



President & CEO, Manchester Bidwell Corporation

William E. Strickland, Jr. was born in Pittsburgh in 1947. A resident of the North Side during the civil rights era, he was, by his own admission, detached from his life and education. While attending David B. Oliver High School, he met art teacher Frank Ross. Ross saw the potential in Strickland. Ross's mentoring was instrumental in Strickland's decision to attend college.

Strickland graduated from Oliver High School in 1965 and was admitted to the University of Pittsburgh on a provisional basis. In 1969, he earned a bachelor's degree in American history and foreign relations from the University of Pittsburgh and graduated cum laude.

While attending college in 1968, Strickland founded Manchester Craftsmen's Guild to bring arts education and mentorship to inner city youth in his neighborhood. The MCG Youth & Arts program, as it is now called, serves public school students by offering courses in our ceramics, design, digital and photography studios.

In 1972, Strickland assumed leadership of a struggling building trade school located near Manchester Craftsmen's Guild. Over the years, Bidwell Training Center evolved to offer programs in fields ranging from horticulture to medical technology. Currently, we are a nationally accredited and state licensed adult career training institution.

Since then, other organizations have been added to the mix – all in an effort to support Strickland's original mission of empowering educational environments. MCG Jazz lends the power of music with both its long-running concert series and educational programming. The Drew Mathieson Center for Horticultural and Agricultural Technology contributes additional educational facilities as well as a sustainable source of beauty for students. Harbor Gardens Park, a commercial office building, hosts programs as well as other tenants in an elegant space.

Strickland's powerful fusion of mentorship, education, beauty, and hope creates a safe space in which students, young and older, can feel comfortable learning. Strickland was so confident in his vision that he founded the National Center for Arts & Technology to create similar educational environments across the nation ... and the world! Currently, there are affiliated centers in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Grand Rapids and San Francisco.

Throughout his distinguished career, Strickland has been honored with numerous prestigious awards for his contributions to the arts and the community including Chicago Ideas Week's 2011 Hero Award, being appointed to President Barack Obama's White House Council for Community Solutions (2010), Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Presidential Legacy Award for Civic Service (2009), the Ronald Harmon Brown Award from the Urban League of Pittsburgh (2006), the Outstanding Leadership Award from LISC (2006), and the International Economic Development Council's 2005 Citizen Leadership Award (2005). In 1999, he was presented with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Arts Leadership and Service Award. In 1998, he received the Kilby Award and "Coming Up Taller" Award presented in a White House ceremony by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. In 1996, he received the MacArthur "Genius" Award for leadership and ingenuity in the arts.

In November 2011, Strickland traveled to Tokyo, Japan to receive the Goi Peace Award presented by the Goi Peace Foundation. This award is presented annually to honor an individual or organization from various fields that have contributed to the advancement of world peace and humanity. In 2013, Strickland was honored on the floor of the US Senate as part of Black History Month.

Additionally, Strickland has 15 honorary doctorates from universities ranging from Carnegie Mellon University to Westminster College as well as having guest lectured at a number of colleges and universities including Harvard and Stanford.

In 2007, Strickland published his book [Make the Impossible Possible](#).