

Parker has established a solid foundation for philanthropy

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To Tom Parker, an important part of making money is making sure it does some good.

As president of the Hutton Foundation, Mr. Parker, recipient of a 2001 Santa Barbara News-Press Lifetime Achievement Award, does just that.

Last year, the foundation handed out grants to more than 70 organizations in Santa Barbara, ranging from the Alzheimer's Association to Zona Seca. Among the wide variety of social services given a helping hand were the Avon Breast Cancer Walk, CALM,

Community Kitchen, Family Service Agency, Habitat for Humanity, Rescue Mission, Unity Shoppe and many more. A financial boost also went to various shelter services, numerous youth programs and local schools and colleges.

Mention the word "philanthropist" and a vision may come to mind of a grandfatherly figure. White-haired, definitely.

Not Tom Parker.

A baby boomer, he sails and surfs at the Rincon, just as he did growing up in Santa Barbara in the 1960s, the son of parents who did social service as a

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RAFAEL MALDONADO / NEWS-PRESS

"What a place to grow up," Tom Parker says of Santa Barbara, where he surfed and sailed as a boy.

Philanthropist puts economic savvy to good use

■ PARKER

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matter of course.

His late father, Jack, was a butcher, working at Colville's Market in Montecito's Upper Village in the 1940s. The family lived in an apartment across the street on East Valley Road, said Parker, 54, who attended Franklin Elementary School.

The elder Parker eventually got his own butcher shop, G&M Market on Milpas Street, and his son helped out before leaving for college. Later, Jack Parker bought landmark Tiny's Restaurant, which he owned for 20 years.

Mr. Parker's mother, Elizabeth, who worked for the city Recreation Department, helped develop the art show at the beach, he said. She also organized dances, changed the Cabrillo Pavilion into an arts center and ran youth theater programs. "She was always involved in nonprofits," he said.

Like other kids, Tom rode his bike to the Museum of Natural History and took part in the Sea Shells youth sailing program at the beach. "What a place to grow up," he says.

He credits Santa Barbara High School football coach Mike Moropoulos with helping him get a

scholarship to California Lutheran University, where he got bachelor's degree in economics and an MBA. "Most important," he said, "I met my wife there."

He and Susan, originally from Orange County, have been married 25 years. They have two sons: Jess, a student at the University of Pennsylvania, and Chris, a senior at Santa Barbara High School.

For a few years, Mr. Parker taught in Ventura. "I loved it," he said, though it was never his intent to remain in education.

Returning to Santa Barbara, he started his own company building and renovating apartments.

"In the early '80s, I was asked to take over a company called Hutton Associates, an investment and real estate company in Orange County," he said. The firm, owned by his wife's aunt, Betty L. Hutton, built high-rise office buildings throughout Southern California. Mr. Parker, with his economics background, saw that the firm needed some help—but knew it had potential. And there was this carrot: If Tom took over the company and it was successful, Betty Hutton said, "We'll take a lot of the profits and run a charitable foundation."

Mr. Parker ran the company for 15

years, driving back and forth from Santa Barbara. "I wanted my family to grow up in Santa Barbara," he said. "I would not move."

Six years ago, with the firm flourishing, "Betty and I looked at each other and decided it was time to start funding the foundation."

Today, Mr. Parker is involved solely in philanthropy. "That's my love." And he's returned to Santa Barbara, which has become a focus of the foundation's philanthropic efforts. There are also significant grants in Orange County, particularly to Chapman College.

His focus here has been working with the many nonprofit organizations. Helping others is a way of life in Santa Barbara, he said. "It used to be service clubs. We've just evolved."

With his economics background, creating the foundation became a love, particularly as it fit into Santa Barbara.

"I get to see it from a different side," he said, adding that one of 10 employees works for a nonprofit.

Mr. Parker has set up a bank, where he gives low-interest loans to nonprofit organizations to help them buy buildings in Santa Barbara County. He also established an endowment program.

Mr. Parker is president of the

Foundation Roundtable, a group of 35 private and community foundations in Santa Barbara. The foundation has purchased buildings to provide office space, including the old Coca-Cola bottling plant in Santa Maria, which will be used as a children's museum and nonprofit offices. And the roundtable also offers scholarships to those who work at nonprofit organizations to take a program in fiscal management at UCSB.

David H. Anderson, chairman of the Santa Barbara Foundation Board of Directors, said Mr. Parker has brought a whole new perspective to foundation philanthropy through his program-related investments and helping nonprofit groups purchase buildings. "He has created a unique niche," he said. "He's a firm believer in leverage and making things happen."

"His economics background gives him the ability to think of totally new ways to solve problems," said Mr. Anderson.

And while solving problems and giving back to the community provides a purpose and revitalization, there's more, said Mr. Parker. Helping others is what he was raised to do, what he feels right doing.

"It makes me happy. I've not given anything up to give back."

Editor's note

Tom Parker, Sue Adams, George Bliss and Dorcas and Ted Hatlen will be presented with News-Press Lifetime Achievement Awards on Saturday at the Four Seasons Biltmore. News-Press columnist Barney Brantingham will also be honored for a lifetime dedicated to local journalism.

The fund-raising awards dinner also signals the beginning of the News-Press Christmas Fund drive, which raises money for Visiting Nurse and Hospice Care of Santa Barbara and the Rehabilitation Institute of Santa Barbara. These organizations use campaign money to buy medical equipment and make rehabilitation services available to area residents.

The fund was established by the late T.M. Storke, News-Press publisher from 1901 to 1964.

Donations may be mailed to News-Press Christmas Fund, P.O. Box 1359, Santa Barbara 93102.