The dictionary defines philanthropy as the practice of giving money and time to help make life better for others. Those who have been impacted by Paul Milburn’s philanthropy may lobby that his picture should appear next to such a definition.

His service on the boards of numerous civic and nonprofit organizations tells the casual observer that he is as generous with his time as he is with his money. He was recognized recently with the Lions International’s most prestigious distinction when he was awarded the Melvin Jones Fellowship. Melvin Jones was the Chicago businessman who founded Lions Clubs and the fellowship is bestowed upon those members who have displayed outstanding service. Mr. Milburn is a 50-year member of the club, once serving as its president. In addition, he has also supported many Lions activities over the years including the Lions Quest educational program and offering challenge grants for the benefit of the Oklahoma Lions Boys Ranch.

“He is so innovative,” his wife, Ann, says. “He constantly finds things he wants to accomplish, people he wants to help, things he wants to make happen.”

Making things happen is what Mr. Milburn does through his charitable giving. He’s not satisfied with just giving money but stays involved with the programs he supports like the Pottawatomie County Dropout Retention Foundation he started in 2010 to address the high dropout rate in Shawnee.

A graduate of Fairview High School, Mr. Milburn earned a bachelor’s degree in business and a master’s degree in vocational education from Oklahoma State University. Following a stint in the U.S. Air Force, both degrees would come in handy as he first embarked upon a career as a teacher and administrator at vocational centers before launching a successful land development business. His success allowed him to focus on helping his community and others. In 2007, he transferred the assets of his private foundation to establish an advised fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Since then, he has created additional funds through the sale of real estate as well as establish several charitable gift annuities. He has also created funds through gifts of real estate.

For a number of years, he and his wife have been committed supporters of Children’s Hospital Foundation, providing funding for four endowed chairs. Established in 1983 as Children’s Medical Research Institute (CMRI), the foundation is the only nonprofit organization in Oklahoma whose sole focus is the advancement of pediatric research and education while supporting specialized clinical care for Oklahoma’s children. The Endowed Chairs Program is what drew Dr. Kenneth Copeland to the hospital 14 years ago. Dr. Copeland cares for children with diabetes and is the CMRI Paul and Ann Milburn Endowed Chair in Pediatric Diabetes/Endocrinology.

“This extraordinary program does not exist anywhere else in the world,” Dr. Copeland says. “The program generates funding each year to support our new and ongoing children’s diabetes research projects while the corpus of the gift remains intact for generations to come.”

Dr. Copeland says the funding supports projects such as testing a new insulin pump, sustaining a promising young researcher on the brink of a new diabetes discovery or bridging support temporarily for a seasoned diabetes researcher who lost funding while on the verge of a research breakthrough.

“The Paul and Ann Milburn Chair was made possible through the vision and generosity of the Milburn family, who recognized the benefit to Oklahoma children, the community and to researchers considering coming to Oklahoma,” he adds. “On behalf of our diabetes doctors and staff at OU Children’s, and on behalf of all the children of Oklahoma afflicted with this terrible disease, we say thank you to CMRI and to the Milburn family.”