



**KIDS FIRST
CHICAGO**

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Kids First Chicago Celebrates Education Milestones

Civil Rights Icon Ruby Bridges Joins Education and Civic Leaders to Celebrate Progress at CPS and Plan for Future

Chicago, IL — On Wednesday, May 8, 2024, Kids First Chicago commemorated the 70th anniversary of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which integrated public schools in America and paved the way for more racial and educational equity. Nearly 400 civic, education, and philanthropic leaders attended the luncheon program at the Harold Washington Library's Winter Garden.

The Living Legacies Luncheon highlighted Kids First Chicago's parent- and data-informed advocacy, helping to create more equitable education across Chicago Public Schools. Key accomplishments include:

- Expanded its reach to support Chicago Public Schools (CPS) families in 63 of 77 community areas, building parent knowledge and know-how to lead local and systemwide change;
- Spearheaded GoCPS, a new universal enrollment platform simplifying school access for 25,000+ 8th graders annually;
- Produced a comprehensive fact base for Chicago's public schools, guiding \$58M in equity-based program investments districtwide;
- Led Chicago Connected, bridging the digital divide and offering free internet and top-tier digital learning resources for 100,000+ students and their households. Chicago Connected has become a national model, inspiring similar efforts nationwide; and
- Guided stakeholder engagement for CPS's new school accountability system with input from 21,000+ participants.

The program included a special keynote conversation moderated by Kids First Chicago CEO Daniel Anello with Civil Rights icon Ruby Bridges, reflecting on progress and the significant work still to be done to build racial equity in education in the seventy years since the *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision.

In May of 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that the nation's schools must desegregate. Six years later, it was the bravery and commitment to equity of Ruby Bridges's mother that put her on the steps to an all-White elementary school in the South and into history as a civil rights icon and living legacy. Her pioneering journey underscores the ongoing struggle for educational equity.

Ms. Bridges's remarks touched upon the audacity and courage of her parents – and many other families like hers – in integrating our country's schools. She echoed Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. in the importance of overcoming societal prejudices, “You cannot look at a person and judge them until you get an opportunity to know them.”

“At Kids First Chicago, we have seen firsthand how centering policy on those most proximal to the challenges -- families -- optimizes for equity. This approach leads to stronger outcomes for our students, our communities, and our city.” Anello added, “Ruby Bridges and her parents took

courageous steps to integrate her school in 1960. Their actions and the actions of those leading up to and following that day changed education across our country in powerful ways. It changed my life trajectory.”

Kids First Chicago Board Chair, Laura Thonn, Office Managing Partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers, concluded the program with a call to action, “Today, we've been reminded of the immense impact that legends like Ruby – and parents like K1C's amazing parent leaders – can have on communities and schools.”

Kids First Chicago's Living Legacies Celebration reached its goal of raising \$500,000 and honored BMO for its commitment to education equity.

“At BMO, we believe in the transformative power of education and the importance of nurturing the potential of every young mind,” said Darrel Hackett, President & CEO, BMO Bank N.A. “In 2023, we donated more than \$5 million to support progress for youth, foster mentorship, and promote financial literacy. These ongoing contributions, guided by our Purpose, to Boldly Grow the Good in business and life, reflect our unwavering commitment to cultivating opportunities for young people, fostering excellence in education, and empowering communities to thrive.”

The Lewis-Sebring Family Foundation was the Presenting Sponsor of the Living Legacies Luncheon. BMO and ITW were Championing Sponsors. Anniversary sponsors included the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education, IMC Charitable Foundation, Miami Corporation Management, LLC, Northern Trust, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Bob and Ellen Venable, and The Vivo Foundation. Additional sponsors included The Academy Group, McDonald's, PNC, Robin Steans and Leonard Gail, Boston Consulting Group, Jane and David Casper, Cornelia Grumman, Carole and Phil Hildebrandt, The Kadens Family Foundation, KPMG LLP, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, The New Harbor Charitable Foundation, The Andersen-Formolo Family Foundation, Carol Glass Pollock, Chicago Urban League, Reed Smith LLP, Pritzker Traubert Foundation, and Melinda Young and Andrew Watts.

See [highlights](#) from the event.

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ABOUT KIDS FIRST CHICAGO

Kids First Chicago's mission is to dramatically improve education for Chicago's children by ensuring their families are the respected authorities on what their kids need and decision-makers in their kids' education. We do this by partnering with families to support them in gaining the resources, access, and voice they need to achieve their vision for their children. K1C provides transparent and rigorous education analysis to families, educators, and policymakers alike to inform data-driven and inclusive decision-making about the future of Chicago's public schools. For more information, visit kidsfirstchicago.org.