

small miracles

A T S A I N T M A L A C H Y S C H O O L

Meet Our National Young Scholars

Two Saint Malachy students, fifth grader **Taylor Sumner** and fourth grader **Kayla Williams**, have been selected to participate this summer in the National Young Scholars Program (NYSP), sponsored by the National Center for Early Academic Excellence.

NYSP is a leadership program in Washington, D.C., designed and created specifically for the nation's most highly acclaimed students. The students represent second through fifth grade and must be nominated by a teacher.

During the weeklong program, Taylor will take the CSI class to learn about forensics. Kayla will take the Weather Station Earth class. Both students hope this program will



Taylor Sumner



Kayla Williams

challenge them and help hone their leadership skills.

"One of my friends participated in this program last summer," Taylor says. "She came back a totally different student."

Taylor's mom, Yolanda, a graduate of Saint Malachy School, believes this program is just one more way the school makes a difference. "Ever since they have been at Saint Malachy,

we have had nothing but positive results," she says.

Special thanks goes to supporters of the Johanna Sigmund Scholarship Fund and Johanna's former classmates and friends, who hosted a fund-raiser at Christmas. The group raised more than \$2,000 to help pay for Taylor and Kayla's NYSP fees and travel expenses.

Breaking News: Saint Malachy Welcomes New Pastor!

We've just learned that Father Kevin C. Lawrence of Saint Timothy's in Northeast Philadelphia has been appointed the new pastor of Saint Malachy Parish. Previously, Father Lawrence served for 10 years at nearby St. John's Hospice in direct ministry to the homeless. All of us at Saint Malachy welcome Father Lawrence with open arms.

The Students' Creed

I have faith in myself
I have faith in my teachers
I can learn if I study hard
I respect others and seek their respect
I have self-respect
I have self-control
I love myself
And loving myself I will be myself
And know myself
I am the one who is talking

The children of Saint Malachy recite this creed each morning after the "Our Father."

SAINT MALACHY SCHOOL

1429 North 11th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

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The sun and rain and spring ... and everything in between. The old school here on North 11th street has been just that.

Days filled with glory. Graduations. Dance classes. Church services. Bright days in the schoolyard.

Days with sadness. Children coming hungry to school. No heat as the boiler is broken.

Dwindling reserves. School closings all around us.

Saint Malachy School is precious.

As many of you have told me, "Mac you are getting old and Saint Malachy School is more important than your lifetime." So I have worked hard these past few years with a multitude of supporters, advisory board members, committee members and a stable faculty. I believe that this hard work has begun to take root.

Our committees cover everything from quality of education to building commissions to budget and financial planning. The Advisory Board has been a source of an Adopt-A-Student program, which is a spectacular success. Recently, two professional women with connections to the Philadelphia Orchestra started coming personally to install a new music program. New books, science equipment, technology. More small miracles.

The morale of the school is exceptional. The school is more prosperous and effective in North Philadelphia than it has ever been in my 25 years here. Our enrollment is strong. The children love

being here, and their parents and guardians share this sense of Saint Malachy School.

The consensus of all our advisors is that Saint Malachy is an invaluable presence in North Philadelphia and a great testimony to the ministry of the Church among people who are largely not Catholic.

Yet, the effort is ongoing.

So, I pray that you will keep up this effort even as I plan to retire as Pastor of Saint Malachy Parish this year. I do not have formal plans after my retirement, except to say that I will step down and allow the school to flourish.

I hope to be connected, in a very small way, to the place that I have called home for so many years.

But I digress. Small is beautiful as you have heard me say. Your small miracles, prayers and support have helped this school remain a beacon of light. Please continue this quest. It is most important. There will be more sun and rain and spring and everything in between. Because of you, there will be life at Saint Malachy School.

Most importantly, a miracle has called you and me to be here. Our children need us all to keep going for their sake. For their futures. So that they too can create small miracles one day.

Gratefully,



New Assessment Tools Help Students, Teachers, Reach Higher

The faculty and administration of Saint Malachy School, along with guidance and support from the Educational Advisory Committee, have instituted rigorous new educational assessment tools to boost student achievement.

