HIGHLAND PARK EDUCATION FOUNDATION: GIVING AT A GLANCE

HISTORIC ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

A transformational campaign to bolster the Tartan Endowment is now publicly underway. Planning for the “Lead for Tomorrow” campaign was initiated in 2021 by the Highland Park Education Foundation (HPEF) in collaboration with HPISD leadership. The Tartan Endowment was created in the late 1990s. A campaign followed in the 2000s to secure the first $10 million. Over 25 years, the endowment grew to 50 funds and a market value of $35 million. In just the first two years of the Lead for Tomorrow campaign, funds have more than doubled to over 130, and the market value combined with new pledges exceeds $55 million.

Nearly all these new funds – called "Legacy Funds" – are unrestricted, allowing HPEF and HPISD to utilize these permanent resources for the district’s most pressing needs. The top priority now and in the immediate future is strengthening teacher salaries.

The public event included remarks from one of these outstanding teachers, Brittany Cristofoli. Now in her eighth year teaching fourth grade at Robert S. Hyer Elementary, Cristofoli thanked the donors who have already supported the campaign, "My fellow teachers and I are astounded by the generosity of the Highland Park community.” She also noted a common sacrifice teachers make to work for HPISD, “We all love teaching here. Many teachers commute from other districts that offer higher pay. This campaign demonstrates just how important public schools are to the Park Cities, and the goal to support teacher compensation.”

Continue reading to learn more about our volunteer leadership, campaign goals, founding gifts, a campaign video featuring a notable HPHS alumnus, and information about how you can help us Lead for Tomorrow.
In the 1940s, Garry Weber’s parents left their family bakery business in Elmhurst, Ill., to look for a better life in University Park. It was sixth grade for Garry, and he fell in love. “I can remember seeing downtown Dallas and thinking, what a town! It was just so beautiful.”

But just one year later, the Webers moved to California, where Garry began planning to run away back to his friends in Highland Park. To his relief, the family soon returned to Dallas, about 10 houses from Hillcrest High School.

But Garry had other plans. “In my own little beat-up mind I knew if I wanted to make a living and be rich and successful, I had to be in Highland Park.” He did not have the $25 that in those days was required as tuition to attend a school outside his district. So Garry went out for the football team, catching the coach’s eye. He was offered a life-changing deal: sweep the gym every day and officially become a Scot.

But Garry also didn’t have a car, so he walked to the intersection of Hillcrest and Royal Lane, knocking on car windows and hitchhiking to school. He gave every inch of himself to attend HPHS, and in return, Garry believes he was granted lifelong friendships and entry into a world of educational and business connections that helped him forge the success he began chasing as a teenager.

Now Garry is championing the community he credits with so much, giving $7 million to the ‘Lead for Tomorrow’ campaign. As a testament to an enduring relationship, the Multi-Purpose Activity Center will soon be known as the Garry Weber Indoor Practice Facility.

“I am so grateful to give to the schools that gave me so much, and that still give to me today,” said Garry, who in 2022 was honored as a distinguished alumnus by the HPHS Alumni Association and Highland Park Education Foundation.

After graduating, Garry used HPHS as a springboard, going on to SMU with a football scholarship, then serving six years in the Air National Guard. He went on to create Weber, Hall, Sale, and Associates, where he served as Chairman of the Board for more than 50 years.

These days, in his office near Preston Center, Garry is making stock trades, toggling between two computer monitors and a credenza of photos celebrating his friendships, football, and travels to the furthest parts of the world. He still holds himself to the same standards as the teenage boy that made the life-changing decision to hitchhike to the high school of his dreams.

LEAD GIFTS PROPEL CAMPAIGN PROGRESS

GRATEFUL, GARRY WEBER ’54 GIVES $7 MILLION TO KICK OFF CAMPAIGN

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Between all the Highland Park teachers, coaches and friends, the Beecherls believe the greatest thing is the community. They work to help it stay the wonderful place that it is. By supporting the district and our teachers, we believe we will help accomplish that.”

“YOU HAVE TO WORK OUT. IF YOU DON’T WANT TO GET OFF THE COUCH, YOU HAVE TO GET OFF THE COUCH. YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU DON’T WANT TO DO. IT’S THAT EASY! I EVEN DO THAT TODAY. I’M 87 AND I COULD SIT AT HOME. BUT I DON’T.”

YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU DON’T WANT TO DO,” EXPLAINED GARRY. “IF YOU DON’T WANT TO WORK OUT, YOU HAVE TO WORK OUT. IF YOU DON’T WANT TO GET OFF THE COUCH, YOU HAVE TO GET OFF THE COUCH. YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU DON’T WANT TO DO. IT’S THAT EASY! I EVEN DO THAT TODAY. I’M 87 AND I COULD SIT AT HOME. BUT I DON’T.”

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Jan. 1, 2021

Growing the Tartan Endowment

Campaign GOAL
by Dec. 31, 2026

250+ FUNDS
$40 Million in New Gifts

Campaign Progress
Sept. 30, 2023

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$20 Million Raised

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P. 2

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“You have to work out. If you don’t want to get off the couch, you have to get off the couch. You gotta do what you don’t want to do. It’s that easy!” explained Garry. “If you don’t want to work out, you have to work out. If you don’t want to get off the couch, you gotta do what you don’t want to do. It’s that easy! I even do that today. I’m 87 and I could sit at home. But I don’t.”

Garry Weber, HPHS Class of 1954

Louis Jr. and Julie Beecherl

BEECHERL CHILDREN HONOR PARENTS’ PASSION FOR EDUCATION

Julie and Louis Beecherl created a legacy in the Highland Park Independent School District (HPISD). After they graduated in 1943, all eight of their kids went on to attend their beloved alma mater. Twenty-seven grandchildren in total have graduated with two more still attending Highland Park High School. And Julie and Louis never missed a grandchild’s graduation. There are 19 great-grandkids in the district today, and several more are cued up to enter soon!

Julie and Louis raised their family the old-fashioned way. Dinner time was family time and the food was always blessed with a prayer, reminding all “to help us to be more mindful of the needs of others.” Their passion for helping others will live on through the Julie and Louis Beecherl, Jr. Memorial Legacy Fund, created with a $15 million gift from their eight children; Kay Beecherl Herring ’89 and Edward Herring ’89 (a prior school board trustee of HPISD); Medora and Robert Beecherl ’83; Susan and Ernest Beecherl ’81; Kay and Will Beecherl ’79 (current Highland Park Mayor and former Highland Park Education Foundation Board Member); Mary and John Beecherl ’76; Cynthia ’75 (former school board trustee of HPISD) and Louis Beecherl III ’74; Mary Helen Beecherl Dillard ’71 and Bill Dillard; and Jan Beecherl Davis ’70 and Alan Davis.

“Our parents were one of the original supporters of the Tartan Endowment,” explained Robert. “We just knew we wanted to be a part of the Lead for Tomorrow campaign because we are their legacy and we want to support the things they cared deeply about.”

“Academics was always a top priority for our parents, and receiving a good education was in their DNA,” said Robert, who noted that his father served as chairman of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System. “My mother told us many times to turn off the TV and go read a book! If we weren’t studying, they wanted us outside playing or working. I now tell my kids to put down their phones and read a book.” It was a childhood filled with learning, playing and hard work.

Growing up, we rode bikes everywhere and played in Hackberry Creek by the fire station,” explained Kay. But very important to all of the Beecherl’s was spending most weekends at their family ranch. “We had the privilege of being able to hunt and fish, but we were also required to work which was even more valuable looking back today,” said John.

Kay is the youngest of the Beecherl brood and the last of her siblings to pass through John S. Armstrong Elementary. She fondly remembers her first-grade teacher, Mrs. Bailey telling her, “I stuck around until you got here because I wanted to teach the last Beecherl!” Between all the Highland Park teachers, coaches and friends, the Beecherl’s believe it is those relationships that have shaped their lives for the better.

“The community is so unique in that way. There aren’t many places like this in the country, and we want to help it stay the wonderful place that it is. By supporting the district and our teachers, we believe we will help accomplish that.”

The Weber and Beecherl gifts are just two of nearly 100 new funds established in support of the Tartan Endowment. This permanent, long-term source of funding, complements the generous annual gifts donated through Mad for Plaid and other fundraising initiatives through the PTA/PTO groups, Dads Clubs and others who raise gifts for immediate needs.

