

Each year when I prepare an annual update on the progress of the Inland Lakes Educational Foundation I reflect on several things. First, I continue to be amazed at the support we receive from all of you to continue our mission. Second, is how successful we have been from our simple beginnings almost 40 years go. Third, the most important thing is how important this effort has been in changing the lives of so many Indian River High School students. One student recently put it better than I ever could when he said . . .

**“You have provided me with the opportunity to jump right into my dreams”**

He speaks eloquently on behalf of the 901 students who have received close to \$2.0 million since we started. And that continues, as next year we will have the ability to award 7 primary college scholarships of \$8,800 each, 21 continuing college scholarships of \$4,450 each and 6 trade scholarships of \$4,450 each. Put in more meaningful terms, it means that 34 more young Indian River high school graduates are getting a jump up to the next level of their life-changing education.

While college scholarships remain our primary focus, we have expanded strongly into adding support for trade and vocational scholarships due to the generous support from one of our founders. Not only have we been able to help students enter the trades, but we have supported several changes in the high school curriculum to enhance emphasis on trades, and support apprentices while still in high school.

While our foundation is extremely healthy and able to sustain the support we provide, the cost of education continues to grow and we need to grow with it. With that in mind we have set an ambitious goal of growing our fund to \$7 million within the next three years. Obviously, your support continues to be critical to our success and to the students we serve.

One student said simply, “somebody believed in me” and of course they were speaking on behalf of all of you who have supported our program. So, once again, we are asking you to believe in the students and give them the chance to “jump in” to their lives ahead.

Billy and I thank you on behalf of the Foundation Board and send our best wishes for a wonderful new year.