

# Shoulder **to** Shoulder

FALL 2022

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## Big Shoulders Fund's Welcome Scholarship Attracts New Families

(Above R) Our Lady of Guadalupe School Principal Bonnie Hall spends time with students.

(Above L) Students in the Steps to Success Program work on STEM projects.

Big Shoulders Fund schools have been countering national trends in enrollment during the past several years, experiencing increases while other communities suffer declines. But there is potential for even further growth by finding ways to welcome new students to its network—thus, the launch of the Welcome Scholarship.

“I think the theme of ‘Welcome’ is appropriate for our schools and their warm culture of embracing new students, and it is also an open invitation for any families considering a new educational home for their child,” commented Dan Bennett, managing director, school marketing and enrollment. “Our schools continue to meet families where they are and offer a welcoming home for parents who want a new and better experience for their child.”

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## Big Shoulders Fund's Welcome Scholarship Attracts New Families

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The Welcome Scholarship is available to qualifying new families with a child entering PreK through seventh grade. Eligible families pay a fixed amount per year for a two-year term. With roughly 400 scholarships distributed to date, Big Shoulders is investing \$1.5 million during the two years of the program.

“By requiring that at least half the scholarships go towards students in PreK or Kindergarten, we are emphasizing the importance of the youngest grades and helping schools build up a solid base in those early childhood classrooms,” Bennett said.

“The Welcome Scholarships have assisted us in welcoming many new families into the Our Lady of Guadalupe School family,” said Principal Bonnie Hall. “The Scholarship’s unique benefit of renewing for the 2023–24 school year was definitely an added blessing as well as peace of mind for several of our families. This year, we have 49 new students, several due to the Welcome Scholarship, which helped many families pay affordable tuition, while keeping up with other bills.” Our Lady of Guadalupe School enrollment has grown by nearly 13% during the past year.

Big Shoulders Fund’s marketing and enrollment team—Maria Ippolito, Jacque Chapman, Jocelyn Esparza, and Bennett—have helped craft an outreach campaign that highlights the scholarship and the larger theme of welcome. The campaign has been building awareness through digital outreach, billboards, CTA ads, new signage, and a new family-facing website. (See images at left.)

The broad nature of the campaign’s theme has also presented the opportunity to highlight differentiators within Big Shoulders Fund schools. The team has been spotlighting distinct school cultures, enrichment opportunities, successes, and more through a targeted social media campaign.

Maternity BVM Principal Christine Molina has been pleased with the program’s impact. “The Welcome Scholarship helped us to provide a quality education in a safe and loving environment to families who otherwise wouldn’t be able to attend our school. We were able to use this scholarship and additional aid to welcome 30 new students to the school. Big Shoulders Fund’s commitment and the creation of this scholarship have helped families join wonderful school communities, eased the financial burden for families investing in Catholic schools, and helped grow enrollment in underserved communities.”

Said Bennett, “In a tough environment, we continue to see growth and stability in almost all of our schools. Schools in our Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* program continue to experience growth, rising nearly two percent this year and 10 percent during the past two years.” ■





## Summer Programs Prepare Students for School Transitions

As children progress through school, each year involves change, growth, and a lot to learn. The prospect of a new school year can, at times, feel intimidating to a young student. To alleviate the pressure and the stress of what's ahead during the upcoming school year, Big Shoulders Fund implemented several summer programs for students entering seventh grade and eighth grade and even moving on to college.

The **Big Shoulders Fund High School Navigators Camp** helped 40 students from 21 Big Shoulders Fund schools practice skills to help them be successful in eighth grade and high school. During each of the four one-week camps—hosted by De La Salle Institute, Holy Trinity High School, Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, and St. Rita of Cascia High School—students learned about their high school options and the application process. They prepared for high school entrance exams, explored future career options, practiced and

reflected on skills like time management and organization, and toured other high schools.

Student comments in surveys revealed the program's positive impact. One student said High School Navigators “has opened my eyes to new high schools and new questions,” and another said they felt “prepared and excited for high school.” Others chimed in: “This program has helped me feel much more confident going into eighth grade and the high school admissions tests” and “I have learned time management, types of scholarships, and how classes work.” Another student said the week made them “more motivated to start doing more research about my high school options,” while another commented, “I feel like high school is much less scary than it was at the beginning of the week.” And in a true display of trust, one student said, “I know I am going to have a hard time choosing what high school I want to go to, but I know that Big Shoulders will help me.”

Students entering seventh grade had a briefer, but equally important, opportunity to prepare for the coming school year. The **Steps to Success Camp** welcomed 33 students from 14 Big Shoulders Fund elementary schools for a one-day camp, hosted by Maternity BVM School and St. Philip Neri School, to reflect on their sixth-grade year, play games, and engage in activities around empathy and social awareness, self-advocacy, leadership, and goal-setting.

Thanks to the generous support of the Mazza Family Foundation, High School Navigators and Steps to Success were free to all participating students.

