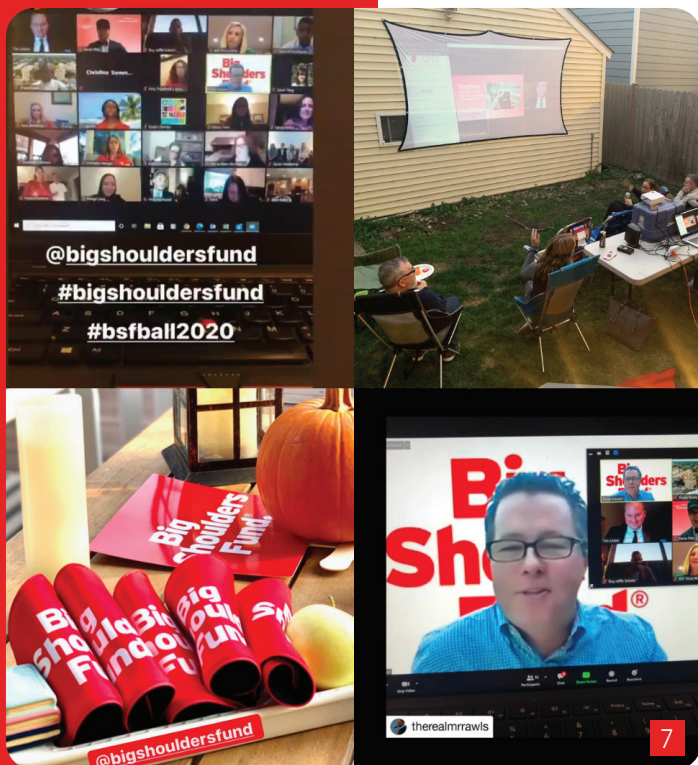
"Our Mad Science class is covering chemical changes, kinetic and potential energy, and engineering," Fox described. "Weekly experiments use supplies students can find in their kitchens. This week, students made oobleck, a non-Newtonian liquid, out of cornstarch and water and noted how it changed from one state of matter to the next."

The fall virtual clubs are offering even the youngest students an opportunity for powerful enrichment. And the silver lining of engaging virtually has been connecting students from across Chicago to share their unique insights and diverse life experiences. ■



# In the Community





1: This summer, Leo Catholic High School held a Back to School Bash to distribute more than 500 backpacks filled with school supplies, offer free COVID-19 testing, distribute meals and PPE, and more. Rita and John Canning, Cadence Kitchen, and Home Run Inn Pizza generously donated nearly 1,000 meals. The event attracted local media segments including interviews with Leo High School Principal and Big Shoulders Fund Sullivan Leadership Fellow Shaka Rawls.

2: (L–R) Ron Guzior, Brian Ruger, Ted Domentita, and Tim Hopper at the 20th Annual Golf Classic, which took place on Monday, August 3 at Olympia Fields Country Club. The day was a huge success, raising nearly \$600,000 for the Friends of Big Shoulders Fund Scholarship. Big Shoulders sends a special thank you to the Golf Classic Committee, led by Giancarlo Turano, Bill Lagoni, and Giancarlo Turano II.

3: Big Shoulders Fund partners Enchanted Backpack and CC's Wish List, founded by longtime Big Shoulders Fund supporter Carol Lavin Bernick, are supporting the Big Shoulders Fund network of schools through the distribution of school supplies and clothing this school year. Director, Patrons Program and Operational Support Kevin Powers (L) delivered items to Visitation Catholic School Principal Jenna Markoff.

4: More than 50 volunteers from Big Shoulders Fund partner Inspire11 helped St. Sylvester School, Queen of the Universe School, and St. Procopius School set up classrooms, clean up play areas, and prepare gardening for the new school year. Big Shoulders thanks Chairmen's Advisory Council member Sharon Nelson and Big Shoulders Fund mentor and Chairmen's Advisory Council member Morgan Hirst for helping to make this connection possible.

5: Eighth grade Big Shoulders Fund Gallagher scholars gathered virtually with board member Bob Gallagher (aka Dr. Bob) in one of a series of high school transition webinars hosted by Big Shoulders to help middle school scholars prepare for their freshman year of high school and navigate the high school admissions process.

6: This summer, Big Shoulders Fund supporters, including board member Clarisol Duque (pictured) ran their own 5K to uphold the Big Shoulders Fund mission, conquering more than 200 miles and raising more than \$8,000 that will directly benefit the Big Shoulders Fund network of students and schools.

7: Through the generosity of incredible supporters, participants, and committee members, Big Shoulders Fund raised more than \$55,000 in support of its Next Generation Board Scholarships at the (Virtual) 14th Annual Big Shoulders Fund Ball.

8: Throughout the summer, Big Shoulders Fund schools developed imaginative ways to honor the class of 2020. From car parades to outdoor ceremonies, the celebrations focused a spotlight on the graduates.

9: KPMG launched its Patron relationship with St. Ethelreda School by having volunteers Sam Rice and Madison Walsh help Principal Dr. Denise Spells prepare classrooms for the new school year. Big Shoulders thanks Linda Imonti, head of KPMG's Chicago office; Executive Committee member and Audit Committee Chair Dan Doherty; and Chairmen's Advisory Council member Chris McCarney for helping make this expanded partnership a possibility.



# Big Shoulders Fund®

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# Big Shoulders Fund.®



As we all continue to face the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Big Shoulders Fund network of principals, teachers, and students has had to reimagine the school year to adapt to the times. **Thanks to the tremendous generosity of those who supported the \$1M Challenge Grant, provided by Executive Committee member Kimberly Querrey and Lou Simpson, Big Shoulders raised \$5.8 million this summer, which helped to provide much-needed technology, programming, scholarships, PPE, food resources, and more to school communities.**

Big Shoulders Fund partners also showed up in a big way by providing meals, books for summer reading, volunteers to help clean schools, and more. ■