

Corey Tafoya:

Welcome back to part two of our education buzz podcast. If you were lucky enough to hear the first part of our podcasts introduction with Dr. Crosby, we were kind of rolling through the ages of just some of the significant events and contributions that have come along the way. And Dr. Crosby, just off there there, you were mentioning just a little bit about how central school has become this icon of the district and it must be special for you in some way to see the new logo that's been created for the district that kind of symbolizes a news that central schools... It's not a steeple that just the roof line there that makes that kind of iconic and so that's something when you see that now on tee-shirts and things like, that letterhead and stationary, those things must feel pretty special to think of that location.

Richard Crosby:

For sure. I mean it's right in the center of town, everyone's been to the five points you talk to anyone across the world it seems like, you know what I mean, so to speak. Particularly in the United States, but even across the world. Oh yeah, I've gone through Harvard at five points [inaudible 00:01:19] I mean central school that large building on right there there. So it has such a presence in the community and to all the people who have gone because what had happened in 1948, what had is that they brought all the elementary schools into Harvard. Cause we had all of our country schools and as you drive around, we have a number of those still standing.

Richard Crosby:

They are being used for homes at this time have been converted. A number of them have gone by the wayside, but the people, when we had the open house for Crosby in 2010, we had a teacher who had taught in the one room school house.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh my gosh.

Richard Crosby:

At that dedication in 2000 and she's still alive today. Eileen King here in Harvard.

Corey Tafoya:

Wow.

Richard Crosby:

Taught in the one room school house when women could not be married at that time. She was not able to get married while she was teaching in the one room school house. That's where things have come over the years.

Corey Tafoya:

Well, I guess that's a good place to kind of introduce this part of the podcast off air, but when kind of getting started again, you mentioned, 47 years of history and names, it is hard to not mentioned some people and we wouldn't want to exclude anyone. So I appreciate your thoughtfulness on that just to kind of make this about mention it because it would be hard to... You don't want to exclude anyone from this cause there's just been so many iconic people that have come through the district, but those events, I think are what trigger people. I was mentioning to you that when you mentioned something

that happens in '97, that'll be, if someone is just coming into the district, they will remember that was the hot button issue at that point. And over time things change and so it is fun to hear these events from your lens cause as I said, been here 47 years. That's why this is gold.

Richard Crosby:

I've conjured over the idea of who not to mention and like you said, the best way is to try to go with the events and anyone listening, I do believe they know who you are and who you were at the time as you had gone through the system with us.

Corey Tafoya:

Absolutely.

Richard Crosby:

And the other people have too. So I'm sorry. I hope I did not... Hope no one feels slighted because everyone is, I'll get into it a little bit, is important. Another item there is we had gone through, Corey I need to mention is, in 1995 we brought back the building trades program after a 20 year hiatus. And it was a program that was needed and has really been a great program since '95 for us, for the district again and all the nice homes around town that had been built. As I had mentioned earlier, Jackie and I bought the number four home and actually... So anyway that was that there, but in '95 for the school district, we need to mention the Harvard education foundation that was established because we were cutting programs.

Richard Crosby:

Students weren't able to have field trips, the extra things that students should have been having that experience and they weren't able to have that. And so that was the sole purpose of, developing a Harvard education foundation that was formed in '95 with Dan Frost as the president and 18 community members. Who got this ball rolling and the intent was to get up to accumulate a million dollars to pituitary and to be able to use the interest from that amount of money. Now we have definitely surpassed that and the Harvard graduate by the name of [Bill Magnuson 00:06:06] in 1955, graduated Harvard high school.

Richard Crosby:

I had taken his class through the high school when they had their 50th class reunion and so that fall, he heard that we were working on trying to develop a foundation and he said, I think I would be able to help do something like that. He said I believe and I quote, "That those of us who have been successful should help take care of future generations of students. Further, believe that the Harvard community education foundation would be very useful in expanding and furthering educational opportunities for Harvard students. We all have a stake in ensuring the best education for our children and this was to be spent..." And he put up \$5,000 each year and from '97, through 2012 when he passed, \$5,000 and then his former employer Shell Oil would match that plus 500.