The Middle States Association accreditation process is one such tool. Saint Malachy is using this process to carefully analyze existing assessment data (such as Terra Nova scores) to better determine each student's academic potential, evaluate his or her current level of functioning, and help each student take increased responsibility for his or her own learning.

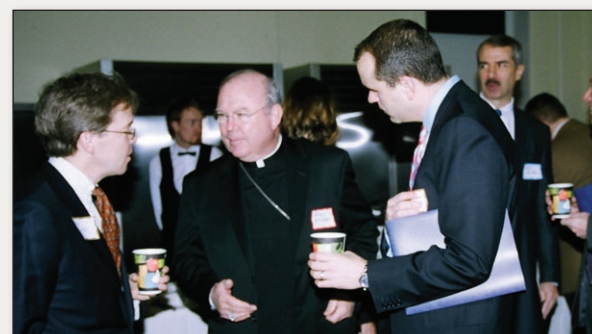
This spring, Saint Malachy also began administering D.I.B.E.L.S. (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), a research-based screening tool from the University of Oregon designed to help teachers identify reading deficits sooner. Title I services and one-on-one instruction from Saint Malachy's new special education teacher will provide intensive intervention strategies for at-risk children.

Building BLOCS at 11th and Master



On February 25, 2008, more than 50 business, religious and community leaders attended a Business Leaders Organized for Catholic Schools (BLOCS) breakfast at Saint Malachy School. Under the leadership of businessman and philanthropist Michael O'Neill, BLOCS is hosting a number

of breakfasts in the greater Philadelphia area to highlight innovative efforts to sustain and improve Catholic schooling. Saint Malachy School is grateful to be part of this effort.



Photos by Mary He ran



Getting Students Into High School One Season at a Time

Getting Saint Malachy students into good high schools is part of our mission. And it's a year-round effort.

One of the many ways we help prepare students for high school is to locate and promote high-quality summer camps and find the financial support to help students attend them.

Take Camp Magis for example—a program developed by St. Joseph Preparatory School to expose young boys to the rigors of Jesuit secondary education. Five of Saint Malachy's fifth-grade boys have applied. If they are accepted, St. Joe's will pick up their camp fees. If they do well at camp, they will be eligible for scholarships to the school.

Another camp, organized by Merion Mercy Academy, offers eighth-grade girls the choice of an academic class, an athletic class, or a learning skills class (public speaking and study habits), expenses paid. Although enrollment does not guarantee acceptance to Merion Mercy, it helps build the girls' skills as they consider all their high school options.

When the time for high school arrives, Saint Malachy works hard to provide scholarship funds. Starting this year, all eighth-grade

graduates who plan to attend private high schools will receive a \$500 scholarship, thanks in part to a generous donation from **Sylvia DiBona**. Ms. DiBona has pledged \$10,000 over four years, and has asked Fr. McNamee and the Friends of Saint Malachy to match her donation. Another anonymous donor has pledged \$15,000 over three years.

The new scholarship initiative comes in addition to several scholarships offered through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and other donors. The eighth-grade class of '08 is making the most of it. Nearly two thirds will attend Catholic high schools.

These scholarships give our students a terrific jump-start, but struggling families need more to make Catholic secondary education a reality. Gifts of all sizes are greatly appreciated!

If you would like to contribute to our high school scholarship program, or help fund an academic summer camp program for our students, please make your check payable to "Saint Malachy School – High School Scholarship," or e-mail Bob Morris at morrisroberte@worldnet.att.net.

Make a Run for It!

This fall, come out and run or walk to support Saint Malachy School.



The Annual Fighting Irish 5K October 4, 2008

Presented by the Notre Dame Alumni Club of Philadelphia, the 5K run (3.1 miles) and 1-mile walk will be held on Saturday, October 4, in Chestnut Hill. The event includes live bagpipe music, great awards, food and more. This year's race will support computer technology at Saint Malachy School.

Visit www.fightingirish5k.com to register. For race sponsorship information, please e-mail Frank McGuire at frank_mcguire@hermanmiller.com. We are seeking a minimum of four school sponsors in the amount of \$5,000 each.



