

## PAUL GUENTHER



Paul Guenther served as President of one of Wall Street's legendary well-reputed firms, Paine Webber. In this position, and earlier at Manufacturers Hanover Trust, he developed a broad network of contacts not only in the financial community but across New York's social spectrum. When he later served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Fordham University and, from 1996 to 2006, as Chairman of the Board of the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center, this acute sense of the urban social and political landscape aided his efforts as a passionate supporter of the arts. The Philharmonic's annual fund more than doubled during Paul's ten years in charge, and this success was largely due to his almost magical connections.

Meantime, a few hours' drive upstate, he and Diane had bought a property in remote Grahamsville, and in 1970 had begun to build a house they somehow even then knew would be meaningful to them and their children for a lifetime. The kind of connections one makes here in the Catskills are of a sort quite different from those made in

the big-city arts and finance worlds, and Paul began to cherish the genuineness and purity of the acquaintanceships and friendships he formed here. He still recalls in detail the finest class he taught in Sunday School at the local church. Among his brilliant students were several whose families worked and lived at Frost Valley. His own young children, needing diversion, enjoyed long rides in the country, so he and Diane drove the back roads, until one day discovering, up on the hill, the Forstmann Castle (to which Paul first responded: "Wow!"); soon they explored the whole of Frost Valley. Halbe Brown befriended him. Two of his and Diane's children – Matt and Liz – attended summer camp. Before long he was invited by Halbe and Jim Kellogg (then President) to join the Board as a trustee.

When a reporter interviewed Paul at the time he announced his departure from the Philharmonic chairmanship, he noted: "My father always said, 'Do what you want to do – but do it well.'" "Why did I leave Wall Street?" he added. "I'd had a pretty good run. I've always tried to do what made me happy – I go where 'happy' is," Paul said. "So what if others had made more money? My parents gave me a strong sense of giving back." Paul Guenther believes in the vital responsibility of philanthropy and in the crucial importance of non-profit organizations in particular, and affiliates only with those that are capable of making a comprehensive impact. Today, in a sense, we celebrate with gratitude his decision to choose Frost Valley as a locus of his father's philosophy of giving. In Frost Valley Paul discovered, as he puts it, "one-stop shopping for everything that's good in the non-profit world: programs to foster environmental awareness and good health, helping city kids get to the country, helping children with special needs."

As a trustee, almost immediately, he began to advocate for a better health care facility at the camp. What Paul dreamed of for Frost Valley long seemed beyond our scope, beyond our capacity to fund-raise and, in the context of other priorities, took some years to take hold. In all the years between his first advocacy of a new wellness center and the time it was built in 2008, Paul strategically gave generous annual gifts to fund the planning process. He had by then succeeded Woody English as Chairman, and continued promoting wellness both as a matter of responsible health care and emergency responsiveness and as an opportunity to teach children how to take care of themselves in a world of endemic obesity, diabetes, and poor diet choices. Finally, working with CEO Jerry Huncosky, trustees Hunter Corbin and Fenn Putman, and fellow donor Eva Gottscho, his dream was realized. **Characteristically, Paul put his money where his mouth has been: he supported the building of Frost Valley's new Wellness Center with an extraordinary, organization-changing gift of \$1 million.** No one who attended the opening of the Guenther Family Wellness Center will ever forget the look of hopeful pride on Paul's face. "Do what you want to do – but do it well," his father had said, "Go where 'happy' is." Happy is the teenager with a heart transplant able to attend camp for two weeks, while his parents get a much-needed rest, because of Paul's vision to build a facility in which pediatric cardiologists could properly work. Happy is the boy with a diagnosis requiring the dispensing of complex meds in complex daily intervals, who can hike out to his overnight camping site knowing that the nurses had the institutional wherewithal to care for him in case of emergency. Happy is the girl who can supportively learn about her own well-being, how to take care of herself, how to enjoy a wellness lifestyle, talking in a seminar room with her counselor and a nurse, in a facility that is no longer about applying band-aids or making do until the ambulance arrives.

Paul loves the broad scope of the Frost Valley project, and the community of staff and volunteers here simply love him for his audacity and commitment. "Frost Valley is unique," Paul Guenther has said, "in that it touches so many people in so many different and wonderful ways and provides an incredible service to the entire metropolitan area." Members of the Board of Trustees of the Frost Valley YMCA with pride of collegiality and gratitude are pleased to induct Paul B. Guenther—visionary supporter of non-profit organizations and our long-time leader—into the Frost Valley Hall of Fame.