



Ed Gott (center) is joined by his sister Bobbie Smith (right) and the next generation of the family, Mary Louise Walter, his niece.

FROM US TO THEM

In 2014 and through much of this year, The Pittsburgh Foundation's Development and Donor Services staff put specialized training in managing next-generation philanthropy to work in helping those with private foundations shift to family foundation funds. The result: more engaged, easier-to-manage giving by future generations.

By Debra Smit

AS HEAD OF A FAMILY THAT EXTENDS to 15 grandchildren, Ed Gott, the son of a U.S. Steel Corp. president and a successful steel industry executive in his own right, realizes he has earned the title of patriarch and, along with it, the responsibility of ensuring the continuity of family history and legacies.

One of the most important to him is the legacy of giving back — a family value enshrined in a private family foundation he established a decade ago with his two sisters, Barbara (Bobbie) and Betsy, and his then-wife, Suzanne.

Operating a private foundation was complicated and limiting. The first-generation members assumed permanent seats as directors. Their nine children rotated through the remaining six seats — each serving a two-year term.

In recent years, the grandchildren, all now in their 20s, began coming into their own, and Ed wanted to structure the family's philanthropy to allow them and future generations to feel emotionally connected and to participate. The older family members decided that the best option was to transfer their private foundation to a family foundation fund at The Pittsburgh Foundation.

While the move has allowed the family to retain a board membership structure, the fund at the Foundation allows next-generation involvement at far less cost.

"The underlying principal is to give something back to the many organizations in Pennsylvania that are deserving of support, says Ed. "We also want to help the second and younger generations learn the importance of philanthropy."

This year, 21-year-old Nicholas, son to Ed's oldest daughter, Mary, became the first of the grandchildren to engage with the fund by focusing on giving opportunities in the Hill District. And Betsy's daughter, Mary Louise Walter, participated in last year's Giving Circle on Poverty through the Foundation's Center for Philanthropy, which brought donors together to make grant-making decisions to have a greater impact on the community. Nicholas's mother, Mary, marvels at the generational differences in philanthropy. Her son wants to do more hands-on volunteering and get to know the people on the ground.

"Hopefully, our children will involve the next generation in perpetuity," says Mary. "That's a lot of people to sit down with in a room and make happy. The Pittsburgh Foundation has the experience to make it happen."

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