

# Riverview kids really need a Boys Girls Club

By EARL LENNARD, Guest Columnist

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After spending 41 years in education as a teacher, administrator and ultimately (Hillsborough County school) superintendent, I have come to recognize what it takes for children to succeed.

I have found that the lessons children learn outside the classroom are just as important as those they learn at school. Essential life skills, such as leadership, responsibility and compassion, are not solely learned from a book or lecture, but also from human interaction and experience.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of children in our community who do not have a positive place to acquire these life skills outside of school. These very children will soon grow up to be adults in our community. They are destined to become the parents, employees and leaders of our Tampa Bay area. Therefore, it is imperative that we provide all the opportunities necessary to mold our young people into productive, caring, responsible citizens.

I became involved with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay more than 20 years ago, and I have witnessed the benefits this organization provides.

That is why I am leading the campaign to build a Boys & Girls Club in Riverview. The need for the club in this rapidly growing community is great. Most club members come from hard-working, single-parent families, and the club is like a second home for these children.

This project will make a significant difference in the lives of children and families in the South Shore area, which will positively impact the entire Tampa Bay community.

To accomplish this goal, we need to raise \$2.5-million for the construction, equipment and to begin an endowment to support ongoing operations. Recognizing this need, the late Ray Campo jump-started this effort by donating \$750,000 of matching funds through the **Community Foundation of Tampa Bay.**

We are proud to say that this challenge has been matched by the generosity of the Wes and Joanne Kearney family. We are indebted to these outstanding benefactors, whose generosity will help make the Riverview club a reality.

We are also pleased to report that the Diocese of St. Petersburg is providing a site for the club at the beautiful Resurrection Catholic Church campus in the heart of Riverview.

We sincerely thank those who have already made a commitment and are seeking the support of others. It is only with the community's generous contributions that we can meet our goals and ultimately provide a better life and future for the children of Tampa Bay.

*Earl Lennard of Riverview is a former educator and superintendent of the Hillsborough County School*

*District.*

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