Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania – History of Philanthropy

On June 1, 2010 Charity Navigator named Pittsburgh the most charity-conscious city. This is not a surprise for most because of Pittsburgh’s philanthropic history. Pittsburgh accumulated a great deal of wealth during the 20th century and its wealthiest citizens wisely invested back into the city.

Pittsburgh is still home to one of the country’s most active foundation communities, supporting hundreds of local nonprofits each year and acting as a significant force for good. Pittsburgh foundations have invested in the arts, real estate, health, environment, education, poverty and institutions to improve our quality of life in the city.

1844 Dorthea Dix, well-known philanthropist and crusader produced a scathing report on Pittsburgh’s shocking health conditions and complete lack institutional facilities. More than 200 of Pittsburgh’s leading citizens subscribed to a new Hospital that was nonsectarian and served all people; $30,000 was raised to establish The Western Pennsylvania Hospital as Pittsburgh’s first chartered Hospital in 1848. But before the hospital could be built, two other institutions got their start, Mercy and Passavant. The Sisters of Mercy rented rooms on the second floor of an old concert floor and began to render the first health care in 1847. In 1849, the Reverend William Passavant opened the Pittsburgh Infirmary. West Penn Hospital opened its doors in the Polish Hill section of Pittsburgh in 1853. Dixmont State Hospital for the Insane opened in 1862 and was named after Dorothea Dix in honor of her advocacy for the humane treatment of the mentally ill.

1864 Pittsburgh displayed leadership in women’s philanthropy through the Pittsburgh Sanitary Fair. The Sanitary Fair opened June 1, 1864, near Federal and Ohio streets and included art exhibitions, livestock and floral displays, bazaars, food concessions, and musical performances. The Sanitary Fair was a regional fund-raising effort to benefit wounded Union soldiers and their families. Pittsburgh’s Sanitary Fair was one of the country’s most successful, raising $363,370.09 in 18 days.

1869 H.J. Heinz founded his business in with the philosophy that “heart power is better than horsepower,” a statement that defined how he treated his employees. The family legacy of philanthropy established many notable Pittsburgh institutions including Sarah Heinz House; the Heinz Memorial Chapel at the University of Pittsburgh; Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts, the home of the Pittsburgh Symphony; and Heinz Gallery, located in the Carnegie Museum of Art.

Pittsburgh’s second-largest philanthropy remains The Heinz Endowments, currently a $1.4 billion organization chaired by Teresa Heinz, wife of U.S. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and former wife of the late Senator John Heinz. Senator Heinz embraced the American belief that individuals have the power and the responsibility to change the world for the better. As a United States senator, he was passionate about protecting the environment and he was a champion of the elderly.

1879 The Senator John Heinz History Center traces its roots back to 1879, making it the oldest cultural institution in Western Pennsylvania. An organization called Old Residents of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania formed in 1879. The
group changed its name to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania in 1884 and has been in continuous existence for more than 130 years. Devoted to the history and heritage of Western Pennsylvania, the Senator John Heinz History Center opened in 1996.

1833 **“Pittsburgh Jane” Holmes** spent her life visiting and caring for the poor and the sick. In 1880 a young girl who was dying of consumption without friends or place of shelter, appealed to Jane for aid. She found a friend in Miss Holmes, who from the day she took her to care for, began to dream of a haven of rest for the last days of those struck with incurable maladies. She converted her family's country home on 16 acres in Lawrenceville into the Protestant Home for Incurables. In 1881, she founded the Home for Aged Protestant Men and Couples next door to the women's home; its name eventually was changed to the Jane Holmes Residence and Gardens.

Along with her cousin Jane of Baltimore and Mrs. Felix Brunot, they underwrote the founding of the Home for Colored Children in 1880; it lives on as Three Rivers Youth in Brighton Heights. In her will, Pittsburgh Jane, who died in 1885, established several institutions, including the School for Blind Children. In 2004, seven agencies including the school established the Jane Holmes Legacy Council, which lobbied for a historical marker and created an internship, supported by a grant from the Buhl Foundation, at four of the institutions in her name. The YWCA gave Pittsburgh Jane a posthumous Leadership Award in 2006.

