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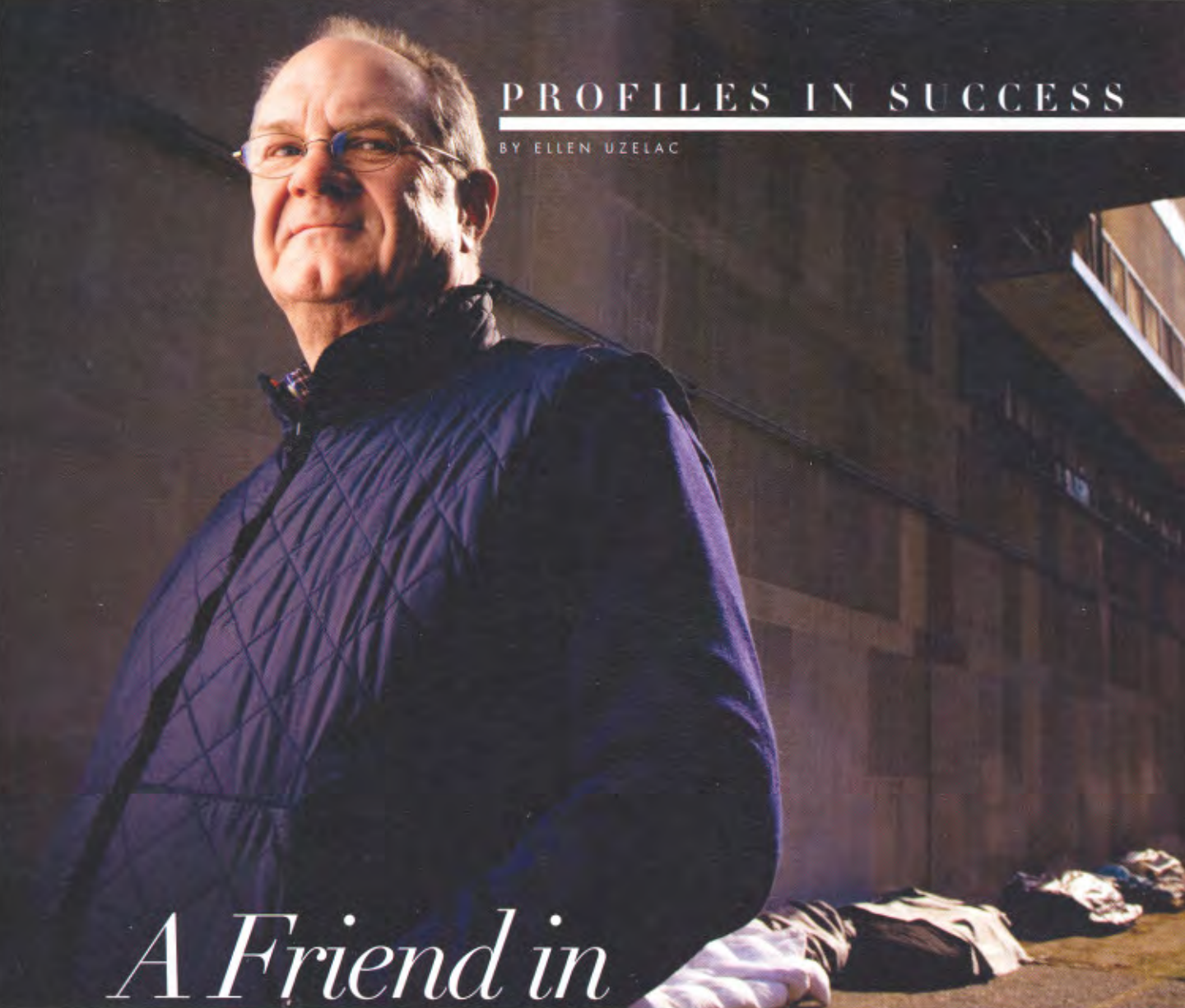
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BY ELLEN UZELAC



A Friend in

PENNSYLVANIA

Wachovia advisor

Zeke Strid has shown

true brotherly love to

Philadelphia's homeless

population.

LAST YEAR, GERALD "ZEKE" STRID attended the funeral of his sixth John Doe, a homeless man who froze to death under an Interstate-95 overpass. Strid had found the body.

For the 63-year-old Strid, homelessness isn't a policy issue; it's personal. Since the late 1960s, Strid has fought hard for Philadelphia's homeless, bringing them coats, blankets and water. As a boy, his son Erik, now 38, remembers watching Strid disembark from a commuter train after work wearing no socks. Asked why, his father replied: "Some-

one needed them more than I did."

