

David Shapira
2025 Wonder, Care, Act Alumni Award Recipient
Nominated by Katie Blauvelt

Year(s) at Falk Laboratory School

1945-1955, 10 years

Graduation year from Falk

1955

Educational institutions attended after Falk

Oberlin College: BA in Economics, 1963

Stanford University: MA in Economics, 1965

Carnegie Mellon University: Honorary Degree, Doctor of Business Administration, 2023

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning & Leadership: Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, 2013

Describe how Falk's "Wonder, Care, Act" principles are reflected in the nominee's life.

David Shapira's life and career epitomize the principles of "Wonder, Care, Act." His leadership is grounded in a deep curiosity about how communities and systems can be improved, a lifelong commitment to service, and a willingness to take thoughtful—and often courageous—action.

One striking example is David's leadership of the Independent Committee tasked with allocating nearly \$6 million in donations following the tragic Tree of Life synagogue shooting. In the face of profound grief and complex community needs, he led a transparent, ethical, and inclusive process. As Chancellor Emeritus Mark Nordenberg remarked in his speech honoring David with the National Association of Corporate Directors Pittsburgh Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award, David's "mature and respectful leadership" transformed what many expected to be a controversial process into one met with widespread gratitude. This ability to ask difficult questions, act with compassion, and lead with integrity reflects the very spirit of the Wonder, Care, Act Alumni Award.

Whether guiding Giant Eagle through decades of innovation and sustainability or creating opportunities for underserved populations through his philanthropy, David has consistently combined intellectual inquiry, moral clarity, and meaningful action.

Professional achievement: Brief description of the nominee's professional and/or personal accomplishments, including significant advancements or impacts in their chosen field; professional milestones; and papers, publications, or works of art.

David Shapira is an accomplished business and civic leader in the Pittsburgh region. As CEO and Chairman of Giant Eagle, Inc. from 1980–2013, and then as Executive Chairman through 2021, he led one of the largest privately held companies in the nation, helping to modernize its operations

while maintaining its community-focused values. Under his leadership, Giant Eagle became a national leader in sustainable grocery practices, earning recognition such as the first LEED-certified supermarket in the country and the Energy Star Partner of the Year.

Beyond his business career, David has contributed to the academic world as a guest instructor in leadership and ethics at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh. Institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University and the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning & Leadership have recognized his impact, awarding him honorary doctorates and leadership awards.

He was the first person in Carnegie Mellon University's history to be asked to serve a second term as Chair of the Board of Trustees, reflecting the deep respect he commands in academic and business circles alike.

Public service: Brief description of the nominee's public service contributions, including membership in professional organizations and/or academic societies, volunteer service awards, and involvement with organizations that contribute to the public good.

David's public service is both broad and deep. He has chaired and served on the boards of numerous cultural, civic, and philanthropic organizations, including:

Carnegie Mellon University (Chairman & Trustee)
Oberlin College Board of Trustees
Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh (Chairman)
United Way of Allegheny County (Director and Campaign Chair)
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Chair)
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust (Vice-Chairman)
Pittsburgh Promise
The Extra Mile Foundation (Board Member since 1990)
Jewish Healthcare Foundation (Chairman)
BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern PA
American Pardes Foundation
Birthright Foundation
Hillel Board of Governors (Chair)
Allegheny Conference on Community Development
Pittsburgh Regional Alliance (Chairman)

He established the Frieda G. and Saul F. Shapira BRCA Cancer Research Program; and contributes to the Social Work Scholarship at CCAC, helping to support future leaders in health and social services.

Support for the Falk Laboratory School mission: Evidence of the nominee's continued support for Falk's mission, including serving on the School Board; volunteering for a committee, project, or event; or advancing Falk's values of progressivism, curiosity, community, research, and/or diversity.

Though David Shapira has not served in formal roles such as on the Falk School Board or committees, his life's work deeply reflects the values at the core of Falk's mission: curiosity, community, diversity, and leadership grounded in compassion and thoughtful action. Through decades of philanthropic leadership, ethical stewardship of both corporate and nonprofit institutions, and his active engagement in education at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, David has consistently advanced the progressive ideals that Falk seeks to instill in every student.

David's impact extends beyond his professional achievements—he lives Falk's values in his personal life as well. As a grandfather to one current and two future Falk students, who affectionately call him “Pa,” David is present, engaged, and nurturing. From weekly dinners to adventures in the country woods, his curiosity, storytelling, and affection make him a source of joy and wisdom in their lives. Whether he's playing the “tickle monster” or spinning tales about the Meshugana Frog who always saves the day, David embodies the spirit of wonder and care that Falk celebrates.

His love of learning, commitment to justice, and dedication to family and community make him not only an extraordinary role model, but a living embodiment of Falk's founding principles. He continues to inspire those around him—across generations—to wonder, care, and act.