Logistics vet plans $3M annual giving program

BY MEG WALKER
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San Francisco logistics giant Lynn Fritz is poised to give away more than $3 million a year to improve disaster relief efforts around the world.

Through the Fritz Foundation, which he leads, the former CEO and chairman of a multimillion dollar logistics company once based in San Francisco, is launching his first year of philanthropy. Fritz, 60, began focusing on the foundation about a year after United Parcel Service bought Fritz Cos. for $450 million in UPS stock.

His foundation, based in San Francisco, is giving:

■ $500,000 to Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of International Migration. The grant will enable the institute, part of the Foreign Service school, to expand a certificate program to train students for careers in disaster relief management. The funding will also support a new mid-career professional training program for staff of humanitarian organizations.

■ Up to $750,000 to Pepperdine University’s School of Public Policy to help develop courses for humanitarian relief workers.

■ An in-kind donation of $2 million in customized software to the International Federation of the Red Cross based in Geneva, Switzerland, to track the purchase and shipping of items used for disaster relief.

Like a lot of philanthropists, Fritz is guided to some extent by his own experience: Fritz and a daughter graduated from Georgetown; two other daughters attended Pepperdine, where Fritz serves on the board of regents.

Fritz said he intends to give away about $3 million every year indefinitely. His philanthropy is dedicated to improving the systems needed in managing disasters. The field he says really has no formal training despite an increasing number of disasters that have claimed 39,000 lives every year for the last decade.

“We’re utilizing talent and our background expertise to help humanitarian aid organizations,” he said.

His grants to academic institutions, he said, “will essentially allow personnel to be more effective, earlier.” The skills, he said, will be used by future leaders of such organizations as the Peace Corps, Save the Children, and Doctors Without Borders.

“I think it’s an impressive demonstration of what a successful business leader can do with the second half of his life to really make a difference using what he’s learned in the business world,” said James Wilburn, dean of the School of Public Policy at Pepperdine in Malibu.

Fritz said he plans annual investments in Georgetown’s programs dealing with disaster relief. He’d like to sponsor seminars for academic experts in logistics management and leaders from relief agencies.

But Fritz is not limiting his philanthropy to organizations he has been a part of. He and his staff at the institute are working to identify relief agencies in this country and abroad that are interested in their assistance and expertise.

“The institute is really there to help organizations function better and to work better with infrastructure,” he said. “It’s not a high-profile thing to do but it’s important.”

Meg Walker covers philanthropy and nonprofits for the San Francisco Business Times.