Boeing gift helps to expand Lean Team’s wellness project

by Allyson Bird

Miss Iris’ deep fryer sits dormant in the back of the cafeteria at Malcolm C. Hursey Elementary School in North Charleston, a memorial to a bygone era of pizza and chicken fingers. Iris Poole, or Miss Iris to students and faculty, has prepared meals for the children at this school for nearly 28 years. Some of the kids rely on her for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks every day. In the past few years, with help from MUSC’s Lean Team, Miss Iris has overhauled the cafeteria’s offerings to bring in wheat bread, baked meats and romaine lettuce.

“You’re not getting anything fried, and iceberg lettuce is obsolete,” she said. She must submit an entire school year in menus to a state board. Last year the board sent her menus back twice for healthier revisions, which come at a price. But, as Miss Iris pointed out, “You have to ask, what’s more important – kids eating healthy, or the money?”

The Lean Team, a childhood obesity prevention project, helps make sure Hursey Elementary and schools through the Charleston area meet and exceed those state guidelines. The Lean Team launched in 2007 with the goals of reducing the number of overweight students and improving overall wellness culture in schools. The Boeing Company became involved in 2010, making it possible for the program to expand its efforts from the 80 Charleston County School District schools to include 22 Berkeley County schools and 10 Dorchester District 2 schools as well.

Beyond its financial support, Boeing has encouraged other businesses to become involved with the Lean Team. That advocacy for support will become important in sustaining the program, according to Lean Team manager Colleen Martin. “With the economic crisis and budget cuts, prevention and wellness often are not priorities,” Martin said. “Thanks to Boeing, we’re able to work on a plan to address that need.”

With the Lean Team’s help, schools offer desk exercises and yoga to keep children active and engaged throughout the day. Schools have stopped using junk food to reward good behavior and instead introduce children to new fruits and vegetables. More than 70 percent of schools incorporate a garden into their classrooms, and more than 80 local physicians have “adopted” schools to help guide their wellness programs, according to program manager Jennifer Moore, who oversees obesity prevention for the Boeing Center for Children’s Wellness.

“We’re at a tipping point in terms of the obesity epidemic,” Moore said. “Obesity is the new normal. You do what is considered normal, and you will become overweight. We go to schools, because that’s where kids are the majority of the day. It’s where they have the opportunity to be physically active or not, to eat nutritious meals or not.”

Harsey Elementary school nurse Terry Lupo leads all 600 students on regular neighborhood walks, and the school serves a dinner four times a year from the vegetables that students grow in the garden, while a guest speaker tells the families about healthy cooking. The school is located in a “food desert,” Lupo explained, meaning fresh foods can prove scarce.

“The only places within walking distance are convenience stores where you can get chips and candy,” she said. If nothing else, the students get healthy meals at school and, thanks to a fruit and vegetable grant, a nutritious snack every day, too. Hursey students have tried persimmons, jicama, UGLI fruit, kumquats and papaya. Plus, everyone gets breakfast for free. As Lupo explained, healthy meals translate into more successful students.

“We want to have the kids better ready to learn,” she said.

“We GO TO SCHOOLS, BECAUSE THAT’S WHERE KIDS ARE THE MAJORITY OF THE DAY. IT’S WHERE THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE OR NOT, TO EAT NUTRITIOUS MEALS OR NOT.”

Neighborhood walks and a student-tended vegetable garden help promote wellness as part of the Boeing-Lean Team partnership.
Not the average hometown doctor

by John Nash

Like many young men, Dr. William Melton Bristow looked to his father’s career when considering his own.

Dr. Walter Bristow was a 1915 graduate of the Medical University who, as a young military doctor, rode with General John Pershing as he pursued the Mexican revolutionary general Pancho Villa through the wilds of Mexico. He joined the reserves after World War I, but spent the rest of his professional life running a private medical practice in Columbia, S.C.

His son, known as Melton to his friends in South Carolina, was an athlete with a taste for adventure. He admired his father, but privately considered the day-to-day work of a private practice physician to be “rather dull.” So when it came time to choose his own career path, he thought about his dad as a young man, chasing Pancho Villa on horseback.

