



Ina A. Colen Academy, Public Charter School, Breaks Ground

Ocala, FL – The Colen Family Charitable Trust celebrated the public charter school's groundbreaking, Ina A. Colen Academy, last Friday morning, October 23, 2020, with community members and dignitaries. Among the attendees were Ocala Mayor Kent Guinn, Marion County School Board Member Beth McCall, Director of School Choice and Student Assignment Stephen Ayres, Ocala Chamber of Economic Commerce and Partnership Chair Angie Lewis with President and CEO Kevin Sheilley, District Safe Schools Director Dennis McFatten and Judge Steven Rogers. The Ina A. Colen Academy Governing Board Members Robert Colen, Dr. Harvey Taub, Dr. Mery Lossada, Kay Fleischaker, and Janet Behnke. The Construction Manager for the project, Ken Ausley and Dustin Magamoll, were in attendance, and Wannemacher Jensen Architects Jason Jensen and Lindsey Evans.

Ina A. Colen Academy will be a tuition-free public charter school open for enrollment to all Marion County students. The charter school application was approved earlier this year, stating the affiliation with the Marion County Public School System. Speaking at the groundbreaking, School Board Member Beth McCall first explained she was not a fan of charter schools until she came across the Ina A. Colen Academy charter school application. "This is a well thought out charter school that not only meets the academic standards of the Marion County Public School System but could potentially exceed those standards. I believe very strongly this application should be a model for other charter schools."

Ina A. Colen Academy will offer Marion County students an opportunity through an educational program focused on project-based learning, emphasizing social-emotional learning. Dr. Christy Noe of Collaborative Educational Network spoke to the curriculum stating, "We want social and emotional learning to be a culture in our school. Relationships and being productive in society – that is what we want for our kids." At the event, guests participated in a social-emotional learning project by writing encouraging words on painted "kindness rocks" to be displayed outside of the academy.

Kenneth Colen, Trustee of the Colen Family Charitable Trust, stated, "For any project, you need a mission; our mission is to cultivate passionate learners in an inclusive school community in which individuality and diversity are valued, and students develop understanding and empathy for others through collaboration and active learning: our vision [is] sharp minds, kind hearts." The academy was founded in memory of Kenneth's late mother, Ina A. Colen, whose iron spirit and commitment to educating children will be embodied at the Ina A. Colen Academy.

Executive Director of the Colen Family Charitable Trust, Rebecca Rogers, was the emcee for the event and expressed gratitude and appreciation for all in attendance and all involved in the academy's planning.

Ina A. Colen Academy will open its doors to welcome students in August 2022.

For more information about Ina A. Colen Academy, please visit IACAFL.org and follow on social media (@IACAFL).

