



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Eileen Violini
eviolini@independencemissionschools.org
(o) 610-200-5100
x105

PRESS RELEASE

Independence Mission Schools Leadership Honored by National Catholic Education Association

Philadelphia, PA (January 11, 2017) – Leadership at two Independence Mission Schools [\(IMS\)](#), a Philadelphia-based non-profit that is transforming urban Catholic education for 5,000 low-income children across the city, will be awarded top honors for their contributions to Catholic education.

Principal Sister Rita James Murphy, IHM, at St. Rose of Lima Catholic School and The Rev. Stephen Thorne, pastor at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School will both receive the 2017 “Lead. Learn. Proclaim.” Award from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) for their dedication and commitment to excellence.

The NCEA selected Sr. Rita and Fr. Thorne to receive this distinguished award from more than 150,000 teachers, administrators, diocesan leaders and organizations across the nation who are dedicated to Catholic education. The annual award honors a select group whose ministry in Catholic education demonstrates a strong Catholic educational philosophy as well as exceptional ability, dedication and results.

St. Rose of Lima Catholic School serves students in the Overbrook neighborhood. Over 95% of the student population is African American and over 70% live below poverty level. Sr. Rita recently celebrated 50 years of service as an IHM Sister, and her constant care and dedication to her staff and students is readily apparent to everyone.

St. Martin de Porres Catholic School serves 500 students in their North Philadelphia neighborhood on Lehigh Avenue. The student population is primarily African American and not Catholic. Fr. Steve was an integral part of a team of committed local business leaders who worked together to preserve the vital neighborhood asset which is the last remaining Catholic school in the poorest congressional district in the nation. Graduates regularly attend prestigious Catholic High Schools like Malvern Prep, Roman Catholic High School and St. Joseph’s Prep.

"Sister Rita and Father Steve are both incredibly deserving of this honor and do great work for students, families, and their school communities," says IMS President Anne McGoldrick, "We are very grateful for their commitment to and passion for Catholic education."

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About Independence Mission Schools

Independence Mission Schools (IMS) is a local non-profit providing a transformational Catholic education to elementary-age students of all faiths from low-income communities in Philadelphia. Founded in 2012, the independent network of 15 inner-city schools provides an affordable and innovative academic curriculum in the Catholic tradition of service to under resourced communities. Read more about IMS at independencemissionschools.org.

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