GIVING BACK

How a family's legacy became one of Minnesota's biggest charitable organizations.

Philanthropy: a love story

How to help when natural disasters strike, page 14 • Minnesota leads in work with refugees, page 20
Gerald and Henrietta Raubenhorst on their first date at St. Thomas' Homecoming Dance.

Provided
Giving refuge

Minnesota is at the forefront of dealing with the largest global refugee crisis since World War II.

By SHEILA REGAN
Special to the Star Tribune

We see the images in the media: people sometimes half-way across the world in desperate situations, fleeing their homes because of war, famine or natural disasters. Not since World War II has there been such a large number of people displaced from their homes, stranded in camps or placed in countries where they don’t know the language or culture and find themselves facing a whole new set of challenges.

The desire to help with the global refugee crisis is palpable, but knowing how to help can be daunting. Displaced people are often far away, and many different organizations are aiming at providing help. Becoming informed about the issue, and the many arms at work to help refugees, is the first step.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees clearly outlines the staggering numbers of the current world refugee crisis: 65.6 million displaced people worldwide, of whom 22.5 million are refugees, 10 million are “stateless” and 39.3 million are resettled.

The state of Minnesota also provides information about refugee populations in the Twin Cities and in places like St. Cloud and Rochester. You can connect with resettlement agencies (see sidebar) that provide support to refugees making their lives here.

“We are at the forefront of what’s happening, just as a source of information,” said Jane Graupman, executive director of the International Institute of Minnesota (IIMN). “We are willing to educate about what the facts are.”

Graupman adds that far from being a burden, refugees coming into the United States are adding to the economy. According to the New York Times, a draft report from the Department of Health and Human Services this year found that refugees brought in $63 billion more in government revenues in a decade than they cost.

“Immigrants have always been a part of our economic engine here,” Graupman said.

Volunteering

Another option is to interact with refugee communities themselves. “One challenge with dealing with the refugee crisis is that it is so vast,” said Michele Garnett McKenzie, advocacy director for Minneapolisa-based Advocates for Human Rights. “No amount of

COVER STORY

PHILANTHROPY: A LOVE STORY

Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhorst worked their way out of hard times with the goal of making a difference. Their legacy is GHR Foundation, one of Minnesota’s largest philanthropic organizations.

BY SHANNON FRATHER • shannon.frather@startribune.com

One of Gerald Rauenhorst’s earliest childhood memories was of walking behind the family wagon, loaded down with possessions. The Catholic family of 10 had lost their southwestern Minnesota farm to foreclosure in the 1930s and were now destitute to scratch by as tenant farmers.

Yet those formative hardships couldn’t dim the ingenuity and generosity that came to define Rauenhorst.

Rauenhorst, with the support and encouragement of his wife, Henrietta, grew up to become one of Minnesota’s most successful contractors. His company, the Opus Group — a series of commercial real estate development, construction and design companies — helped sculpt the Minneapolis skyline. The couple also became one of the state’s most generous philanthropic teams, quietly giving millions to local and global causes close to their hearts until their deaths in 2010 and 2014.

Now Gerald and Henrietta’s vast fortune is being rolled into what will be one of Minnesota’s largest philanthropies: GHR Foundation.

The Rauenhorst’s youngest child, Amy Rauenhorst Goldman, runs the Minneapolis-based foundation.
GHR Foundation has a really important voice that contributes to greater understanding of peace-building in conflicts and among religions.

Nancy Lindborg, president of United States Institute of Peace

Gerald Rauenhorst as a young poultry farmer in 1940.

PE

Haiti
Paul Evans after FMSC
Mambo Pack meals.

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- GHR continued from 5
dation, which has assets around $495 million that are expected to eclipse $1 billion when her par-
en’s estate is settled. That could propel GHR into the top five best-endowed philanthropies in the state, funding everything from Catholic elementary schools and universities in the Twin Cities to a peacemakers’ conference this fall in India where young leaders from war-torn nations will meet with the Dalai Lama.

"GHR has a really impor-
tant voice that contributes to greater understanding of peace-
buiding in conflicts and peace-
buiding among religions. That's really a critical issue for us to grapple with globally," said Nancy Lindborg, president of Washington, D.C.-based United States Institute of Peace, which is collaborating on the Dalai Lama conference. "We work with other foundations, but the greater depth of the partnership is what GHR really stands out.

Over the past decade, GHR grants and commitments have totaled $75 million, of which $175 million went to local recipi-
ents. The foundation funds global development with an emphasis on peacemaking and supporting children and fami-
lies, health research, including work on Alzheimer’s disease at the Mayo Clinic and Harvard and Catholic education, includ-
ing the couple’s alma mater, the University of St. Thomas, St. Catherine University and Mar-
quartet University in Milwaukee, St.

