Students Enjoy Expanding Program and Professional Mentoring

A chance meeting and a photographer’s desire to “pay it forward” has resulted in unprecedented student opportunities. After hearing a radio interview last year with professional photographer Marc Serota, University School’s Judie Jackowitz used Facebook to connect with him and ask about speaking to her digital photography students. He was “exciting, honest and wonderful with the [youngsters],” and so Ms. Jackowitz invited him back, joking that next time he should bring with him a Miami Dolphin. Serota obliged. This year, the popular digital photography program has expanded, and so has Serota’s generous all-access offers.

Students, faculty, administrators and family members were invited earlier this month to photograph the best players in the nation at the National Volleyball League’s Beach Volleyball Championship. And just last week Serota made University School’s Epstein Center for the Arts the location for his professional shoot with Miami Dolphins running back Daniel Thomas. Serota’s willingness to mentor students stems from his own experiences with professional photographers while studying at the Art Institute at Fort Lauderdale.

“My personal philosophy is that nobody gets anywhere without the help of others,” Serota said. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without it.”

The humble words impress considering that this is a man who has shot six Sports Illustrated covers and countless Dan Marino books, free-lanced for the New York Times, and owned his own studio 17 years and counting. Dare we mention his photographs for Reebok featuring Kim Kardashian? Yes, because Serota creates real-world situations in which students can not only apply their classroom-learned skills but develop sports

“For students to have the opportunity to photograph professional athletes is a rare and unique occasion. They don’t just watch a professional photo shoot, they actually get to be a part of it,” Jackowitz said. “And the stories he is able to share [like the Kardashian/Reebok shoot] are fantastic.”

Since the inaugural Middle School photography club, University School has welcomed three additional digital photography teachers -- Suzanne Kerr, Michael Lyn and Maria Vega.

“There are many more photo shoots with Serota being planned as we speak,” Jackowitz added. “Let’s just say that if your child is into sports and likes taking pictures, they will be thrilled with the opportunities that await them!”