1889 **Andrew Carnegie** was one of the first to state publicly that the rich have a moral obligation to give away their fortunes. In 1889, he wrote *The Gospel of Wealth*, in which he asserted that all personal wealth beyond that required to supply the needs of one's family should be regarded as a trust fund to be administered for the benefit of the community. One of his lifelong interests was the establishment of free public libraries to make available to everyone a means of self-education.

- **1890** Andrew Carnegie offered the City of Pittsburgh $1 million to build and equip the main library and five branches (Carnegie Library); he founded Carnegie Technical Schools (now Carnegie Mellon University)
- By the time of his death in 1919, Andrew Carnegie had given away about $350 million, but the legacy of his generosity continues to unfold in the work of the trusts and institutions that he endowed.

1889 **Mary Grogham Schenley** donated land to the city of Pittsburgh in 1889 for Schenley Park; to Western Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind for a school in 1890; a large lot to the Newsboys' Home in 1894 and in 1895, she gave the old Blockhouse at the Point, which is the only remnant of Fort Pitt, and adjoining property, to the Daughters of the American Revolution. She also donated the 19 acres of land on which the Library was built.
1895 Christopher Lyman Magee was one of America’s most powerful political bosses. In the late 1900s, he essentially ran Pittsburgh and Allegheny County and is credited with helping to develop the infrastructure of the city. In 1895, he presented the city with a gift of $100,000 for the construction of its first zoological park in Pittsburgh’s Highland Park neighborhood. When the planning for the zoo began, the emerging public park system was an extremely important part of Pittsburgh’s urban development, and creating a zoological park became a matter of civic pride. On June 14, 1898, the Pittsburgh Zoo opened its gates to the public.

Today, the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium is a 77-acre naturalistic habitat facility that is home to thousands of animals representing hundreds of diverse species.

1907 The Pittsburgh Survey was a comprehensive social survey of living conditions and working conditions in Pittsburgh. The methodology, which spanned many months, used photography and what we’ve come to know as oral history and analyzed hard data. It became a source of significant policy changes in philanthropic initiatives that occurred subsequently. That Pittsburgh Survey is viewed by sociologists and others as a landmark, water-shed tool in how problem-solving should happen in community settings.

1908 Montefiore Hospital was financed by Pittsburgh’s Jewish community to meet the healthcare needs of Pittsburgh’s expanding and underserved Jewish community.

- 1990 Montefiore Hospital becomes a University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) facility and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation was founded to support programs that improve quality of healthcare such as research and education and helping the underserved populations get the care they need.

1909 The Animal Rescue League was chartered on October 30, 1909. Five animal Pittsbughers (Elizabeth F. Holmes, M.E. Zydem, A.M. Wadsworth, R.W. Kenney, and Mary Elizabeth Kenney) came together to form an organization that would devote itself solely to the welfare of animals in the Pittsburgh area. They sought to return lost dogs and cats to their owners while at the same time giving temporary shelter and food to lost and starving stray dogs and cats. In addition, they wanted to secure a merciful and painless death for animals that were old, injured, diseased or dangerous. They were deeply distressed by the cruel disposal methods used by City officials at that time. Motivated to change the City’s ways, early League founders sought to contract with the City to perform this unpleasant task in the most humane way possible. The founders’ dream to have a shelter to house animals finally came true in May of 1910 when the Animal Rescue League opened a small city shelter on lower Denniston Avenue in East Liberty. That same
year, a generous benefactor donated a 16-acre farm to the League, located on Verona Road in Rosedale.

1910 Catholic Charities is the primary social service agency of the Diocese of Pittsburgh serving all regardless of religious affiliation, at their time of greatest need. In 1910, outreach began to address the needs of struggling immigrant families who came to the region from various parts of Europe. Many were homeless, hungry and alone and Catholic Charities helped those families with food, clothing, shelter, and the skills necessary to begin a new life.

1912 The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh began as the central fund-raising and planning organization for the Jewish community of Greater Pittsburgh.

- In 1936 the United Jewish Fund was created to raise funds for distribution via the National United Jewish Appeal to aid and rescue European Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany – and, later, to aid in the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1955, FJP and the United Jewish Fund were consolidated into the current Federation.

1915 The Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was organized in 1915 in the home of Attorney William H. Randolph, who became the first President. Founded in 1909, NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The mission of NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.

