



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 2, 2026 — Bartow, Florida

Polk Education Foundation Hosts Soirée for Students to Increase Student Success

Polk Education Foundation will host Soirée for Students on September 17 at the Auburndale Civic Center (2220 Lake Ariana Blvd, Auburndale, FL 33823), raising essential funds for the Renaissance Program, a countywide student success initiative that celebrates academic achievement, positive behavior, and attendance.

The Renaissance Program, supported by Polk Education Foundation and funding from the United Way of Central Florida George Jenkins Youth Opportunity grant, has helped strengthen school cultures by establishing systems that intentionally recognize meaningful student progress. By shifting focus toward positive reinforcement through quarterly school-wide recognition events and monthly incentive rewards tied to tangible goals, schools have seen measurable improvements, including increased test scores, daily attendance, and fewer behavioral referrals.

A prime example of the success of this program occurred at Crystal Lake Middle School where a group of chronically disengaged students significantly improved their performance after working to qualify for Renaissance rewards. The program bridged gaps between effort and recognition, ensuring students felt acknowledged for their progress. With support from PEF and the UWCF GJF Youth Opportunity grant, the Renaissance Program continues to cultivate an environment where academic determination is recognized alongside athletic achievement in participating schools.

Funds raised through Soirée for Students directly support these incentives, helping schools maintain consistent recognition practices and encourage ongoing student engagement.

About Polk Education Foundation

Polk Education Foundation is the nonprofit arm of Polk County Public Schools, working to elevate the educational experience through the power of philanthropy. Student success programs, classroom grants, a free teacher market, tutoring, mentoring, best-practice sharing, support for homeless students and those in need, recognition and retention initiatives, and scholarships are among the ways the Foundation serves schools across the district. There are limitless ways to support students so they may have infinite opportunities.