The New York City Marathon Team Johanna Sigmund November 2, 2008

Advisory board member Dan Pickens is organizing a 10-person team to run the New York City Marathon (26.2 miles) this year as a charity, with proceeds to support the Johanna Sigmund Fund. The fund, established for Saint Malachy in memory of parishioner Johanna Sigmund, provides tuition money for financially needy children who embody Johanna's spirit, joy and determination.

For more information, please e-mail Dan Pickens at dpickens@jmsonline.com.



25 Years of Saint Malachy Milestones

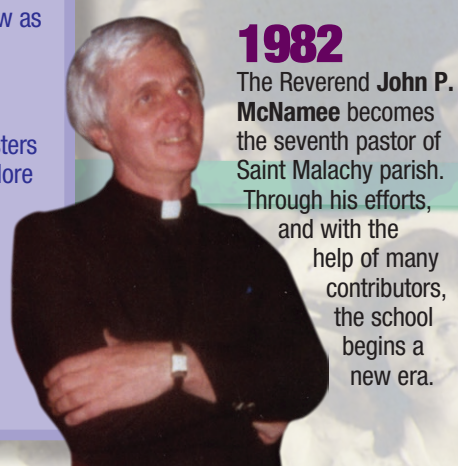
Founded in **1850**, the parish of Saint Malachy, also known as "Church in the Woods," stood on the outskirts of the city of Philadelphia. In those days, what we now know as North Philadelphia was little more than forestland.

Saint Malachy's first parishioners were Irish immigrants, bound to Catholic faith and education. The first school opened to serve their children in 1860, staffed by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1891, a new school building was erected. More

than 100 years later, Saint Malachy's students still attend school in that same building.

Today, the children of Saint Malachy are mostly African-American; a few are Hispanic. The teachers are no longer nuns, but dedicated laypeople. The majority of children are not Catholic.

The goal of Saint Malachy School is to help its students, and the students that follow them, achieve things their parents never dreamed possible. For a quarter of a century, Father John McNamee has made this goal his life's work. We mark here just a few of the small miracles and major milestones in Father Mac's years at Saint Malachy School.



1982

The Reverend **John P. McNamee** becomes the seventh pastor of Saint Malachy parish. Through his efforts, and with the help of many contributors, the school begins a new era.

1984

Saint Isaac Jogues becomes a sister parish to Saint Malachy, providing volunteers, financial aid and holiday food baskets.



1986

Vince Reilly and friends hold the first **Beef and Beer** to benefit the parish and school.



1987

Noted Irish folk musician **Mick Moloney** (and friends) performs his first **Irish concert** to benefit the school.

1991

Dorothy McKenna Brown, Ed.D.Sc., former president of Rosemont College, initiates a grant from Provident Mutual. Funds are used to create the school's **first computer lab**.



Save the Date!
2008 Irish Concert
November 2,
4:00 p.m.

1993

The renowned architecture firm of **Venturi, Scott Brown** donates its services to renovate the 102-year-old school with **new bathrooms** and a redesigned, **repaved schoolyard**.

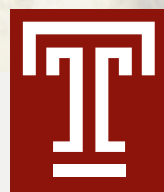


1992

After 130 years, the **Sisters of Mercy** end their tenure at Saint Malachy School. Their legacy lives on in the work of dedicated lay teachers.

1995

A partnership with **Temple University** begins. **Bill Bergman**, Temple Vice President, and **Captain Eileen Bradley**, Temple Security, provide security, sound systems and student volunteers for the school.



1996

Vince Reilly obtains a 501(c)3 to officially establish the nonprofit organization **Friends of Saint Malachy**.

2002

The **Sigmund family** starts a scholarship fund for needy students in memory of their daughter, **Johanna**, who died on 9/11.



2003

Frank and Merrell McGuire start the annual **Fighting Irish 5K race**, hosted by the Notre Dame Alumni Club of Philadelphia. The event generates \$100,000 for Saint Malachy School in five years.



2004

A **transition team** of parishioners and community leaders is formed. The team meets to discuss the future of the school after Father Mac's retirement, and establishes committees, including finance, development and good school keeping.



