

November 6, 2024

Dear Friends of Cristo Rey Philadelphia,

It is with deep sadness that I write to inform you of the passing of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School's founding President John McConnell. John is now at peace, after a hard-fought battle with a rare form of leukemia. We especially hold in our prayers his wife, Gwen, four children, and eight grandchildren.



We are forever indebted to John, for without him there would be no Cristo Rey Philadelphia. John was the fifth person to attempt to establish a Cristo Rey school in Philadelphia, but was the only one to succeed. After a 27-year career at Deloitte Consulting, he began his journey to advance educational equity in our city at his kitchen table. Under his tireless efforts, Cristo Rey Philadelphia opened in 2012 with a class of 124 freshmen at 5218 N. Broad Street, in an old elementary school. John then served as our school's President for ten years, guiding the school as it became the largest in the national Cristo Rey Network and leading the creation of our permanent home – our state-of-the-art campus at 1717 W. Allegheny Avenue. He embodied the Cristo Rey Credo, living with Outrageously Bold Hope every single day, and we benefit from his visionary leadership as we continue his work.

John's legacy is defined by the impact he had on others. Whether meeting him just once, sharing a lifetime of friendship, or working and learning alongside him in our Blue Pride community, John had a unique gift for making people feel not only important, but also that he genuinely believed they could achieve anything they set their minds to. John saw boundless potential in everyone he met. He believed in our students. He believed in our mission. They were his guiding lights. He even said as much in his fourth President's newsletter in March of 2012 - just five months before Cristo Rey Philadelphia was set to open its doors: "Every day, our Cristo Rey community is immersed in a world filled with confidence in a better future." John had confidence in a better future, and worked to make that future real every day with our young people at Cristo



Top Left: John walking through the lot at 1717 W. Allegheny Avenue prior to construction; Top Right: John speaking at Grand Opening of 1717; Bottom Left: John with students at 2018 We Serve Day with school under construction in background; Bottom Right: John at Cristo Rey Philadelphia's first Signing Day in 2012 at 5218 N. Broad Street

A viewing will take place at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School on Sunday, November 10th from 2-4pm in our Sanctuary. Parking instructions can be found [here](#). An additional viewing will occur before mass beginning at 9am on Monday, November 11th. The funeral service will take place at St. Katherine of Siena in Wayne, PA at 11am.

I ask that you keep the McConnell family and all who knew John closely in your thoughts and prayers. We will keep you in ours. He was an important and influential person to so many. At Cristo Rey, we are dedicated to honoring his memory by building on the meaningful work he started, ensuring that students across Philadelphia receive the quality education they deserve.

In Blue Pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas A. Shoemaker".

Tom Shoemaker
President & CEO
Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School





Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School | 1717 West Allegheny Avenue | Philadelphia, PA 19132 US

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