



(Photos by Ron Hall)

Paul Orfalea bestows landmark gifts

**\$15 million endows business college,
\$1 million benefits children's center**

by Jeff Bliss

You can copy
all you want and
still be an original.
That is how Paul J.
Orfalea made his
mark in the world.

He succeeded not by imitating other people and their ideas, but by helping others multiply their own efforts. You see, Orfalea is the founder of Kinko's, widely regarded as the world's leading business services chain and tapped by *Fortune* magazine as one of the "100 Best Companies to Work for in America" for three years in a row for its progressive

management. Orfalea has reached out to help make the world a better place to live—and learn—in.

Recently, gifts to Cal Poly from Orfalea and his family's foundation have included \$15 million for the College of Business—a landmark gift which is the largest of its kind in the history of the California State University system and which brings the first named college to Cal Poly—and \$1 million to Cal Poly's children's center, newly renamed the Orfalea Family and ASI Children's Center.

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— Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker



"The generosity of Paul Orfalea and his family will make it possible to transform the talent of our faculty into broader opportunities for students," notes Cal Poly President Warren J. Baker. "The gift to the College of Business will enhance learning by doing, and foster the development of vital programs and the skills students will need to be successful business leaders."

"And with the children's center gift, the Orfalea family becomes a partner with ASI in educating young children and their parents," Baker adds. "This not only has a tremendous impact on Cal Poly, but on society as a whole."

Orfalea's successful business legacy and support to Cal Poly

are stories in themselves. But they do not tell the deeper story of the man himself.

For Orfalea, it was always people and not the bottom line that came first. "Our primary objective was to take care of the customer," he says. "But it has always been important for us to remember to keep things in balance. To work, to love, to play. You have to keep things in perspective."

Before most of corporate America's leading companies even thought of child care, Kinko's included it as part of its employee benefits package at its corporate office. Viewed then by most companies as a social/business experiment, it is now an increasingly common fixture in many

organizations and just one of the reasons why Orfalea—who championed the idea—earned a special place in the hearts of his co-workers. (No matter their position, Orfalea never let his fellow Kinko's workers be referred to as "employees." They were always "co-workers"—just another Orfalea touch.)

From humble beginnings

Thirty-one years ago, Orfalea founded the company best known for photocopying in what can only be described as a shack. The 100-square-foot hamburger stand, located near the University of California at Santa Barbara, was so small that the sole copy machine had to be wheeled out onto the

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sidewalk whenever he was open. His business, tagged “Kinko’s” after his kinky hair, today boasts more than 1,100 locations worldwide. (Kinko’s second store was in San Luis Obispo.)

Much of Kinko’s success can be traced directly to Orfalea’s unique business philosophy, based on his freethinking style and grounded in his passion for retailing, his insistence on taking care of his co-workers and customers, and a sharp eye for opportunity.

Orfalea garnered rave reviews from pundits—and colleagues—for generous incentive programs implemented to stimulate creativity and encourage all 23,000 co-workers at every level to discuss

organizational decisions freely. He also made sure that Kinko’s took a leading role in environmental responsibility.

A new venture— new investments

Last year Orfalea stepped down as Kinko’s chairperson and assumed the role of chairperson emeritus to devote much of his time to new business ventures with his associates.

One of these has been the formation of the Orfalea Family Foundation, which supports various philanthropic efforts, concentrating on early-child-care and infant centers. While the Orfalea College of Business (named in honor of Orfalea’s parents) has been the

largest beneficiary at Cal Poly, it was research and teaching in child development that brought the university to his attention.

A chance meeting with Tom Dalton, an adjunct professor in the College of Liberal Arts, led to a visit by Orfalea to campus, where he met faculty and students.

In addition to his interest in the business college, Orfalea learned more about the ASI children’s center—one of the foremost university children’s centers in California. Already focusing on child-care centers at other schools along the Central Coast, his foundation decided to reach out to Cal Poly.





"Our family has a long-standing commitment to young children, and we are happy to see our contributions make a difference in their families' lives," Orfalea says. "We really believe that early care needs more of this country's focus and attention. We should think of investing in early-care programs the same way we think about investing in college education, because both are essential learning environments in the development of our youth and future leaders."

Overcoming obstacles

Just as it was for Orfalea in business, so is it in philanthropy. From supporting Cal Poly's children's center to

endowing the College of Business, it is still—first and foremost—about people, and about "focusing on Cal Poly's primary objective: taking care of students and faculty."

"Removing obstacles and making it easier to learn is what it's about," he says.

Orfalea knows all about obstacles firsthand. Throughout his life he has dealt with dyslexia, a major learning disability. Just last year, *People Magazine* profiled Orfalea as one of several prominent people who have overcome disabilities and gone on to illustrious careers. He has used his own difficulty to inspire others with the same condition, and to encourage young scientists and teachers

who may someday unlock the myriad mysteries of the way we learn.

"Cal Poly is about learning, and that's what I like," says Orfalea. "We hope to help students take on new challenges and the faculty to develop even closer mentoring relationships, so that they can make learning more accessible. You've got to make students more inquisitive and learning more fun."

Making learning fun is also something Orfalea understands. His recent lectures at the College of Business won the hearts and minds of "some very appreciative audiences," notes William Pendergast, dean of the Orfalea College of Business. Orfalea's presen-

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tations were so well received by students and faculty that he has been invited to return to lecture again.

“We all look forward to Paul continuing to share his unique personal business insights and his 30 years of experience,” Pendergast says.

This month Cal Poly formally dedicates the Orfalea College of Business. The family foundation’s \$15 million gift—earmarked to enhance the quality and scope of business education at the college—creates the Orfalea Family Endowment for Excellence, with a focus on strategic initiatives in entrepreneurship, globalization, and technology through scholarships, faculty development, and program

enhancements. The contribution also includes a \$5 million challenge gift to leverage additional private support for the college and the establishment of endowed professorships in critical areas.

“Cal Poly deserves recognition for encouraging its students to gain experience through hands-on internships and collaboration with businesses, enabling graduates to be well equipped upon entering the business world. It is our hope that this gift will further provide a lifetime foundation for success,” Orfalea notes.

For Orfalea, that “lifetime foundation for success” is more than just a phrase. If you ask him, he will probably tell you that his was set by his parents,

who were “wonderful role models . . . They were people who lived by example.”

That is no doubt a large part of what helped imbue Paul J. Orfalea with a work ethic—and a sense of ethics—that lives on in the people he continues to touch.

And what continues to make him a good man to copy in his own right. **CP**



Paul Orfalea is also the recipient of a gift—from one of the clients of the newly named Orfalea Family and ASI Children’s Center. Assisting the gift-giver is Tonya Iversen, center director. (Photo by Patrick Swadener)