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DONOR OF THE DAY

Alum Makes a Mark With Baruch Park

A Gift of \$1 Million for New Pocket Park

By MELANIE GRAYCE WEST -- July 11, 2013



*Lawrence "Larry"
Field*

Lawrence "Larry" Field has only had one real job in his life, and he tried to get fired while doing it.

He was selling Dove soap—a lot of it—for Lever Bros., but he was restless and underappreciated. He was earning the company millions in sales, but only drawing \$500 a month in salary. He didn't want to work for someone else anymore; he wanted to collect the unemployment. But when he tried to get fired, the plan backfired. His boss wouldn't let him go because he was too good at his job. So, Mr. Field walked.

And he never looked back.

Through a series of lucky connections and a half decade of hard work, Mr. Field made a fortune in real estate. At 82 years old, he is the founder and chairman of NSB Associates, a large real-estate development company in Southern California.

Mr. Field's education at Baruch College gave him the courage to chart his own path. Attending Baruch, then known as the City College of New York Downtown, helped him to become more mature and more aware of the world. Baruch gave him the confidence to

pursue anything he wanted.

"I never had that. I was so shy in high school. I didn't even go to the prom. I hadn't gone out with any girls," recalls Mr. Field, who graduated in 1952 with a degree in business administration. "That was a major change for me. That's why I give to Baruch."

Mr. Field's latest gift of \$1 million, made this year, will support the new pedestrian plaza on 25th Street. The college's center for entrepreneurship is named for Mr. Field. At a recent dinner, he was awarded the college's Newman Medal of Philanthropy for his continued gifts to Baruch.

A native of the Throgs Neck section of the Bronx, Mr. Field is the only child of Hungarian immigrants. Mr. Field's parents dreamed he might become a postal worker or a teacher and urged him to pursue those careers. "That was the highest thing they could think of with great security," he says. "They never thought beyond that."

Mr. Field's father ran a grocery store and worked well into his 70s, never really retiring but instead taking a job as a night watchman and a box boy at a grocery store. Mr. Field is similarly not retiring, but he now spends a good deal of time mentoring and pursuing his philanthropic interests.

For the pocket park outside of Baruch's main campus building, on 25th Street between Third and Lexington avenues, Mr. Field says he helped persuade the city to approve the park with some magic words: "If you vacate the street, we will put in all of the money to change it into grass and trees." The deal was approved in record time and Mr. Field raised \$3 million for the park.

"It's really something special," he says. "It has given me great satisfaction because the students are using it."