

SHARING A VISION FOR THE REGION

Heritage Circle Member Ralph Egerman

Ralph Egerman, a commercial real estate broker with Colliers International|Pittsburgh, works with many corporate real estate executives who are evaluating Pittsburgh as a potential location for their companies. He often hosts these executives as they search for a new home to grow their businesses and attract intellectual capital to what has been described as the 'most livable city in America.' The drive from the airport to the city helps him to establish his case, showcasing the natural beauty of the rolling green hillsides that make the region such a treasure. Ralph explains the rich conservation history of the region and how Western Pennsylvanians, including himself, embrace the vision of protecting these resources for the future.

As they reach the end of the Fort Pitt Tunnel, the landscape opens with a grand entrance. Set at the confluence of three rivers, with cliffs on one embankment and floodplains on the other, the City of Pittsburgh rises ahead. Ralph doesn't need to say anything in this moment — this is where the view speaks for itself.

Ralph knows there will be questions about the issues the region has with its air and water quality. This is where Pittsburgh's industrialized past continues to haunt. But Ralph shares the upside — there is a strong contingent of individuals and organizations, including the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, working to continually improve the quality of our rivers, streams and air.



Pittsburgh has been Ralph's home for his entire life. Growing up in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood on the East End of Pittsburgh, he spent much of his childhood romping through Frick Park with friends. He recalls "fishing" in a small pond there with a spool of thread and hook. This was one of the

only places they could fish due to the parks' streams being polluted and access to the three rivers being tightly restricted by heavy industry. When he went camping and hiking, they would often find orange streams with very little aquatic wildlife. Even as a boy, he knew something was "off."

But engaged residents like Ralph have made a difference by supporting organizations that have been working for decades to improve Western Pennsylvania. He is able to talk to business leaders about the Conservancy's impact of planting more than 37,000 trees in the urban landscape, the recovery of streams, the protection of green space and the vibrant community gardens that provide beauty to residents and visitors. He tells the visitors "the future is bright."

Ralph believes we will continue to attract new people and businesses to the area because of the intrinsic value of our land and water. He often contemplates where the next 50-100 years will take the city that he has loved his whole life:

Continued



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"I think, in the future, Pittsburgh's riverfronts will grace a river system that will be much healthier. Residential, commercial and recreational development will be greater, and vastly improved. In addition to the Conservancy's work to restore creeks and streams, advances in environmental technology will further help to effectively clean our rivers. Humans have a natural attraction to water. To be near it, to see it, and feel it. In the future, we'll be able to fully enjoy the rivers and riverfronts."

The future is indeed bright for the Pittsburgh region and those who invest in it. Protecting and restoring this natural beauty for future generations to enjoy is exactly why Ralph Egerman included the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in his will. And he encourages others to do the same. Together, the transformation of the city from smoky and dirty to green is in full force, supported by individuals like Ralph Egerman. 🌿

With Gratitude

The Heritage Circle is a recognition society that honors individuals who have included WPC in their estate plans.

We are pleased to welcome **Herbert K. Sacks** and **Mary Ann Gross** as our newest Heritage Circle members.

If you have questions about making the Conservancy a beneficiary of your will or trust, contact Julie Holmes at **412-586-2312** or jholmes@paconserve.org.



Do you know about the SECURE ACT?

If you are retired or nearing retirement, you should know about a few changes to laws concerning your IRA. The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act was enacted Jan. 1, 2020. With it came many questions for those who are planning for retirement, retired or who are retiring in the near future.

Passed as part of a spending bill, the SECURE Act brought with it the most significant changes to retirement plans since 2006. While some changes impact you, others will impact the people you name as a beneficiary.

Changes to Know

1. You can contribute to your IRA longer. Previously, you could not contribute to your IRA after reaching the age of 70½. However, with more and more people working past that age, the SECURE Act repeals this age limitation, allowing you more time to save.
2. The required minimum distribution (RMD) age changed. The SECURE Act changed the age at which you must start taking RMDs from your retirement account from 70½ to 72 for those who were born July 1, 1949, or later. This change allows you additional time to grow the funds in your account before you have to start withdrawing from it.