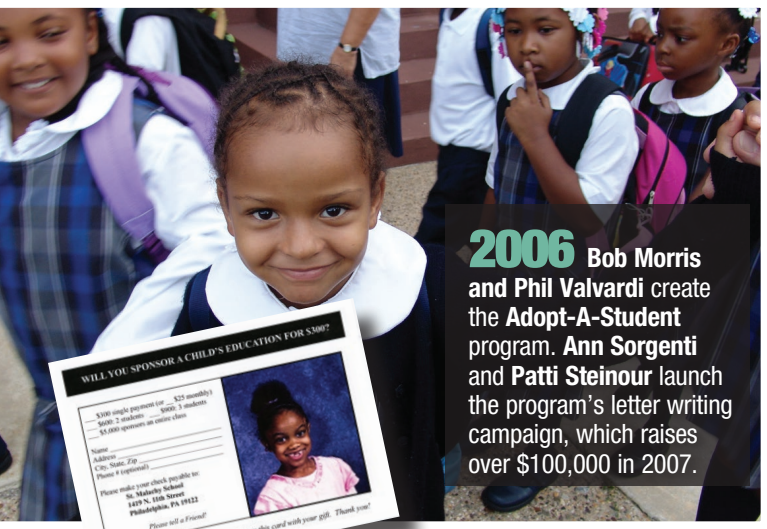
2005

Nora Pickens runs the **New York City Marathon** to raise money for the **Johanna Sigmund Scholarship Fund**. She is followed by her sister **Mollie** in 2006 and father, **Dan**, in 2007. Together they have raised more than \$84,000.



2006

The school's **Advisory Board** is formed with 57 members from government, education and business participating in the first meeting.



2006

Bob Morris and **Phil Valvardi** create the **Adopt-A-Student** program. **Ann Sorgenti** and **Patti Steinour** launch the program's letter writing campaign, which raises over \$100,000 in 2007.



2006

The Children's Scholarship Fund names **Jason White**, eighth-grade teacher, **Teacher of the Year**.



2007

With the help of **Mary Schmelzer, Ph.D.**, Saint Malachy's **after school program** continues to help working parents while accessing government funds.



2007

Ramona Vosebikian, Chairwomen of the Volunteer Education Committee at The Philadelphia Orchestra, begins the school's **new music program**, which includes a choir, instrumental instructions, and visits to Philadelphia Orchestra concerts.



2007

Saint Malachy School enters a partnership with **Business Leaders Organized for Catholic Schools (BLOCS)**, led by **Michael O'Neill** — a consortium dedicated to preserving and promoting inner-city Catholic schools.

2007

The **Education Affairs Committee** is formed under the leadership of **Dorothy McKenna Brown**. The group is engaged in **Middle States Accreditation** to help ensure the school's future.



2008

A grateful community bids **farewell to Father McNamee** with a special mass and party to honor his 25 years of service. At least 1,500 friends attend the celebration.



To One Who Has Always Been There



In his 75 years, Father McNamee has often remarked, "The people we surround ourselves with ultimately make us who we are."

Photos by Linda Panetta/Optical Realities

So it goes that all of us at Saint Malachy, and all of you who have supported his work for 25 years, are today who we are in part because of Father Mac.

John P. McNamee grew up in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia. He served at the nearby Cathedral Basilica and other parishes as a young priest. But it was in a small corner of North Philadelphia that this poet-activist priest came of age; the seeds of his calling took root.

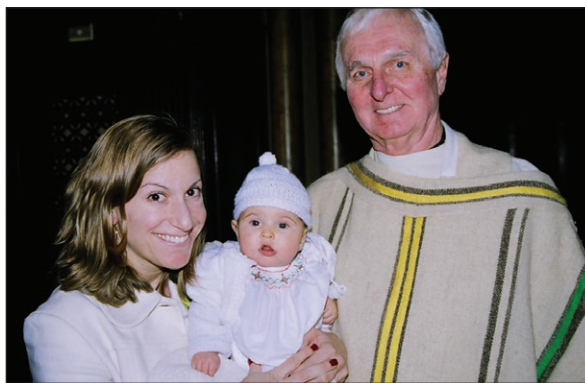
By being there at 11th and Master Streets, John McNamee has nourished and enriched each one of us.

