

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Where's the most need?

Last week, we noted that the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, which has distributed more than \$37 million in grants since its inception 15 years ago, has allocated the highest percentage of its giving — 25 percent — to direct health providers like Community Health and Dental.

The next highest group of recipients has been public schools — about \$7 million, nearly 20 percent of total grant funding.

No one can question that encouraging children and youth to adopt healthy habits is vitally important. However, school districts do have another source of funding — local tax dollars.

The \$80 million endowment of the Health and Wellness Foundation came from the sale of the Pottstown Memorial Medical Center, whose predecessors were founded more than a century ago in Pottstown. As a non-profit, PMMC never paid taxes before it was sold to the for-profit Community Health Systems.

Meanwhile, the middle class has mostly moved to the suburbs in the last five or six decades, leaving Pottstown with a meager tax base and a high concentra-

tion of poverty.

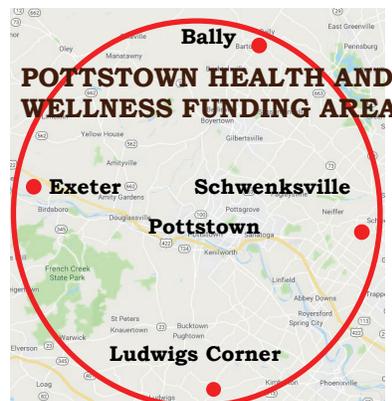
That's the main reason the Pottstown School District has among the highest taxes in Pennsylvania, which contributes to our downward cycle of disinvestment.

The Health and Wellness Foundation's policy allows grant-giving within a 10-mile radius of downtown Pottstown.

But with so much need in Pottstown, is it the best use of limited community resources to give millions of dollars to wealthy districts like Spring Ford and Owen. J. Roberts for programs they could fund themselves?



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



School districts by wealth, need, and funding

| School District | Percent low-income students | Wealth, ranked out of 500 districts | Local tax effort, ranked out of 500 districts | Funding received from Health and Wellness Fdn. |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Pottstown | 72.5% | 413 | 6 | \$2,421,477 |
| Pottsgrove | 37.3% | 240 | 23 | \$534,447 |
| Boyertown | 24.4% | 140 | 217* (tie) | \$1,244,146 |
| Daniel Boone | 23.7% | 255 | 48 | \$820,000 |
| Owen J. Roberts | 18.2% | 61 | 97 | \$855,475 |
| Spring-Ford | 16.9% | 37 | 217* (tie) | \$1,022,844 |
| Perkiomen Valley | 15.6% | 86 | 79 | \$186,900 |
| TOTAL | | | | \$7,107,289 |

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOUNDATION has given millions of dollars to wealthy school districts like Spring-Ford and Owen J. Roberts.