

SCOOOP

By Regina M. Vitti-Lyons

What Big Hearts They Have

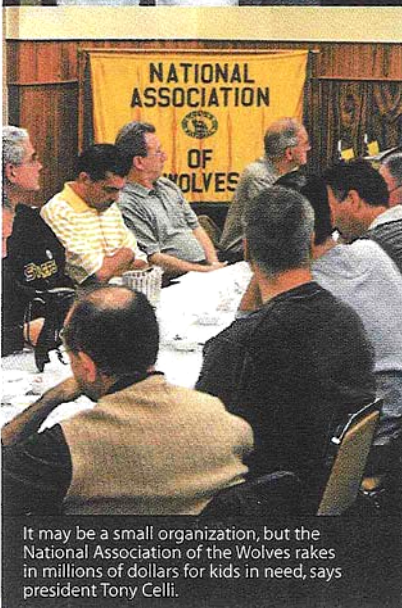
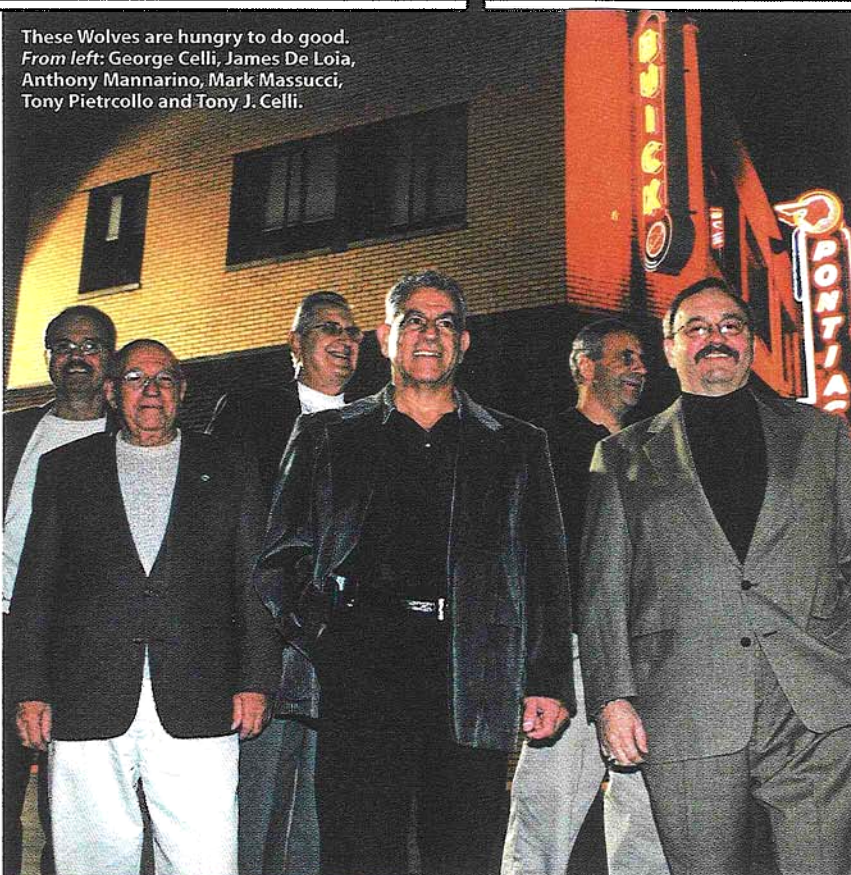
The National Association of the Wolves raises funds for kids who need scholarships.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever does." This Margaret Mead quote has become the creed of many nonprofit organizations, but none proves it more than the National Association of the Wolves. Known simply as "the Wolves," a name chosen because of the Roman legend of Romulus and Remus, twins raised by wolves, the organization has only 406 members but has provided almost \$6 million in college scholarships and grants to needy students since its founding.

A small group of Italian-American professionals and businessmen started the Wolves as a service organization nearly 80 years ago in New Castle. This group also established a national organization and began the scholarship program more than 20 years later. "In the beginning, only Italian-American men could join or be eligible for scholarships," says Tony Celli, National Association of the Wolves president. "But now we give scholarships to any deserving high school student. And anyone with good moral character can become a member. We let the individual dens determine who would make a good member."

The organization comprises 14 dens in Western Pennsylvania and Ohio. The dens, which range in size from 12 to 85 members, raise money and grant scholarships. Members contribute an initial sum determined by the den, and they and their relatives are not eligible for scholarships.

These Wolves are hungry to do good. From left: George Celli, James De Loia, Anthony Mannarino, Mark Massucci, Tony Pietrcollo and Tony J. Celli.



It may be a small organization, but the National Association of the Wolves rakes in millions of dollars for kids in need, says president Tony Celli.

How do the dens raise money? In Celli's case, "We cook!" His Ellwood City den holds a food festival. And they drink, too. A wine tasting of 43 homemade wines sold out. Other dens have bocce tournaments, Easter-egg hunts, reverse raffles, National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament-related fundraisers and year-round raffles among other things.

Celli is matter-of-fact when he talks about why Wolves' members are so successful. "It's just a commitment," he says. "We are passionate about what we do." Exactly as Margaret Mead said.

For information on upcoming fundraisers and on becoming a member or contributor, visit the National Association of the Wolves Web site at wolvesclub.org.

Photography by Brandon McChesney