

# Wayne Community Foundation: Giving is the heart of the community

By THOMAS DOOHAN Staff Writer Published: October 17, 2015 4:00AM

WOOSTER -- Philanthropy is a concept rooted firmly in the American psyche, hinging on a key tenant of the national identity -- freedom.

That is what Ronald Holtman told a packed auditorium at the Shisler Center on Wednesday during the Wayne County Community Foundation annual dinner.

Giving back to the community has been a tradition in the United States since the nation's founding, he said. The colonists who arrived in the new world found themselves in a land without the societal infrastructure they knew in Europe. But as the society progressed, a nation was set up and philanthropy blossomed.

Giving back to community became a hallmark of the society, Holtman said. Today, that tradition continues, with private charitable contributions outpacing governmental spending on foreign aid by billions. He said in 2013, the government spent \$31 billion on foreign aid and private charitable contributions totalled \$39 billion.

"In my view, it was freedom, pure and simple," he said, explaining how charity could grow to be so robust.

The idea that freedom could be the catalyst by which philanthropy could blossom into what it has become comes from Enlightenment era Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith. Holtman said Smith spoke of how society will be the most efficient, prosperous and free if individuals have the freedom to make decisions about things that have impacts on their material and moral lives.

Holtman said the colonists, and in turn the Founding Fathers, embraced this idea. In the absence of state guidance on where these early Americans should direct their generosity, they were able to give to causes they cared about.

"The colonists arrived in this country with no institutional structure, no government and no charities," he said at Wednesday's meeting. "They only had their own entrepreneurial determination and a new environment which germinated the unfettered exchange of ideas and the opportunity to risk success."

This entrepreneurial philanthropy is what has made the U.S. such a generous nation and is an idea in which Wayne County philanthropists are steeped, Holtman said. Countless times over the community's history, people have worked creatively to use their resources to address an issue they are passionate about.

The most obvious philanthropists in Wayne County are Stan and the late Flo Gault, who used their resources in strategic and creative ways, Holtman said.

Other people gave back to the community by starting organizations aimed at bettering the world. Holtman said Kathy Tschiegg did that when she saw the lack of access Central America had to medical

equipment and established Central American Medical Outreach to help.

Young people will bring these ideas through to the next age, Holtman said, noting this next age is known as the age of hacker philanthropy, a kind of giving back that mirrors the tenacious problem-solving for which leaders in the technology sector are known.

Stephen Shapiro, a foundation trustee, said the entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of hacker philanthropy is critical to the success of philanthropic efforts. Just like businesses look for outcomes, the entrepreneurial spirit pushes philanthropic efforts to measure outcomes, which ensures they are effective.

As executive director of Liberty Center Connections, Bobbi Douglas said she is well acquainted with local philanthropic efforts. Her agency has been the recipient of donors across the community, including the Nobles and their foundation, who funded Liberty Center Connection's Noble House.

"It's part of the culture here," she said. Throughout the county, there are donors small and large and just by being near them, Douglas said she has learned so much about philanthropy.

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