

## In Memorium

# There is No Ceiling on Greatness: Reflections on the Life of Dick Siemens



Rabbi Feinberg, Dean of TABR

Fortunately, in my capacity as dean of Torah Academy of Boca Raton, I get the opportunity to meet a lot of very generous people. Anyone who wants to support Jewish education is another inspiration to me, reminding me of the special fabric of our Jewish community and our collective commitment to timeless values. Yet still, sometimes I have the special merit of crossing life paths with a stand-out individual whose impact on my life, and on Torah Academy, is on a different plane. Richard Siemens ob"m, my friend Dick, was one of those people.

The days since his recent passing have filled my mind and heart with reflections on his life and his lessons for me. Dick was commonly described as a philanthropist and developer, and those two monikers could not be more appropriate for this special man. Yes, he gave of himself to literally build the Jewish infrastructure in Palm Beach County, an impact that is immeasurable; but more than that, he loved his fellow man deeply, and developed himself and those around him into people who could express that love on a scale of incredible proportion. His love brought West Boca Medical Center and Delray Medical Center into being, and helped make the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County's campus, which bears the name the Richard and Carole Siemens Campus, the pulsating hub of Jewish life it is today. At every turn since I came to Boca, it was Dick who made constant visits to our school, helped us secure new property, helped us learn how to turn the requisite wheels to grow our school, and thus enabled the growth to our 400-plus student body, already bursting at the seams as Dick predicted.


Dick personified what it means to be a *mentch*. With Dick, his word was gold, and his dealings were always above reproach. He was passionate about helping others in need, particularly the most vulnerable in our community, and he was steadfastly committed to the future of the

Jewish people.

When I picture Dick as a little boy, sharing a bed in a tiny apartment with his brothers in the Bronx, coming from such humble beginnings that the amenity of shower stall was unknown to him until high school, I think of the classic American story of a person pulling himself up by his boot straps. But I also think of the Jewish ideal of reaching for greatness, no matter our starting point – believing in ourselves that we all have it in us to take our G-d-given raw material and develop it into lasting contributions to our communities and the world.

Dick shared with me many times that he felt it was vitally important to do everything in his power to guarantee a Jewish future by making a traditional Jewish education available to every child. When others thought that Torah Academy had reached its potential when we purchased our second campus and doubled our capacity, it was Dick who was certain that within a few years we would outgrow our space and need a much bigger and better facility. Even at the time of his passing, he was involved in trying to further grow our school; he never considered his work done, because there is no ceiling on greatness. Indeed, Dick's prediction has come true, to which I'm sure he would have said, "Of course we outgrew our campus. Isn't that what I told you would happen?"

Dick's lasting legacy is a special commodity, both tangible in the physical existence of our growing Yeshiva, and intangible in his friendship, support, and encouragement that bolstered our efforts. Even as my heart breaks for the loss our community has suffered in his passing, I can almost hear Dick's voice saying, "The thing is this... Now what are YOU going to do about getting our children what they need?"

Without Dick, we are all going to have to try a bit harder and reach a little farther, to make the dreams he had for our community become realities. 

A SPECIAL EVENING CELEBRATING

# THE Dignity OF OUR Differences

Join together with our local leaders of various backgrounds and denominations as we rally together as a community to reinforce our shared values of respect and unity.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2018**  
**7:00 PM**

**Boca Raton Synagogue**

7900 Montoya Circle N, Boca Raton, FL

**Featuring:**

*Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is an international religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author and respected moral voice.

This event is free and open to the public.  
Registration is required.  
SPACE IS LIMITED.

**TO REGISTER VISIT:**  
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