Richard Crosby:

So then that was \$11,500 a year, it was \$7,000 a year. That was coming from him so that really helped kickstart us and getting things going because a million dollars that seems like a long ways down the road. And you're going to have to do more than bake sales in order to get to that point. Which this energetic group did so that was a very pivotal part of our community that came together. '99, the year

before I retired the Harvard Diggins Library was wanting to move out of the building downtown into a new facility.

Richard Crosby:

So in 99, one of the projects that they came up was pennies for the library. So all the kids in the school district collected all their pennies and they collected them at the school, each respective school through the high school. And then one afternoon they brought a flatbed up in front of the high school semi tractor, semi trailer and then everybody brought their bags of money. We'd gotten the bags, a whole bunch of empty bags from Harvard, and they had filled them, bought them up there and they threw the bags on the flatbed.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh my gosh.

Richard Crosby:

As we all said, saw the smoke from the tractor [inaudible 00:09:11] it's pennies very small project that they had and that helped pass I believe and build there in 2001, the Harvard library, as we know it today so that was great. In 2000, we had a bleacher project on the football field that the lights. And then in 2006 we had lights since the junior high on our varsity soccer.

Corey Tafoya:

That's a big difference right.

Richard Crosby:

And our junior high playground, that's where they had their playground. 2006, the board commissioned, a facilities committee in 2006, work out our facilities and give up a recommendation and that recommendation came up to be a 41 classroom recommendation for 41 classrooms, a stage and a large gym, which now is the Crosby school supported again by the community, our stakeholders. During that same year we were able to get rid of the mobiles that had been in the district for 40 years at Washington school.

Richard Crosby:

In the Harvard schools, we have had a tradition, I believe of a strong academic program with many, and I meant emphasized many success stories. You can go right down the line of all the success stories and everyone who had ever listened to this, or we know people who have gone out and really have made a mark in the world. We've been rich in choral and instrumental music along with our successful athletic teams.

Corey Tafoya:

It is a well rounded history, isn't it?

Richard Crosby:

It's just been awesome and then all the groups, we had a hearts group that was very instrumental in supporting the arts and the band and the coral throughout the last number of years. In 2011, we had a partnership with a community for building a food pantry, a building trades program built, built that the

booster club supported all of the groups that are music, academics, athletics. We've supported the Milk Days over the years by having the Milk bay grounds were on our school property. We're all of our new classrooms are at Jefferson school and in the outfield for baseball was all a carnival.

Corey Tafoya:

Really?

Richard Crosby:

Oh yes. Back in the early days. That was tremendous. The last week of school, a lot of times when school did not end, the milk day was there first. It was an education for all the kids.

Corey Tafoya:

Lisa Webber still talks about those moments where if kids have to come back after milk day, it's really tough on kids and teachers.

Richard Crosby:

Yes, exactly. That's been very instrumental. It's been great.

Corey Tafoya:

I want to ask you one thing about that period of time you said it was 2006, what was the year when the community voted to build Crosby school?

Richard Crosby:

2008.

Corey Tafoya:

2008, okay.

Richard Crosby:

2006, it was commissioned.

Corey Tafoya:

Commissioned and then 2008 is when that happened. It would just had its 10th year last year. So during that time you were instrumental in kind of being a community voice, this is needed and a part of that. At what point did things turn, and then there became a conversation that this was going to be called Crosby school because that must have been something that you didn't necessarily see coming. You had obviously contributed in countless ways but do you remember how that emerged as a thing and I know this is probably a little embarrassing for you.

Corey Tafoya:

You're such a humble man, I don't want to embarrass you, but that must've been a really inspiring moment just to not even do all this because that's going to happen but then someone suggested that and it kind of must have grabbed hold and everyone said, absolutely.

