

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

DECEMBER 31, 2014

Biggest Gifts of Year Topped by New \$1-Billion Foundation



JOE ROBBINS/GETTY IMAGES

The top donation of 2014 was a \$1-billion bequest from Ralph Wilson, Jr., a Detroit businessman who owned the Buffalo Bills football team.

By Maria Di Mento

The ultra-rich continued to give big to American nonprofits in the past year, with the sum of the 10 largest single donations of the year nearly equaling the combined top 10 of 2013.

The top donation of 2014 was a \$1-billion bequest from Ralph Wilson, Jr., a Detroit businessman who owned the Buffalo Bills football team. He died in March at age 95, and now his heirs are deciding how best to adhere to his wishes as his charitable

foundation expands.

No. 2 was a \$650-million pledge from the 83-year-old businessman Ted Stanley, who made one of the biggest commitments ever to mental-health research with a donation to the Broad Institute.

Still, even though the 10 biggest gifts of the year totaled about the same as last year, the top donations have yet to recover to the sums America's super-wealthy gave before the downturn. In 2007, the 10 biggest gifts totaled \$4.1-billion, compared with 2014's \$3.3-billion and 2013's \$3.4-billion. Even so, the past two years have been much stronger than the years after the financial crisis, when the totals struggled to exceed \$2.5-billion.

Young Tech Entrepreneurs

The robust stock market, plus other strong economic signs, is pumping up giving not just by billionaires but also multimillionaires. According to *The Chronicle's* data, all gifts of publicly reported donations of \$1-million or more totaled nearly \$11-billion in 2014, compared with \$9.6-billion in 2013.

Among the other reasons big gifts are surging: Many nonprofits are running ambitious capital campaigns. Harvard, which is trying to set a new record by raising \$6.5-billion in a single drive, received two of the donations on the list. The financiers Gerald and Ronnie Chan, along with other relatives who make up one of Hong Kong's wealthiest families, gave \$350-million to its public health school. Another financier, Kenneth Griffin, provided \$150-million for financial aid.

In 2013, the release of *The Chronicle's* list marked a milestone, because it was the first time a couple under age 30 made the single biggest gift—Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan donated nearly \$1-billion in Facebook stock.

While the two biggest gifts in 2014 were from men over 80, the top 10 list again reinforced the important role young technology wealth is playing in changing the face of philanthropy. Nicholas Woodman, 39, and his wife, Jill, 38, who founded the GoPro camera company, were No. 3 with their \$500-million donation to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Larry Page, the 41-year-old co-founder of Google, made the fifth-largest gift, with more than \$175-million donated to his family fund.

While most of the big donations went to colleges, research institutes, or foundations, perhaps the most unusual contribution among the largest came from Barry Diller and Diane von Furstenberg, who donated \$130-million through their foundation to the Hudson River Park Trust to create a new greenway and performance space in New York City.

The Chronicle's annual ranking is based on the 10 biggest publicly announced single gifts; often more than 10 gifts appear on the list because of ties. The tally does not include donations of artwork or gifts from anonymous donors.

In February, *The Chronicle* will unveil its annual ranking of the 50 most-generous donors, a list based on total donations in 2014, not just single gifts and not just those announced to the public.

Biggest Gifts Announced by Individuals and Their Foundations in 2014

Amount	Donor	Purpose or beneficiary
\$1-billion (estimated bequest)	Ralph Wilson Jr., founder of the Buffalo Bills football team	Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation
\$650-million (pledge)	Ted Stanley, a businessman	Broad Institute, for research on the genetics of psychiatric disorders
\$500-million	Nicholas and Jill Woodman, founders of the GoPro camera company	Silicon Valley Community Foundation
\$350-million	The Chan family and the Morningside Foundation; Gerald and Ronnie Chan co-founded the Morningside Group, a private equity and venture capital firm	Harvard School of Public Health
\$177.3-million	Larry Page, a co-founder of Google	Carl Victor Page Memorial Foundation
\$150-million (pledge)	Kenneth Griffin, a financier	Harvard University, for financial aid
\$130-million (pledge)	Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation; Barry Diller is chairman of IAC/InteractiveCorp and Diane von Furstenberg is a fashion designer	Hudson River Park Trust, for a new park
\$125-million (pledge)	T. Denny Sanford, chairman of United National Corporation	Sanford Health, for genetic testing programs
\$120-million (pledge)	Ernest Rady, a real-estate developer	Rady Children's Hospital San Diego, for a genomics institute
\$110-million	Sidney Kimmel Foundation; Mr. Kimmel founded Jones Apparel Group	Thomas Jefferson University, for its medical college