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A jubilant crowd gathered on August 30 at the Dallas Country Club for the public launch of Lead for Tomorrow. The date coincided with the annual joint meeting of the boards of the Highland Park Education Foundation and the HPHS Alumni Association, but the guest list was expanded to include HPISD trustees, PTA/PTO and Dads Club leaders, Sports Clubs, and Park Cities elected officials. “This was no coincidence,” said Bill Ogle, HPEF president. “We wanted this event to symbolize how this community mobilizes around critical issues. Ensuring the continued success of our public schools is a priority for everyone.”

Special guests also included those who have made a commitment to the Tartan Endowment during the campaign’s quiet phase. HPISD board president Maryjane Bonfield acknowledged these leaders for being among the first to support the campaign. “These donors all experienced the excellence of Highland Park Schools through their own education or their children’s, or like me, through both! We all want to see future generations of HP students achieve ever-higher levels of success. A stronger Tartan Endowment will help make that possible.”
When Kacy and Carter ’97 Tolleson were considering schools for their children, they visited many of the private schools in Dallas and their neighborhood schools in Highland Park. “Then Kacy said to me, ‘How many towns are left in the U.S. where kids can walk to school in a safe environment and the schools are some of the best in the state?’” remembered Carter.

With the realization that they had the winning combination in their Park Cities backyard, the Tollesons started each of their children at Armstrong Elementary. “We’re really blessed to have not only a wonderful neighborhood but an incredible school system, too,” said Carter. “The fact that we’re landlocked is a real advantage because the district has stayed smallish. We just have to take care of this little diamond that we have.”

With the creation of the Kacy and Carter Tolleson Legacy Fund, the family is ensuring that the district will grow and strengthen for generations to come. “I hope that our giving can help meet important needs, like hiring new teachers and keeping our most talented educators,” said Kacy. “We need to support the hardest working people in the school, which are the teachers and staff.”

Legacy Funds provide unrestricted support for the district’s greatest need, which is currently to boost teachers’ salaries. “We’re so lucky to live in this district and have these schools in our backyard,” said Kacy. “But they need our financial support to continue to be great.”

The Tolleson Family

When Lauren and Rob Langley moved to Dallas from Atlanta 16 years ago, the newlyweds knew they would eventually need a warm, welcoming community for their family. Now, as parents to Cameron, 13, Luke, 11 and Meg, 9, they’re glad to call the Park Cities home.

“Atlanta and Dallas have a lot of similarities and are often compared to one another but metro Atlanta has a lot of private schools and mediocre public schools which makes for a disjointed community,” explained Rob. “What makes the Park Cities so unique is there are great schools close to the city, and those schools attract great families to the community.”

The Langleys are infusing their neighborhood schools with support through the Langley Family Legacy Fund. “For all kids, having a good education is the ticket to building your career and success,” said Lauren. “You’re going to need to have a strong foundation in whatever you do in life. That’s why we want to help make our schools as strong as they can be,” she explained.

For the Langleys, it also means showing up at their children’s schools to pitch in by serving lunches in the cafeteria and making copies for the teachers. “We try to teach our kids that we, as humans and people, want to be ‘givers’ not ‘takers,’” said Lauren. “We want to give back and volunteer at our schools, not only with our resources but with our time and energy.”

The Langley Family

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CAMPAIGN VIDEO FEATURES BROADWAY, HOLLYWOOD STAR

The Lead for Tomorrow launch featured the premiere of a campaign video narrated by Stark Sands. The ’97 HPHS graduate is currently starring as William Shakespeare in the Broadway hit musical, & Juliet.

Sands discovered his passion for acting before his freshman year at Highland Park, landing a role in a summer production of The Sound of Music. He went on to earn a fine arts degree in acting at the University of Southern California.

His early theater performances led to bigger roles, including movies and television. But Broadway is where this star shines. Twice nominated for a Tony Award, he earned a Grammy Award in 2013 for Kinky Boots, with music and lyrics written by 80s pop icon Cindy Lauper.

Despite performing eight shows a week, Sands made time for Highland Park to help create this video. Thank you Stark, break a leg!

The ultimate Broadway honor, enshrined at Sardi’s restaurant in New York.

With Ryan Phillippe in Flags of Our Fathers, directed by Clint Eastwood.

See the video at leadfortomorrow.org
leadfortomorrow.org

- Watch campaign video featuring Stark Sands ‘97
- Read about the goals and vision for this campaign
- View list of Lead for Tomorrow donors
- Learn how to establish your own legacy fund