Richard Crosby:

Like you say it's just hard, but Julie Layman and her committee took the bull by the horns and took on the responsibility for passing the referendum but back in December before the referendum was started, well actually it was passed in November. They started in the spring of the year so during the summertime, they were already gearing up with their information that they were going to go out and promote the referendum. So after the referendum was passed in November, then a committee unbeknownst to me was formed.

Richard Crosby:

To seek what we are going to name the new school and so it was through that process and then the community was to send in recommendations of what the school should be named, what the board should consider as the name of the School. They have a school named after you it was very humbling.

Corey Tafoya:

I can imagine.

Richard Crosby:

To say the least and one, is that an education go out to make a career out of trying to get a school built after him.

Corey Tafoya:

Of course.

Richard Crosby:

As I have mentioned to other people and sincerely, I accepted this honor on behalf of everyone who I have ever been associated with throughout my life. I took for my parents, my wife, Jackie, our family, friends, and acquaintances, the list goes on the district 50 staff, all the board members I've ever worked with. The community had played a major role in my life in our family's lives. So I just ask that every time that you hear the name Crosby elementary school, please keep in mind that the community of Harvard made this gift possible for many generations to come.

Corey Tafoya:

Yeah, that's well said, because as you think about it, you think about, dips in the road where you might've taken a misstep, but someone who was in your ear and said, "Maybe don't forget about doing this" And it makes initiative you had that if you were just all by yourself, might not have gone so well. So it's always a collective thing to be a part of a school district. And that's one of the things that I love about our district is there are so many people willing and engaged to be a part of the improvement process and that's what's exciting is just the innovation that continues to occur and find new ways to be proud.

Corey Tafoya:

And so maybe are there some points I titled that part as we kind of prepare for this inflection points of the history, are there some moments where you really realized, okay, I didn't think back on time, but boy, that was really a critical decision that we made for the future of the district or something that really worked out right or some of the things that were really a tough decision that really thank goodness we chose the way we did. Are there some things that stick out for big moments?

Richard Crosby:

Well, I tell you, there is lots. A number of things that we have come down the road there with the opening, there was a opening the Motorola and the anticipation.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh yeah.

Richard Crosby:

It was over a million dollars a year that the school district was being generated for the district and to only have that for the six years then the drop off so that was very crucial and then with him closing, that was something that I think the shifting of we had, as I mentioned, we had kindergarten up through first grade and then at central, and then we found out years later after I guess the law had been in effect for, I don't know years, but every school district had kids in two, three story building over the years.

Richard Crosby:

And so for them to say, then well you can't have any kids below the age of six or seven, the central school that limits are just pretty much the second grade and above. So that was pivotal, I think the things that were really, be on the watch list Corey once you've ever been on that and hope you never be on that, but we were on the watch list, financial watch list in 1990, we were able to get off of it that year but the emphasis there, I think that you never bank on your May and June taxes to cover your previous year's expenses. Never, because once you do that, you're spending next year's money in your previous year.

Richard Crosby:

You just cannot do that because that's going to catch up and then you're going to be in the rears and selling tax anticipates and warrants and things like that. You just can't have that. I have another big point was, on this, I want to mention was that, I'm just trying to think here, in 1999, there was the construction grants out there for the state of Illinois. So everybody in the school, in the state of Illinois applied for the construction money, and before you can get construction money, you have to have also tried to pass a referendum too.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh, okay.

Richard Crosby:

But in 99 we applied, that was one of the last things that I did that summer before I retired is, we went through the process, the state came out, we measured every room in the school district, how many square feet we had, et cetera, et cetera but then it wasn't... So anyway, we went along over the years and we kept getting, we were 600th on the list when it came out and [inaudible 00:21:21]

Corey Tafoya:

Yikes.

Richard Crosby:

Yeah right, yikes. Then after that, then we kept getting, and then chipping away at it and some districts pass referendums, some other districts, found other ways, et cetera. So we kept getting up to the point where we're getting down to the 50 so we were moving. That was in 2006, it came back and so we kept moving up on the list and in 2009 or 10, we were hoping to get that construction money to help build the Crosby but that didn't materialize at that time. But during about 2000 after the school had been pretty much built, we were getting down to number six on the list while we're getting closer.