1919 When Henry Clay Frick died in 1919, he left 80 percent of his $145 million fortune to purposes from which the public could benefit. In Pittsburgh his legacy included the 151-acre Frick Park (to which he added $2 million for upkeep), and some of the city’s greatest buildings: the William Penn Hotel, the Union Trust building, and the Frick Building. He gave $5 million each to Harvard, MIT and the Educational Commission of Pittsburgh, and his gifts to hospitals included Mercy Hospital (where he was treated after the attempt on his life) and the hospitals of coke region towns such as Connellsville, Mount Pleasant and Greensburg, and to steel towns such as Braddock and Homestead. To his 31-year-old daughter Helen Clay Frick he gave $6.5 million to be spent for charitable and educational purposes, and during her life the Frick Fine Arts Building of the University of Pittsburgh was constructed. After her death, the family home Clayton became the Frick Art & Historical Center.
1919  Ketchum, Inc., one of the first professional fund raising consulting firms in the world was founded in 1919 in Pittsburgh by Carlton G. Ketchum, and guided for 17 years by his son David S. Ketchum. Among the milestones in the history of Ketchum is The Cathedral of Learning of the University of Pittsburgh, for which Ketchum raised funds in 1925. In the ensuing years Ketchum served almost every hospital in Pennsylvania and many others throughout the country, as well as colleges and universities, United Ways, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boys and Girl Scouts, YMCAs, churches, and museums. Ketchum conducted the country’s first $100 million campaign, for Johns Hopkins University. Ketchum officers were founders of The American Association of Fund Raising Counsel (AAFRC) in 1935, creating the standards of ethics which continue to guide the not-for-profit sector. Ketchum Inc. became part of The Pursuant Group in 2009.

- Ketchum Inc. provided the funding to create the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) in 1960, and funded that chapter for its first several years. Ketchum leadership continues to be evident within the AFP nationally and locally.

1922  The Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce urged the many local fund raising groups to combine into one campaign, but it wasn't until 1927 that the Welfare Fund of Pittsburgh was chartered. This was to be the forerunner of today's United Way of Allegheny County. In 1928, the Welfare Fund conducted its first campaign for 25 agencies in Allegheny County. With the beginning of the depression and the proliferation of relief programs, the term, "welfare," had become synonymous with federal relief. As a result, in 1933, the Welfare Fund changed its name to the Community Fund. In 1956, United Fund of Allegheny County was chartered, following a study of a report calling for the unification of fund raising drives. The Community Chest of Allegheny County became the first member agency of United Fund of Allegheny County. In 1973, the Pennsylvania Economy League recommended a complete merger of United Fund and the Community Chest into United Fund of Allegheny County with one board of directors and a single staff. United Way of Allegheny County emerged as the successor organization in 1974, resulting in the centralization of the fundraising, planning and allocations functions.

1927  The Buhl Foundation was created by Henry Buhl Jr. a wealthy retailer as a memorial to his wife, Louise C. Buhl. It was the first multipurpose foundation in Pittsburgh and one of the ten largest of such foundations in the country. Mr. Buhl directed the Foundation to be especially concerned with the “well-being of the citizens of the City of Pittsburgh, and the County of Allegheny.”

- 1937- Buhl foundation financed a survey of Pittsburgh’s social condition… used data collection to justify grant making initiatives.

1944  The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation was established by Michael and Sarah Benedum. During his lifetime in the oil and gas business, Michael Benedum amassed a fortune, ranking him in his day among the 100 wealthiest Americans. The Foundation was named in memory of their only child, Claude Worthington Benedum, who died in 1918 at age 20. In creating the Foundation in 1944, the Benedums expressed the wish that grantmaking be focused in West Virginia and Pittsburgh, their native and adopted homes.
Excerpts from the Fifth Codicil to the Last Will and Testament of Michael L. Benedum: “I have always felt that I have been only a trustee for such material wealth as Providence has placed in my hands. This trusteeship has weighed heavily upon me. In carrying out this final responsibility of my stewardship, I have sought to utilize such wisdom and understanding of equity as the Creator has given me. No one with any regard for his responsibility to his God and his fellow man should do less. No one can do more. … Only those who sustain the faltering ones on the rungs above and extend a helping hand to the less fortunate on the rungs below, can approach the end with the strength of sublime faith and confidence. …I submit my soul to His tender mercy, and my memory to the generosity & compassion of my fellow man.”