"There was a difference when Father McNamee came here," notes longtime parishioner Maria Mills. "His time was everybody's. He opened all the doors."

Over the years, Father Mac has been there for countless friends who have looked to him for food, jobs, carfare, legal service, or just someone to lend an ear. In answering the door for the next person in crisis, fielding the endless barrage of phone calls and requests, and tending to the countless suburban obligations, Father Mac has been there. For Friday prayer services with the students, visits to the hospitalized, Catholic Peace Fellowship meetings, school development and finance meetings, Father Mac has been there. In assuming the Herculean task of maintaining a 117-year-old school for 215 precious children, Father Mac has been there all the way, focusing his energy unfailingly on those who need it most.

"One Sunday, Father McNamee baptized four generations of our family: my parents, my brother and his children, and my grandchildren," says parishioner Damaris Martinez. "Thanks to him, my granddaughter graduated from Saint Malachy. If he would call me at 3:00 in the morning and ask me to do something, I would do it."

Dorothy Brown, benefactor and Chair of Saint Malachy's Education Affairs Committee, tells a story of the start of the school's new music program. She traveled to a senior residence in North Philadelphia to collect donated instruments: "The elderly lady making the donation told us some history of her children and husband who had played



the instruments," Dorothy says. "None of them had attended Saint Malachy. When she thought of what to do with the instruments, however, she immediately thought of Saint Malachy. 'Father helped me when I needed it,' she said."

Lisa Hoover, parishioner and Saint Malachy Development Chair, says, "This past year, Father McNamee gave shelter to a Rwandan refugee family with five young adult children. For over 20 years, he practically funded the school single-handedly. I am touched by his love for everyone."

How does one person serve so many with such passion for so long? What keeps him going with a schedule that would overwhelm most mortals half his age? Among other things, a bit of grit, gristle and a sense of humor. And yes, Father Mac is visited by more

than a fair share of the Irish muse.

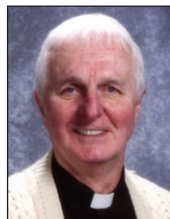
Longtime friend and parish hermit Rich Withers recalls a favorite Father Mac quote: "What use is being Irish if you can't be bleak?"

The muse is what drives John McNamee, poet and author. His gift has touched so many he has never met.

Father McNamee has published four books, which have garnered critical acclaim and earned him awards. Two chronicle his personal spiritual journey: "Diary of a City Priest" (1993), which was made into a film starring David Morse, and "Endurance" (1996). The other two are works of poetry: "Clay Vessels" (1995) and "Donegal Suite" (2005). If one can't travel to North Philadelphia or to the Northwest of Ireland, Father Mac provides an up-close view of life there through his own lyrical lens.

Father McNamee reminds us through his poetry, his prose, his humor and his intimate knowledge of the lives of Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Peter Maurin, and countless saints and others, that there is beauty in the most unlikely places. In case we fail to notice, he has been there for each of us, quietly pointing it out every day for more than 25 years.

How do you thank a man who has surrounded us with so much love? Someone whose life's work has been, to paraphrase his oft-quoted Peter Maurin, to build a community where it is easier for people to be good? Be there. For ourselves, for each other, for Saint Malachy ... and for Father Mac.



SMART Boards™ Let Students See Sudan

"SMART Boards bring the classroom to life!" raves Mario Gutierrez, sixth-grade teacher. "They have changed my whole way of teaching."

With a SMART Board in the classroom, students are now able to correspond with a missionary in Southern Sudan as part of their African history lessons.



"Because of the pictures we receive from our friend in Sudan, I am learning that we have so much here," says James, a sixth grader in Mr. Gutierrez's class. "It helps me not only understand African history, but also how people struggle daily. I want to change that."

A SMART Board is a touch-sensitive whiteboard display that connects a computer and a digital projector to show an enlarged computer image. Using his or her hand like a cursor to touch the whiteboard, the user can control computer applications directly from the display, write notes in "digital ink," and save work to share later. The technology was purchased for fifth- through eighth-grade classes with contributions made by the **Fighting Irish 5K** race and a grant from **Lockheed Martin**.

