

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Best source of funding: philanthropy

As one of the most disadvantaged municipalities in southeastern Pennsylvania, Pottstown has high tax rates and very little funding for quality of life projects.

In recent weeks, we've discussed grantmaking by the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, which gives out more than \$2 million annually to help schools and non-profits improve our community.

Beyond that, there's another source of funding for initiatives Pottstown could not otherwise afford: private philanthropy.

Just 20 percent of Americans control 85 percent of the nation's wealth.

Many people accumulate wealth as they age, so those 65 and older have the greatest net worth.

And as they contemplate the end of their lives, their thoughts may turn toward sharing their wealth with their community.

Last month, the Wells brothers, Pottstown area music educators, donated \$3 million to their alma mater, West Chester University, to create an endowment for music scholarships, graduate assistantship programs, travel for music ensembles, marching band equipment, and music education programming. The gift

is the largest cash gift received in the history of West Chester.

Dr. James Wells was my freshman music teacher at Kutztown University in 1966. He put me in the marching band even though I couldn't read music or play an instrument (I got the bass drum).

Two years later, James moved to West Chester University and his brother Richard replaced him at Kutztown. I suspect I was one of the few students to have both of them.

I thought they were great, but I could little imagine the impact they would have later in the music and travel worlds.

As they continued to lead the bands at West Chester and Kutztown, the Wells brothers started the Festivals of Music, school band conferences and clinics, in 1982. The following year, the two started World Travel Inc. to facilitate travel to their music festivals.

World Travel, headquartered in Union Township, has evolved into one of the largest independent travel agencies in America, specializing in corporate work. It generates more than \$175 million in yearly revenues.

The Wells brothers are married to sisters, who are also educators. Richard's wife, Elizabeth, taught social studies at Pottstown High School for 40 years.

The Wells want others to enjoy the rich musical lives they have experienced, and they gave back to the college that nurtured them.

There are many other area residents who have the financial means to make a positive difference in the lives of upcoming generations.

Let's hope some will profit from the Wells's example.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



\$3 MILLION DONATION — Musicians Dr. James R. Wells, right, and his brother Richard, left, recently donated \$3 million to West Chester University, the largest cash gift in the university's history, to establish the Wells School of Music. (West Chester President Christopher Fiorentino is pictured at center.)

James Wells is a longtime resident of Union Township. Richard Wells lives in Lower Pottsgrove.

Median net worth of
wealthiest Americans
65 and older

Top 1%	\$12.2 million
Top 5%	\$3.5 million
Top 10%	\$2 million

Federal Reserve 2016