



Pete M. Hanna
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Executive Director

Pete M. Hanna Charitable Foundation

Birmingham, Alabama

Background

Pete M. Hanna was not a man who gave quietly out of obligation. He gave boldly, faithfully, and often anonymously, attributing his gifts to “John 3:16” rather than his own name. He was a decorated Army captain, a self-made steel executive, and one of Alabama’s most consequential philanthropists. He was also someone who wanted to meet the people and organizations he helped, to understand their mission, hold them accountable, and walk alongside them over the long haul.

Pete Hanna was born in 1936, the son of General Walter J. “Crack” Hanna, a decorated World War II veteran who saw opportunities in the steel-processing field and launched Hanna Steel Corporation in 1954. After Pete Hanna graduated from the University of Alabama’s College of Commerce and Business Administration in 1960 and completed his service as a Captain in the Army National Guard’s 20th Special Forces Group, he decided to invest in his father’s company and purchased his first shares of Hanna Steel Corporation in 1962 with an \$80,000 loan. By 1984, he had bought out his father’s stake entirely and gone on to build the company into a major steel processing and transportation enterprise, with facilities in Fairfield, Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Pekin, Illinois. His philosophy, always, was people first.

The Pete M. Hanna Charitable Foundation (the “Foundation”) was established during Mr. Hanna’s lifetime as a vehicle for his Christian faith giving and his commitment to education, children and social services, healthcare, and animal welfare. Mr. Hanna attributed much of his faith, character, and the relationships that shaped his life to his years at Samford University, where he was a student athlete who played halfback, center, and linebacker on Samford’s football teams. Over the years, Mr. Hanna funded landmark projects, including the Pete Hanna Center and Pete Hanna Football



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Stadium at Samford University, the RISE Center at the University of Alabama, supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities, and four decades of support to Big Oak Ranch, a Christian children's home that raises children out of abuse and broken homes and sends them to college.

Mr. Hanna passed away on May 25, 2025, at the age of 88. With his passing, and an anticipated addition of more than \$150 million to the Foundation's corpus from his estate, the Foundation is poised to become one of Alabama's most significant philanthropic institutions—and is now seeking its first Executive Director to work alongside the Foundation's board of directors to build upon Mr. Hanna's legacy of philanthropy and to carry out his intentions that the foundation provide ongoing support to specified charities for decades to come.

The Organization

With an anticipated annual grantmaking capacity of \$8–10 million per year and a governing charter that requires all the Foundation's funds to be disbursed no later than October 1, 2060, the Foundation enters a new era with clear priorities, deep roots, and meaningful complexity.

The Foundation operates under a two-tier grantmaking structure:

- **Designated Charities** make up the primary focus of the Foundation's annual giving. Mr. Hanna left a list of approximately 19 charitable organizations he wanted the Foundation to support. These were organizations he knew personally, believed in deeply, and had often supported for decades. Building and sustaining relationships with this collection of charities will be among the new Executive Director's most important early responsibilities.

- **Discretionary Grantmaking** is capped at \$1 million annually and requires unanimous board approval. By design, this is not a Foundation that will be flooded with open grant applications. The discretionary program is by-invitation-only, a structure that protects Mr. Hanna’s legacy while creating space for the board to respond to extraordinary opportunities.

The Foundation’s designated charities fall into five distinct categories and reflect Mr. Hanna’s core values and life commitments:

- Christian Faith
- Education
- Children and Social Services
- Healthcare
- Animal Welfare

Geographically, the Foundation’s footprint centers on the greater Birmingham, Alabama community with additional connections to Tuscaloosa, the Florida Panhandle, and Pekin, Illinois; communities where Mr. Hanna lived, worked, and built relationships over a lifetime.

The Foundation’s articles of incorporation include a provision permanently protecting Mr. Hanna’s Christian mission: no amendment may permit the Foundation to operate for purposes other than those benefiting “charitable faith-based organizations, the principal activities of which involve or are based upon the Christian faith.” This is not a foundation searching for an identity. Its character is defined. The task ahead is building the infrastructure and relationships to honor it with excellence.

The Foundation is governed by a six-member board of directors (the “Board”), all selected by Mr. Hanna from among his long-time associates and trusted advisors. The Board is unified by personal



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relationships with Mr. Hanna, a shared faith orientation, and a practical, relationship-driven approach to philanthropy.

The Mandate

The Board is clear-eyed about what this moment requires. The Foundation is not simply scaling up, but it is in many ways starting up. Currently, the Foundation has no full-time staff, no grant application infrastructure, no website, and no established process for engaging its beneficiaries.

That is not a shortcoming; it is the starting point. And the person who steps into this role will have the rare and significant privilege of building something meaningful from the ground up, in the spirit of a man who spent his life doing exactly that.

The Board shares a unifying vision for the Executive Director:

- This is a relationship-driven role. Mr. Hanna never wanted funds distributed without engagement, accountability, or follow-up. He built strong relationships with the organizations. He asked tough questions. The Foundation's Executive Director will be expected to embody that same relational commitment, visiting grantees, understanding their programs, helping them think through what funding could make possible, and holding them accountable to their missions over time.
- The Foundation exists to prevent mission drift in its grantees, and in the Foundation itself. Mr. Hanna was explicit: he did not want organizations to receive so much money at once that it changed who they were. He cared about stewardship and organizational integrity. The Executive Director will need to develop the judgment and the relationships to monitor grantee health, engage when concerns arise,

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and be a genuine partner in organizational sustainability, not simply a funding source.

