



## *Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School*

8213 Church Lane East St. Louis, IL 62203  
Phone (618) 397-0316 Fax (618) 397-0337

July 26, 2011

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to give you an update on our 2010-2011 school year, since the Belleville Diocesan Presbyteral Council made Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School the recipient of the Priest's Charity Fund. Through their initiative, as well as through the impact of the "Thea's Thirteen" letter sent out on our behalf, you have helped us continue our mission to, "*inspire, prepare, and empower*" the school families we serve, in the name of the Diocese of Belleville.

### **BACKGROUND**

Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School is the only Belleville Diocesan elementary school, and the last remaining Catholic school in East St. Louis;

The Belleville Diocesan commitment to our school represents the Church's preferential option for the poor, and witnesses to the belief that empowerment through education is the most effective way to break the cycle of poverty;

The public school district in East St. Louis is fragile; parents/guardians are looking for an effective, alternative educational approach to education so that their children will have the opportunity to go from poverty to possibilities;

The economic status of a family significantly impacts the educational life of a child;

Sister Thea Bowman offers a unique holistic leaning program and is blessed with an extraordinarily committed staff;

The economic recession has brought about a decline in funding from the CSMA, and other foundations and sources;

Simultaneously, there has been an increase in the need for tuition assistance for the 82% of our school families who live below the poverty level;

### **MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY**

Several priests have visited and toured our school this year, including: Frs. John Iffert, Dan Friedman, Ray Schultz, Eric Wagner, CR, and Urban Osuji, CM; Fr. Vince Haselhorst and Don Lenzini attended our Advent Service rehearsal;

Immaculate Conception, Columbia staff personally delivered their parish donation and received a tour;

Immaculate Conception, Columbia 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders and staff and parent chaperones attended the final rehearsal of our annual Advent Prayer Service, and have donated school supplies and money from their school community;

An Immaculate Conception School parent and parishioner is currently volunteering in our upper grades;

2 Gibault Catholic High School students are here for their Senior Project; we have been invited to bring our students to their Spring musical;

Our students participate in the athletic program at Blessed Sacrament School in Belleville;

St. Stephen Parish generously allows us, at no charge, to use their parish hall for our annual Benefit Dinner;

St. Nicholas Parish includes us in their charity tithing each year;

A St. Nicholas parishioner volunteers at our school every week as a teacher of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program;

Sister Joan Stoverink, ASC, and a Hispanic college student gave a presentation to our students on the presence of Hispanic culture in the North Central Deanery. We collected almost \$500.00 from our school families, and donated this for the part-time position for Hispanic ministry in that area;

Parishioners from St. Mary Parish in Carlyle recently donated a large amount of books to our school library and for our students to take home;

#### **ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?**

8<sup>th</sup> grade Class of 2007-one student graduated with honors classes from O'Fallon High-will attend Spelman College to study pre-law; another graduated with honors classes from Althoff-accepted into the theater department at Webster University; another National Honor Society student, accepted at Howard University and Spelman College, plans to study pre-dentistry

Last year's 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, 100% enrolled in a Catholic high school

Current 8<sup>th</sup> grade 10 of the 11 students will attend Catholic high school

Have had a number of students here from a variety of colleges in Kansas, Iowa and Michigan, who wish to give service in East St. Louis, and who are interested in experiencing the best practices in an alternative urban educational approach;

#### **UPDATE**

Current enrollment 113-budgeted for 105

Cost per student \$7,000 per student (was \$8,000 in prior years); accomplished by an increase in enrollment, reducing janitorial cost by half; eliminating 2 part-time positions; and teachers and staff taking on additional classes and responsibilities (with no pay raise or bonus as they began contributing 4% to their health insurance)

Priest's Charity Fund/Donations from Parishes, Religious Men and Women=\$36,281.00

We have been able to add \$10,000 to our endowment;

We have received over \$77,000 in grant money that was not in our original budget;

Sister Janet McCann, ASC, principal, and Sister Margaret Marie Clifford, DC, advancement director, meet monthly with Jim Mroczkowski and Jo Stogner/Jeanne Mertens to review financial reports; in particular, we are working toward revamping the format of the financial reports so that they are more “user-friendly” as we strive to take more local ownership in our financial reality;

A recently retired teacher/curriculum consultant from the Edwardsville School District (Catholic, and interested in volunteering her expertise) has been added to Advisory Board to assist with curriculum planning;

Allsup, Inc.’s marketing person has worked with us on marketing and publicity.

A DVD about our school was recently created by the college son of one of our teachers

Since June, 2010, we were able to pay almost \$27,000 owed to the Diocese for health insurance and property liability bills owed from previous years.

We have submitted a balanced budget for 2011-2012.

While all our families pay some tuition (1 child is \$357 per month), most pay only a small portion, and even that is a great challenge for them; we are currently working to reduce the amount of outstanding tuition owed, and to ensure that the numbers on the tuition portion of accounts receivable are correct.

As our school building ages, the amount of repairs and upkeep goes up: Immediate needs include: repair of a leaky roof and replacement of decrepit windows.

Through the efforts of many dedicated people, we have certainly made gains in shoring up the financial situation at Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School. We still have lots to do to ensure that this positive movement continues.

### **WHY SHOULD SUPPORT CONTINUE?**

We are grateful to the Diocese of Belleville, and to our many benefactors who believe in the importance of the presence of Catholic education in East St. Louis. We are aware that people may ask you why our school should receive financial support from the Diocese, when their own Catholic schools are struggling to remain open. Please share with them our call as Catholics toward a preferential option for the poor. Please help them understand the extreme level of poverty in which our families exist and the lack of a good public school system to address their critical academic needs. Please share with them that if our students do not have the opportunity to receive a quality education, the cycle of generational poverty that permeates their existence could well continue, and the next generation will most likely be as hopeless and helpless as the ones that currently surround them. Please let them know that while we do not receive subsidy from any one parish, we are able to exist only because of the decision over 20 years ago to make Sister Thea Bowman Catholic School a mission of the Diocese of Belleville. And, as you are aware, mission work cannot exist on its own; it flourishes only with continued financial support and the generosity of the people of the larger Church.

Please accept our deep gratitude. Please continue to work with us and pray for us as we continue this critical mission on behalf of our school families.

Sincerely, in the name of those we serve,

*Sister Janet McCann, ASC, Principal*