1944 In the 1930s and 1940s, there was increased public concern about the long-term future of the region. Pittsburgh’s dependence on heavy industry limited the region’s options and made it unattractive for new business and population growth. In particular, there were serious problems with air and water pollution. The Allegheny Conference on Community Development grew out of efforts to unify and coordinate regional transportation and environmental improvement efforts. Incorporated as the Allegheny Conference on Community Development in 1944, the new organization served as a prominent coordinating mechanism for civic action, including the anti-pollution law in 1949 and the creation of the Port Authority of Allegheny County in 1959.

1945 The Pittsburgh Foundation was established by the Union Trust Company of Pittsburgh to become one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States.

- 1953 With The Foundation’s support, Pittsburgh becomes home to the nation’s first educational television station, WQED
- 2009 The Pittsburgh Foundation serves as fiscal agent for the historic $40 million grant awarded to the Pittsburgh Public Schools by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Pittsburgh Gives and the first Day of Giving was launched.

1945 David L. Lawrence was elected mayor of Pittsburgh and with the help of the famous banker Richard King Mellon they began to clean up a city that had such nicknames as "The Smokey City" and "Hell with the Lid Off". During this renaissance phase, many construction projects took place, including Point State Park, Gateway Center, Civic Arena (Mellon Arena), and Greater Pittsburgh Municipal Airport.

1947 The R.K. Mellon Foundation was created by Richard King Mellon, president and chairman of Mellon Bank, a conservationist and leading figure in the financial and civic life of Pennsylvania. Following his service in World War II, General Mellon returned home to catalyze the nationally recognized Pittsburgh Renaissance I, a groundbreaking public-private partnership for urban revitalization. As a banker and director of major corporations, he envisioned philanthropy as an investment and partnership to improve the city and region where he worked and lived.

- Mellon and his wife, Constance Prosser Mellon, through the R. K. Mellon Foundation, made a $10 million grant to fund the School of Urban and Public Affairs at Carnegie Mellon University. (Carnegie Tech,” as it was known, merged with the Mellon Institute to become Carnegie Mellon University in 1967)
1951 The **Hillman Foundation** was established with the goal of improving the quality of life in Pittsburgh and southwestern PA. Among the notable projects Hillman Foundation has supported over the years are Hillman Hall of Minerals and Gems at Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Hillman Cancer Center, the University of Pittsburgh’s Hillman Library.

- The generosity and dedication of **Elsie and Henry Hillman** have had tremendous impact in Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania.

1952 **Alcoa Foundation** was established by Alcoa to invest in the communities in which the company operates. Their causes relate specifically to environmental sustainability and climate change.

1964 **Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation (PHLF)** was founded to organize historic preservation as a tool for renewing communities.

- **1966** A $100,000 Revolving Fund for Preservation was set up with a grant from the Sarah Scaife Foundation to purchase, restore and renovate historic inner-city properties that were then rented or sold to low and moderate-income families.
- **1976** **Station Square** gave PHLF the opportunity to put its urban planning principles into practice. Aided by an initial generous gift from the Allegheny Foundation in 1976, PHLF adapted five historic Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad buildings for new uses and added a hotel, a dock for the Gateway Clipper fleet, and parking areas. Now shops, offices, restaurants and entertainment anchor the historic riverfront site on the south shore of the Monongahela, opposite the Golden Triangle.

1975 In 1975, The Terrible Towel® was created by the late Steelers broadcaster **Myron Cope** to inspire fan involvement in a playoff game against the then-Baltimore Colts. It's nothing fancy - just a bright yellow towel with the words "Terrible Towel" emblazoned in black. When those yellow towels start waving at Steelers games, the stands literally turn to a sea of yellow, a strong, very visible show of support for the team. In 1996, Myron Cope gave the ownership of The Terrible Towel® trademark to **Allegheny Valley School (AVS)**. The sale of any The Terrible Towel® product benefits the children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are served by Allegheny Valley School. Myron’s involvement with AVS stretched more than a quarter century when his son became a resident of Allegheny Valley School. Myron’s gift of The Terrible Towel® trademark created a living legacy-- Allegheny Valley School has realized more than $2.5 million from The Terrible Towel® and related items.

