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Lew Feldstein has left a mark, by the Concord Monitor

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For nearly a quarter-century Lew Feldstein, a one-time wine steward for actor John Wayne, civil rights activist and long-distance swimmer, has led the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. It was largely at Feldstein's insistence that the philanthropic foundation became a major player not just in handing out money but also in guiding public policy.

Feldstein, 69, will serve a while longer — his replacement has not been chosen — but his official retirement party took place last week. Under his leadership, the foundation grew to become a major force in the state, and fostered a host of nonprofit organizations that work to make New Hampshire a better place.

"We really think about the difference between philanthropy and charity. Philanthropy moves society rather than just alleviating suffering. ... Public policy gets at the conditions that create the problems," former Concord mayor and foundation board member Martin Gross once said of the foundation under Feldstein.

The roster of nonprofit organizations given financial support or launched by the foundation on Feldstein's watch is long. But the chief impact of his tenure is a slow change in the culture of the state, from one famous for going it alone to one that recognizes, albeit imperfectly, that success is purchased not with money but with social capital. It is when networks of people, who may not share an ideology but who like, trust and respect each other, work together that the common good is most readily advanced.

Feldstein repeats that message at every opportunity. He has voiced it at meetings, in lectures and in *Better Together*, the book on successful community-building that he co-authored with Harvard professor Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*. Last month, it was his advice to Plymouth State University graduates.

"None of us work by ourselves. The most valuable people in any business or organization are those with the widest circle of relationships who make this work with the people around them," Feldstein told students.

New Hampshire is different both from what it was and what it might have become because of the foundation's work under Feldstein. The foundation was quick to embrace the Society for Protection of New Hampshire's Forests' then-president Paul Bofinger's goal of creating a public-private partnership to protect more state land from development. That effort became the Trust for New Hampshire Lands, which added 100,000 acres of protected land.

Feldstein and the charitable foundation's board didn't, and doesn't, always wait for some person or organization to come to them for help to solve a problem. Sometimes, when the foundation sees a problem, it works to create a nonprofit to remedy it. That's what happened when the Legislature's need for accurate and unbiased information on which to base its decisions became too big to ignore. To meet that need, the foundation created the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, a nonpartisan public policy think tank.

Many worthy organizations might have limped along or not existed at all were it not for the foundation's help. Among them are New Futures, the statewide nonprofit that combats alcohol and drug abuse; the state's first fund to prevent child abuse; an effort to winterize the homes of low-income residents, the board that is guiding the state's transportation future; the committee to put in place the state's plan to reduce climate change; and the state's Best Schools program.

Under Feldstein's leadership, the foundation grew to become the state's largest philanthropic organization, but it did so quietly. It has not been perceived as, nor is it, a relentless fundraising machine. Money is drawn to the foundation by its goals and its success. When Feldstein took over in 1986 it was a \$25 million foundation. He will leave it a \$375 million foundation that each year gives away about \$30 million, much of it as college scholarships.

Feldstein is retiring, but he won't rest because he can't. He'll continue to see problems and use his vast network to address them. It's in his nature.

— Concord Monitor

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