Not surprisingly, Wachovia Securities has nominated Strid for the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association's "Good Samaritan" award. SIFMA was evaluating nominations at press time.

Strid, managing director of Strid Wealth Management Group in Berwyn, Pa., joined Wachovia Securities in 2003. His son, Erik, serves as CEO and son Paul as COO. An advisor since 1968, Strid worked for several Philadelphia brokerages, then spent 23 years at

Merrill Lynch. At Merrill, he created a College Builder program — based on Treasury-insured zero-coupon bonds — that went firm-wide.

It was while working in Philadelphia's city center, when he first started out, that Strid was introduced to the homeless.

"I'd go to lunch, get a hot dog, and there would be all these guys standing around with nothing at all. I befriended them, brought them clothes and one thing led to another," says Strid, who has also raised over \$2 million for Project H.O.M.E., a Philadelphia non-profit. "It's not a yippie-yi-ya thing. I just believe that everyone has a nature. My nature is: There but for the grace of God go me."

In recent years, Strid has been closely allied with Project H.O.M.E., which stands for Housing and Opportunities for Medical Care, Education and Employment. The magazine *Main Line Today* in January named Strid "Man of the Year" as a result of his work with the organization, which is dedicated to ending homelessness in Philadelphia.

Strid was instrumental in raising over \$1 million for Honickman Learn-

ing Center and Comcast Technology Labs, a 38,000-square-foot facility that serves as the centerpiece of Project H.O.M.E.'s community revitalization strategy in North Central Philadelphia. The state-of-the-art complex, just over three years old, has 255 computers, the latest in wireless technology and two classrooms wired for distance learning. It also has a robust after-school program.

More recently, Strid spent 14 months organizing the first I Care gala, a \$5,000-per-plate auction and dinner that raised \$1.2 million for Project H.O.M.E. last October. Strid recruit-

Strid's passion for the homeless is infectious.

ed celebrity backers for the black-tie event, including Peter Callahan, Martha Stewart's caterer, and designer Brian Kappra, who has produced tributes for Oprah Winfrey, Elizabeth Taylor and Vera Wang. Strid also convinced friends to contribute luxury items to the auction. One client, the COO of Estee Lauder, provided a pampering package in Manhattan for 15 women that included a personal consultation with makeup artist Bobbi Brown, tea in the late Lauder's corporate museum, lunch with the editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine followed by a private \$500-shopping tour at Bergdorf Goodman, champagne at Lauder headquarters.



Gerald "Zeke" Strid

Managing Director, Strid Wealth Management Group of Wachovia Securities

HOME BASE: Berwyn, Pa.

AUM: \$100 million

THE QUESTION THAT KEEPS STRID AWAKE AT NIGHT: "Are we losing our compass for the poor? Deep in my heart, I believe we are."

and a luxurious gift bag. The winning bid for that package? \$20,000.

At the moment, Strid is preparing for this year's event — but clearly he's eager to get back to the streets, where his "guys" live. At least weekly, Strid, along with Project H.O.M.E. outreach worker Sam Santiago, checks in on Philadelphia's hardcore homeless.

As Santiago notes: "Zeke sees the problem and he wants to do something about it. It's about more than writing checks for him. He cares about the people on the street. It's not easy, the work we do. But outreach is about building relationships so that we get to know who's

who. And we're there for them when they're ready to make a change."

On his way to Project H.O.M.E. each week, Strid takes groceries to his two "adopted boys," 48-year-old retarded twins now off the streets and living in a modest house. After that, he and Santiago get to work.

"My dreams at night are about this. I don't think I've even scratched the surface," says Strid. "One minute I'm thinking of guys lying in the street, the next I'm envisioning walking into a blown-out shelter with kids huddled around a kerosene lamp. I've got kids who can't tell you how you're supposed to eat. They don't know breakfast, lunch or dinner. Just think about a five-year-old looking you in the eye and you give him a bowl of cereal and they don't know that's breakfast. They just know it's food."

Strid's passion for the homeless is infectious. After the gala, he received

97 e-mails from attendees. "Some would make you cry," says Strid. "This was such an awareness builder." Strid's family is also involved in the effort. His wife Kris volun-

teers once a week at a Project H.O.M.E. women's center, and all five of their children support the organization. Daughter Kristin gave her parents 100 blankets for Christmas last year, all destined for the homeless.

"These are the toughest guys you'll ever meet. A true street person never asks for anything," says Strid. "Sometimes, all it takes is a little bit of dignity. I just know you never give up on some people. Actually, I think they were starting to worry about me. When I went back to the streets, one of the guys said: 'Zeke, where the hell you been? I missed you.'" ■