Also this summer, Big Shoulders Fund offered four virtual workshops for rising high school seniors as part of the Mazza High School Support Program. Current college scholars, who are also alumni of Big Shoulders Fund schools, helped students get a jump-start on their college applications, answered questions, and shared tips and strategies for staying organized and managing the college application and selection process. Each workshop also presented ways for students to make the most of senior year to be best prepared for college.

Middle school students and families looking for more information about high school options and the application process may visit the following websites: [CatholicHighSchoolChicago.org](https://CatholicHighSchoolChicago.org) and [sites.google.com/view/highschooltransition](https://sites.google.com/view/highschooltransition). ■

(Above) High School Navigators visit St. Rita of Cascia High School as part of the program.

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# Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* Adds Two Schools

In 2020, when Big Shoulders Fund launched Big Shoulders Fund *Plus*—an unprecedented 10-year, \$70 million commitment to 30 of its highest-need schools—its leadership hoped to add schools during the life of the program. Big Shoulders has made significant strides in just two years, raising nearly \$70 million to date and enabling *Plus* schools to remain open and viable and continue enriching the local communities they serve.

In an important development, Big Shoulders Fund recently welcomed two schools from its network, St. Francis de Sales High School and St. Sabina Academy, to the *Plus* network. As Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* schools, they join the existing 30 high-need schools in receiving additional academic and operational support, aimed at preserving their long-term vitality.

“Ensuring that these students continue to have access to a high-quality education in a safe and supportive environment is critical to helping them grow up to be productive, positive forces in their communities and in the world.”

“Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* schools are located in neighborhoods and communities that have suffered from years of underinvestment,” said Big Shoulders Fund President and CEO Josh Hale. “Despite this, the children in these neighborhoods are rich in talent, passion, hard work, and hope. Ensuring that these students continue to have access to a high-quality education in a safe and supportive environment is critical to helping them grow up to be productive, positive forces in their communities and in the world.”

As part of this legal agreement with the Archdiocese of Chicago, Big Shoulders Fund assumed a 51 percent financial stake in these schools and has taken on more direct management, working closely with principals and school leaders to help them plan strategically and work towards specific academic, enrollment, developmental, and financial goals. The introduction of a new distributed leadership model, which includes an executive director that works in an advisory role with principals in multiple schools, is also creating new professional development opportunities and an extended career path for school leaders.



St. Sabina Academy Principal Tiffany Brown enjoys time with students.

“Chicago-area families are blessed by the work of Big Shoulders Fund,” said Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Chicago Greg Richmond. “Throughout the pandemic, we saw increased interest in Catholic education among parents and a greater appreciation of the community, stability, and academic rigor of Catholic schools. Big Shoulders Fund makes that education available to thousands of families.”

This expanded operational management support has already translated into significant outcomes. In this school year and last, the 32 Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* schools experienced 10% growth in enrollment, with PreK enrollment increasing more than 30%.

“Working hand in hand with Big Shoulders Fund, I have seen what a difference their commitment to our school, staff, students, and families makes to our school and the Southeast Side community,” said St. Francis de Sales Principal/CEO Roni-Nicole Facen. “Through our work study program, professional



# Initiative

Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* is a 10-year, \$70 million initiative that aims to increase the long-term sustainability of 32 high-need Chicago schools, ensuring they remain pillars in their communities. Big Shoulders Fund staff members work closely with principals toward specific academic, enrollment, fundraising, and finance goals.



St. Francis de Sales High School Principal Roni-Nicole Facen poses with students.

development, grants for academic initiatives, scholarship support, marketing and development resources, and more, Big Shoulders is a true partner. We are excited to formalize our work together by joining the cadre of *Plus* schools!”

St. Sabina Academy Principal Tiffany Brown commented, “We are thrilled to join the *Plus* network. We look forward to working together to provide a rich educational experience for children. St. Sabina Academy has been in the Auburn Gresham community for more than 100 years, ensuring students and families feel known, safe, loved, and nurtured. This partnership also enables us to make an even bigger impact on the families who call this neighborhood home.”

Individuals interested in learning more or donating can visit [bigshouldersfund.org/plus](http://bigshouldersfund.org/plus). ■

## Kent Dauten Appointed Board Co-Chair



Big Shoulders Fund has elected Kent Dauten co-chair of its Board of Trustees, effective July 1. Chairman and co-founder of private investment firm Keystone Capital, Dauten succeeds John Canning, Jr., who stepped down from the co-chair role after more than 25 years but will remain an active member of the Board of Trustees. Dauten, who has served on the board since 2014, works alongside Founding Chairman Jim O'Connor and Co-Chair Monsignor Kenneth Velo.

“Kent’s addition comes at an exciting time for us,” said President and CEO Josh Hale. “Kent is an incredibly thoughtful, effective, and insightful leader, and these qualities, coupled with his vast experience working with boards and management teams, will have a great impact on our mission and ensure we remain in a strong, forward-looking position.”

“I am honored and humbled to partner with Jim O'Connor and Monsignor Velo as co-chair,” commented Dauten. “Along with John Canning, they have dramatically expanded educational opportunities for Chicago’s children. I hope to provide continued strong governance leadership for the benefit of our mission as we grow our operational role through Big Shoulders Fund *Plus* and expansion into Northwest Indiana.”

