

Our Giving Pledge

As appears to be the case with most Giving Pledge members, the decision to use our earnings philanthropically during our lifetimes came long before this Association's formation.

After about 15 successful years in commercial real estate, we came to recognize and believe that no one can truly "own" anything. Particularly, as regards real estate, how can we possibly think of ourselves as actually owning land? How can we ever be more than caretakers of the land, which lies beneath whatever we might develop on a property? With that in mind, it was easy to start giving things away.

In 1986, we established Cummings Foundation and pledged to donate 10 percent of all after-tax profits to it. Gradually, as it became clear that our four children and any future grandchildren were well provided for, we also began donating much of our commercial real estate to the Foundation. By 1998, about 60 percent of the total family assets were donated, and Cummings Foundation had sufficient resources to become a meaningful philanthropic force.

Classified by the IRS as an operating foundation, Cummings Foundation has four subsidiaries. The first two operate New Horizons assisted living communities in Woburn and Marlborough, Massachusetts, while the third is associated with Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. The final subsidiary, formed in 2010, is Institute for World Justice, LLC.

In 2009, after a life-changing meeting in Jerusalem with Holocaust survivor Eliezer Ayalon, we came to three powerful realizations: 1) The lessons of the Holocaust are too vital to be forgotten or denied, 2) Genocides are still occurring around the world, and 3) We cannot simply sit quietly and let them happen.

Convinced that real change can come from the next generation of world citizens, we created the interfaith "Cummings/Hillel Program for Holocaust and Genocide Education at Tufts University." Through academic courses, immersion travel experiences, meetings with genocide survivors, and much more, it is our hope that these students will become sensitized to the early warning signs of genocide, and become strong and passionate enough to stand up against genocidal forces.

While the Tufts program will not be fully operational until September 2011, pre-program activities have validated that the students have a keen interest in genocide

education and a passion for stopping the violence. While Eliezer Ayalon was the original inspiration for this program, the students strengthen our commitment every day.

Seeing the remarkable impact of genocide education on Tufts students has inspired us to make similar programming available at colleges all across America. As such, we created the Institute for World Justice, which we hope will play a role in reducing genocide, as well as all the societal problems that lead to it, including prejudice, intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia. For us, there could be no greater legacy.

As we move forward with this new initiative, we welcome the support and partnership of others who share our belief that genocide should be a matter of great concern and responsibility for all people.

Having already pledged privately years ago to donate 90 percent of our wealth to charity, we now publicly take the Giving Pledge in the hope that, with every new member, the Association will gain momentum and provide encouragement to others who have the capacity to give in very meaningful ways.

We have never particularly liked the expression about “giving until it hurts,” but rather suggest the better standard might be – “Give until it feels great.” This feels great, and we applaud the vision and leadership of the founders.

W.S. Cummings

Joyce Cummings