

Thank you so much. Thank you so much for all of your kind words. Peter, I'm forever grateful for all that you do and for inviting me into this incredible mission. I know that at CSF we change lives, and as you and I have discussed, the Catholic School's Foundation has forever changed mine.

Twenty plus years ago, I could never have imagined standing here before you tonight. And I am humbled to be recognized.

Thanks to all who've come out this evening to support the Catholic Schools Foundation.

The best way I know to directly and meaningfully impact the lives of our kids is through the gift of a first-rate, faith-based education in a loving and nurturing environment. Tonight, you are all making a difference.

A special thanks to my friends Mike and Renee Minogue for their tireless leadership of this year's gala committee.

Their commitment to catholic education and so many other important causes is truly inspirational.

I'm here because I love these kids. The kids you met on the escalators; the kids whose work we got to share in the lobby; and kids like Mariana who spoke so eloquently tonight.

This dinner is my favorite night of the year. I was moved by the first dinner I attended, and I am moved in new and meaningful ways each and every year. What we do here and in our schools' matters.

It really matters.

When you enter one of our schools you can't help but feel the love, the kindness, and the compassion that permeates.

Delivered with your support through our teachers and principals, who are educating the next generation with the fundamentals as well as with the values they will need to be good, active, and engaged citizens.

I love these kids.

Most have come from very different circumstances than most of us here tonight. They live in a variety neighborhoods, and so many are either first-generation Americans or new arrivals themselves.

While they may come from different places, they are no different than my kids. No different than yours.

I'm so impressed by these young people. They are bright, curious, creative.

They are incredibly motivated and driven to succeed.

All they need is a chance - an opportunity that most of us take for granted.

The chance at a first-class education, which, more than anything else I know, is the ticket to success.

Working with CFS I've been blessed to have gotten to know so many wonderful people, people who live by the adage that to whom much is given much is expected.

People who meet those expectations with joy and love.

As I think about our students, who they are, where they come from, and the challenges so many of them face, I think of something that I've heard my friend John Remondi say.

John has been a major supporter of CFS since its inception and a massive benefactor to Cathedral High School, where his leadership has helped transform a, shall we say, tired, physical plant into a modern state of the art facility.

As John tells it, when he was a student at Cathedral most of his classmates were immigrants from Ireland and Italy just wanting to work hard, get an education, and build a future.

Today, the school looks very different but fundamentally it has not changed. The first generation Irish and Italians have been replaced with new arrivals from all over the world.

But, as John says, these students and their families are no different than when he was there.

They're just looking for an opportunity to work hard, to succeed, to build a future for themselves and the generations that follow them.

That's how I see it.

The power of the education our schools provide sets the path for our students and all that come after them.

Just as our parents or grandparents or great grandparents worked and sacrificed to provide for the lives we've all enjoyed.

The Talmud says, "for anybody who preserves a single life it is counted as if he preserved an entire world."

Think about that.

Think about how that by changing the trajectory for these kids you are setting the tone for generations to come.

Families will succeed because you've helped.

Good, educated, active citizens will be created. Citizens who will contribute more than any of us could possibly imagine.

That's how important your support is.

It truly can change the world.

I can't close without a few words about Peter Lynch.

I am so grateful to Peter and Carolyn, of blessed memory, for bringing me into the fold with open arms.

For showing me what truly giving spirits look like.

For offering me the opportunity to do some good in this world.

Thank you, Peter, for all of your contributions to so many. I am blessed to know you and honored to receive this award in your and Carolyn's names.

When I first met Peter and was asked to make a contribution, he told me something that has always stayed with me.

Rick, he said, we'll be thrilled to have your donation. But please remember that these kids will need support every year.

I don't want to have to tell a family that their kid has to leave our school because we lost a donation.

So, thank you all so very much. Thanks for coming out, and thanks for digging deep. I hope that this evening has moved you, and that you'll always remember Peter's words.

Thank you.