New EREF Named Scholarship Honors Tom J. Fatjo Jr.

Raleigh, NC (December 5, 2019) – The Environmental Research & Education Foundation’s (EREF) Scholarship Program has provided financial support to over 80 students since its inception in 1998. A number of the scholarships offered were established in memory of those who have played a vital role in the waste industry. This year, donations from companies and individuals from the waste industry have funded a named scholarship honoring Tom J. Fatjo Jr., who passed away earlier this year. The first Tom J. Fatjo Jr. scholar will be named in 2020.

“My father was a true visionary who believed that any obstacle could be overcome,” said Tommy Fatjo, Tom’s son. “People gravitated toward him, drawn by his charisma, creativity, positivity, honesty and integrity.”

Tom was no stranger to dreaming big. Early in his career, he came across a challenge to improve waste collection in his neighborhood. Tom embraced this challenge which led to the creation of Browning-Ferris Industries. Under Tom’s leadership, BFI became one of the largest waste management companies in the nation. This entrepreneurial venture was only the beginning. Tom has been the founder and major shareholder in many different businesses including Fannin Bank, Mortgage Banque, American Title Co. and Criterion Management. Tom shared his creative enterprise process through authoring the book “With No Fear of Failure.” In 1979, driven by a personal passion towards health and fitness, Tom developed the Houstonian Hotel and Fitness Center along with the Houstonian Estates. His expertise in health and fitness resulted in his appointment to the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports under Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush. During this time, Tom ran over 30 marathons, including 13 Boston Marathons. Tom returned to his roots in the waste business in 1990 and over the next 10 years founded Republic Waste, TransAmerican Waste and Waste Corporation of America.

EREF awards scholarships to Master’s or Doctoral students pursuing an education in solid waste who demonstrate excellence and passion for their work. The Scholarship Program aims to encourage students to work in the waste industry upon graduation. Cumulative scholarship funding is nearly $2 million.

“WCA is honored to support the establishment of the Fatjo Scholarship,” said WCA Waste Corporation CEO, Bill Caesar. “Tom was the driving force behind the establishment of WCA and we are thrilled to give something back to him and his family.”

EREF is still seeking additional support for this scholarship. If you would like to honor Tom’s memory, please consider making a donation. To donate to the Fatjo scholarship, contact Kristy Pickurel at kpickurel@erefdn.org.

EREF is a 501(c)3 class charity that funds and directs scientific research and educational initiatives for waste management practices to benefit industry participants and the communities they serve. For more complete information on EREF funded research, its scholarship program and how to donate to this great cause, visit erefdn.org.

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