Giving Becomes Contagious at Shriners Hospital

A longtime employee of Shriners Hospital for Children on North Broad Street triggered a chain reaction of generosity to Saint Malachy School.

Annemarie Conte raised enough money from friends and coworkers to sponsor two Saint Malachy students last year through the Adopt-A-Student program. Word spread of her efforts, and this year her network doubled the gift, raising enough to sponsor four students. Conte solicited neighbors, coworkers and hospital visitors from as far away as Boston.

"When you believe in a cause, you just have to put it out there," Conte says. Her fund-raiser inspired another coworker to collect gloves and hats that were distributed to the children during the holidays.

Conte hopes the children remember "the goodness that goes on in the world." Saint Malachy will certainly remember Annemarie Conte.

Principal's Corner

As we conclude the academic year at Saint Malachy School, we have many blessings to count:

- ★ Last fall, the **Fighting Irish 5K** race generated \$26,000. We used the proceeds to purchase three SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards for use in the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade classes. (See story, left.)
- ★ We used a \$5,000 grant from **Lockheed Martin** to purchase microscopes and other science-related materials, along with a SMART Board for our fifth-grade classroom.
- ★ **The Piasecki Fund for Math and Science Education**, established in memory of Frank Piasecki, helped us purchase science textbooks and workbooks, lab equipment, math derivatives and the math game "24."
- ★ We received generous funding from the **Pennsylvania Department of Aging** to start an intergenerational after school mentoring program with the North City Congress, a local senior center. Members of the senior center visit Saint Malachy School twice a week for quilting and other arts programs, public speech classes and field trips.
- ★ We started an exciting new music program through the **Anna-Maria Moggio Foundation**. Our mornings begin with classical music played over the loud speakers, and we now offer classical musical workshops, field trips to Philadelphia Orchestra concerts, and choir and trumpet practice after school. We owe special thanks to advisory board members **Ramona Vosebikian** and **Dorothy Brown** for their help designing and launching the program.
- ★ We recently hired a teacher certified to provide **special education programming** to our students in need.
- ★ For five months, our sixth- and seventh-grade students now take a class in **ballroom dancing**, under the leadership of **Sue Shea**.
- ★ The Archdiocese of Philadelphia approved our application to begin **First in Math**, an online math competition tool to help increase our students' test-taking abilities, while making the classroom fun and exciting.



Laura Hoffman, Principal, with Father McNamee

We owe our heartfelt gratitude to all the friends and supporters who have made so much good news and great progress possible.

Saalim Abdul Carter

A failed spelling test is among **Saalim Abdul Carter's** most treasured mementos from Saint Malachy School. It's not the "F" he holds dear, but the inscription by his eighth-grade teacher, Jason White: "This is your greatest weakness and your biggest strength."

Saalim, now 23, says this message and others like it gave him the fortitude to overcome his struggles with reading and dyslexia. Today, he is a first-year Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago.

"If only I could be completely literate, the places I could go," Saalim says. This is the message he received from Saint Malachy teachers, such as Mr. White and teacher-turned-principal Ruth Thornton-Payne. In fact, Saalim met with some of his first academic successes in Ms. Thornton-Payne's fourth-grade class. She encouraged his love of history and allowed him to study and take tests orally so his reading difficulties would not interfere with his grades. Saalim recalls with pride the 104% score he received on a colonial history test.

"I was always fascinated by history," Saalim says. He is studying 20th century intellectual and constitutional U.S. history at the University of Chicago. He graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a degree in history and a minor in English.

Saalim could barely read in fourth grade when he entered Saint Malachy School. He dreaded the embarrassment his reading problems might create.

Despite the best efforts of his teachers and Aretta Pinkett, the reading specialist who worked with Saalim as part of the Title I program, the disability dogged him until his second year at Mercy Vocational High School. It was then that the determined young student laid out a strategy to teach himself to read on an adult level. He picked 40 challenging books, including "The Color Purple," by Alice Walker, and "The Souls of Black Folk," by W.E.B. Dubois. He downloaded a computer program that pronounced unfamiliar words for him, and amassed stacks of index cards with new vocabulary from his books.