Like his father, Melton enrolled in MUSC’s College of Medicine, which he completed in 1956. While in school, he received a commission from the U.S. Navy, but did not intend to pursue a full career in the military.

“I wanted to be in medicine, but not like my father,” he says. “The Navy looked like a way to see the world, live in different places, experience other countries and still advance in the medical field. As time went on, the military offered me various educational experiences in exchange for a few more years of service. As time does fly, I was going on 30 years before I knew it.”

By the time he retired from the Navy in 1979, Dr. Bristow had visited more than 100 countries, served with two underwater demolition teams, patrolled with SEAL teams on secret missions in the Mekong Delta, and toured with the U.S. Marine Corps in both Vietnam and Okinawa, Japan.

He also had earned a degree in epidemiology from UCLA and had become an expert in atomic, biological and chemical warfare defense, performing top-secret research worldwide and writing top-secret classified reports for the Navy.

He had served as medical officer for the first Navy SEALs team and practiced nuclear/chemical medicine on nuclear subs around the world. He was one of the few medical officers at the time to receive a combat action medal, and at one point was the youngest captain on active duty in the Navy.

He once received a letter of commendation from the king of Morocco for helping contain an outbreak of meningitis among NATO forces stationed there. One of his favorite memories is of finding an underwater graveyard of ancient Phoenician shipwrecks while searching for downed aircraft off the coast of Malta.

“I was the guy whose bag was always packed,” he says. “If there was a mission, they knew they could call me. I was always ready to go.”

Today, at age 81, Dr. Bristow lives in San Diego and runs a private practice in nearby Pacific Beach. Looking back over his career, he says it has been the life of adventure he had hoped for as a young man, and more.

He credits the Medical University for opening the door to a “marvelous career” and providing him with a lifetime of rich memories and deep friendships, many of which he still maintains. Moved by his gratitude to MUSC, Dr. Bristow recently made a gift commitment that will establish an endowed chair and new scholarship in his name at the College of Medicine.

“I wanted to be in medicine, but not like my father. The Navy looked like a way to see the world, live in different places, experience other countries and still advance in the medical field.”

- Dr. William Melton Bristow

The scholarship will be designated to support students wishing to practice medicine in underserved parts of the state. Currently, nearly 75 percent of South Carolina is designated as rural. All 46 counties include areas that are medically underserved or report a shortage of health care professionals.

Dr. Erta Pizzaro, dean of the MUSC College of Medicine, says such scholarships can help to address the critical shortage of physicians in these communities.

“Many medical students graduate with so much debt, they feel they have no choice but to practice in higher-paying metropolitan areas,” she said. “By reducing their student debt, we can make it easier for them to practice where they want to, instead of where they have to.” Dr. Bristow hopes that his gift will help open the door to the kind of rewarding career that he enjoyed.

“Medicine is my life. It’s everything,” he says. “I always enjoyed the reward you get in healing. It is just a great feeling to make sick or injured people well, and I wanted to support young people to pursue the medical field so they could have similar life experiences and help others.”

William Melton Bristow

B.S., M.D., M.P.H.

Captain MC, USN

Naval Special Warfare, US Navy SEALs

Combat Action Medal-Vietnam

Faithfully and honorably served his country. Served as the First Medical Officer for the US Navy SEALs and was a Qualified Diving and Submarine Medical Officer.
FLORIDA GRANDPARENTS FUND MUSC RESEARCH INTO PEDIATRIC CATARACTS

by Allyson Bird

Something seemed off when Tylee and Patricia Wilson visited their newborn granddaughter in North Carolina. The Florida couple hoped they simply had forgotten the way babies act and move, but when their son and daughter-in-law took Anna Frances to see her pediatrician, the doctor confirmed their fears. Anna Frances couldn’t see.

The Wilsons, who had lived in Winston-Salem, N.C., for 15 years while Mr. Wilson ran RJ Reynolds Industries/RJR Nabisco, began making phone calls to old friends at the local hospital. A doctor there told the family that Anna Frances’ double cataracts required specialized care. He recommended Dr. Ed Wilson at MUSC’s Storm Eye Institute, who surgically repaired complex cataracts in both of the girl’s eyes. Now 8 years old, Anna Frances looks forward to her visits with Dr. Wilson a few times a year.

