Business Hall of Fame & Community Leaders of the Year

Individually making a difference
Together inspiring change
A $500 INVESTMENT in College Now to support a high school student with advising, mentorship and guidance to get to college can result in a $70,000 package for that Pell Grant-eligible student. Those numbers talk, says Lee Friedman, CEO, College Now Greater Cleveland.

“A lot of the issues the community is facing have to do with education equity,” Friedman says. “By solving for that, you can change life for individuals.”

Friedman has been driving the wheel of change at College Now, helping businesses understand that their support pays off by creating talent pipelines.

“In its history, people saw College Now as a scholarship for kids who are disadvantaged — we did tactical things. If there’s something I brought, it’s this transformation. College Now as a part of a long-term, regional economic strategy.”

Friedman started talking differently — quantifying the impact. And, beyond going to college, College Now has focused on improving graduation rate so those students are prepared in the workforce.

“For kids who are Pell-eligible, the on-time graduation rate is about 40 percent,” Friedman relates. “For kids coming from poverty, the graduation rate is not even 20 percent. Our College Now students had a 60 percent graduation rate, and then we added a mentoring program and our graduation rates are tracking at 80 percent.”

Students need support, Friedman em-