Corey Tafoya:

From 60 down to six

Richard Crosby:

Right, exactly. 600 down to six.

Corey Tafoya:

Wow.

Richard Crosby:

At that time, the architects from the state of Illinois, we were in contact with them and they said, what are your needs? We did everything we could to try to renovate and add on to the high school. That's what we wanted to do and so we did everything with our architects then to go to work and then we shoot that past the state saying, how does that look? And they say, well, add as much as you want because we can always cut it. If you don't have it there, you're not going to get it. That's why we also had the entrances to all the schools, interest and security and things like that. So it wasn't until probably 2012 that's the state had notified the school district that we were going to receive 13.5\$ million to renovate the high school and to add on.

Corey Tafoya:

That's a happy day. Wow.

Richard Crosby:

A happy day and that was based off of a formula of what the Crosby school costs. So we had an edge, a big edge because we already knew what costs were for that building. The building is already built and occupied.

Corey Tafoya:

And that was built at a time where costs were really good, because that was kind of in the great recession time period where you could get a good deal on things. If I remember, right, that was a part of the benefit that we experienced is that the numbers were generated based on the great recessions labor numbers and the material prices. So it kind of helped out a great deal because then you could duplicate those numbers.

Richard Crosby:

Exactly.

Corey Tafoya:

That's been a fascinating one to watch. They try to reemerge that cause that's reemerged. As a board we have talked about that trying to put ourselves in position for that once more, so what goes around comes around.

Richard Crosby:

Well, that is for sure and two, the prices had come in so well, for Crosby school that we were able to then renovate central school. We can not start on central school until the Crosby was completed and after Crosby was completed, then we were able to work on that and the money saved over through the bid process was well-used to renovate central schools.

Corey Tafoya:

Wow. And that way must have been really good oversight on part of the district and the board at that point to do that. So that that savings could be made cause what would a good decision that's been for the whole district to have central school be preserved as this icon for the community, but also be a hub for our board meetings and for those of us that work there everyday, it's just such a priceless place to work so fantastic.

Corey Tafoya:

What are some other memories that you would kind of pinpoint is something that you've had, boy, that was a moment or are there any dreams for district 50 that you have that or some things that you're still excited as, some people realize, you have been on the board now for, is this your third term?

Richard Crosby:

This is-

Corey Tafoya:

Second.

Richard Crosby:

This is yes, my second term.

Corey Tafoya:

Second term.

Richard Crosby:

Seven years.

Corey Tafoya:

It's a good time to ask. You've seen a lot of things, but you still have this vision of kind of what you walked into district 50 that day of, okay, we're the kind of place that sends choirs to Austria or bands to Austria. You still have those visions of excellence and I think we're still in some ways driven by that, trying to strive for, the things that can be in our district. Maybe you still have some ideas and some thoughts of memories that led you to kind of be on the board or inspired you to kind of keep working for some excellence.

Richard Crosby:

I have to come back to all the activities that the community and boards and teachers had already instituted and we had going, and then when it came up to the time your predecessor had asked me to run for the board. So I ran for the board, she said you ought to be able to try to help keep things going in the district. I thought, well maybe that's what I ought to do so that's what I did. So anyway, and then she was retiring and then you came on and with your energy and ideas and for the district and leading this forward, I knew that I wanted to run for a second term.

Richard Crosby:

So that was really why I've been here as long as I have because there are so many good things going and so many good people in the school system. I have used the analogy of a bicycle tire and you've probably heard me say this maybe before or not but anyway, if a person closes their eyes and imagines that each spoke, represents a category, a spoke of the wheel, and I use this with the staff twice the first time when I was a superintendent then when I came back because everyone is suited and that each person represents a category on that spoke. And be it staff, volunteers, bus drivers, aids, cafeteria personnel, custodians, maintenance, teachers, administrators, instructors. So as you can see business leaders, community businesses, and each individual belongs to a group on that. It makes the bicycle function district actually.