“As far as Anna Frances is concerned, Dr. Wilson is her best friend,” Mrs. Wilson said. “If it hadn’t been for Dr. Wilson and having the benefit of Storm Eye Institute, she probably would have been blind or close to blind.” Instead, Anna Frances leads a typical third-grader’s life — but with a healthy interest in science and technology.

“She’s into all the things little girls do,” Mrs. Wilson said. “She’s on a gymnastics team, playing in meets. She’s the only child with third glasses on, but that doesn’t bother her.”

The Wilsons recently established the Anna Frances Wilson Fund, which will provide money for physician-scientists at Storm Eye to track childhood cataract patients like Anna Frances. Dr. Wilson and other researchers plan to perform tests on new patients and then follow those patients throughout childhood. The findings will direct future treatment plans.

The Wilsons’ gift provides funding to carry the project forward for three years. At the end of their commitment, the couple intends to launch a challenge grant that would raise matching funds from other private sources.

Dr. Wilson said cataracts are the most common cause of preventable blindness in children worldwide, and Storm Eye takes referrals for children born with cataracts and those who develop the condition later on. “We treat some of the nation’s most complex cases and, as a result, there is an expectation that we will help set the evolving standard of care for these special patients,” Dr. Wilson said. The Wilsons’ gift will provide special optical tests, scanning images and precise ultrasound measurements. Those research tools will help physicians to customize surgery and track the eyes’ growth and development after treatment.

“With the help of the Anna Frances Wilson Pediatric Cataract Research Fund, children born with cataracts have a brighter future,” Dr. Wilson said. “They, too, can grow up and see the world.”

The Wilsons first started helping philanthropic organizations as a young married couple living in Canada and volunteering at a hospital for paralyzed children. Their work extended from there to the North Carolina Zoological Society, Wake Forest University, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and other nonprofit organizations.

“With the help of the Anna Frances Wilson Pediatric Cataract Research Fund, children born with cataracts have a brighter future. They, too, can grow up and see the world.” — Dr. Ed Wilson

Tytee and Patricia Wilson’s gift will help young cataract patients receive the kind of first-rate care their granddaughter, Anna Frances, received at Storm Eye Institute.

“We have both been on the other side of raising money for the cause,” Mr. Wilson said. “We have an appreciation for what it takes and why you do it.”

In the case of the Anna Frances Wilson Fund, the Wilsons hope to help families that otherwise couldn’t afford tests and treatment over the years. “That’s what philanthropy is,” Mrs. Wilson said. “It’s asking: How can we make the world a better place for other children?”

CREATIVE GIVING

Bequests: the ultimate empowerment

by Toni Jernigan, Director of Planned Giving

IF YOU DIED TOMORROW, WHO WOULD INHERIT YOUR HOME, SAVINGS, INVESTMENTS, FAMILY HEIRLOOMS AND OTHER PERSONAL PROPERTY?

It depends. If you have a will, you have already answered that question in a legally binding document. However, if you’re among the 50 percent of American parents who do not have a will, the laws of your state — not you — will determine how, when and among whom your estate will be divided.

Worse, without a carefully considered will, over half of your assets could wind up going to the Internal Revenue Service.

A properly planned and executed will can help you protect your estate from unintended beneficiaries of your life’s work. That, of course, is the most important benefit of establishing a will. It provides you with a simple way to control distribution of your estate.

A will also allows you to make a larger gift to the MUSC Foundation — and achieve a larger impact — than otherwise might be possible during your lifetime. This way, you get the immediate satisfaction of making a gift to the foundation without incurring any immediate costs.

Furthermore, when you make a gift through your will, you can achieve a number of other immediate and long-term financial advantages, including:

- Full use of your assets during your lifetime
- Estate tax charitable deduction
- Avoidance of inheritance disputes

Most important, by making a gift to the MUSC Foundation through your will, you can achieve the immediate satisfaction of knowing that your life’s work will make a long-term difference in the lives of so many people, for generations to come.