1980 The Western PA Chapter of the **National Society of Fundraising Executives** was officially chartered on September 5, 1980 at the National Board of Directors meeting in Baltimore Maryland. The organizing committee included Warren B. Dana, Shirley A. Thompkins, Alvin P. Brannick, Jerry Kleinman and Robert W. Stuckrath; B. Jeanne Williams was acting chairman. The first official meeting of the Western PA Chapter of the National Society of Fundraising Executives was held on September 11, 1980 at the Pittsburgh Press Club. Thirty nine were in attendance. The guest speaker was Mr. John Duff, Esq., Deputy Attorney General,
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, who spoke on “Legislation and Fund Raising.” It was agreed to hold monthly luncheon meetings on the second Thursday of each month at The Pittsburgh Press Club, beginning with the October 9, 1980 meeting. By December, the Chapter had 22 fully paid members.

1984 The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust was formed in 1984 as both an arts agency and a real estate and economic development catalyst. The Trust's first project was the restoration of the former Stanley Theater into the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts. This $43 million project was completed in 1987, and at that time the Trust's Board of Trustees began to focus on the creation of a downtown Cultural District Development Plan. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's plan for development was a holistic approach that has included street-scaping programs, facade restorations, new cultural facilities, and public open spaces and art projects. The end result encompasses a complete transformation of Pittsburgh's Downtown; from a "red light" district with only two cultural facilities - Heinz Hall and the Convention Center - to a vibrant animated area with over fourteen cultural facilities, public parks and plazas, and new and proposed commercial development.

1985 Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania is a professional membership association formed in 1985 by leaders who wanted to create an organized mechanism for grantmakers to learn and work together. Today there are 85 member organizations serving 26 counties in western Pennsylvania.

1985 The first Chapter National Philanthropy Day was celebrated in November at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association in Oakland. George Omiros, CFRE was President of the Chapter and he presided over the event. The award recipients included Mrs. William E. (Ann) Kerr, Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser; Mellon Bank, Outstanding Philanthropist; and Mrs. V. Byron (Jeanne) Williams, ACFRE, Outstanding Fundraising Executive.

1986 University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is founded leading to a 1990 study “Overcoming the odds… Children at Risk in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County” – helps revamp children’s charities in Pittsburgh.

1992 Pittsburgh Cares was founded in 1992 by a group of six Pittsburghers who had a vision to create “a new way to volunteer” by offering a more user-friendly, flexible approach to volunteer service. Pittsburgh Cares is affiliated with the Hands On Network & Points of Light Foundation.
**2007** The **Pittsburgh Promise** was launched with a $100 million commitment by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). UPMC’s commitment includes an initial $10 million and the remaining $90 million is a challenge grant, intended to spur a community-wide campaign to raise an additional $135 million. The Promise vows to help all students in Pittsburgh Public Schools plan, prepare, and pay for education beyond high school at an accredited post-secondary institution within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**2008** The University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Public and International Affair’s (GSPIA) **Philanthropy Forum** was developed to offer a university-based platform for national dialogue with leading thinkers and practitioners in the field of philanthropy. The Philanthropy Forum highlights philanthropic advances originated in Pittsburgh, tapping the city’s rich philanthropic tradition as a learning laboratory to understand past progress, current practice and future developments. Core activities include a graduate level course on Philanthropy and Society, case studies, oral histories, teaching tools and research developed from practice based experiences, a speaker’s series and additional engagement.

- **2010** The Philanthropy Forum launched the Pittsburgh Philanthropy Project to explore and document the significant role of the Pittsburgh region in philanthropy and prompt a civic dialogue about the implications of this legacy going forward.

**2009** The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** granted the **Pittsburgh Public School** district $40 million for sweeping initiatives to maximize teacher effectiveness. The grant will help finance an $85 million-plus campaign to improve the way teachers are recruited, inducted, evaluated, recognized and compensated. The Pittsburgh Foundation will serve as fiscal agent for the historic $40 million grant.

Bill Gates visited Carnegie Mellon University for the dedication of The Gates Center for Computer Science, which was funded partly by a $20 million gift from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The new facility will enable the university to broaden its leadership in this crucial field by providing more space to nurture important ongoing and new endeavors.

**2010** 500 of the field's most innovative colleagues working for change gathered at the 2010 **Grantmakers for Effective Change (GEO)** National Conference, “Unleashing Philanthropy’s Potential” held in Pittsburgh in partnership with Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania.

**2010** On June 1, 2010 **Charity Navigator** named Pittsburgh the most charity-conscious metropolitan area in the country.