



RETIRED CEO OF TENNECO RECOGNIZED FOR HIGHER PURPOSE

By JEANNIE KEVER
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With baby boomers starting to turn 60, life is suddenly all about second acts. Think Bill Gates and his announcement earlier this month that he will drop day-to-day responsibilities at Microsoft in 2008 to focus on his charitable foundation.

Jim Ketelsen did it before it was hip.

In 1988, Ketelsen, then CEO of Tenneco, zeroed in on education policy, starting a program at Davis High School to encourage low-income students to not only finish high school but also go on to college.

"I believed that education, and inner-city education in particular, is one of the biggest problems we have in this country," said Ketelsen, whose experiment at Davis grew into Project GRAD, which now serves 135,000 students in eight states. "If we're going to have a work force in the future, we better get these people into college."

Ketelsen, who retired from Tenneco in 1992, is among 15 finalists for the inaugural Purpose Prize,

honoring a new wave of social innovators, all of them over 60.

The finalists, including two two-person teams, are to be announced today by Civic Ventures, a San Francisco-based think tank.

Each finalist will receive \$10,000. Five winners, each of whom will receive \$100,000, will be announced in September.

The prizes reflect a movement toward meaningful work at an age when previous generations headed for the rocking chair.

"It's a recognition that they're entering a stage of life that's too long for retirement," said Civic Ventures founder and president Marc Freedman. "There's a real interest in what the purpose of their life is going to be in this period that could be as long as midlife."

The baby boom's potential impact comes not only from its sheer numbers but also from the fact that boomers are better educated than any

previous generation, said Freedman, author of *Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*.

The other finalists' work includes expanding access to health care, providing low-interest car loans to the rural poor and restoring flood-prone riverfront acreage as wildlife habitat.

Education programs for at-risk youths have mushroomed over the past 20 years, but Ketelsen said few take the approach of Project GRAD, which works with children from preschool through college.

In Houston alone, Project GRAD now has an \$8 million budget to serve about 47,000 students in low-income neighborhoods surrounding five high schools.

Once in high school, students are asked to graduate with at least a 2.5 grade-point average and participate in Project GRAD activities, including summer programs on college campuses. In exchange,

each is promised a \$4,000 scholarship.

About 827 Houston students were in college this past spring on Project GRAD scholarships, and others remain in school even though their scholarships have been exhausted, said Ann B. Stiles, executive director of the local office.

Another 551 have graduated from college.

The Houston Independent School District named Ketelsen Elementary School on the near north side after the Project GRAD founder in 2002, although it reduced its funding for the program earlier this year.

Nevertheless, the 75-year-old Ketelsen said he envisions the day when financial support flows and Project GRAD can operate in low-income areas across the nation.

About 700 Project GRAD Houston participants qualified for a college scholarship this year, he said. "That's a significant number, but in the national context it's a drop in the bucket."

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