For more information on bequests and other planned giving options, please call Toni Jernigan at (843) 792-2256, toll-free (800) 810-MUSC (6872) or email jernigan@musc.edu.
Within a few days after arriving at MUSC, he was visited by a man who spoke with him at great length about his interests and what he planned to do in the College of Pharmacy. “I was flabbergasted and flattered to learn that he was Dr. Franklin C. Fetter, dean of the College of Medicine, and that he had come to visit me. That was an example of how collegial the Medical College was in those days.”

He recalls sitting in front of James Colbert, the university’s first vice president for academic affairs and father of comedian Stephen Colbert, during a performance of “Hair” that evidently was not well received by the parent of 11: “He and the whole family got up and left, in the middle of the show.”

He also remembers faculty member Thomas S. Hargest showing him his first royalty check for the air-fluidized bed he designed for burn victims. “I don’t know why he continued coming to work after that!”

Dr. Brueggeman remained at MUSC until 1975, when he left to take a position in the new products division of Johnson & Johnson in New Jersey. There, he worked with a team of more than 20 physicians around the country to bring new pharmaceutical products to market.

“THIS NEW BUILDING REPRESENTS A NEW ERA OF PHARMACY EDUCATION IN OUR STATE, AND WILL BE HERE FOR GENERATIONS OF PHARMACISTS WHO AREN’T EVEN ALIVE YET. IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP WE’VE TAKEN OVER THE PAST 75 YEARS. AND HE WILL BE A BIG PART OF THAT.” — S.C. College of Pharmacy Dean Joe DiPiro

It was a job for which he had been exceptionally well prepared by his time at MUSC. “My learning experience here was a wonderful one,” he said. “I did a lot of good things here and learned a lot about medicine. All these things made me a lot more conversant with doctors, which of course helped me a lot at J&J.”

In 1983, facing a possible transfer to Europe and not wanting to leave his mother alone in the United States, Dr. Brueggeman returned to Charleston and bought the franchise to the outpatient pharmacy at Trident Hospital, which he ran until his retirement in 2010.

Shortly thereafter, he sat down with an estate planner to update his will. A lifelong bachelor with no family, he began thinking about the institutions that had shaped the course of his life. And his mind turned to the Medical University.

He sent an email to current Pharmacy Dean Joe DiPiro, whom he had met at a meeting a couple of weeks earlier. Together, they arranged a meeting with Dr. Philip Hall, dean of the college’s campus in Charleston.

“At that point, I wanted to know something about the people who were running the college. If they’d have said they wanted money to buy a golden chalice, I’d have had second thoughts,” he says.

Instead, the men talked about common acquaintances, pharmacy in general and the mechanics of bringing together two pharmacy schools. They also spoke briefly about the college’s plans to replace its aging pharmacy-education building.

The S.C. College of Pharmacy is planning to develop a new flagship building at its campus in Charleston, allowing the school to expand and enhance the facilities that have served as its home since 1940. The project has been described as a crucial step toward establishing the college as one of the top 10 pharmacy schools in the country.

“When I left that meeting, I was convinced that this was the right thing to do,“ says Brueggeman.

And so he decided to make a gift in support of the effort. Although the word “legacy” was never mentioned during their initial meeting, DiPiro says that Brueggeman seemed interested making an enduring impact on the career that had meant so much to him. This gift, he says, will achieve that.

“This new building represents a new era of pharmacy education in our state, and will be here for generations of pharmacists who aren’t even alive yet,” says DiPiro. “It is the most important step we’ve taken over the past 75 years. And he will be a big part of that.”
Husband a Patient and Wife an Employee,
THE KARPPINENS SUPPORT MUSC

by Allyson Bird

Margaret Karppinen gave her husband a double-take when he suggested that they start donating to MUSC, her employer.

“I believed I was giving quite a bit already, with all the time I was putting in at the hospital,” Margaret said. “I thought, he can't be serious. But Paul said, 'That's where you work. You should support it and help it grow and improve.'”

Paul, a northern Michigan native, was stationed in Charleston with the U.S. Navy. Margaret, who grew up in Virginia, moved to Charleston to work at MUSC after completing a radiologic technologist program. The Karppinens met when Margaret’s cousin and Paul’s boat mate, a couple of newlyweds, introduced them.

