

# New Foundation aims to change way of the world in ‘nick of time’



At last count, there are more than 78,000 foundations in the United States with a total worth of approximately half a trillion (with a “t”) dollars, generating nearly \$50 billion in giving each year.

By any calculation, that’s a lot of dough being funneled annually into good causes, philanthropy that is designed to make a positive impact on society in the areas of health care, education, recreation, the environment, religion, social services, and many more.

Last year, in honor of the 30th anniversary of Primerus™, plans were unveiled to add one more foundation to that ever-growing list.

The Primerus™ Foundation.

It was the brainchild of my longtime friend Jack Buchanan, the founder and president of Primerus™, who was kind enough to ask me and Grand Rapids, Michigan attorney Lee Silver to join him in helping launch the endeavor that has several lofty goals in mind for the

betterment of society. In the coming months, we expect to invite at least 10 Primerus™ leaders from around the globe to serve as directors, thereby broadening our efforts to make significant progress in tackling some of the world’s most pressing problems.

First, we strive to be a unique force for good, operating under the motto of “Saving the World in the Nick of Time.”

With that lofty goal as our guide, we are in the process of establishing an ambitious “to-do” list that will include: eliminate or reduce nuclear weaponry; mitigate the impact of climate change; stabilize and strengthen democracies around the world; and educate our youth about the vital virtues that everyone should embrace to help uplift mankind.

Unquestionably, we are embarking on a mighty tall task, one that every fledgling foundation certainly faced as it made its mission known.

And as the new president of the Primerus™ Foundation, I feel a special responsibility to help make the world a better place, drawing inspiration from some of the greatest philanthropists of all time, visionaries such as Rotary International founder Paul Harris and famed industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

Harris, a Chicago attorney, formed the first Rotary Club in 1905, initially viewing it as an organization where professionals from diverse backgrounds could exchange ideas and form meaningful friendships. It soon would grow to become international in scope, creating its own foundation to address humanitarian needs, including a massive effort to wipe out polio in countries around the globe. Under the inspiring leadership of Harris, Rotary would come to symbolize two important

mottoes: “Service Above Self” and “One Profits Most Who Serves Best.”

Andrew Carnegie, who made his fortune primarily by pioneering the manufacture of steel in the late 19th century, certainly would merit a spot on the “Mt. Rushmore” of generous givers, reportedly donating the equivalent of \$5.5 billion in today’s dollars, or approximately 90 percent of his vast wealth.

In 1889, he published an article titled “The Gospel of Wealth,” calling upon the rich to use their fortunes to improve society. In one of his memos to himself, Carnegie wrote: “I have known millionaires starving for lack of the nutriment which alone can sustain all that is human in man, and I know workmen, and many so-called poor men, who revel in luxuries beyond the power of those millionaires to reach. It is the mind that makes the body rich. There is no class so pitifully wretched as that which possesses money and nothing else. Money can only be the useful drudge of things immeasurably higher than itself.”

This was the essence of the “Andrew Carnegie Dictum,” which featured a three-pronged approach to a meaningful life: (1) To spend the first third of one’s life getting all the education one can; (2) To spend the next third making all the money one can; and (3) To spend the last third giving it all away for worthwhile causes.

Carnegie, who died in 1919, donated much of his money to educational causes, funding the construction of more than 2,500 libraries in cities big and small around the world to combat illiteracy.

It may have been at one of them where he read a time-honored fable about a chicken and a pig. It goes

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something like this:

*A pig and a chicken are walking down a road together when they approach a church with a sign out front advertising a breakfast featuring ham and eggs. When the chicken asks the pig whether they should go inside, the porker politely declines, commenting, “All they want from you is a contribution, while I would be expected to make a sacrifice.”*

The fable is worth a good laugh, but more importantly it offers a valuable lesson on the varying degrees of having some skin in the game.

In this case, our goal at the Primerus™ Foundation is to encourage all 150+ Primerus™ member firms – and our 2,500+ attorneys – to join with us in lending support for our mission. We all aspire to leave the world a better place for posterity. With your help, the Primerus™ Foundation can serve as a means to that end.

Best regards,

**Joel W. Collins, Jr.**

**President, Primerus™ Foundation**