

Jerry

Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish existentialist philosopher, once wrote that life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forwards.

I love this quote. It's a reminder that we can only really understand our lives, and the impact that we (can) have, by looking back at what we've already done. But we can't spend our time just living in the past. We have to keep moving. We need to take our experiences, our wisdom, our learning, and look ahead too.

Which is why it was so moving, and so necessary, to hear the beautiful eulogies by those who loved Jerry Gottesman at his funeral last week. The poignancy of looking back, of seeing the enormous impact of this amazing man and all that he built – impact on family, friends, community – was not lost on all those present at Gottesman RTW Academy, built by the generosity of Jerry and Paula, and others like them, and inspired by their values.



There was a particularly lovely moment when one of Jerry and Paula's awesome daughters asked all those present whose lives had been touched by Jerry's generosity in the community, through organizations or philanthropy, to stand up. All around you could hear the word "wow" as hundreds of people stood up in a gesture of gratitude and warmth. These hundreds of people represented countless thousands whose lives had been touched by Jerry and Paula. Looking backwards, we could understand in that moment, all too well, a life well-lived, filled with love, community, family and legacy. It was an amazing moment remembering an amazing man.

May his memory be for a blessing... His memory will live forward, well into the future – in the songs of children who learn in our schools, in the stories told by children who read our books, in the countless numbers of those whose lives were improved, made safer, and made more whole because of him.