

**A Proposal to The Smith – Jones Foundation
from
St. Mary’s School
October 2010**

Executive Summary

This proposal requests a gift of \$25,000 from Smith – Jones Foundation in support of the St. Mary’s School. Your gift will support need-based scholarships for students to start or continue their education at St. Mary’s School in the 2010 -2011 academic year.

Rapid global change demands that schools teach new skills for individual success as early as kindergarten. Meanwhile, outdated systems and rising costs hamper their ability to do so. Those schools that do possess the resources are too often beyond either the area or financial means of urban families. As a result, many parents today are heavily challenged to guide their children to a bright future.

Recognizing these issues, particularly for Chicago’s growing downtown residential community, the St. Mary’s opened in 1950. Now serving pre-school through grade 8, the schools provide a high quality, value-driven education to students of all backgrounds with the purpose of developing the whole child for a lifetime of learning and cooperative relating in a changing world.

St. Mary’s commitment to the area’s children is only fulfilled, however, if the poorest as well as the wealthiest receive equal opportunity to attend. In 1990, we became one of the first private schools to establish a separate foundation to raise scholarship funds.

Without this funding source, 80% of our students each year would lose the advantage of our advanced education, which works to strengthen them for a lifetime of positive choices. Sustaining our scholarship funds is critical for these children.

Statement of Need

Today’s children require an education beyond reading, writing, and math. They must know how to analyze problems and solve them, how to bridge conflicts with wise communication and cooperation, how to make choices from a strong sense of their own values, and how to gather knowledge and apply information to their daily lives.

These are life skills. They are more important than ever for the development of the whole child into a thriving adult. Yet, this kind of teaching requires significant resources. To address the whole child requires more individual attention from teachers, more innovation and flexibility in curriculum and techniques, more technology in the classrooms and more spiritual guidance than public schools and even many private schools can afford. It’s no wonder that the best schools—those at the forefront of education—are also the ones with the highest tuition in the most well-to-do neighborhoods.

What does our collective future look like if only a few privileged children are educated to think critically and act responsibly in our increasingly complex world?

St. Mary's School

In fifty years, the St. Mary's have grown from 100 students to 500 students. Tuition is will be at \$3,600 per student. The actual cost of education per student is approximately \$4,900.

Rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the St. Mary's accepts students of all ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds. We are one of the most diverse private elementary schools in the area, serving a population that is XX% Asian, XX% African American, XX% Hispanic, and XX% Caucasian. These children represent xx neighborhoods within the city. Our graduates are accepted into the city's best public and private high schools. We thrive in our urban environment, partnering with some of Chicago's best universities and cultural institutions to provide the latest in special programming and classroom techniques with an emphasis on offering a multicultural learning experience for our students.

St. Mary's is a Catholic school that embrace students of all religions, reinforcing through classes in ecumenical or Catholic teachings the values we hold in common. We also embrace innovative program elements to address the needs of the whole child. Each grade level studies traditional subject categories within the framework of a theme like "Chicago," requiring analysis of ideas and real life situations as they connect to the child's own experience.

St. Mary's partners with a number of colleges to train new teachers and continually strengthen our programs with the latest research. For example, we have adopted a cutting edge math program through the University of Chicago that has sent our students' standardized test scores well above the 90th percentile. We also partner with City of Chicago cultural institutions to provide experiences like a visit from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Ensemble, a trip to the Lyric Opera, or a workshop with an Artist in Residence of the Art Institute.

With computers in every classroom, an average 15:1 student-teacher ratio, programs at the forefront of education, and lessons in ethical and responsible relating, St. Mary's enable our students to develop a positive self-image, independent thinking, a sense of responsibility for oneself and others, and enthusiasm for learning.

An education at St. Mary's is an opportunity for a brighter future for all our students, but even more so for those from struggling families.

St. Mary's Scholarship Fund

Economic circumstances should not preclude an eager and capable child from receiving a quality education. St. Mary's established the scholarship fund with the mission of raising funds to give every child the opportunity to attend our schools. Since 1990, nearly \$1.2 million in funding which has provided hundreds of children an opportunity in education they might not otherwise have had. Scholarship awards have increased each year to a total of 35 recipients in the 2009-2010 school year at a total amount of \$50,000.

Higher enrollment means more students need scholarship support, and higher tuition means the average scholarship award must increase. To meet these challenges, our objectives for the current year are:

- To maintain funding at 15% of all students with scholarships that meet their need.
- To raise \$50,000 for scholarships.

Scholarship Awards and Evaluation

PSAS, an outside service, reviews parents' applications for scholarship funds and makes recommendations to the Schools' scholarship committee. The committee then finalizes the awards based on their understanding of the complexities of each family situation. Awards vary according to each family's circumstances and range from 5-80% of the annual tuition. In recent years, we have made additional efforts to reach out to the community and make them aware of the schools and scholarship opportunities through community meetings, flyers, postings and advertisements.

Quantitative records of award distribution are collected for each academic year, and evaluated for total award amount, total scholarship students, average award amount, etc. The goal of quantitative evaluation is to ensure that the objective of awarding 15% of the student body is met.

Budget

The St. Mary's have an annual operating budget of \$1.1 million for the 2010-2011 fiscal and academic year. Funds are secured through a combination of tuition income (75%) and grants and private philanthropy (25%). This year we plan to secure \$50,000 and distribute scholarships to 15 children.

Ensuring Resources and Long-Term Sustainability

In addition to seeking grant support for St. Mary's, we will continue to raise scholarship money through several events. Our annual golf outing raises approximately \$10,000 for scholarships. Scholarship Sunday Drives collect almost a quarter of our goal from generous church members. In the spring, the Awards Dinner provides another opportunity for our supporters to respond to the belief that all children deserve a quality education.

Additional fundraising initiatives are essential to make up the difference between tuition and the actual cost per student. The Annual Dinner Auction and the Annual Fund are the

main initiatives that keep our educational programs moving forward while ensuring that money always remains available exclusively for need-based scholarships. A full 70 percent of parents contribute to The St. Mary's either through voluntarism or direct gifts, demonstrating a strong base of personal investment in our mission.

Leadership

Many individuals have been instrumental in helping us raise scholarship funds and sustain our commitment to providing a quality education to children of diverse backgrounds. Ms. Mary Smith joined St. Mary's as Principal in 2005. Well-versed in governing educational institutions, she has been a school principal for twenty years. The Board of Directors is made up of civic leaders, many of whom have never had children in our schools, but who recognize our value to the broader community. Our Business Manager Jean Jones has been with St. Mary's since 2006 and is dedicated to making new connections with supporters in the nonprofit and corporate community. Complete lists of our board members and top administrative staff are attached.

Conclusion

At St. Mary's we recognize that the speed of change in our time demands *all* children be educated to think critically and act responsibly. The future looks dim if only a select minority of tomorrow's leaders master these skills. We have created an educational program that teaches life skills as well as academic ones. Further, we have created a scholarship program that makes this exemplary education available to disadvantaged children as well as privileged ones.

As a private institution, St. Mary's School has the resources and flexibility to fine-tune programs according to the latest in educational research. We are able to apply our resources directly to the development of each child. Advanced teaching techniques and individual attention in a supportive environment prepare our graduates for a lifetime of learning and cooperation. With the additional resource of the St. Mary's Scholarship Fund, we are able to fulfill our commitment to making this high quality education affordable, preparing all children in the area, regardless of religious or socioeconomic background, for the future.

We hope The Smith-Jones Foundation will join us in moving toward a bright collective future by supporting our neediest children with a grant of \$25,000 to the St. Mary School's Scholarship Fund.