

PHILANTHROPY PERSONIFIED

DR. WILLIAM F. PICKARD

*Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
Global Automotive Alliance*



By Damon Autry

To whom much is given, much more is required' is an overused axiom that quite frankly still falls short of accurately describing the true benevolence of Dr. William F. Pickard. Pickard has carved out a comfortable existence as an entrepreneur and his success has triggered an exorbitant amount of gratitude to the extent that he feels obligated to help others. "I believe that when God shows you favor, you have to be favorable to His children," he says. "It's as simple as that. If God's been good to me, why shouldn't I be good to others?"

God's goodness began early for Pickard. After relocating to Flint from Georgia at a young age, he later used his profound belief in education to pursue and ultimately earn a bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University, a master's degree from the University of Michigan and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from The Ohio State University. All the while, Pickard molded and shaped his entrepreneurial dreams, like a potter at an ever-spinning wheel. In 1971 he purchased the first of his now six McDonald's franchises. He also became chairman and chief executive officer of the Global Automotive Alliance, an automotive parts supplier.

But as the success of his business entities remains steady, the idea of philanthropy is what provides Pickard with an unmatched sense of accomplishment. His gratitude, his humbleness, the satisfaction of knowing his involvement is making a difference—they are all evident in his demeanor and in his actions. He talks energetically about his passion for education and for

young people, for it is education that opened doors for Pickard that would have otherwise been nailed shut and he practically illuminates when he speaks specifically of the young people who have directly benefited from his generosity. "That's the true power of God," he says. "I'm just doing His work."

Pickard's modesty aside, it should be noted that "God's work" of which he speaks includes donating \$1 million to the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, \$250,000 to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and a large, undisclosed gift to Grand Valley State University, where he spearheaded the development of the school's Minority Business Program and where a dormitory is named in his honor: the William F. Pickard Living Center. Concerning philanthropy, as it relates to African Americans, Pickard says, it is more than just writing a check. "Before there was Social Security, before there was welfare, how did (black people in need) survive?" he asks. "They survived because we looked out for each other in our community. It was such that everybody had a responsibility to their neighbor. That's what got (black people) over the creek, so to speak. So if it was preparing a meal for the woman down the street who was sick, or cutting the grass of the older couple next door...that's philanthropy, too."

While Detroit will always have deserving people in need of help to one extent or another, the possibility of assistance from a person with a caring, compassionate heart is never too far away while Pickard is here.