Walt Imhoff
Beloved Business Leader and Philanthropist

Walt Imhoff, a well-known figure in the Denver business community and a major force in corporate and personal philanthropy, passed away in February of this year.

The Denver Foundation was lucky to have had a long-standing relationship with Walt that started when he created a donor-advised fund in 2000. Walt was an early member of the Foundation’s Community Legacy Society, and also served on The Denver Foundation’s Human Services Committee from 2000 to 2004, helping the Community Grants Program staff make thoughtful decisions on grants that benefited the most vulnerable members of our community. His business savvy from a long career in finance and investment banking helped form wise giving decisions.

Walt’s personal philanthropy was very wide-ranging, from support of the Flight for Life Program at St. Anthony Hospital, to the Denver Hospice and The Women’s Foundation, where he created the Georgia R. Imhoff Endowment in honor of his late wife who preceded him in death in 2009. He and Georgia were especially committed to the prevention and treatment of child abuse, primarily at the Kempe Center.

As a champion of corporate philanthropy, Walt served as board chair of the 2% Club for eight years. “He modeled that behavior in his own company and encouraged other businesses to do the same,” reported Jeanne Bistranin, former 2% Club staffer. In fact, said Jeanne, “During Walt’s tenure, we doubled the membership.”

Walt was one of the first to realize that there was the potential for creating a community-wide organization dedicated to business philanthropy that expanded upon the 2% Club mission. He was instrumental in efforts to create the soon-to-be-launched Businesses Committed to Investing and Volunteering in the Community (B:CIVIC).

Jack Fox, B:CIVIC Chairman, noted, “Walt was a such a positive force in this community in so many ways. I see the B:CIVIC effort as a testament to his ability to motivate people and get them to commit to a greater good. He will be sorely missed.”

The staff at The Denver Foundation will also miss his kindness, his laughter, and his generosity. Walt embodied the definition of a true gentleman and it was an honor to serve him. We look forward to partnering with Walt’s family in years to come as his philanthropic legacy continues to impact our community.

Family Philanthropy Tips

Engaging in giving and volunteering with your family is as dynamic as any other family activity; it can be rewarding, surprising, and transformational, but not always in the ways you imagine. Consider the following ideas when creating or growing a culture of philanthropy in your clan.

Learning goes both ways. If you have something you want to teach, also be ready to learn. When the children are successful parents and professionals, and when the grandkids are active in school activities, everyone has ideas and experiences to contribute to the discussion!

Show rather than tell. Experiential learning is highly preferred to lectures or reading assignments. Think “site visits” rather than “binders.” Engage in hands-on activities rather than “Q&A.”

You don’t have to step away to let the next generations step up. Think about ways to share and trade power rather than to transfer it.

It’s about the impact! Discussing what you want to do together helps frame how you’re going to do it. Reviewing progress regularly helps you evaluate your philanthropy and change its course if necessary. Outputs and outcomes are not the same, and the former will sustain the interest of the next generations.