

On the Road to Philanthropy

Friends' examples and life's experiences motivate couple's generosity

Before the interstate highway system crisscrossed Pennsylvania, traveling to Erie was by way of two lane roads that wound their way through the countryside, small towns and an occasional city.

Among those who made the journey to Erie along those roads was a young man from Brockway, Pennsylvania. Having survived a rather adventuresome adolescent lifestyle that included racing trucks and motorcycles in the abandoned strip mines of Jefferson County, Clarence Kearney arrived in Erie to study accounting and business. It was the first step in a career path that would lead to his present position as a partner with Malin, Bergquist & Company, LLP, Erie's largest independent accounting firm.

According to Clarence, his success is due in part to the people he met along the way. Some, like his high school business teacher, not only redirected Clarence's path from trade school to business school, but also secured a scholarship for his student. Others, like Doug Smiley, one of the founding partners of the firm Root, Spitznas and Smiley, mentored the young fledgling accountant and introduced



him to a number of the firm's clients. Now, forty years later, many of those clients still view Clarence as not only their accountant but also as a friend.

Another individual who had a tremendous influence on his life is the person who traveled with him along that path, his wife of 39 years, Sandy. Also from Brockway, the two began dating in high school. In reflecting on his success, Clarence is quick to acknowledge that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish what he's done had he been on his own. He continues, "Fortunately, I was not. I was blessed to have had [in Sandy] the very best by my side every step of the way."

Sandy, who is currently a CPA with Malin Bergquist, previously worked for Robinson Conner Insurance Agency. The firm's president, Bill Conner, would become the Kearneys' friend, client and philanthropic role model.

"Bill, like Doug Smiley, was someone who cared deeply about people," recalls Clarence. "He was always willing to help others and to give back to the community. Thanks to a lot of hard work, some good luck and great friends, Sandy and I have been very successful and are now in a position that we, too, can give back," notes Clarence.

Hamot has been blessed to be one of the recipients of the Kearneys' generosity.

According to the Kearneys, their gifts to Hamot were inspired by Bill Conner's vision to add \$10 million dollars to Hamot's endowment. As a former chairman of Hamot's board of trustees, Bill not only understood the community's need for quality health care, he also recognized Hamot's need to have a strong endowment as a basis for future planning and long-term financial stability.

Bill viewed building Hamot's endowment as a way to help guarantee our community's future access to high quality health care.

"As a trustee on the boards of Hamot Health Foundation and Hamot Second Century Fund," Clarence explains, "I have seen not only the difference that Hamot makes in the lives of our patients but also an increased need for philanthropic support. As a way to honor Bill and help fulfill his vision, Sandy and I have included Hamot in our estate plans by naming it as the owner and beneficiary of an insurance policy as well as through a bequest in our will.

"There are a lot of very successful people in our community and so many ways that people can include Hamot in their estate plans. I hope others will join Sandy and me in our efforts to help ensure the future of quality health care for our community."

It has been said that success is not a place at which one arrives but rather the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey. As the Kearneys journey through life – at times on their 2007 Harley Davidson Fat Boy - there can be no doubt that they will continue to enjoy success for they go with a generous spirit and the hope that their philanthropic journey will serve as an inspiration for others.

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For more information on including Hamot in your estate plans, contact Linda Wilkinson at (814) 877-3737 or through email to Linda.Wilkinson@Hamot.org.