Richard Crosby:

So anyway with that, we know that, we must as a category, keep the right tension on the spokes because if you don't, the spoke gets too loose or too tight, then it breaks and then the wheel goes out of balance. So it's something that you need to do to keep in balance. It's going back to emphasize everyone is pulling their load and everyone is a crucial part of the district. Another thing that really helped us, was a turning point, I believe was Mr Hurley, Dan Hurley had come to us right after we had passed the referendum. In April of 08', Mr. Hurley had come to the board with a very generous and timely business proposition. He shared at that time the Evelyn Hurley trust, his mother would donate 22 acres for an elementary school.

Corey Tafoya:

Dr. Crosby, what was the reaction of the board to this offer of land that must've been really a surprise to everyone?

Richard Crosby:

Well, it was, I mean, it was such a gift at that time cause we did not have a location nailed down for sure. We had some acreage up on Harvard Hills road, but that was really meant for a little larger school cause it was 50 sum' acres and so this would fit just right for an elementary. It was flat within the city limits and the utilities were right close.

Corey Tafoya:

Nice.

Richard Crosby:

so it was ideal. The district what they needed to do in this partnership, was to provide improvements to the South side of Hurley drive both East and West of Hurley drive, and then to build a detention pond on the 22 acres, which is to the Western part of the 22 acres.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh, gotcha.

Richard Crosby:

To be able to take the water from Mr. Harvey's proposed subdivision to the South.

Corey Tafoya:

Oh, okay. Wow.

Richard Crosby:

Anyway, it was a very, very generous offer for the family to come forward with that.

Corey Tafoya:

It really sounds like a win-win for everyone.

Richard Crosby:

Definitely.

Corey Tafoya:

Made that the resolution of that really come true. Now the other thing that is interesting, that I want to ask you about is you've also seen the evolution of services to our children. Earlier you mentioned how special education students were beginning to be served in a more comprehensive fashion. You've also seen the emergence of service to our bilingual students and as well as our dual language programs. So because you were kind of around for some of those things emerging, what are some of your recollections of those events?

Richard Crosby:

Well, back in 1973, when we first came, we basically had students who were migrant students in the Hispanic population and so they came in the spring and left in the fall. So that was the extent plus then eventually we started having a summer school, a migrant summer school through the Illinois department of education, the migrant council but then they provided the funds for us to have that. And then 13 years ago, then we just kept getting... We had more students who were being settled out. That means that they were staying here year round as opposed to migrating.

Richard Crosby:

So the students we had a number of resource teachers who would then provide in a pull out program, provide services for our students and then eventually then it came down to the dual language and the dual language, being English as a primary language and then Spanish as a primary language for the students. And so that all came together and there was a waiting list at that time to get into the program. We started down at the kindergarten and move that up through and as you know, last spring, we had our first graduating class who had gone through the whole dual language program.

Richard Crosby:

That was fantastic. And Brogan is doing a great job with that.

Corey Tafoya:

Yeah, she sure is. It's really fun though, to watch that and to know that that has become to the point where we actually have one of our districts become our BHGER our big, hairy, audacious goal that we want to have half of our students graduate with that seal of bi literacy showing that, they're proficient in two language. So that's one of the big goals down the road that I know there's a lot of people [inaudible 00:34:32] But that must have really enriched, I guess, Harvard as a place that says, okay, you're welcome here. You're appreciated here. We're going to build this program just so we can kind of make sure that you're learning for us. And we're learning for you. There's some cross curricular, cross cultural understanding being built.

Richard Crosby:

Exactly. And having had two of our grandchildren who have gone through the bilingual program in another district they might have had their older two boys go through it.

Corey Tafoya:

That's right.

Richard Crosby:

They were there sooner enough for that but anyway, it's just been a fantastic experience.

Corey Tafoya:

Certainly benefits a lot.