"IT’S GREAT WHEN THINKING A PATIENT FOR COMING TO MUSC TO HEAR THEM RESPOND, ‘I WOULDN’T GO ANYWHERE ELSE.’ PAUL AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY."
- Margaret Karppinen

“I didn’t think he was going to call me back,” Margaret said. But they married months after they met, and this year will mark their 46th anniversary.

They settled into a 620-square-foot house in West Ashley, “a real test of a marriage” as Margaret called it, with a sofa bed that they folded out when company came over. They used barium bars from the hospital for their tables and battled a constant draft.

“When it blew 20 miles per hour outside, it blew 15 miles per hour inside,” Paul said.

Paul, who calls himself “a jack of all trades and master of none,” went into electrical contracting after leaving the Navy and eventually opened a successful business selling contractor tools. The days of a 620-square-foot home are long gone, and the Karppinens now donate to both Hollings Cancer Center and Storm Eye Institute. They also helped launch a new technical program in Paul’s hometown of Painesville, Mich., where students can learn trade skills, such as carpentry, masonry and welding.

Former Storm Eye Institute Development Director Toni McHugh said the Karppinens, who worked for everything they have, contribute significantly to both ophthalmological and cancer research at MUSC, with more than 50 gifts over the years. “They’re true philanthropists, in my mind,” McHugh said. “They get joy out of giving.”

By the time the Karppinens began donating to MUSC, Margaret had been working as a radiologic technologist for 20 years, and Paul had developed an equally intimate relationship with the Medical University. He had fallen down the stairs as a toddler and sustained an injury that caused astigmatism in one eye. He underwent six operations in the 1950s, but none of the procedures fully repaired his eye. He remained self-conscious his entire life, until Dr. Richard Saunders at Storm Eye performed a final operation correcting the problem.

The Karppinens’ connection to MUSC only grew stronger with time. In 2006, doctors diagnosed Paul with diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, an aggressive cancer that causes fever and weight loss in patients.

Paul underwent several chemotherapy treatments and a stem cell transplant using his own tissue, followed by a bone marrow transplant from an unrelated donor. Although the bone marrow transplant worked, Paul developed graft-versus-host disease, a side effect in which the transplanted cells attack the body and can leave the patient thin and weak.

Paul has regained most of the weight and strength he lost during treatment, and he and his wife credit the team at the Hollings Cancer Center for guiding, supporting and cheering them along the way. “The good thing is, I’m still above the grass,” he said.

Not only is he above the grass, but Paul billed to the top of Diamond Head crater during a December trip to Hawaii with Margaret, their two daughters, their son-in-law and their grandson. His souvenir T-shirt marked more than a scenic climb.

Margaret retired in 1998 but still works several shifts at the hospital each month. “It’s great when thanking a patient for coming to MUSC to hear them respond, ‘I wouldn’t go anywhere else,’” she said. “Paul and I feel the same way.”

Raising money for the future of the College of Pharmacy

Just weeks after graduation, nearly 80 percent of the College of Pharmacy Class of 2013 already has given back to its alma mater. The recent graduates have raised more than $45,000 in gifts and pledges to help replace the college’s aging building.

The college plans to move from its 1930s structure into a state-of-the-art building in the heart of campus on President Street. The new building will link to the Drug Discovery Building and one of the College of Dental Medicine buildings, with the room to accommodate growing student enrollment and cutting-edge technologies.

A group of leaders within the Class of 2013 banded together to form the Student Legacy Committee, which will work to raise money for the future building. To date, 77 percent of the Class of 2013 has contributed.

To learn more about the campaign for a new College of Pharmacy building, please visit buildingthefutureofpharmacy.org.

