



PITTSBURGH WALK OF FAME

Celebrating Southwestern Pennsylvanians Who Have Left Their Mark on America



ANNUAL REPORT | 2025

OUR MISSION

To create a landmark honoring people with ties to the Pittsburgh region who have influenced America's cultural heritage and to educate the public about the honorees and their accomplishments.

OUR VISION

To be a major tourist attraction and a source of pride for people living in the Pittsburgh area.

OUR VALUES

We value the many diverse people from the Pittsburgh region whose talents, skills, and genius have contributed significantly to science and technology, the arts and humanities, and American industry, democracy, and culture.





INAUGURAL INDUCTION CEREMONY

October 20, 2025

Presented by **HIGHMARK**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I couldn't find the right words.

Standing at the podium on the morning of October 20, 2025, looking out at the many people—nearly a thousand—who had gathered for the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame's inaugural induction ceremony, I couldn't find the right words to describe the moment; I was too overwhelmed with emotion.

I felt amazement that so many people had shown up. This being a first-time public event, there had been no way to predict what the turnout would be, and we had taken a shot in the dark in deciding to set up 600 chairs. What if many of them remained empty?

I needn't have worried.

I also felt gratitude. Deep gratitude. Among the faces in the crowd were the remarkable board members who had committed themselves to making my years-long vision a reality. There were also funders—grant-makers, corporate sponsors, and individual donors—who had generously contributed the dollars necessary to underwrite this initiative. There were our partners—people who had worked with us to fabricate the bronze markers at the heart of this venture, to install them in the sidewalk, to provide that sidewalk, and to develop the website and app that give the walk its public face. And there were the ceremony participants—people who had accepted the invitation to take part in something new, trusting that it would be done in a manner that would make them proud of their association with it.

Yes, there was deep, deep gratitude.

And finally, I felt relief. Relief that this was actually happening, that the hard work of getting started was behind us—and that it wasn't raining!

I remained on a high of amazement, gratitude, and relief for about a month afterward, as notes, emails, and phone calls came in, many praising the day as being joyous and uplifting. Then Pittsburgh Magazine named the launch of the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame one of its Top Ten "Most Impactful and Important Moments of 2025."

Joyous. Uplifting. Impactful. Important.

Those are, indeed, the right words.

Nancy Polinsky Johnson
Founder & Executive Director



People Filled the Street

On this crisp fall morning, nearly 1,000 people gathered in front of the Strip District Terminal on Smallman Street to celebrate the induction of the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame's first ten honorees. It was a festive and uplifting event.

The Ribbon Was Cut

The board of directors joined executive director and founder Nancy Polinsky Johnson (center, flanked by Dan McCaffery of McCaffery Interests to the left and Jim Rudolph, board president, to the right) to cut the ribbon on the walk.



Stars Were Unveiled

Roberto Clemente Jr. and Luis Roberto Clemente unveiled the star honoring their namesake father, the legendary Pittsburgh Pirate. Throughout the ceremony, people associated with other inductees did the same.

Luminaries Were Memorialized

Bronze stars set in granite blocks embedded in the sidewalk were revealed to feature the names of the ten honorees, while narrative plaques tell of their accomplishments and ties to the region.



Star Power Was on Display

Actor Michael Keaton—famously known for his roles as Batman, Beetlejuice, and Birdman—unveiled his own star and then took to the podium with grace, charm, and humor, saying, "This is truly one of the best days of my life."

pittsburghwalkoffame.org



FROM THE PRESIDENT

I have been involved in a number of worthwhile business ventures and community initiatives throughout my life. Which means I've seen more than my fair share of grand openings and ribbon-cuttings. But I can't recall one more personally fulfilling than when the ribbon was cut on the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame.

More than the realization of a dream and the result of years of work—neither of which should be minimized—this new visitor attraction is a gift to Pittsburgh, to the people of this region. It is a gift to future generations,

one that will grow with them. And it is a gift that reflects the collaborative spirit of the Pittsburgh area, a spirit that brings people with vision together with foundations, businesses, and individuals eager to support a big idea.

It's one of the reasons I love living here.

The late historian David McCullough, a beloved native son of Pittsburgh, once addressed a group of his hometown's leaders as they were embarking on a significant renewal initiative for the city.

"Make it a place where people want to bring those they love...to live here," he said. "And make it in keeping with the city's heroic past...preserving a sense that this story that we have...belongs here and is unlike that of anything else in the country."

Those of us involved with building the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame share that commitment to preserving the unique story of this remarkable area. We're doing it by highlighting the stories of individuals with ties to southwestern Pennsylvania who have left their mark on America. And we're doing it on a Strip District sidewalk you can visit any time.

