6-23-2004


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Campus Loses Longtime Friend

By: Sudsy Tschiderer
June 23, 2004 2:02PM EST

A distinguished and stalwart advocate of USF St. Petersburg and its community, Edward L. Cole Jr, MD, passed away Monday, June 21 at his home after a long illness. He was 84. A respected pediatrician, Cole also served terms as St. Petersburg’s Mayor and as a member of St. Petersburg City Council.

Cole was a vital presence at USF St. Petersburg, offering his time, his talents and his gifts. From 1990-2002, Cole served on the Campus Advisory Board, and was named a distinguished member. During that time Cole and his wife Martha co-chaired the first 25th Hour Bayboro Event, the campus’ signature annual fundraiser, along with J.C. and Carol Russell.

In 1993, he established a scholarship fund for St. Petersburg Junior College transfer students in honor of his granddaughter Amanda Cole. In 1989, he established the Marie E. and E. Leslie Cole Endowed Chair in Ethics as a tribute to his parents. This gift assisted the campus in developing a curriculum in ethics and in attracting eminent scholars and outstanding students.

At the time, Cole said, “A measure of a great and progressive community is the opportunity it gives its citizens—especially its younger citizens—to expand their knowledge, character and horizons. I believe this endowment, with the help of a great university, does this.” Hugh LaFollette, PhD, assumes the Cole Chair in August.

Bill Heller, PhD, recognizing Cole’s dedication to campus, appointed him as a Special Assistant to the Vice President in the late 90s, and he worked out of a small office on campus. There, many members of the campus community worked with Cole on various campus projects. Donna Knudsen, coordinator of administrative services, worked with the Campus Advisory Board. She remembers Cole as "a lovely man, and one that USF St. Petersburg owes a great debt of gratitude for his service over the years."

Photo credit: St. Petersburg Times