

LEO JUNE 2017 NEWS



DEAR LEO FAMILY,

Shaka Rawls '93 has too much experience as a school administrator to qualify as a rookie, but if the Archdiocese of Chicago sponsored a Rookie of the Year award for first-year principals, he'd be a hands-down winner.

As Leo's 90th year of service to Chicago's South Side communities comes to an end, Mr. Rawls' imprint is all over developments that helped make it one of our best years in recent memory.

Among the highlights:

- **An eighth consecutive year of 100 percent graduation** and 100 percent college acceptance for Leo seniors. Those graduates who have made college commitments will receive more than \$300,000 in scholarship assistance.
- **An updated, improved curriculum**, devised by Mr. Rawls and implemented by Academic Coordinator **Jennifer Fleck**, that has created greater academic rigor and will lead to more ambitious college placements for Leo graduates down the road.
- **An upward trend in enrollment** that will necessitate the hiring of at least one and possibly two new teachers.
- **A 90th Anniversary Scholarship Benefit Dinner** that honored **Andy McKenna '47** with a Lifetime Achievement Award and was the most successful fundraiser in Leo history.
- **A state of the art computer lab**, thanks to a generous donation from **Sam Leno '63** and his wife Pamela, that gives us a technology component to match our rivals.
- **Physical improvements in and around the building**, including a resurfaced main parking lot courtesy of **Anne Bigane Wilson**, daughter of **Ed Bigane '47**, and a brand new, fuel-efficient furnace courtesy of **Mr. Ty Warner**, the Beanie Babies founder and a special friend to Leo.
- **A flourishing partnership with the Chicago Bears**, featuring Leo's participation in several "Bears Care" events and the Bears reciprocating with sponsorship of Leo activities and classroom upgrades.
- **Implementation of "Leo Men Read,"** a tutoring and mentoring program that sends our students out to St. Sabina, Oglesby and other neighborhood elementary schools to engage and instruct their youngsters.





Derrick Golden

The hectic final month of the school year is a snapshot of what a beehive of productive activity Leo is these days. And it will continue throughout the summer with summer school, summer sports camps and an “open door” policy that encourages Leo students with time on their hands to come to Leo to read, work out or study.

At the behest of the Big Shoulders Fund, Shaka Rawls appeared on the WCIU-Channel 26 “You and Me” morning show on Memorial Day and was a strong, eloquent advocate for the value of Catholic education in general and the Leo version in particular.

As a prelude to graduation, the Seniors were feted at a Senior Luncheon at the Oak Lawn Hilton. The Senior Prom featured some stylishly dressed young guys and their dates and a Lake Michigan Dinner Cruise off Navy Pier. Senior **Derrick Golden** was the keynote

speaker at a meeting of the Big Shoulders Fund Auxiliary Board downtown and did a bang-up job.

The annual Spring Concert was a typically glorious showcase for our musicians and singers, under the unmatched leadership of **Ms. La Donna Hill**, our Music Director. There was one additional flourish this year: the first public performance by the new Leo Drumline, which has been practicing diligently since November and would have stolen the show if the singers and musicians hadn’t been as good as ever.

We hosted sectional track and regional baseball competitions. We sent seven competitors on to Eastern Illinois for the Class 1-A state track meet, including **Aamir Holmes**, who qualified in four events in his first year as a track-and-field athlete.

We toured Halas Hall during a Bears mini-camp and met Chairman **George McCaskey**, Coach **John Fox** and several players, including first-year quarterback **Mitch Trubisky**.

Finally, at Mr. Rawls’ insistence, we revived the Leo tradition of graduating on Mother’s Day, and what a day it was. Catholic Schools Superintendent **Dr. Jim Rigg** joined us, along with **Dr. Maria Hawk**, who supervises Catholic high schools. Commencement speaker **Shawn Harrington** delivered a powerful message of perseverance in the face of hardship as he described putting his life back together after he was left paralyzed in a shooting three years ago. **Khalid Manney** was our valedictorian and **Tyler Goodwin** our salutatorian, and the speeches they gave left no doubt that the graduates they represented are ready for the next phase of their lives.

That’s what we do at Leo—we prepare young men for lives as responsible, productive, caring citizens. We’ve been doing it for 90 years, and we’re very good at it.

And under Shaka Rawls’ leadership, we’ll only get better.

Thanks for your support, and please keep it coming. As I complete my seventh year, it remains an honor to serve these young men.

Leo for life.

Dan McGrath '68
President Leo High School



Shawn Harrington