

# Neither 'extreme' nor 'secretive'

**A**s recklessly irresponsible commentary goes, it would be hard to top Tom Randall's bizarre characterization of The Heinz Endowments' relationship with the Tides-Center. ("The Heinz Endowments have teamed up with a secretive left-wing group," Sunday, Dec. 14). The column is so riddled with errors and shadings of truth that it's tough to know where to begin to respond, but here are a few salient facts the writer neglected to mention:

■ All of the funding provided by the endowments to the Tides Center and, more recently, to Tides of Western Pennsylvania, has been explicitly dedicated to supporting projects in or important to our region. None of those resources were used to support the national groups mentioned by Mr. Randall, despite his implication to the contrary.

■ Neither the Tides Center nor Tides of Western Pennsylvania are grantmaking institutions

that use funding from the endowments and other foundations to support activities of their own choosing.

Rather, they provide administrative oversight and support for specified projects, typically short-term or start-up programs that lack the capacity to administer pay-

roll and other human-resources functions. In addition to providing these services, Tides promotes accountability by ensuring that projects are well managed and that foundation resources are used in keeping with their charitable purpose.

■ The endowments were only one of several regional foundations that came together to support the creation of Tides of Western Pennsylvania in 2001. After many years of funding a

variety of regional programs through the national Tides Center, these foundations believed that the volume of projects in our area merited the creation of a more local resource. We also believed that the projects in our area would benefit from having a local provider of essential administrative services.

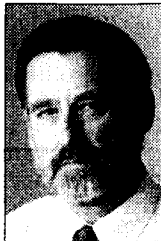
■ Among the "extreme left-wing activist groups" supported by the endowments through Tides have been a Keys2Work program to test the employment skills of high school students; the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership's drafting of a plan to conserve Pennsylvania's rich array of native species; the Sprout Fund's efforts to retain young people in Pittsburgh; Cool Space Locator's promotion of urban office space; Sustainable Pittsburgh's leadership of an ongoing regional dialogue on critical growth and equity issues; and the Pennsylvania Energy Project's advancement of renewable energy. Hardly extremist,

these and similar groups supported by the endowments and other foundations are engaging our community at all levels to help address the serious challenges confronting our region.

■ There is nothing "secretive" about which programs the endowments support through Tides of Western Pennsylvania. We report these grants on our Forms 990-PF, our annual report, and our Web site ([www.heinz.org](http://www.heinz.org)), always taking pains to note the specific projects we are supporting. We invite your readers to look for themselves — the information is all there.

Had Mr. Randall ever contacted the endowments prior to publication of his screed, we might have been able to clarify these issues for him. Call it a hunch, but we think Mr. Randall's intention was not to let the facts get in the way of a good argument.

Maxwell King is president of The Heinz Endowments.



King