College of Pharmacy Dean Dr. Joe DiPiro and his wife Cecily recently hosted a dinner dinner for members of the Class of 2013. Pictured are, back row (l-r): Cecily DiPiro, Jacqueline Edmon, Brea Keeler, Billy Grooms and Joe DiPiro. Front row (l-r): Diane Okpala, Caroline Gregg, Andy Bodford and Charleston Campus Dean Dr. Philip Hall.
COUPLE’S GIFT TO ADDRESS RARE, COMPLEX VISION PROBLEMS

by Allyson Bird

Dr. Bill Johnson and his wife, Sandra, left Charleston with $200 after Bill completed ophthalmology training at MUSC – just enough to pay for the moving truck that brought them home to Columbia.

Looking back on 1976, Sandra said, “We literally had nothing.” But they did have friends, including one whose father worked at a bank and set them up with the account they needed to buy a home and start their new life. Bill soon joined a practice with a partner and, six months later, he joined a larger group of ophthalmologists.

Today, their Columbia Eye Clinic has grown to include 14 physicians, including Bill and Sandra’s daughter and son. With four operating rooms on site, the clinic takes on everything from simple vision problems to complex surgeries.

As Bill’s ophthalmology career took off, he remained involved with MUSC. Even though he never had the opportunity to train inside the then-new Storm Eye Institute building, he has served on its board of directors for 14 years.

That’s how Storm Eye Institute Director Dr. Lucian V. Del Priore and former Storm Eye Institute Development Director Toni McHugh wound up visiting the Johnsons’ home in January and taking them to dinner. At the end of the meal, Dr. Del Priore and McHugh showed the Johnsons a brochure with the couple’s photo and the title “The Dr. William and Sandra Johnson Endowed Chair in Neuro-Ophthalmology.”

“They gave us several copies. They probably thought if I gave them to a few people, we’d have to do it,” Bill said with a grin. A few days later the Johnsons made a pledge of $500,000.

Within a few years, the Dr. William and Sandra Johnson Endowed Chair in Neuro-Ophthalmology will provide funding needed to attract a worldwide expert in vision diseases that originate from the brain and nervous system. Dr. Del Priore noted that only about 200 neuroophthalmologists nationwide specialize in the complex relationship between the eyes and the brain, making the Johnsons’ gift all the more significant.

“We are committed to determining the cause of problems and to providing appropriate and aggressive treatment options to preserve and improve the vision of each and every patient,” Dr. Del Priore said. “The Johnsons’ gift will ensure we continue to be in the forefront, and we are honored that a graduate and Storm Eye board member chose to make this position possible for us.”

MUSC President Ray Greenberg called the Johnsons “role models” for other alumni and their families. Bill and two of his three brothers graduated from MUSC, and all three of Bill and Sandra’s children graduated from MUSC. Sandra said she hopes her children will look back on their own experience just as fondly.

“I want them to find something that they love enough to do something for it,” she said. Bill and Sandra, sweethearts from A.C. Flora High School in Columbia, lived with their young children in a $1,000-per-month apartment during Bill’s time at MUSC. To offset the cost of medical school, Sandra took a teaching job, and Bill picked up a variety of part-time work, including weekend autopsies, surgery preparation and shifts in hospital emergency rooms in Charleston, Orangeburg, Walterboro and Kingstree.

He remembered one night when a man showed up at one hospital with a bullet in his leg. The shooter later arrived with the intention of finishing what he’d started. The deep blue guard who kept watch over the hospital entrance grabbed the man, threw him against the wall, took his gun and handcuffed him.

Bill once had to drive the director of ophthalmology to the emergency room after a fishing trip with an instructor. The instructor had cast his line, and the lure hooked through the director’s eyelid. Bill said the director first wanted to stop by his home to show his wife the horrific accident before heading on to medical care.

At the end of his time at MUSC, Bill left with both hands-on experience and a trove of stories. One of his instructors gave Sandra the “Ph.T.” for “pushing him through.”

“Fortunately, he didn’t need a lot of help,” Sandra remembered. “But we were just worried about eating.”

Forty years later they held a proposal asking them to help provide a neuro-ophthalmology faculty position at Storm Eye Institute. Bill and Sandra discussed the gift for just a few days before committing. “Sandra said, ‘You love MUSC. You love Storm Eye. You stay connected,’” Bill remembered.