- **Infrastructure comes first, then impact.** The inaugural year will require significant administrative work such as establishing systems, policies, and processes; developing the Foundation's public presence; and organizing a grantmaking operation that can operate with consistency and integrity for decades. The Executive Director who thrives will be someone who finds genuine satisfaction in building well, not just leading what is already built.

Among the Executive Director's overlapping priorities:

1. **Foundation Building:** Establishing the operational, administrative, and communications infrastructure the Foundation needs to function, including grant management systems, a public-facing web presence, and board meeting processes.
2. **Grantee Relationships:** Systematically reaching out to the approximately 19 designated charities and establishing the kind of substantive, trust-based relationships Mr. Hanna would have valued.
3. **Board Partnership:** Developing effective working relationships with all Board members, individuals who knew Mr. Hanna personally, who have practical business experience, and who are navigating the transition from a founder-led to an institutionalized operation.
4. **Investment Oversight Engagement:** Working alongside the Board as it finalizes an investment management structure appropriate for a \$150+ million corpus, bringing sufficient financial fluency to be a useful partner in those conversations.



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The Executive Director's priorities include serving as the Foundation's primary external voice with grantees, prospective partners, legal and financial advisors, and the broader philanthropic community in a way that reflects Mr. Hanna's character with pride.

5. **Stakeholder Communication:** Serving as the Foundation's primary external voice with grantees, prospective partners, legal and financial advisors, and the broader philanthropic community in a way that reflects Mr. Hanna's character with pride.

The Relationships

The Executive Director reports to:	The Foundation's Board of Directors
Works closely with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The full Board of Directors, with particular engagement with Board officers and legal counsel ▪ Key contacts at charitable partners
Stewards relationships with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designated grantee organizations and their leadership ▪ Discretionary grant applicants and recipients ▪ Investment managers and financial advisors ▪ Legal Counsel
Builds:	A lean operational infrastructure, communications presence, and long-term grantmaking processes

The Candidate

The PMHCF's inaugural Executive Director must be a proven leader who understands that the highest calling of this role is relational and who brings the professional experience, personal character, and Christian faith orientation to represent Mr. Hanna's legacy with integrity.

The Board is open to a range of professional backgrounds, but the right candidate will likely have meaningful leadership experience in the nonprofit or foundations sector, possibly as an executive leader or program officer. Birmingham roots or deep Alabama connections will be a significant advantage.

The ideal candidate will offer a compelling mix of the following experiences and characteristics:

Expertise: The ideal candidate will offer...

- Impactful executive leadership experience in significant community-based contexts, ideally including work in one or more of the Foundation's priority areas: faith-based organizations, education, social services, animal welfare, or healthcare.
- Understanding of grantmaking, grant management, or philanthropic operations, whether as a funder or a grant recipient.
- Sufficient budgeting and financial acumen to engage meaningfully with investment managers and participate in board-level conversations about fiduciary responsibility and the prudent deployment of a significant endowment.
- Demonstrated ability to build relationships with diverse organizations and communities, including faith-based communities, with authenticity and respect.



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- Experience developing administrative systems, organizational processes, or operational infrastructure, ideally in a startup or early-stage organizational context.
- Familiarity with Alabama’s philanthropic and nonprofit community, or the ability to establish credibility within it quickly.

Culture: The Foundation seeks an Executive Director who is...

- A person of Christian faith, comfortable engaging with faith-based organizations and representing a foundation whose mission is explicitly grounded in Christian values.
- A relationship-builder by instinct, someone who is energized by people, and who understands that presence and trust are the currency of effective philanthropy.
- A self-starter with the initiative to build and the discipline to follow through. This role requires someone who can hold both the big picture and the administrative detail.
- Humble enough to listen deeply, strong enough to hold grantees accountable, and wise enough to know the difference.
- A clear communicator who is comfortable in a boardroom, in a community center, in a conversation with a nonprofit CEO or whatever the medium or audience
- Mission-driven in a way that goes beyond professional interest, someone for whom this work is a calling.
- A person of integrity who would make Pete Hanna proud to have his name associated with theirs.



The Foundation seeks an Executive Director who is a person of integrity who would make Pete Hanna proud to have his name associated with theirs.

The Location

The Pete M. Hanna Charitable Foundation will likely be in the greater Birmingham metropolitan area. [Birmingham](#) is Alabama's largest city and a dynamic hub for healthcare, finance, education, and nonprofit activity, with a growing civic culture and a strong philanthropic community. The area offers affordable living, a robust faith community, and a sense of place that rewards people who choose to put down roots.

The Foundation's grantees are concentrated in greater Birmingham, with additional reach to [Tuscaloosa](#) (approximately one hour away), [the Florida Panhandle](#) (where Mr. Hanna maintained a vacation home and established meaningful charitable ties), and [Pekin, Illinois](#) (home to a Hanna Steel facility and a handful of designated charities). The Executive Director should expect meaningful in-state and occasional out-of-state travel as a core feature of the role.

For potential consideration
or to recommend a prospect, please email
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