

## *Joe Hardy Charitable Fund*

This fund was created in 2004 in conjunction with Mr. Hardy being chosen as the Washington County Community Foundation's *Philanthropist of the Year*.

You will not often see Joe Hardy without a cigar between his teeth and the 2004 *Philanthropist of the Year* banquet in Joe's honor was no exception. As Joe sat at the head table listening to others recount stories of the early days of 84 Lumber and give just a few examples of the tremendous gifts he and 84 Lumber have made to local charities, he continued to chew on his cigar.

Many came to pay tribute to Joe, including vocalist Bobby Nicholas who mesmerized the audience with a delightful mixture of patriotic, classic, country, and religious songs. Family members, friends, employees, and charities that had benefited from his generosity, came as well.

Joe's friend of over 50 years, Dan Hixenbaugh, drove from Florida to honor his good friend and former boss. Dan told stories about the many gimmicks Joe devised to attract more customers to store openings. Dan was responsible for the publicity surrounding the openings of new 84 Lumber stores, and so it was Dan who was responsible for implementing Joe's gimmicks. The audience laughed at hearing about the Paul Bunyan Games, a series of outdoorsy related events that customers could compete in to win cash prizes, and of the 84 Lumber blimp that got away.

As 84 grew, so did Joe's ideas. Joe had told Dan that each opening needed a "spectacular," something so special that people would come from miles around just to see it. One such "spectacular" was "Victor the Rastlin' Bear," which drew men from all over for a chance to win the coveted prize – a T-shirt that said they had wrestled a bear.

Through all of the laughter of the evening, Joe's sincere and genuine appreciation emerged as he accepted his award. He said, "It is the people in our lives that are really important, not the money in our pockets." He expressed his appreciation to his many family members in attendance and his gratitude to Dan for coming all that way with his kind words. But perhaps the most touching moment of the evening came when Joe drew the audience's attention to the list of prior awardees printed in the program - a list that included the names of Frank Sarris, John Northrop and William Northrop, Dr. E. Ronald Salvitti, Thomas R. Milhollan, and Pete Cameron. "I know these men and they are all good people, but my eye is drawn to the bottom. I miss my friend Pete," Joe said



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with a quiver in his voice, looking toward Nan Cameron and her family, all seated together.

Tears were wiped away and laughter ensued, as the room filled with the soulful voice of Bobby Nicholas in a final tribute to Joe. And Joe sat back smiling, his cigar between his teeth.

Joe began his business quest in the early 1950's. The Pittsburgh native left the family jewelry business, Hardy & Hayes, to pursue his dream of becoming an entrepreneur. Using a suggestion of a friend, he opened Green Hills Lumber, a building materials supply business. Upon its success, Joe pooled resources with his two younger brothers and a friend to begin yet another venture, a cash-and-carry lumber business targeting homebuilders, located in Eighty Four, Pennsylvania. Liking the name of the rural town, he named the business 84 Lumber. 84 Lumber grew from the tri-state region of Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, to one of the largest building retailers in the United States with over 500 locations in 34 states coast to coast and reported sales of over \$2.5 billion in 2003. Joe also owns Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort and Spa, which boasts itself as the only four-star resort in the state of Pennsylvania.

Locally, just a few of the charities Joe has supported are: California University of PA, Children's Hospital, The Washington Hospital, the United Ways in southwestern Pennsylvania, Washington & Jefferson College, Penn State University, 84 Baseball/ Softball, Habitat for Humanity, and the Washington County Food Bank.



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