“You have three kids that graduated from MUSC. This is a part of our life.”
Alumnus moved to give by seeing others in need

by Allyson Bird

Dr. A.J. “Buddy” Thompson, a 1978 graduate of the MUSC College of Medicine, was born a block away from Medical University Hospital. He father went to school on campus at the former Porter Military Academy, and his mother grew up nearby on Ashley Avenue. “This is the epicenter of my life, in a sense,” Dr. Thompson said. “I have a great fondness for this place, and it goes back several generations.”

Dr. Thompson and his wife, Elizabeth, intend to leave the bulk of their estate to the three institutions they cherish: their church, Clemson University and MUSC.

Their gift to MUSC is especially generous in that it’s unrestrict ed, meaning the funds will go where they are needed most. “When you give everything away, you really aren’t working for yourself anymore,” Dr. Thompson said. “It’s a different kind of motivation, and it’s kind of liberating knowing that you’re not held captive by all this stuff.”

Storm Eye Institute Director Dr. Lucien V. Del Priore said Dr. and Elizabeth Thompson’s gift will help recruit prominent physicians and scientists who, in turn, attract top-notch faculty members and students. “A gift such as the Thompsons’ will allow Storm Eye to remain one of the elite eye institutes of the United States,” Del Priore said.

From an early age, Dr. Thompson wanted his work to serve others. He found a hero in Charleston surgeon Julian Buxton, who admitted a black medical orderly for treatment at Roper Hospital in 1964, a racially tense time. Buxton also performed hundreds of civilian surgeries in Vietnam and conducted medical missions in Kenya, Siberia and the Dominican Republic.

Inspired by his Buxton, Dr. Thompson made his own first medical mission trip in the late 1980s while working at Baptist Hospital in Easley. The ophthalmologist had planned to make the trip to Brazil backed out six weeks before departure, so colleagues pushed for Dr. Thompson to fill in.

Dr. Thompson hadn’t taken a vacation with his own family in more than two years and wrestled with the idea. His coworkers reminded him that people living in developing countries most need eye and dental care, so Dr. Thompson collected 2,000 pairs of reading glasses, and he headed to Brazil.

The pastor leading their group took them directly from the plane onto a bus and into a favela, or Brazilian ghetto often ruled by dangerous overlords. The physicians heard gunfire as they sat idling outside the favela and learned that this particular overhead did not want visitors.

“I’m tired. I’m smelly. I’m sitting there having a pity party for myself,” Dr. Thompson remembered. “I’m thinking, They don’t want us here. It’s a Sunday night. Why am I here?”

But over the next nine days he watched mothers wait patiently for hours to get glasses for their children. He met a 76-year-old seamstress who walked five miles to his makeshift clinic, only to miss the cutoff for appointments that day. She walked the five miles home and then back again the very next day to get the pair of dollar-store glasses that she needed for her sewing projects.

Dr. Thompson remembers his Brazil mission, from the initial regrets to the overwhelming sadness upon his departure 10 days later, as a time of transformation. He also looks at that trip as metaphor for medical school today: expensive and exhausting but, above all else, rewarding.

“You don’t go into medicine for money anymore,” he said. “You go into it because you want to go into it and because you get gratification from helping folks in their time of need.”

Dr. Thompson, a former board member at the Storm Eye Institute and a current member of the MUSC Foundation Board, hopes his resources will help those future physicians. His mother received successful treatment at Storm Eye Institute for diseases that threatened her sight, so Dr. Thompson wants to support cutting-edge ophthalmologic research. His mother’s life also was spared twice at MUSC’s Ashley River Tower, once by a thoracic surgeon and again by a gastrointestinal specialist, so Dr. Thompson wants to support general programs at MUSC, as well.

And, of course, he hopes his gift benefits less fortunate people, both in South Carolina and through MUSC physicians’ work abroad.

“YOU DON’T GO INTO MEDICINE FOR MONEY ANYMORE. YOU GO INTO IT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO GO INTO IT AND BECAUSE YOU GET GRATIFICATION FROM HELPING FOLKS IN THEIR TIME OF NEED.”

- Dr. A.J. “Buddy” Thompson, Medical Class of ’78
Childress honors husband, grandchildren with gift to Pharmacy

by John Nash

A lifelong resident of South Carolina, Jan Childress admits she knew little about the Medical University until she met the man who later would become her husband, Ed.

