Wilson praised for business, philanthropy

BY PAT KIMBROUGH
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HIGH POINT — Fred Wilson Jr.'s name adorns many buildings in High Point, although he wasn't the type of person to draw attention to them, said those who knew him.

The longtime business and philanthropic leader, who died Sunday at age 88, left his mark on the community helping lead Piedmont Chemical Industries to prominence and in charitable giving to High Point University and many other organizations.

"He was obviously a very successful person in the business world," said City Councilman Britt Moore. "When you look at some of the foundational pillars in

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High Point, he was — in my opinion, from the outside looking in — just a quiet, genuine person that kind of didn't seek the limelight."

Wilson's father, Fred Wilson Sr., founded Piedmont Chemical Industries in High Point during the Great Depression, and his son helped grow the specialty chemical manufacturer that supplied the textile industry over the ensuing decades.

The company is still in operation today at its plant at Burton Road and Westchester Drive, and Wilson is credited with helping diversify it to serve not only the textile industry, but other markets like oil and gas, as well as foam, coatings and additives.

After he retired, he gave the naming rights gift to HPU for its Fred Wilson School of Pharmacy in 2015.

"Fred was one of the most generous benefactors this city has ever seen," said HPU President Nido Qubein. "His love for High Point was constantly exhibited with his service on many boards and consistently demonstrated by his loving investments in High Point University, Westchester Country Day, and especially in downtown development."



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Fred Wilson Jr. is shown with his wife, Barbara, in this photo provided by High Point University. Wilson died died Sunday at age 88.

It was in this latter category that he and his wife in 2018 donat-

ed to the city's downtown revitalization efforts in the form of the Fred and Barbara Wilson Plaza, which has become a popular gathering place at the entrance to Truist Point stadium.

"We at the city level have felt his impact for years," Moore said.

Wilson was also praised for his spirit of generosity on a personal level, said Dennis Wall, who worked closely with Wilson and his family through Piedmont Chemical Industries.

"He was just a man who loved everybody — a great man," Wall said. "He always encouraged me to give my all and said, 'You can't go wrong when people trust you.'"