Richard Crosby:

It's equipping both cultures for the future.

Corey Tafoya:

Exactly.

Richard Crosby:

I mean to have a... I had Spanish in college, but I cannot function with Spanish. I just haven't used it. I had enough practice at it, but these kids have had years of it here at 12 years, in the district 13 years. And so they moved right into junior college or college or a workplace and be able to pretty much call what job they liked to have.

Corey Tafoya:

You're right there. It's hardwired into their system at this point. And that's one thing we're doing in the summer SOAR programs. Some of our families are telling us, man on my son or my daughter hasn't spoken or heard much Spanish during this pandemic so we're really hoping some of the SOAR experiences of the summer really look in there. Well maybe as we wrap up, are there any more recent

events that you can think of, things that have happened that you thought were really triggers that, did some things that have benefited the district?

Richard Crosby:

Well as I had mentioned to you in 2017, the community's input in the boards, the selection of you Corey, as a superintendent of schools was definitely a turning point here for us. We followed that up then with the echo group who came in and worked on strategic goals with us, they worked with our surveys of the community, the students, the staff, all this going toward making a better curriculum and a greater communications between Holman school.

Corey Tafoya:

That really has mattered and I guess that was one of my attractions to Harvard is that when it was explained to me what the plan that the board had built, it was just such a clear and logical plan for how they were just expressing. We have this idea on how to go somewhere and we just need to figure out who the right person and I've been the lucky person to sit there and kind of watch this. Before we were talking, I was actually working on in the summer is the Thursday update and all of those four elements of our strategic plan are kind of the essence of that update. That's still very much lives on, it's not some static document that no one really looks at ever like happens in many places.

Richard Crosby:

Well, I'd tell you Dr. Tafoya when I was first hired by Harvard school district 50, I was on a career path. I was having a smooth every two to three years and I figured that Harvard here, five to seven years and we'd be good to go and move on. Little did I know, as you can see, I became more involved and engaged in the schools and the Harvard community and here I am here we are 47 years later. I don't forget, I don't regret one minute of it. In my 47 years in Harvard, I have had the opportunity to recommend and work with hundreds of dedicated, innovative, and creative staff and board members.

Richard Crosby:

It has been so rewarding that many of the staff members have elected to stay teaching in the community. It is also particularly gratifying that so many of our staff are Harvard graduates. In addition, each day, all of us strive to provide educational experiences and an educational environment, which is conducive to learning and facilities that are healthy and safe for all of our occupants and visitors for our schools. My wish for district 50 is to continue to hire diverse, energetic, creative and student centered staff.

Richard Crosby:

Secondly, I applaud the legislature for passing the evidence based funding law in 2017. District 50's financial capacity to meet running expectations that only 53% or \$7,411 per student per year, the target amount is \$14,913, which leaves us with around an \$8,000 gap but hopefully state will continue to support evidence based funding so that the Illinois school districts like Harvard district 50 can reach the adequacy, target, to provide quality education for all of our average students. Thank you so much for this opportunity, Dr Tafoya.

Corey Tafoya:

Well, we could probably do another, five sessions not even tell all the stories, but Dr. Crosby, just personally for me, I just want to thank you for taking your time to think about this and share some of

these stories. It's I think not even close to a stretch to say if there was a Mount Rushmore of Harvard, you certainly would be one of the four faces carved into stone because you've had such an influence and such respect from everyone for the sincere contributions you've made in so many ways. So thanks for your time and all you've done and the support you've given me. This has been just a wonderful experience and then as these podcasts go out and live on in infamy, people can relive the stories of some of the things they've experienced in our great community.

Richard Crosby:

Very good.

Corey Tafoya:

Good.

Richard Crosby:

Thank you so much.

Corey Tafoya:

Thank you very much. We'll be in and out throughout the summer with our education buzz podcast, but this is our first ever two-part podcast, but we just want to thank Dr. Crosby for joining us and we'll be in touch with you next time on education buzz.

Richard Crosby:

Okay.Thank you.