

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

[http://www.philly.com/philly/phillywomen/20090602\\_Karen\\_Heller\\_Alarming\\_decline\\_in\\_philanthropy.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/phillywomen/20090602_Karen_Heller_Alarming_decline_in_philanthropy.html)

June 2, 2009

## **Alarming decline in philanthropy**

by Karen Heller  
Inquirer Columnist

Less.

In a country where General Motors declares bankruptcy, Americans are learning to deal with less of everything.

Our region has less, too, including a dwindling pool of generous benefactors and civic leaders.

"This is the passing of an era," said family spokesman and Penn professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson of Leonore Annenberg's death in March. The family foundation had enriched myriad regional organizations with millions in grants.

On the very day the philanthropist died, officials at the foundation announced it was moving on as well, the headquarters transferring from Radnor to Los Angeles.

The foundation "will no longer have an impact in Philadelphia," said H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest, 78, who partnered with Annenberg and the Pew Charitable Trusts to move the Barnes Foundation from Merion to the Parkway. The trio together also resuscitated the Kimmel Center.

"One important leg of that stool is not available to us any longer," said the Pew's Rebecca Rimel.

And another charitable leg, Lenfest, is coming to the end of his astonishing largesse, after donating or pledging \$800 million, much of it to the region and in the past decade.

"We've given away the bulk of our wealth," Lenfest recently told The Inquirer's Peter Dobrin. "We'll have to go into hibernation."

In a region of this size, Lenfest is board chair of two leading arts organizations, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Curtis Institute of Music, as well as the head of the American Revolution Center.

Lenfest's omnipresence speaks not only to his tremendous generosity, but also to a paucity of peers in a region that's home to tremendous wealth. The lack of leadership,

and deep-pocketed, committed donors, is of growing concern to cultural leaders. There's an obvious need to cultivate a new generation, the next Lenfest, the new Lee Annenberg, as the economy continues to lash endowments and resources.

The third leg of the stool, the Pew, while committed to the region, has become increasingly national and international in scope. Pew now has more employees working in its Washington headquarters than at its Market Street office.

The Haas charitable trusts grew substantially, to \$2.7 billion, after Dow Chemical Co. acquired Rohm & Haas Co. this spring. But the sale may not translate into a windfall for the family's William Penn Foundation, with its mandate "to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region."

"Once very focused on Philadelphia, the family is aging, dispersing geographically, and growing in number," The Inquirer's Bob Fernandez reported, "which puts strain on the financial resources of the charitable trusts and alters the Haas family dynamics."

Meanwhile, the Art Museum and the Philadelphia Orchestra, the city's largest arts organizations, are seaching for new leaders, visionaries as strong in fund-raising as they are in their fields.

Those institutions are not alone. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society will lose its president, Jane Pepper, who announced her planned retirement for next year. Under her three-decade stewardship, the operating budget grew from \$1.6 million to \$21 million, attracting both kinds of green essential to making the organization blossom.

Philadelphia has plenty of fortunes, newly minted and generations old, though some individuals who benefit from such abundance often seem more interested in horses and houses, alma maters and vanity projects, rather than giving back to the community that fueled that wealth. We need better rich people.

In trying times, when the state is fighting over the budget and cuts are a constant byproduct of the economy, when there's more need than funding, and when the very institutions that make a place great require additional revenue to maintain the region's greatness, it's clear what's needed.

More.