



Pinellas Education Foundation

New Era Begins for Richard O. Jacobson Technical High School at Seminole with Record \$5 Million Gift



SEMINOLE (Nov. 30, 2018) – On a bright and breezy November morning, the culmination of one man’s vision for the power of giving and the promise of education unfolded Friday for a grateful gathering outside the Richard O. Jacobson Technical High School at Seminole.

The festive occasion featured the official ribbon cutting for the unique new high school, named for late businessman and philanthropist Richard “Dick” Jacobson. His foundation’s landmark \$5 million gift to the Pinellas Education Foundation – the largest in the organization’s history – will support the state-of-the-art addition to Pinellas County Schools that opened its doors in August to some 375 students, replacing the county’s career technical academies that had dated back to 1961.

“It is quickly becoming the jewel of not only Seminole but our school district,” said Dr. Michael Grego, Superintendent of Pinellas County Schools. “It’s on target to house and educate more than 600 students in the very near future. ... I want to say thank you to the Pinellas Education Foundation, to Dr. Stacy Baier (and PEF President) for her leadership and for reaching out and partnering with the Richard O. Jacobson Foundation and for the generous gift.”

Funds will help prepare students for life after high school, whether the path leads to college or a technical career. The gift will also benefit a life-changing initiative in partnership with the Pinellas Education Foundation and PCS called



Elevating Excellence. That program assists high-achieving minority and low-income students with a personalized pathway to college success.

The story of Richard Jacobson's generosity connected the large crowd of school board and school officials, members of the Pinellas Education Foundation and hundreds of excited students wearing black Jacobson Technical High School jerseys.



They heard the powerful tale of a man whose passion for helping educational causes and those in need motivated him over the years to make the rarest of gifts in his adopted home of Pinellas County – a combined \$15 million to benefit the causes of three dear Tampa Bay area friends. All three were in attendance: PEF director Bob McIntyre, who directed the funds to the Pinellas Education Foundation; hospitality entrepreneur Ed Droste for the Moffitt Cancer Center; and restaurateur Frank Chivas for the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and a culinary arts program.

“His fingerprints are all over Iowa, that’s where he was born and raised, but he loved Florida and this area – and he’s given over \$24 million to various causes here,” McIntyre said prior to speaking at the podium. “You have to ask yourself, ‘Why would a man from Iowa do so much for this area?’ And it’s because he loved it. And he loved the cooperation between the Pinellas Education Foundation and the Pinellas County School board – he didn’t see that in Iowa. He loved the way business partners with the schools.”

Of course, the school that would have been closest to his heart was the one in the spotlight Friday – a sparkling new senior high that offers training in such diverse fields as building and construction, commercial and digital arts, electricity, gaming and simulation programming, marine mechanics, nursing and veterinary science. A portion of the Jacobson Foundation gift, in fact, will go toward building the Vet Assisting and Life Sciences building on the school’s campus, in a spot where a barn housing animals for the program had been destroyed by Hurricane Irma in 2017.

“We’re the only school that has large animals to work with,” said Jacobson Tech principal Martha Giancola, who led a small tour of the school prior to the event. “It’s training that most people don’t get to have. Some of the work the students are *already* starting to do is post-secondary, so they’ll be doubly ready to join the work force.”

Representing the Jacobson Foundation was its President and Chief Operating Officer, Doug DenAdel, who talked

of Richard Jacobson's love of helping others with the money he earned through his large logistics company and various businesses.

"Dick was all about helping kids find their path," he added. "Not everyone is going to get a four-year degree. Some people will work in various service industries, whatever that may be. But everyone has their place. And he was just radically impressed with the Pinellas Education Foundation and what they were doing – with leading-edge programs and supporting the kids, and finding the right ways to get them where they needed to be. We knew that this was something we wanted to continue to help grow."



DenAdel's voice cracked with emotion in his closing words: "I know Dick would be proud of what you have done."

Among the speakers was Pinellas County School Board Chairperson René Flowers, who expressed gratitude to the Jacobson Foundation for its support of the Jacobson Technical High School and previously the Jacobson Culinary Academy at Tarpon Springs High School. "Students at both schools are thriving," she said. "Here at Richard O. Jacobson Technical High School, students are receiving the hands-on experience, internships and apprenticeships, and industry certifications will ultimately lead them to high-paying jobs – many right here in Pinellas County."

Soon after, the official ribbon was cut by the assembled leaders amid cheers and applause, and the vision of a big-hearted businessman and philanthropist shined as brightly as the morning sun.