Dauten serves on the boards of numerous civic and philanthropic organizations, including the Museum of Science and Industry and Northwestern Medicine. He and his wife Liz are also supporters of numerous initiatives related to mental health, including the Dauten Family Center for Bipolar Treatment Innovation at Mass General Hospital.

Canning has been critical to the fulfillment of Big Shoulders Fund’s mission. He helped raise more than \$500 million to support students in under-resourced communities, and The Rita and John Canning Scholarship has helped thousands of promising and deserving students at Big Shoulders Fund schools find pathways to brighter futures.

“We are incredibly grateful for John’s leadership, service, and unrelenting focus on our mission,” said Hale. “John quickly gets to the heart of a matter—how best to serve students and schools—which has served us incredibly well.” ■





# In the Community







- 1: The 22nd Annual Big Shoulders Fund Golf Classic was impactful, raising more than \$700,000 for the Friends of Big Shoulders Fund Scholarship. Big Shoulders Fund thanks Golf Classic Co-Chairs Giancarlo Turano, Bill Lagoni, and Giancarlo Turano II, as well as the committee, volunteers, and staff who worked tirelessly to ensure this event was a success.
- 2: More than 75 supporters gathered at Lucky Dorr in Wrigleyville for the Big Shoulders Fund Ball Kick-Off. Big Shoulders Fund thanks all who helped make the night memorable.
- 3: Students from Academy of St. Benedict the African were invited for a special visit to the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine's Louis A. Simpson and Kimberly K. Querrey Biomedical Research Center. They took a tour of the facility led by Director of the Simpson Querrey Institute for Epigenetics Ali Shilatifard, PhD and Chief of Thoracic Surgery at Northwestern Ankit Bharat, MBBS, whose surgical team has made incredible strides to help patients affected by COVID-19. Big Shoulders Fund thanks Shilatifard Laboratory Editorial Assistant and Big Shoulders Fund mentor Laura Shilatifard and Big Shoulders Fund Trustee Kimberly Querrey for making this opportunity possible.
- 4: Volunteers from RSM participated in multiple service days this summer helping with landscaping, painting, moving furniture, setting up classrooms, and deep cleaning at schools including St. Gall, St. Nicholas of Tolentine, and St. Thomas the Apostle. Big Shoulders Fund thanks RSM for their continued partnership.
- 5: Congratulations to St. John de la Salle Catholic Academy Principal Sally Santellano on receiving the Gretchen A. Ludwig Principal Award for her outstanding leadership. As principal for the last five years, Santellano has helped the school grow in many areas, including enrollment, academic outcomes, programming, and more.
- 6: Congratulations to Big Shoulders Fund Board Director Fred O'Connor on receiving Honorable Mention for the Lifetime Achievement Award in the 2022 Invest in Others Awards. The awards recognize the charitable work of financial advisors in communities across the country and around the world. Big Shoulders Fund thanks Fred for his contributions and support of the organization's mission throughout the years, including founding the Chairmen's Advisory Council, mentoring scholars, teaching the Stock Market Program, serving on a school board, providing pro bono support, and so much more.
- 7: The second annual Big Shoulders Fund Northwest Indiana Conference "Where Theory Meets Action" took place this summer at Purdue University Northwest. This year's conference provided an opportunity for school leaders and their teams to engage in collective learning, build informal ties, and hear from inspiring speakers and panels.
- 8: In April, Big Shoulders Fund announced a new partnership with ComEd and United Way of Metro Chicago, launching "Powering Our Future," a new initiative that will introduce students at four Big Shoulders Fund high schools to career pathways in the energy, utility, and related sectors during the 2022–23 academic year and years to come.
- 9: This summer, more than 200 middle school students from 36 Big Shoulders Fund schools took part in a six-day trip aimed at science-focused academic sessions at Staddle Camp at Brush Creek Ranch in Saratoga, Wyoming. The program took place across eight weeks and also included 20 junior counselors and five camp staffers, four of whom had previously attended the camp as students and served as junior counselors. Campers engaged in science enrichment lessons, climbed the high rope course, floated down the North Platte River, and more.
- 10: With the support of the Big Shoulders Fund Next Generation Boards, the Teen Board hosted the inaugural 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament at St. Helen Catholic School. The event raised nearly \$10,000 to support the Auxiliary Board Scholarship.
- 11: Big Shoulders Fund thanks the Chicago Bears and Bears Care for inviting families from Epiphany Catholic School, Good Shepherd Catholic School, and St Agnes of Bohemia School to their training camp and 14th Annual Back to School Fair.

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# SAVE THE DATE

## *2023 Humanitarian Award Dinner*

**Wednesday, May 24, 2023**

### **Designing the Course for A Brighter Future**

The 2023 Humanitarian Award Dinner Honorees are **Mike and Lindy Keiser**. Big Shoulders Fund is excited to celebrate our mission in person. More details to follow.

For sponsorship information, contact Amelia Drozda at 312.751.3850 or [adrozda@bigshouldersfund.org](mailto:adrozda@bigshouldersfund.org).