My deepest thanks go to everyone who helped to make 2025 the year that the Pittsburgh Walk of Fame launched. I look forward to watching it grow.

Jim Rudolph
President

OUR FINANCIALS

January – December 2025

INCOME

Contributed Income	\$420,423
Event Income	\$24,100
Interest Income	\$1,923
Total Income	\$446,446

EXPENSES

Ceremony	\$107,655
Salaries	\$82,000
Sidewalk Markers	\$70,823
App Development	\$55,631
Professional Fees	\$16,625
Website	\$8,636
Marketing	\$8,258
Insurance	\$3,149
Office Expenses	\$2,886
Banking & Other Fees	\$1,058
Total Expenses	\$356,721

HBK CPAs & Consultants

CUSTOM APP



This year saw the development of a Pittsburgh Walk of Fame app, designed to enhance the experience of visiting the sidewalk. While it can be opened and used anywhere, it's particularly impressive to see the way it uses the stars on the sidewalk as triggers to access information about each individual honoree. The app offers images, bios, videos, fun facts, and suggestions for other local places to visit that relate to the inductees, and it's extremely user-friendly.



★ Inaugural Honorees ★

George Benson
Nellie Bly
Andrew Carnegie
Rachel Carson
Roberto Clemente

Michael Keaton
Fred Rogers
Jonas Salk
Andy Warhol
August Wilson

We Are Grateful to These Foundations

The Buhl Foundation

Burke Family Foundation

The Grable Foundation

Hillman Foundation

Philip Chosky Private
Foundation Fund of the
Jewish Federation of
Greater Pittsburgh

Robert H. Reakirt
Foundation

We Thank These Businesses and Individuals for Their Generous Support

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Rycon Construction

Walk Champions
Huntington Bank
McCaffery

Platinum Stars
Nancy & David Johnson
Catherine Loevner
Martha & Kent McElhattan
Louise & Jim Rudolph

Trailblazers
Bernstein-Burkley, P.C.
Pittsburgh Pirates

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Shining Stars
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Robin Wertkin

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Bike Share Pittsburgh Inc.
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Walk Productions

**The Many Friends of
the Walk**

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Rudolph, president

An entrepreneur and developer, formerly with McKnight Realty Partners, he has extensive experience as both a franchisor and a franchisee in the food and beverage industry. Jim is involved in numerous philanthropic causes.

Tripp Clarke, vice-president

Co-founder and former co-owner of the local marketing agency Blink, he has also sat on a number of nonprofit boards. In addition, Tripp co-authored *Pittsburgh Born, Pittsburgh Bred*, a book highlighting 500 noteworthy people who have called Pittsburgh home.

Michael Goldstein, treasurer

CFO of Walnut Capital, he has also been a founding board member and president or treasurer of several local nonprofits, including Dress for Success Pittsburgh, Bike Share Pittsburgh, and Carriage House Children's Center. Michael is a licensed certified public accountant and an attorney.

Geraldine "Gerri" Jones, secretary

Retired president of California University of Pennsylvania—the first woman and person of color to hold that position—she spent 46 years in education. Gerri sits on several boards, including Adagio Health, the Washington County Community Foundation, and LeMoyné Community Center.

Priya Amin – Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh, she has worked at corporations including IBM and Nestle. After founding her own marketing consulting firm and launching a company that provided innovative childcare solutions, she now mentors and advises startups.

Kenya T. Boswell – Senior Vice President, Community Affairs at Highmark Health, she previously served as the director of global impact citizenship at BNY Mellon, as well as president for BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania. She sits on numerous nonprofit boards.

Diana Bucco – President of The Buhl Foundation and former president of The Forbes Fund. She launched the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership and was the founding executive director of the Coro Center for Civic Leadership and The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Joel Burstein – CEO and founder of BEAM Collaborative, an advisory firm dedicated to expanding local minority-owned businesses. His expertise comes from 12 years as a manager at Raymond James. He also sits on other boards, including the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western PA.

Martha "Mardi" Isler – Retired from a public policy career focused on early childhood education, she is now a community volunteer and has held leadership roles for the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, Allies for Children, Uncover Squirrel Hill, and Tree Pittsburgh, among others.

Rick Sebak – Public television producer, writer, and on-air host, he has become Pittsburgh's premiere storyteller. During his 38 years at WQED, Rick has chronicled local and regional history and highlighted numerous people in a series of popular and engaging documentaries.

Dean Welch – As vice president of Pittsburgh operations for the development company McCaffery, he oversaw The Terminal, home to the Walk, throughout 2025. Dean holds a Pennsylvania Managing Broker's license and sits on the Community Development Review Committee for Strip District Neighbors.

Contact Us

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