



## THE FRIDAY REPORT

Friday, April 17, 2015

Being a witness to a life-changing event in the lives of students is a heartwarming experience. Last Saturday, over 100 at-risk students attended the annual Take Stock in Children (TSIC) Scholarship Interview Day. With the help of 38 community volunteers, the students were interviewed in order to make the final selection of which students would be awarded one of the 96 TSIC scholarships.

Each year, over 5,000 students apply for the TSIC and Junior Senior Scholarships. In addition to the TSIC scholarships, another 300 scholarships are awarded by over 150 HEF partner organizations, foundations, and individuals. Some of the many partners are the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, Rays/Helios Double Up for Education, Sheriff's Star Program, Derek Jeter's



Turn 2 Foundation, Edgecomb Bar Association, William A. Gregory, Jr. Foundation, and AFCEA, to name a few.

All of the eligible TSIC Scholarship finalists are at-risk from economically disadvantaged families, and are eligible for the Free and Reduced School Lunch program. Most of the students are from

single parent families, and often English is a second language in their home. For most of the students, no one in their family has ever attended college.

Despite all of these obstacles to success, the students arrive for the scholarship interviews dressed in their best clothes. They all have a

brightness in their eyes, enthusiasm in their voices, and fire in their bellies to receive a college scholarship. All of the students seem to sense that if they were to receive a college scholarship, it would literally change their life for the good. If selected, the student will be awarded one of the following: a two year Community College, a two year Community College plus two year two year University, a four year State College or a four year University scholarship.

The beauty of the Take Stock in Children scholarship is that the student is matched with a caring adult mentor. The mentor meets with the student several times a month to offer advice and encouragement to the student. On the student's part, they must stay free from crime and drugs and graduate with at least a 2.5 GPA. Most students have a much higher GPA due to the motivation of having a scholarship awaiting them if they are successful in their studies. A whopping 98.5% of these students graduate from high school compared to a statewide graduation rate of 76%. Fully 93% of the TSIC students attend a college as compared to 53% statewide.

Events like the Interview Day make all of the hard work at HEF by staff and volunteers worth every minute. In no uncertain terms we are a part of "Connecting Kids to Greatness."

A special thank you goes to all of our 38 volunteer interviewers. Thanks also to the HEF staff who gave up their Saturday to organize and run this life-changing event for the students.

All the best,

*Phil*

