Cristo Rey empowers urban youth with college prep and jobs

By Allen A. Buchanan,

“There are all these neat kids that had something different on their plate,” said Julie Fouchie, assistant principal of the high school. “I was very impressed.”

“It was a good experience,” said freshmen Jani Baby, a former student of McClain Middle School in Brandon.

“Cristo Rey Tampa stressed the importance of first impressions,” added Baby who began her work-study experience during an orientation at the Fee & Jeffries Law Firm in downtown Tampa.

Baby said she found out about Cristo Rey Tampa from a relative, and when the freshmen attended an orientation session, she saw one of her former schoolmates.

“Everyone is friendly. I’ve been to the church. I like the grounds, the lake, it’s beautiful!”

Baby and her 92 classmates will not only benefit from a work-study and college preparatory program, but they will also have access to the Boys and Girls Club, a swimming pool, horses and over 140 acres of natural beauty.

During the Draft Day ceremonies, each work-study business sponsor and student who will be working for them were called to the stage to get their pictures taken.

Principal Jim Madden and CEO Charles Imbergamo introduced students to the school’s culture and expectations, and each student receive their first school t-shirt.

Students had a chance to vote on the school mascot along with sports and extracurricular activities.

“We have four years of growth ahead of us,” said Fouchie with wide smile.

Some of the 2016-17 Cristo Rey Tampa corporate work partners include Coca-Cola Beverages, Fintech, Columbia Restaurant, Saint Leo University, Step Up For Students, TECO Energy and The Florida Aquarium.

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TAMPA – Cristo Rey Tampa High School hosted its first work-study program Draft Day for the inaugural ninth grade class of more than 90 freshmen at Higgins Hall at St. Lawrence last month. All students have been placed with corporations, local businesses and non-profit organizations in the Tampa Bay area.

Cristo Rey Tampa is the latest in a national network of 32 Catholic schools founded by Fr. John P. Foley, S.J., in 1996. Cristo Rey is the largest network of high schools in the United States whose enrollment is limited to low-income youth.

The Cristo Rey Network delivers a distinctive approach to inner-city education that equips students with the knowledge, character and skills to transform their lives.

Draft Day was the beginning of that transformation as students cheered each other on as they were called up to take pictures with their employers who “drafted” them.

Before the work-study draft began, students got the opportunity to apply what they learned during their Table Manners Etiquette workshop as they ate breakfast. Teachers who sat at each table observed and gently corrected students when necessary.