

H. F. “Gerry” Lenfest, David Friedman, and Other Alumni in the News

By

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Trustee emeritus **H. F. “Gerry” Lenfest ’58LAW, ’09HON** and his wife Marguerite are among nine winners of the 2017 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, given every two years to philanthropists who embody Andrew Carnegie’s devotion to giving. Lenfest, a lawyer and media entrepreneur, has donated more than \$1.2 billion to education, social services, and the arts, including more than \$100 million to Columbia.

Madeleine Olnek ’08SOA took home the top prize at the Champs-Élysées Film Festival in Paris for her film *Wild Nights with Emily*, which imagines an illicit romance between the poet Emily Dickinson and her sister-in-law Susan Dickinson. School of the Arts film student **Max Rifkind-Barron ’11CC** served as a producer.

Two Columbians have been confirmed by the US Senate to positions in the Trump administration. This past spring, **David Friedman ’78CC** became the new US ambassador to Israel. Friedman was previously a lawyer with the firm Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman, where he represented the Trump Organization in several bankruptcy cases. He has also been involved with several philanthropic organizations, particularly those that support Israeli settlements. **David Pekoske ’89SIPA** now leads the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Pekoske is a former vice commandant for the US Coast Guard; he retired from active service in 2010.

Parul Sehgal '10SOA has been named a book critic at the *New York Times*, following chief book critic Michiko Kakutani's retirement. Sehgal, who is also an adjunct professor at the School of the Arts, has been a senior editor and columnist at the *New York Times* since 2012. Her TED talk on literature and envy has been viewed more than two million times.

Two Columbia Business School alums were included on *HuffPost*'s list of five next-generation tech leaders. **Alicia Syrett '07BUS** is the former chief administrative officer of a major private-equity firm and the founder of Pantegron Capital, an angel-investment vehicle focused on seed and early-stage investments. **Delphine Braas '14BUS** is cofounder of Sailo, a marketplace connecting boats, captains, and renters, which now manages a fleet of four thousand vessels. (For more on Braas and Sailo, see our Fall 2014 cover story "[Start Me Up.](#)")

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