

7/9/2011 11:07 AM

By Tara García Mathewson

Elgin man reaps joy from giving

Mark Seigle's family has had a presence in Elgin since the late 1800s and that's a trend he never wanted to change. There was no youthful rebellion — he always knew he wanted to grow up and take over the family building materials business.

Another family tradition he has never wavered on is philanthropy.

His father started the Seigle Family Foundation in 1980 as a way to donate to various charities and community organizations. When Seigle and his brother Harry took over the business, now Seigle's Cabinet Center, as well as the foundation, the pair continued to give.

"We have always felt, as part of our corporate philosophy, it's imperative that we give back to the community," Seigle said.

The Elgin philanthropist has most recently been honored as a lifetime director of the Elgin Area United Way — a title he shares with only four others.

Seigle got involved with the charity organization in the early 1980s when he returned to Elgin after his college years at the University of Michigan. The United Way has stayed central to his commitment to volunteerism and philanthropy ever since.

"I think it single-handedly does the best job," Seigle said. "It efficiently distributes charitable donations to the most important and deserving causes in our community."

Seigle served on the board of directors from 1993 to 2006, spending time in virtually every board capacity. He dedicated his time as the head of finance, marketing, the campaign and, shortly before retiring, as board chair.

In 1994, he became the first campaign chair to raise more than \$2 million. "Like anything else, you've got to be passionate about what you commit yourself to," Seigle said of his fundraising achievement. Persistence and organization, of course, helped him along.

Seigle said his family first came to Elgin more than 100 years ago, finding a haven in an open-minded community. His grandfather left czarist Lithuania for refuge in the United States and his mother did the same in her exit from Nazi Germany.

"Today it remains an incredibly tolerant community," Seigle said. "You look at the ethnic cross-section and see what America is all about."

That tolerance, combined with what Seigle calls Elgin's self-sufficiency with health care, social services, education and the arts keep him more than satisfied with the "city in the suburbs."

Seigle's presence will continue to mean contributions to local organizations. Beyond the United Way, the Seigle Family Foundation's chosen organizations have included Elgin Community College, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Elgin Academy, Sherman Hospital, the City of Elgin and the YMCA.

"There's no greater honor or thrill than to be able to donate to deserving charities," Seigle said.

The United Way recognition is only the tip of the iceberg in Seigle's lifelong commitment to his community.



Elgin-area philanthropist Mark Seigle was recently honored as a lifetime director for the local United Way. Seigle has been involved with the organization since he moved back to town after college in the early 1980s and served on its board from 1993 to 2006.