

SCHOLARSHIPS

continued from page 9

Heart of Jesus School, 1329 E. Moyamensing Ave., with his new educational home. His brother, Joey Gorman, a recent graduate of Neumann-Goretti and a freshman at St. Joseph's University, also acquired relief during his local scholastic tenure, a fact that has granted their parents a break on roughly one-third of the South Philly schools' tuitions.

"Our average scholarship is around \$1,000," Nutt, whose employer has issued \$17 million in support to families who enroll their offspring in tuition-based facilities, said. "We have been able to appropriate such a great amount through dedicated individuals who realize what a solid education they are helping others to achieve."

The commonwealth has overseen the tax credit program for 11 years and has \$100 million to provide during this fiscal year. Income guidelines determine eligibility, with distribution beginning immediately after approval. That the benevolence goes toward independent and private school pupils, too, appeals to Matt, who, in addition to pondering attending St. Joseph's Preparatory School, another designee last week, is considering matriculating at William Penn Charter School.

"For those of you gathered here, it might take some time to understand the importance of today," Bridge official Joseph Gerdes said. "However, your experiences will soon help you to learn the value of educational dollars."

Ryan already has mastered that lesson. A member of a sizeable family with a deep parochial presence in South Philly, the former Sacred Heart attendee understands sacrifices and admires how faithfully influential companies and elected officials have enabled his schooling to continue.

"Bridge has been such a plus," the resident of Third and Wolf streets said. "It has allowed me to thrive in my two schools, and I'm happy my family might be able to use it again when I go to high school."

WHILE RYAN AND his peers are only months away from cracking open books in new classrooms, the school's second-graders have years to go before they part with Principal Patricia Cody. The excited youngsters kicked off the afternoon by performing two songs acknowledging their gratitude for their lives and opportunities, with three equally appreciative

mothers then commending Bridge's colleagues for their altruism.

"We could be here all day thanking you for your goodness," Cody said before the guests spoke to their beneficiaries.

Instrumental in facilitating funds' acquisition, state Sen. Larry Farnese fondly recalled his Delaware County-centered Catholic schooling and stressed maximizing each school day's possibilities.

"I come from a family of educators, so I fully believe in accepting the responsibility of learning lessons and putting them to great use," he said. "I want for you to be able to do whatever you wish to do in life."

"What a year it has been in local Catholic education," state Rep. Bill Keller added, touch-

ing on consolidations that trimmed South Philly's parochial sites from 10 to six.

The 184th District figure, a 1968 graduate of Bishop Neumann High School, formerly 2600 Moore St., also attended Our Lady of Mount Carmel and divulged that he keeps a picture of his first-grade class

in his local office, 1531 S. Second St.

"Though I was sad to see my elementary school close, I'm excited that the former students who now come to Our Lady of Hope will be able to reach for their dreams," Keller said.

Bridge has 40 partners this year and will persist in helping to offset partial costs for struggling families, Nutt noted, with an extra \$50 million set aside for enrollees in the state's lowest performing schools.

"We typically make presentations totaling around what we did today," she said, remarking that distribution depends on availability and occasional donor preferences. "We've really enjoyed being a source of comfort for South Philly families in doing so."

Nutt orchestrated photo sessions, as each school sent representatives to pose with the oversized check. As the host site, Our Lady of Hope went first, giving Morgan an immediate chance to fraternize with her helpers. Considering Center City's John W. Hallahan High School, she again could seek aid if circumstances necessitate and although she did not want to look too far into the future, she was thankful for what the scholarship will mean for the upcoming months.

"I'm glad to be among the recipients," she said. "Today is special for all of us." **SPR**

For more information, visit bridgeedu.org.

Contact Staff Writer Joseph Myers at jmyers@southphillyreview.com or ext. 124. Comment at southphillyreview.com/news/features.

'We have been able to appropriate such a great amount through dedicated individuals who realize what a solid education they are helping others to achieve.'

—Natalie Nutt,
executive director, Bridge