Thomas President Julie Sullivan said she doesn’t think the school would be what it is today without Gerald Rauen-
horst, not only because of his generosity but his vision and boldness. "What he cared about was giving opportunity to people and giving people the education they needed to fully realize their potential," she said. GHR continues on 8 ->
In life, the Raunehorst family long resisted publicizing their giving. Gerald Raunehorst declined St. Thomas’ offer to name its College of Business after him (he later accepted the use of his business name, Opus). Now Goldman, realizing that brand recognition can deepen partnerships and the foundation’s work, is opening up about her parents’ love story, her life’s work and legacy.

Gerald Raunehorst grew up farming in Olivia, Minn., while Henrietta “Hank” Schmoll, the daughter of dairy farmers, grew up 5 miles away in Bird Island. 

“His childhood by any standard was tough,” Goldman said. “To help keep the family afloat, he started a series of small businesses as a youngster, including raising turkeys—he later recalled it as a miserable enterprise—and running the high school baseball-field concession stand. He and his brothers built a plane from a kit and he taught flying lessons to pay for college.”

Raunehorst, a ‘Tommie,’ asked Henrietta, a home economics student at St. Kate’s, to attend homecoming. They quickly became a couple, staying together even as Henrietta left college for a year to help on the farm after her father’s sudden death and Gerald moved to Milwaukee to earn a second degree in civil engineering.

Their children cherish a cache of love letters written between the two. They were among the first generation in their families to go to college, and money—or the lack of it—was always on their minds.

“I love the spirit and optimism my parents had at that age,” said Goldman. “They wrote, ‘What a good life we are going to build together. We are going to raise a family and make a difference,’ They were scrambling but they felt so lucky to be going to college.”

They married in 1950. Gerald went to work for a Wisconsin construction firm, but was dismayed by what he saw as poor-quality work. With his wife’s urging, he started his own firm.

Gerald and Henrietta on their wedding day in 1950.

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"I love the spirit and optimism my parents had. They wrote, 'What a good life we are going to build together. We are going to raise a family and make a difference.'”

Amy Goldman, Gerald and Henrietta's daughter and CEO and chair of the GHR Foundation.

The Raunshierts met Mother Teresa in 1981.

GHR continued from 8
in the couple's small Richfield home in 1958 with $2,500 he bor-
rowed from his brother. The new company was chosen to build a
Lutheran church in Olivia.

In time, Opus helped pioneer the "design-build" model of con-
struction, one that relies on keeping a range of skills in-house, from
architecture to engineering and construction, to better control
the quality and cost. Opus' legacy
includes the halo-topped Capella
Tower in downtown Minneapolis
and Maturi Arena at the Univer-
sity of Minnesota.

"They knew they were in-
credibly lucky in life," Goldman said.
"They knew they were no differ-
ent from that waitress working
her way through college because
that used to be them."

Raunshierts stepped back from
day-to-day operations in 2005.
The Great Recession in 2008
rolled the real estate industry and
Opus, then run by one of Raun-
shierts' sons and outside leader-
ship, and resulted in bankruptcy
reorganizations and litigation.

Through it all, Raunshierts
never lost sight of his goal to leave
a legacy foundation that helped
others, his family said. The couple
had quietly founded GHR in the
1960s. In an effort to give back to
the community
"He was very clear his personal
wealth would go into the founda-
tion," Goldman said.

Building from the Inside
The foundation, which includes a mix of family and non-
family directors on its board, also
relies on what they call a "design-
built" model of philanthropy.

Instead of simply writing checks, GHR partners with the schools
and nonprofits to craft programs
and solve social problems.

In 2015, GHR spent $96 million
on global development includ-
ing an ongoing partnership with
the Institute of Peace, a congres-
sionally funded organization
that promotes global stability by
reducing violent conflicts abroad.

Other international charities
GHR supports include the Spoon
Foundation, which provides nutri-
tional support to vulnerable chil-
dren to prevent family separation
in 12 countries including Zambi.
s to recovery

...major disasters. But some forms of help are better than others.

could tell that he needed that one dollar. But in that moment, he needed it more to help the people who were affected by that terrible event.

In the wake of disasters, natural or otherwise, Americans can be counted on to step up and aid people who are suffering, said Hansen, who has worked with the Red Cross nearly 30 years and is now CEO for the Minnesota region. Hansen returned in October from Florida, where he worked in a field shelter that housed more than 1,000 people, ranging from 4 days old to 100 years old.

The second half of 2017, unfortunately, has brought more reasons to help than usual. Hurricanes battered populations in...