



UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Parents Club Meeting
OCTOBER 19, 2016 at 6 pm

Open House
OCTOBER 22, 2016 10 am to 1 pm

Alumni Veterans Ceremony
NOVEMBER 4, 2016

Dear Leo Family,

I don't want to say Shaka Rawls is a rock star, because the label doesn't do him justice. Shaka, a 1993 Leo graduate and a 2015 inductee into the Leo Hall of Fame, took over as Leo's principal in July. His effect has been transformative already.

Enrollment is up more than 20 percent over last year's, bolstered by a freshman class that's our largest in seven years.

Senior **Khalid Manney**, top-ranked student in the senior class, was chosen as a Big Shoulders Student Ambassador and spoke on the value of his Leo education to more than 200 members of the Big Shoulders Fund Auxiliary Board on Sept. 30.

More than 100 volunteers showed up to work and more than \$2,000 in supplies were donated to a Shaka-organized Clean-Up Day at Leo on Sept. 24. I'm not going to fib and say the school has never looked better, but it looks pretty darn good for 90 years old after a thorough scrub-down.

- Two dozen principals from nearby schools and pastors from neighboring churches came to Leo on Sept. 20 for a get-acquainted breakfast and to hear of all the great things happening here.
- At Shaka's behest, nearly 70 alums came to Leo on Aug. 19, the first full day of classes, to welcome the students and to share with them the history and traditions they are becoming part of.
- More than 40 Leo grads from the Classes of 1951 and '52 came to a Tinley Park restaurant on Sept. 21 for a "State of Leo" briefing from Shaka and Dan McGrath.
- Rawls and McGrath also spoke to a gathering of some two dozen members of the Class of '54, who came to Ridge Country Club at the behest of great Leo Man **Tom Owens** on July 12.
- Big Shoulders brought more than 40 volunteers around to mingle with the students and offer college and career advice on "Lend a Shoulder Day" on Sept. 9.
- Ten Leo kids and four chaperones were invited to take part in a charity bowling event with the Chicago Bears in Northbrook on Sept. 12. Senior **Damari Owens** had the highest score in the house, although I wouldn't be so mean as to suggest the Bears are no better at bowling than they are at football.



Gabriel Jones, middle, uses his strength to scrub the walls of the basketball gym at Leo Catholic High School, Saturday, September 24, 2016. Friends, school alumni, local organizations and volunteers from the community came together to help clean Leo. People swept classroom floors, washed graduated cylinders, scrubbed down lockers and shined stained glass windows within the school.

Alyssa Pointer / Chicago Tribune

- And in perhaps the most welcome development of all, the Bigane Paving Co., under the direction of **Anne Bigane Wilson**, daughter of company founder **Ed Bigane '47**, made us an offer we couldn't refuse to strip and resurface the main parking lot on the north side of 79th Street. **Jim Dillon '69** was the manager on a project that transformed a chewed-up and decrepit eyesore into a gleaming, orange-striped asset that truly changes the look of the school and reinforces the notion that Leo is a special place.

With a special guy as principal.

I've been trying to get Shaka in the building since I first met him, during my first year as Leo president in 2010. We finally were able to make it happen this summer, and I couldn't be happier.

Shaka is a committed, experienced educator whose energy and enthusiasm are contagious. Working with Ms. **Jennifer Fleck**, our newly hired director of instruction and learning, Shaka has revised and strengthened the curriculum so that each student can get exactly what he needs to succeed at Leo and beyond. The teachers are rejuvenated. The kids are excited about learning. They feel good about being at Leo. So do their parents.

We have 29 more students enrolled than we we had at the conclusion of the 2015-16 school year in May. That is a truly significant increase. We can credit a number of factors, including the runner-up finish by our basketball team in the state tournament; hard, determined work by **Coach Holmes, Coach Frison** and our recruiting team; and the unfortunate fact that both Hales Franciscan and Seton Academy have closed their doors.

But the Shaka Rawls Effect cannot be discounted. He is reviving the feeling that Leo is a special place, a feeling we all share.

And the word is spreading. The Chicago Tribune, the Daily Southtown and the Beverly Review have done profiles of our new principal. Channel 2's Jim Williams did a beautiful feature on an accomplished professional coming back and giving back to the school that got him started.

We have a lot to be thankful for.

Thanks for your support, and please keep it coming.

God bless,

Dan McGrath '68
President Leo High School

Leo Catholic High School