



## WILLIAM H. ALEXANDER

**You can't live in Central Pennsylvania without being affected by William H. Alexander's contributions. The Harrisburg skyline was literally shaped by H.B. Alexander Enterprises, a construction company founded in 1928 by his grandfather.**

Unlike many children born into a family business, Alexander didn't transition to the business straight from high school or college. "I was in the Army Corps of Engineers," he says. "I did that to make sure that there was nothing else that I wanted to do."

Although he considered a career in the corps, he returned to Harrisburg with six years of service under his belt, a Bronze Star Medal and an MBA.

At his family's company, he quickly moved from project manager to vice president and general manager. "About halfway through the process, my father died of a heart attack, so I only served a short period of time as general manager before I became CEO," says Alexander. "I was probably about five years away from really being ready."

Despite not having the time he would have liked to develop external relationships, and being about 20 years younger than most other decision-makers in the area, Alexander grew into the position of CEO. "I approached my leadership responsibilities with a sense of obligation to make my customers, my employees and my community better off because of my leadership decision-making," he says.

When asked if he had a hero in the business world,

Alexander didn't have a person in mind, but he did have more of an ideal. "My hero in business would be somebody who is the good spirit of the business. Someone who is committed to growing a business, not seeking headlines or an ego trip, so you wouldn't have read or heard about them," he says.

About an hour later, Alexander realized that he had described his grandfather.

As CEO, Alexander worked hard to uphold the standards set by his grandfather and father. He also made sure that the company managers were well trained to succeed him. "I was purposefully working toward an early retirement," he says.

Construction is a stressful business, and not wanting to share the same fate as his father, he retired in 1995.

Since then, Alexander has been helping to build Central Pennsylvania in many other ways. He and his wife, Marion, are still active in every aspect of community service. The family also maintains the H.B. Alexander Foundation, established by Alexander's grandfather to contribute a percentage of company profits to support the community, and it plans to continue the foundation through future generations.

Alexander hasn't completely stepped away from business. For more than a dozen years, he's been a lecturer at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. For him, going from a board room to a lecture hall was ideal.

"It's probably the most wonderful thing anyone in business could ask to have happen to them," he says. "It's a way to pass on your concepts of how a business should be run, and it's a way to create a legacy through the talented young people in the classroom."



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## ANNE BEILER

**Anne Beiler admits she is an unlikely entrepreneurial success story. She had an Amish education (which ends after eighth grade), no long-term business plans and little money. But she had purpose and faith — and a recipe for a killer soft pretzel.**

In 1988, when Beiler, founder of Auntie Anne's Soft Pretzels, opened a food stand in a Downingtown farmers market, she had no concept of the success that she would experience. Rather than education, Beiler drew on deep-seated faith and a hard-working attitude, both gained from a traditional Amish-Mennonite upbringing.

It is fitting that the pretzel was the catalyst to her success. This treat was said to have been created by monks to resemble hands in prayer and has been a symbol of faith, good fortune and the strength of marriage. Beiler has been blessed with them all, but her life hasn't been without hardship.

In 1975, she and her husband faced the loss of their 19-month-old daughter. She was subsequently taken advantage of by a pastor to whom she had turned for counsel. The Beilers were forced to cope with years of despair, but eventually committed themselves to counseling and allowed faith to repair their lives and family.

"I never aspired to be a businesswoman," says Beiler. "All I really wanted to be was a wife and a mother."

In fact, she had bought the food stand to make ends meet and support her husband, Jonas, while he pursued starting a Christian counseling center so he could help other families.

Initially, the stand did OK, and the pretzels were good. But it wasn't until an ordering mishap left them with the wrong ingredients that Beiler's husband devised the recipe that would propel the business to become the world's largest soft pretzel chain. As word spread, demand for the warm, buttery pretzels soared. It wasn't long before additional locations were opened — the second was at Harrisburg's Broad Street Market — and Auntie Anne's Soft Pretzels began to franchise.

Suddenly, Beiler found herself in the role of manager and leader, tasked with growing a company and leading a team of employees and franchisees. "A true leader is a role model and needs to have a purpose," says Beiler.

To this end, Beiler developed a business philosophy called L.I.G.H.T., which stands for lead by example, invest in employees, give freely, honor God, and treat all business associates with kindness and respect. "It became the grid by which we made every decision," says Beiler.

Despite the rapid success of Auntie Anne's, the Beilers never lost sight of their purpose. In 1992, they opened the Family Resource and Counseling Center, in Gap. Then in 2005, the Beilers sold Auntie Anne's to pursue other interests and to fund The Family Center of Gap, a facility that serves the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the community.

"This was the dream all along," says Beiler, who spends much of her time as she always anticipated — being a wife and a mother and, these days, a grandmother.

"I feel very fulfilled with what I've done, what I'm doing, and where I feel like I'm headed," she says. "It's a wonderful place to be."



## ROBERT W. PULLO

**"I wear a white rose on my lapel each day — that's the symbol of York County," explains Robert W. Pullo. "It's a simple reminder that I am in a position to have some influence, to help other people. I have a passion for utilizing the influence that I have acquired over the years."**

That influence was earned over a 50-year career in banking and a lifetime of community leadership, a tireless work ethic, genuine compassion for his neighbors, and the significant impact he has had on the York community.

When he started working as a messenger at a bank in Boston in 1958, Pullo made it his business to learn all he could about the banking industry. "I was a sponge when it comes to learning and education, always trying to acquire knowledge from other people and from my experiences," he recalls.

He moved to York in 1975 to join York Federal Savings and Loan as executive vice president and chief operating officer, and quickly became the CEO and president. In those days, York Federal was the area's dominant residential finance company and a crucial part of the business scene.

"We positioned that institution to be on top of the waves in the transitioning world of banking and finance," Pullo explains. "We were very progressive and were major advocates for change in our industry. We influenced more efficient delivery of products and were a front-runner in the establishment of computer operations."

Even while making a mark in his new community and

caring for a young family, Pullo was already starting to give back. One of his first volunteer experiences was with the United Way, an organization that exemplifies his belief in the importance of meeting the basic needs within communities. Pullo has remained active in the United Way, having served as a board member and fundraising campaign chair of the York County chapter and currently as chairman of the Alexis de Tocqueville Society.

As his philanthropic activities grew, Pullo focused on his passions: education, family and home (the basic needs), as well as arts and culture. "There's plenty of money in every community chasing economic investment," he notes. "There's not anywhere near enough money chasing the improvement of social conditions and the basic needs. None of it can be done alone, but it can be done in partnership with other well-intended, hard-working people who are willing to contribute their time, talent and treasure."

Over the years, Pullo has served on countless boards, foundations and fundraising campaigns, and he shows no signs of slowing down. His contributions to the arts include being a trustee of the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts, and the major donation for the Pullo Family Performing Arts Center, located at Penn State York. Pullo's modesty leaves him with mixed feelings about having a building named for him, but he's getting used to the idea.

"I have come to realize that it's worth the embarrassment to try to create an awareness of one's capacity," he says. "If I can influence by example what other people do for the good of the community, then I should do that."