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Estate will aid array of causes

Written by

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Organizations that advocate for immigrants, stray animals and women's health are among 13 nonprofits that will benefit from a local entrepreneur's fortune today.

Attorney Larry Reuben, whose father, Albert, was a successful Indianapolis entrepreneur, will join the Central Indiana Community Foundation this morning to dole out \$8 million from his parents' estate.

Two organizations, Grameen Bank and Immigrant Welcome Center, will get \$1 million each, the most to be awarded to any of the organizations.

Other sizable contributions will go to the Humane Society of Indianapolis, the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana, Planned Parenthood of Indiana and the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention.

The issues the charities address are as varied as Albert Reuben's business ventures, Larry Reuben said.

Albert Reuben opened an aluminum siding franchise in Indianapolis in 1948. He went

on to own Kentucky Fried Chicken and Holiday Inn franchises. He also invested in real estate, and some credit him with developing the strip mall concept, his son said.

"He's the classic American entrepreneur," Larry Reuben said. "He had a touch, and it allowed him to be involved in a lot of different things that would seem disjointed but really weren't."

Albert Reuben died in 2002, and his wife, Sara, died in 2010.

The Reubens were passionate about a variety of causes, including immigration -- Sara Reuben emigrated from Belarus -- and education.

They gave Larry Reuben some direction on what kind of organizations they wanted to receive their money, but he had the final say, with guidance from his two siblings. CICF also helped them narrow their search.

Larry Reuben said he picked organizations

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where the money would be a "game-changer."

That certainly will be the case for the Immigrant Welcome Center, which helps immigrants adjust to life in the United States.

Executive Director Terri Morris Downs, the center's only employee, hopes to use the money to hire another staff member and bolster the center's programs.

The organization connected about 1,700 immigrants with jobs and various services last year.

"For us, it is a huge gift, and it is affirming the need to help immigrants and refugees in Indianapolis," Downs said.

Another \$1 million gift from the Reubens will help a unique lender come to the city.

Grameen Bank, which formed in Bangladesh, gives small loans to people who are trying to establish businesses and might not be able to get funding elsewhere.

CICF had asked the bank to come to the city because it could bring opportunities to residents, spokesman Mike Knight said.

The Reubens' donations will help make the bank a reality and will provide much-needed support to the other organizations, Knight said.

"This is such a gift," Knight said. "It's a lot of money to a lot of different organizations. This is . . . being spread communitywide."

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