

# Baltimore Catholic schools celebrate \$1 million gift from Under Armour founder

By Paul McMullen

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On the same morning that an originator of Partners in Excellence was acknowledged, the Archdiocese of Baltimore's scholarship program for elementary and high school students in Baltimore City received a \$1 million gift from the founder of Under Armour Inc.

Kevin Plank was in China on business, so it was left to Tom Geddes, the CEO of Plank Industries and executive director of the Cupid Foundation, Plank's private foundation, to announce the \$1 million gift to PIE Sept. 7 at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel.



"Kevin Plank likes tried-and-tested programs that work," Geddes said. "Education is how the cycle of poverty is broken, and (with the gift) as many as 100 children could get a chance they would not have otherwise."

Over the past 20 years, PIE has awarded more than 25,000 scholarships, worth more than \$29 million, to children from low-income families. PIE scholars have a 95 percent attendance rate, higher than the Catholic school average.

"Nobody goes for free, everyone pays something. They're invested, parent and child alike," said Thomas Kurowski, of PIE's Board of Advisors, who referenced a study of a seven-year cohort of PIE scholars. "In a city in which 1 in 5 go to college, two-thirds of ours (PIE scholars who graduate high school) graduate from college in five years, and that's amazing."

Plank's Cupid Foundation joins dozens of other Baltimore-based philanthropies and businesses which perpetuate a program begun 20 years ago under the direction of Cardinal William H. Keeler, the 14th archbishop of Baltimore.



*Archbishop William E. Lori thanks Plank Industries and Cupid Foundation CEO Tom*

*Geddes, following the announcement of a \$1 million gift by Under Armour founder Kevin Plank to the Partners in Excellence Scholarship Program Sept. 7. (Kevin J. Parks | CR Staff)*

One of its earliest advocates was Raymond A. “Chip” Mason, a parishioner of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, who was recognized with the fourth annual Partners in Excellence Award, one which now carries Cardinal Keeler’s name.

Founder of Mason and Company in 1962 and still senior advisor at Legg Mason Inc., he was born in Lynchburg, Va., in the heart of the Bible Belt. Mason was in the second grade when his father died, and the family moved to Bethlehem, Pa. There, he attended the parish school at Ss. Simon and Jude, and then Allentown Central Catholic High.

“They do good things, help those who have the need,” Mason said, when asked why he heeded the call of Cardinal Keeler and continues to support PIE schools. “People don’t realize how much this helps these young kids, 85 percent of whom are not Catholic.”

Mason spoke to the Catholic Review just prior to the breakfast, which was sponsored by Legg Mason Inc.



*Students from Cardinal Shehan School’s choir sing during a Sept. 7 announcement of a \$1 million gift from Kevin Plank to support Partners in Excellence schools. (Kevin J. Parks/CR Staff)*

The program included a virtual tour of Archbishop Borders School in Highlandtown; an opening prayer and choir performance courtesy of the students of Cardinal Shehan School in Northwood; and remarks from Ryann Cooper, a junior at The Seton Keough High School in Baltimore.

Seton Keough’s athletic teams, as well as those from Archbishop Curley, Cristo Rey Jesuit, the Institute of Notre Dame, Mercy and St. Frances Academy, are all outfitted by Under Armour.

“It’s an especially exciting day, to welcome our newest partner,” said Archbishop William E. Lori, who introduced Geddes. “I’ve gotten to know Kevin (Plank), and how much he cares about the youth of Baltimore.”

He acknowledged educators and supporters in attendance.

“We have principals, presidents, teachers and staff, who work so hard every day to

provide Catholic education,” Archbishop Lori said. “None of what we achieve is possible without you.”

*Watch a video of the announcement of the \$1 million gift [here](#).*

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