

Thomas Solenberger Proudly Invests in RBC's Future

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- For the first time in over a decade, Thomas H. Solenberger, M.D. visited Richard Bland College (RBC). He was impressed by everything he experienced.

"This place is just like watching a flower blossoming," Solenberger said with a smile. "There's a go, go, go attitude here and it is just a wonderful environment for students to learn in."

Solenberger is the son of the late Capt. Earl "Gus" Solenberger, a professor of Math and Business at RBC from 1967-1971. His mother, Marjorie Solenberger, served as a public relations specialist at the institution for 28 years and was an RBC Foundation board member from 1997-2002.

"She was a community activist with many eclectic interests," Solenberger said about his late mother, who passed away in 2003. "She liked herbs, and fossils and history and she was very gregarious and got along with many, many people."

"She got initiatives going that no one else had. She just liked doing things in a fashion that didn't offend other people. It wasn't threatening to anyone."

In addition to promoting RBC's students and programs in local newspapers, Marjorie established a series of nature walks and lectures around the Tri-Cities, as well as a cleanup of an abandoned African American cemetery.

Marjorie even served as a liaison for the House of Sabah, Kuwait's ruling family.

"Members of the Kuwait royal family were looking to get to the U.S. and transfer to more advanced schools," Solenberger recalled. "We had someone who became the foreign minister of



Thomas Solenberger and his family will provide full tuition for a handful of students in the near future.

Kuwait here at RBC and he lived at our house.”

In 2016, the Solenberger family received the inaugural Richard Bland Award, which recognizes a member of the RBC family for exemplary service to the college.

“It’s quite an honor, no question,” Solenberger said. “We weren’t expecting it and we are pleased to see how RBC has matured over the years.

“So many superb kids are coming out of here.”

The Solenberger family contributed a number of items to the RBC collections, including books about the Civil War and Virginia’s tobacco industry. However, Solenberger said some of the greatest gifts are yet to come.

“It’s no longer about what we can leave, but what we can fund,” Solenberger explained. “We want there to be scholarships to allow the institution to have great wisdom and help the next generations of students with what they want to achieve.”

The family endowment is set up so a portion of the Solenberger estates will move to the RBC Foundation. While it may be some time before it is fully funded, Solenberger hopes the endowment will provide full tuition for as many as five students.

Solenberger, who is currently an obstetrician-gynecologist in Kodiak, Alaska, credits his parents for instilling the value of pursuing advanced degrees.

“Mother and Dad were always talking about getting ahead through academics,” Solenberger said.

Thomas’ parents, natives of Oregon and North Dakota, came from humble beginnings. But that didn’t deter them from pursuing higher education.

Walking on RBC’s campus, Solenberger appreciated seeing the growth and affirmed his family’s investment in the school.

“We are strongly committed to RBC and the future and the students who come through here,” he said.

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