



DR. HENRY A. AND BARBARA M. JORDAN AWARD - 2012

significant, longstanding, comprehensive philanthropic achievements

~ **WIGGIE AND JOHN FEATHERMAN OF WEST CHESTER**

Well-known throughout Chester County by business leaders, bankers, attorneys, doctors, academics, politicians, dressed-for-success women, and nonprofit charities, Wiggie and John Featherman are the “dynamic duo” of Chester County community philanthropy.

Wiggie was born in Nashville, Tennessee. Her father was a highly-respected dentist. “It was a normal part of my childhood to see my father coming and going from his community involvement,” Wiggie explains. “He was President of the state Dental Society and led many organizations.”

Wiggie’s father died when she was in 8th grade. Her mother passed away just three years later. At age 16, she found herself on her own. Wiggie showed what she was made of, taking charge of things and calling on her circle of friends for support.

Wiggie’s first attempt at community service came in high school when she worked in a clinic for babies – a position which she recalls being woefully unprepared for. Yet that began her lifetime of service to others.

During college, Wiggie studied retailing and worked in a men’s specialty store in Richmond. Her talent for fashion and retailing soon led her to Strawbridge and Clothier in Philadelphia, which ran the best retail training program in the country at that time.

John grew up on the family dairy farm in Nottingham Township. Farm life taught John many lessons. Perseverance was

one. John learned to get up early, get to work, and keep working till the job was done. John also learned about the dignity of every person and every job. This led him to strive to treat everyone with kindness and respect, no matter their situation in life. John also learned to help those less fortunate. Many days he saw his mother share the family’s food with hobos who would get off the train and walk up the hill, as they had heard they could get a meal from the lady of the house. These lessons in compassion and concern would never leave him.

Following graduation from Penn State, John joined the Navy and served his first three years in the Pacific, followed by more two years as an Aide to three Admirals.

In Philadelphia, a friend introduced Wiggie to John. The very independent young woman from Nashville and the handsome young Navy Lieutenant had such different backgrounds, but so much energy in common.

John is clear that Wiggie’s independence and grit was instantly recognizable and held great appeal for him. They were married in 1966.

John chose to study law at Vanderbilt in Nashville. For a time, Wiggie returned to her hometown, working as a model while John earned his law degree. Upon graduation, John and Wiggie returned to Chester County, as John was offered a position with the prestigious MacElree Harvey law firm.

As three children arrived for John and Wiggie, the family became increasingly involved in the community. An active member of First Presbyterian Church, John has served as an Elder and member of the Special Giving Committee. Wiggie deepened her community involvement for quite an unexpected reason. Contracting breast cancer and surviving – at a time 20 years ago when some of her friends did not – led Wiggie to become known for her own personal outreach to those struggling with the disease.

Wiggie looked for new challenges as the Featherman nest grew empty. Becoming a Lead Sales Associate for apparel firm Worth NY, the entrepreneurial and fashionable Wiggie Featherman organized and led her own business enterprise. For over a decade, Wiggie provided high-end clothing and the ultimate in personalized service to some of Chester County’s best-dressed women.

Meanwhile at MacElree Harvey, John gained extensive experience in banking, business, commercial, trust and estates, and real estate law. John’s active professional leadership has benefited the Pennsylvania Bar Association, Chester County Bar Association and Foundation, Chester County Estate Planning Council, and the Chester County Chamber of Business and Industry.

In 1994, John used his legal skills to help incorporate the Chester County Community Foundation. In 1996, Wiggie became involved in the founding circle of Chester County Fund for Women and

Girls. John and Wiggie have been crucial leaders helping the Community Foundation thrive, taking on leadership roles as Board Chair, Nominating Chair, and co-chairing major fundraising events including a decade of Giving for Good Galas and Sweet Charity events. In 2003, John was named Emeritus Board member of the Community Foundation. Wiggie was named Emeritus in 2011.

In 2003, the First National Bank Board of Directors elected John to succeed Charles Swope as Chairman and CEO. In that role, John was called upon to support a myriad of Chester County causes. John believes strongly that a community bank must be ingrained into the fabric of the community, hence First National supported the community not only financially, but also by providing volunteers and technical expertise to hundreds of Chester County nonprofits. In 2010, First National merged with Tower Bancorp, which merged with Susquehanna Bancorp in 2011. John retired in late 2011 and today serves on

several Boards of Directors of private corporations and nonprofits.

Throughout it all, John and Wiggie continued to balance careers and community service. From 2005-2009, John and Wiggie successfully co-chaired the Friends of the Chester County Hospital Cardiac Care Center, a \$33 million capital campaign. In addition to their ongoing Hospital fundraising, Wiggie continues to serve on the Board of the Hospital Foundation.

From 2005-2007, John and Wiggie led the fundraising campaign committee supporting the Performing Arts Center of West Chester University. WCU’s new Swope Music Building and the Performing Arts Center opened in 2007. Wiggie was instrumental in planning the grand opening concert and reception.

A longtime supporter of the Y, John began serving on the Board of the YMCA of the Brandywine Valley in 2005 and was elected Chair of the Board in 2011.

In 2006, John was named Business Person of the Year by the Great Valley Chamber of Commerce, and in 2007 Citizen of the Year by the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce. Also that year, John and Wiggie were awarded West Chester University’s President’s Medallion for Service.

John and Wiggie’s decades of service to Chester County provide a unique vantage point. John has taken on numerous challenging leadership positions in times of organizational change, and he is a trusted counselor and strategist. Wiggie is a special events dynamo. They both are energetic, passionate, tireless ambassadors, recruiting new leadership and spearheading major fundraising campaigns. John and Wiggie generously share their hard-earned experience as innumerable charities seek their wisdom, guidance, experience, networks, and perspective.

John and Wiggie always lead the way personally and professionally, inspiring others to serve and to give abundantly.

