

# Tech alumni step in to fill funding gap

■ Group is part of nationwide trend of private money helping out public schools.

By Kevin O'Neal

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Alumni of Tech High School have raised about a half-million dollars for campus improvements — a rare feat in a district struggling to find money for much-needed renovations.

The endowment fund created at Tech is the only organization like it within Indianapolis Public Schools, but the group is part of a growing trend nationwide to seek out private funding for public schools. According to the National Center for Public and Private School Foundations, such money can offset gaps in taxpayer funding and can be spent with greater flexibility on a school's needs.

The latest sign of the Tech foundation's impact: a walk of fame dedicated this month honoring the school's football coaches. The Endowment Fund of the Arsenal Technical High School Alumni Association also has paid for maps and globes for the Tech



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**Time to help:** Donations from alumni paid for the renovation of Tech High School's clock tower and other improvements.

social studies department, as well as covering the cost of restoring the campus carillon.

Now organizers say they want to raise even more.

"The goal is to keep that as an ongoing fund and only use the interest on that money," said Ronald

See Tech, Page B5

9/28/04

# Tech

■ The Class of 1950 began the serious fund raising.

## From B1

Jackson, 69, a member of Tech's Class of 1953 who is semiretired from a career in advertising. He serves as president of the Arsenal Technical High School Alumni Association.

The Indianapolis school district has a foundation, but it administers grant money to bolster reading lessons in IPS. The district has launched a campaign to issue \$200 million in bonds as part of a 10-year effort to renovate dozens of schools, but opponents have vowed to block the move.

Meanwhile at Tech, alumni say their endowment will generate as much as \$20,000 a year in interest for the Near-Eastside school.

The serious fund raising began when the Class of 1950 decided to do something special for its 50th anniversary. Alums raised \$65,000, and the money was used to restore the clock tower and carillon at the Civil War-era arsenal that gave the school its name. Then the Class of 1951 got assistance from two foundations to come up with \$154,000 to restore the 19th century campus guardhouse.



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**Looking good:** Peggy Clark, Tech High School principal, shows off the school's recently renovated 19th century guardhouse. Alumni now are trying to raise \$1 million to fund an endowment.

## "These things signify Tech High School."

Peggy Clark,  
Tech High School principal and a  
member of the Class of 1966

"These things signify Tech High School," said Peggy Clark, Tech's principal.

The success of those previous campaigns to brighten up the old campus led to the plans for a bigger endowment fund. The goal is

\$1 million. So far, the fund has around \$480,000 — on top of the money already spent on campus.

If the fund gets enough donations to produce more interest income, Clark, a graduate of the Class of 1966, would like to put the money to use for further renovations on campus. The Stuart Hall tower, one of the tallest at the school, could be seen from Downtown if illuminated, Clark said. She'd love to see the tower lit at night.

■ Call Star reporter Kevin O'Neal at (317) 444-2760.