



fund highlights

FRANCIS J. SNYDER FOUNDATION – established 2007

Francis J. Snyder (“Fritz”) has spent his life in a small city nestled in dairy country in central New York, living a very solid, simple life.

Fritz was the product of a faith- and love-filled Catholic home. His Dad was a factory worker and his Mom a homemaker. Fritz learned about sharing from day one. While his parents “made do” with what they were blessed with, he watched, learned and appreciated. Fritz’s mom made fried cakes every Saturday morning. It could not have been a coincidence that the paperboy “collected” every Saturday just as those fried cakes were being shaken in a bag of powdered sugar. The paperboy was always invited in and treated to a doughnut.

Grandma Snyder had a brother who during the Depression was in danger of losing his home to taxes. Grandma somehow found a way to take care of the tax bill and preserve her brother’s home and dignity. Grandpa Snyder worked hard and was never out of work. Grandma Snyder worked hard at home and found ways to stretch her family’s budget including some years seeing that her brother’s coal bin was filled for the cold winter. Grandma used to say that she would walk the length of Main Street to save a nickel. More on that “saved nickel” to follow.

At 18, Fritz started working at the same factory where his own Dad was employed. At 28, he married his sweetheart and life partner, Loretta Ryan. Together they built their own faith-and love-filled family. They brought 9 children into the world and so far have celebrated 61 anniversaries together. They are proud of their 31 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

Loretta was born and raised on a farm near a small village 30 miles from Fritz. Farm life was tough. The Ryan family always had a wholesome dinner on the table through her parent’s hard work and ingenuity; but there was not much left over after the basic necessities were met. When Fritz and Loretta married, Loretta herself did not realize how difficult it was for her own dear mother, recently widowed and with young children at home. Fritz and Loretta began sending her mother money when they had a bit extra. This may have been the beginning of Fritz and Loretta’s charity work together.

In the early years of their family, somehow Fritz and Loretta managed to sponsor a seminarian, Father Joseph Arackaparambil, a Catholic priest in Kerala, India.



Fritz and Loretta valued Catholic education and saw to it that their children attended Catholic School. Fritz himself entered St. Mary’s School the first year it opened – 1928 – and all nine Snyder children went there, as well as 13 of the 31 grandkids.

Back to that “saved nickel”. Fritz has always gotten a tremendous amount of pleasure out of giving; yet he never had a large coffer from which to give. In New York State it is law that carbonated beverages have a nickel deposit attached. Fritz began collecting castaway cans and bottles and returning them for the cash. What has he received from this endeavor? Fritz gets a tremendous amount of exercise from walking, and he has several favorite charities to which he donates the proceeds of those castaway nickels! He has collected thousands of nickels and given away hundreds and hundreds of dollars. He has “walked the length of Main Street” to save a nickel and he has exemplified his own dear mom’s generosity.

After Fritz and Loretta lost their son, Gary, in a car accident in 1979, they started a memorial scholarship in Gary Snyder’s name at St. Mary’s School. Years later the existence of that scholarship gave Tom (the ninth) and Alicia an idea. They saw the joy that Fritz received from giving and they wanted to help him to do what he really enjoys.

The Francis J. Snyder Foundation at the Chester County Community Foundation was born. Tom explains “My dad is a humble, happy, and content man. He doesn’t have a lot of wants. His needs are met. He gets such joy out of giving to his charities. Why not help him give now, instead of giving in his name, later?”

Each year Tom and Alicia give Pops a handful of grant distribution forms for his August 1st birthday and ask him to make his gift-giving choices. Pops loves to be able to make a difference with generosity. Tom adds “It’s the best present we could give him!”

Fritz and Loretta now spend their summers in a cozy home on Tully Lake in New York. (Fritz likes to say he helped his sons build it, but of course HE built it with some help from his sons.) They enjoy winters in Florida. Wherever they are, Tully or Florida, Fritz makes it a point to attend daily Mass. The Snyder children and their spouses are all in awe of the faith-filled life their parents have enjoyed together and the generosity that they have always practiced.