

# **WEA celebrates success of students from Baltimore's Catholic schools**

Ti'Yon McDowell's advocates at Holy Angels Catholic School in Baltimore go well beyond its staff.

McDowell was on stage in the gym at Cardinal Shehan School Nov. 7 for the sixth annual fall luncheon sponsored by the Women's Education Alliance. Its members donated more than \$200,000 this year, in the form of ongoing scholarships for deserving children at Holy Angels, Cardinal Shehan and the city's two other Partners in Excellence schools, Archbishop Borders and Ss. James and John.

In addition to being chairwoman of school support services for WEA, Gina Gracie has been sponsoring McDowell's Catholic education since he was in the third grade.

"I assumed this donation would be like any other," Gracie told a gathering that included Archbishop William E. Lori. "He (Ti'Yon) was a little guy then. He's still always smiling. He writes me, that he's getting A's and B's. He makes me proud. I know he is way more artistic than me."

According to Meghan Cosgrove, the assistant principal at Holy Angels, McDowell is also a math wiz.

"He likes to be able to share what he knows with his classmates if he sees they are struggling," Cosgrove told the Review. "He also likes science and is excelling in both. In science he finds it interesting to learn about the human body and his lungs and how it all works."

The spirit of students from the other PIE schools was on display, starting with another rendition of "Rise Up" by the choir from Cardinal Shehan, which graces the cover of the November issue of the Catholic Review.

Kenyatta Hardison, the choir's director, shared that the video of a late September rehearsal had been viewed, as of that morning, more than 42 million times. Her

students have already performed on Good Morning America, the nation's most-watched morning news show. Next up is a Nov. 13 appearance on "The View," a request from Whoopi Goldberg for her 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Theresa Derr and Jacey Kadima of Archbishop Borders School offered grace. Mi'chael Pearson, a sixth-grader at Ss. James and John, shared a song. Daina Gomez choreographed a dance by four girls from Archbishop Borders: Cindy Figueroa, Sophia Fernandez, Quadaupe Ramos and Katherine Quizphi. The dance included their principal, Alicia Freeman.

Dr. LaUanah King-Cassell, of Ss. James and John, served as emcee, on behalf of her fellow principals: Freeman, Fametta Jackson of Cardinal Shehan and Kathleen Filippelli of Holy Angels.

She described students coming from neighborhoods racked by drugs, poverty and other social ills.

"The data predicts that (our students) will not be successful," King-Cassell said. "The predictions of failure are from the reality. Our children succeed against all odds.

"The main ingredient is that our schools and students witness the presence of God every day. He is the fiber of everything we do."

She asked not just for financial donations, but for tutors and mentors.

"You are the wind beneath our wings," King-Cassell told the guests from WEA, which is led by Betty Contino.

Archbishop Lori thanked benefactors, educators and families of students.

"Our students," he said, "deserve the most applause of all."

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