

HVL man shifts gears from 'what works,' to 'what matters'

(This is the second of a two-part story focusing on Hidden Valley Lake resident Gale Smith and his work and nonprofit foundation.)

Now in his 60s, Gale Smith believes there are two basic reasons people become involved in philanthropy: the love of mankind or because it makes you feel good.

"I'll never become a Mother Teresa. I do it because it makes me feel good," said Smith.

As president and founder of The Smith Family Foundation he must constantly have a smile on his face.

The mission of the foundation, started in 1996, is to serve youth worldwide. The foundation's primary focus is Greater Cincinnati non-profit organizations that

focus on enhancing the quality of life for children. Smith noted that 100 per cent of all proceeds raised by the foundation are donated to non-profit groups.

After spending many years in the business world, Smith wanted to give back to the community.

"I found myself looking not for what worked, but for what matters," said Smith.

He became involved with charities helping children after a visit to the Marva Collins Preparatory School of Cincinnati.

Seen here at right breaking ground on Sept. 17, 1992 for the Security and Information Center are, from left, George Riehle, Hudepohl Construction Co.; Sammy Gutzwiller, President of the POA Board of Directors; Wayne Hamon, A&H Foundations; Gale Smith, HVL POA Special Projects Committee Chairman; Tony Carter, POA Maintenance Supervisor; Jim Schafer, HVL Community Manager; and Lonnie Steele, Steele Excavation & Foundation.

The school was started by president Cleaster Whitehurst Mims, and modeled after the teaching methods and techniques of educator Marva Collins. Collins started her own Chicago classroom in 1975 as an alternative to public schools.

Enrollment at the Cincinnati school has been as high as 250. The institution provides an edu-

cation alternative for children others have given up on teaching, said Mims.

The foundation has been a tremendous help to the school financially, she said.

"Gale is very sincere in his efforts and is always ready to help others in any way he can,"

Continued on Page 29



HVL's Russ Dickman donated his time and talents to create this sign board recognizing donors who helped build the security center at the main gate. Gale Smith led the effort to replace an aging building then used by security personnel.



What matters**Continued from Page 28**

said Mims.

"Smith Family Foundation has a clear vision," said Smith. "We want to be a leader in the community we serve in showing others by example the potential we all have to make a difference in the lives of others."

"We all want to make a difference, but a good many people are just not sure how to get started," he said. "I try to stay very accessible and am passionate about helping others who are passionate about helping kids."

One way the foundation helps is through financial support.

The foundation's goal for 2004 is to raise \$300,000 to \$500,000 through its Golf-A-Thon outings, Smith said. To date, five Golf-A-Thons have been scheduled for 2004, including the Third Annual Smith Family Foundation Hidden Valley Golf Club outing slated for September 13.

(The 2003 Golf-A-thon at Hidden Valley realized \$15,000 for the YMCA's Black Achiever and Character Award programs, \$15,000 for the Anthony Munoz Foundation, an inner-city youth scholarship fund, and \$10,000 for the SFF Over-the-Rhine 200 Liberty Project.

Other 2004 Golf-A-Thons will benefit:

- * Crossroads health Center, Over-the-Rhine, and Sign of the Cross Ministries, which provides housing for homeless families in Over-the-Rhine.

- * Give Back Cincinnati, a non-profit organization of young professionals committed to volunteerism.

- * Multiple Sclerosis Center.

- * The Aubrey Rose Hollenkamp Children's Trust Fund, which offers scholarships and help families with seriously ill children.

"We are working to help our youth reach their full potential and destiny. Anything less is just not good enough," said Smith.

This is a new scale of fund raising for the foundation and is possible because of the creation of a new position, Director of Community Affairs, filled by Deborah Rogowski, Smith said.

"Deborah is very professional, creative, and committed," he added. "She is a great addition to our team."

Though providing financial assistance is an important aspect of its mission, Smith also recognizes the need to help nonprofit organizations become self-sustaining through business plan-

ning, he said.

Grants can be hard to find and usually are a one-time benefit, he said.

The foundation recognizes "extraordinary givers" who make a positive impact on the lives of children through its The Secret of Living is Giving Awards.

A commemorative sculpture that is presented with the award incorporates a pelican, emblematic of a commitment to service. According to Christian legend, the pelican will tear at its own flesh to provide food for her family when nothing else is available, said Smith.

This selfless act represents the sacrifices award winners have made for youth and their communities, he said.

individuals. Over fifty were placed in the homes of Lawrenceburg area home-schoolers.

Sometimes, he makes a personal commitment. He led the 1991-92 development of a 10-year plan for Hidden Valley and has supported the Joe Tarantino Memorial Golf Classic at Hidden Valley Golf Course.

In 1992, Smith volunteered to lead an effort to build a new HVL Community Information Center to replace the crumbling headquarters the Valley's security force then occupied. Ground breaking for the new building at HVL's main entrance was in mid-September 1992 and it was in use the following February.

Smith spearheaded a drive that raised \$25,000 for construction in cash, materials, and labor. A large signboard near the construction site listed each donor and kept residents aware of progress. HVL's own Russ Dickman handled the board.

Smith said he is "a big fan of Russ and Joann Dickman."

Russ, a retired commercial artist well known in HVL for his many sign projects and Valley Christmas

cards, has also provided signs, lettering, and special design work for almost every event sponsored by the Smith Family Foundation. When Russ and some of his young art students created a September 11 memorial for the main entrance, Smith presented each of the youths a



The SICenter went up quickly and was in use by February 1993, five months after ground-breaking.

Smith also tries to stay involved with his own community. Sometimes, the foundation touches places and people that are close to home. Its support of the Full Circle Group has been responsible for placing hundreds of computers in the hands of local organizations, schools, and

Smith family Foundation "difference-maker" angel medallion at a special luncheon at the Tavern on the Lake.

Russ, who has known Smith for more than 25 years, said, "He is a friendly, fast-moving, hard-working man. ... He likes to help people."

Hard work – he averages 60 to 70 hours a week - drive, and a sense of purpose are evident in everything Smith does. "Live your life," he said, "so that your children can tell their children that you not only stood for something wonderful, you acted on it!"

He hopes the foundation he

started will continue to make a difference for years to come, and that his family will continue to be involved in it. Along with his wife, Laura, who is the foundation's secretary, his four children currently serve as vice presidents.

"I want my family to say, 'I can't think of a better way to continue his legacy than to continue the principles he initiated,'" said Smith.

For more information about the foundation visit:

www.smithfamilyfoundation.org

Join a committee today