3. IRA beneficiary rules have changed. Prior to the SECURE Act, beneficiaries could take distributions throughout their lives. This offered tax savings for the beneficiary. The SECURE Act preserved this option for beneficiaries who are spouses, but repeals it for non-spousal IRA beneficiaries. They will now have 10 years to withdraw the entire amount.

What Stayed the Same

If you're 70½ or older, you can still make a tax-free gift to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy!

You can transfer any amount up to \$100,000 per year directly to a qualified charitable organization without paying income tax on the distribution. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.

Your gift will also be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference you're making in Western Pennsylvania. Please contact Julie Holmes at jholmes@paconserve.org or **412-586-2312** with questions, or call your financial advisor. 🌿



Gardens in need of a Volunteer Steward

Beltzhoover:

Liberty Tunnel and Route 51

Carnegie:

Mansfield Boulevard and Campbells Run Road

Carrick:

*2350 Brownsville Road,
Concord Elementary School*

Downtown:

*Liberty Avenue and Commonwealth Place –
The Point*

Highland Park:

Highland Park Bridge at Butler Street

Ross Township:

McIntyre Road and McKnight Road

Hill District:

Centre Avenue and Herron Avenue

Larimer:

Lincoln Ave and Frankstown Avenue

Millvale:

Ohio Street and Grant Avenue

Moon Township:

Route 51 and Thorn Run Road

South Park:

Brownsville Road and Maple Springs Road

State College:

College Avenue (Route 26) and University Drive

Seeking Helping Hands

While many gardeners are leafing through plant catalogues to pass the bleak days of winter, our Gardens and Greenspace team has been designing gardens, ordering flowers, shrubs and trees and organizing the planting schedule. Last year, volunteers helped WPC staff plant 115,000 flowers in 132 gardens!

Want to help our gardens grow? Become a Garden Steward! Stewards are a dedicated group of volunteers who help keep the Conservancy's gardens vibrant throughout the growing season. Each steward monitors a specific garden, weeding and watering when necessary from May through September. We rely on their feedback and commitment to keep our gardens in bloom.

There are still a number of gardens without stewards. Green thumbs aren't a requirement; only the ability to give a little TLC every week.



If you are interested in volunteering as a garden steward for any of the gardens listed to the right, please contact Lynn McGuire-Olzak at **412-586-2324** or **LMcGuire-Olzak@paconserve.org**. 🌿

A Garden for Everyone Receives Recognition

The sensory garden at Pioneer Education Center in Pittsburgh's South Hills was recently recognized with an award from the Pennsylvania Seed Keeper Project, sponsored by The Seed Keeper Company. Voters submitted online nominations for their favorite school garden in each state.

The Pioneer Sensory Garden was the first of three ADA-accessible gardens in the region that the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy helped to create. The school accommodates children with a variety of special physical and emotional needs, so the garden is designed with plants and interactive features to both stimulate and soothe the senses. The garden has a water feature and wide paths for wheelchairs, walkers and bikes, as well as swings to accommodate wheelchairs. As a Pioneer teacher wrote in her nomination: "Every kid should have an outdoor living space. Every kid should have the opportunity to see the trees turn colors, to grow vegetables; it's a major part of life." 🌿



Western Pennsylvania
Conservancy



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Four-star rating from Charity Navigator

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent evaluator of charities. These ratings reveal how efficiently a nonprofit uses donor support, how well it sustains its programs over time and the level of commitment to good governance, best practices and openness with information. This marks the 17th year of the top rating for the Conservancy since Charity Navigator started the rating system in 2002.



Join us for WPC's Members' Day and Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 2 | 8:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**The Barn at Fallingwater on
Bear Run Nature Reserve in Mill Run, Pa.**

Members' Day is a great way to experience all that the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has to offer. All current members are invited to bring friends and family. After a complimentary breakfast, enjoy a selection of naturalist-led hikes, information sessions and program updates, children's activities, a native plant sale and free tours of Fallingwater. Bring your own picnic lunch or enjoy a buffet for \$18 per person, children 10 and under are free.

Register by Friday, April 24th.
Call 1-866-564-6972 or visit
WaterLandLife.org/md20.



Mission Statement: The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and preserves Fallingwater, a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.