"It was his hard work and determination that got him where he is today," says Ms. Pinkett, who continues to teach remedial reading. Saalim is her first student to seek a Ph.D.

Stephanie Smith

A brief stint teaching in public school helped **Stephanie Smith** really appreciate her Catholic education. At public school, she insists, her education "would have been drastically different."

Saint Malachy School has smaller, more intimate classes.

Students look forward to attending class, and school is more like a family. "I was able to form real relationships with the teachers," Stephanie says.

Stephanie is Baptist, but she also enjoyed the religious aspect of Saint Malachy. She remembers helping Fr. McNamee with Friday morning masses in eighth grade. "Knowing about another religion really opened me up to a lot of things," she says.

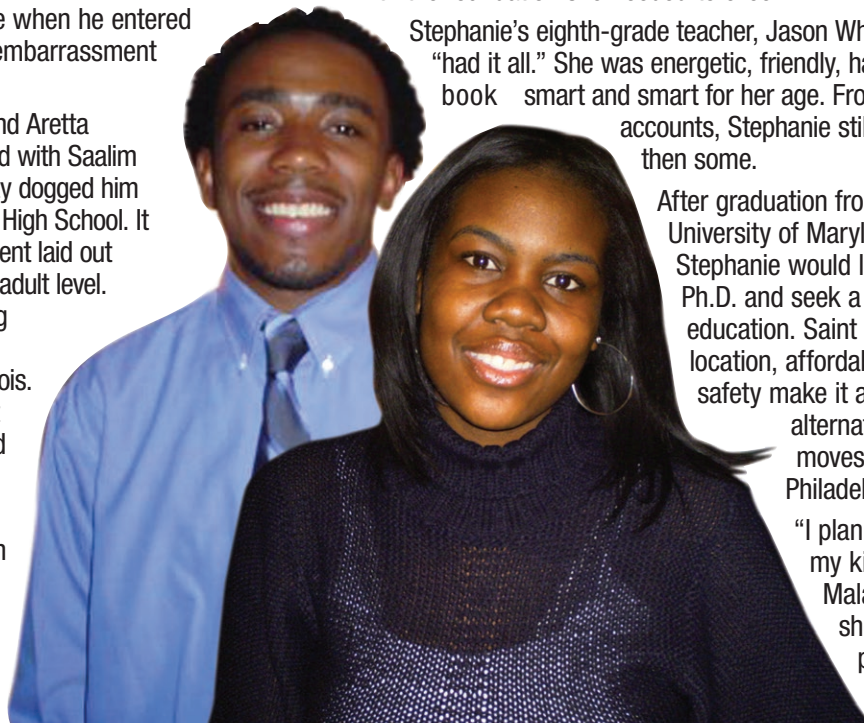
Stephanie, who was the 2007 commencement speaker at Temple University's College of Education, is studying for her Masters of Education at the University of Maryland, where she serves as the Graduate Coordinator for Black Student Involvement and Advocacy. She recently completed study abroad in South Korea. Previously, at Bodine High School for International Affairs, Stephanie studied in France.

"When I was in high school, I was able to compete with the best of the best," Stephanie says. She credits Saint Malachy School with the foundation she needed to excel.

Stephanie's eighth-grade teacher, Jason White, says she "had it all." She was energetic, friendly, hardworking, book smart and smart for her age. From all accounts, Stephanie still has it—and then some.

After graduation from the University of Maryland, Stephanie would like to get her Ph.D. and seek a job in higher education. Saint Malachy's location, affordability and safety make it a desirable alternative if she moves back to Philadelphia.

"I plan to send my kids to Saint Malachy School," she says proudly. "I had a great experience



For More Information

To discuss your ideas and the ways in which you can support Saint Malachy School, please contact one of the following individuals:

Bob Morris, Chairperson

Finance Council, 610-725-9797
morrisrobertej@worldnet.att.net

Lisa Hoover, Chairperson

Development Committee, 610-668-8607
lkhooover@comcast.net

Jim Martin, President

Friends of Saint Malachy, 215-850-4084
jimart40@mac.com

To support the Friends of Saint Malachy School's United Way campaign, please select **#1940**.