Ed Childress was a 1968 graduate of the MUSC College of Pharmacy who went on to build and manage a network of 22 long-term care homes in Georgia and the Carolinas.

“He always joked that he could never get fired if he owned the facility,” said Jan. “But the truth is, he loved working with the residents. He felt that he could have more control over the kind of care they needed if he owned the home.”

Ed and Jan met in 1991 at Smithfield Country Club in Easley, S.C., where he was a golfer and she was an office manager. The two hit it off instantly, she says.

“THERE CHANGED MY THOUGHT PROCESSES ABOUT WHAT I GIVE AND WHOM I GIVE IT TO. I THINK MORE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY. I ASK, ‘IS THIS FOR THE HERE AND NOW, OR IS IT FOR THE FUTURE? AND I CHOOSE TO PUT MY TIME AND RESOURCES INTO CAUSES THAT WILL CHANGE THE FUTURE IN A POSITIVE WAY.’”

- Jan Childress

“I thought he was too good to be true,” she said. “He was an incredible man, kind, passionate, visionary in terms of what he was doing with his business. The first time we went out, I remember thinking, ‘He can’t be like this forever. But he was.’

His most enduring quality was a grounded sense of balance and perspective, said Jan.

“He was one of those people who just loved life. His work was important, but faith and family always came first. He could be working with the governor in Columbia at lunchtime, but he’d be home that same night, fishing fish at the lake.

The two married in 1991. Shortly afterward, Jan made the first of many regular visits to the Medical University, where Ed was actively involved with the Pharmacy Alumni Association.

“It was mainly alumni events at first, but we made great friends that we’d get together with even when we weren’t in Charleston,” she said.

“Ed’s focus was on pharmacy, so that’s where it was for me at the time. But even then, I remember being very impressed by the quality of health care that we had access to, so close to home.”

Jan says that appreciation broadened and deepened in 2006, when Ed was diagnosed with cancer.

“That led me to start researching and doing my homework on the kind of treatments that were out there. I learned that there was nothing offered anywhere in the country that we couldn’t get here. That told me that MUSC was right on target and was a leader in the field.”

Ed Childress passed away in December 2008, after battling cancer for almost nine years.

After his death, Jan felt called to become more involved with the Medical University, especially

As a successful businesswoman in her own right, Jan also saw her gift to MUSC as a solid investment with an enduring return. She became more convinced of this when her daughter Brandi and son-in-law Parker became parents to her twin grandsons.

“The twins changed my thought processes about what I give and whom I give it to,” she said. “I think more about sustainability. I ask, ‘Is this for the here and now, or is it for the future?’ And I choose to put my time and resources into causes that will change the future in a positive way.”

She’s also pleased that her gift will help memorialize Ed in a place that meant so much to him during his lifetime.

“The College of Pharmacy has been very good to us, so I wanted to keep the Childress name involved with it. It was very important to have that as a legacy,” she said. “This new facility will help MUSC continue its goal of having one of the best pharmacy schools in the country. That’s exciting to me. I love that, and I know Ed would too.”
Dental class of June 1973 provides for future students

Four decades have come and gone since members of the Dental Class of June 1973 strolled across MUSC’s campus as students. Yet nearly all 18 living classmates get together each year “to share drinks, tell lies and look at old pictures,” as one of them, Dr. John Sherer of Chester, puts it. And two years ago the class decided it wanted to do a little more than that.

The group pooled money to establish the Dental Class of June 1973 Memorial Fund. The fund initially began with an idea to honor a beloved classmate, Dr. Randall Heffron, who died from cancer in 1994 at only 47 years old. “For years and years he was the No. 1 tennis player at The Citadel,” Sherer remembered.

“He was a great kid and had a winning smile. He was kind to everyone.” Sherer remembered riding around downtown Charleston on old motorcycles with Heffron when they were young men in dental school. Sherer and other classmates received word of Heffron’s diagnosis just weeks before his death.

“Our class got to talking about the fact that we’d all be going that way eventually,” Sherer said. “We decided that we’d like to leave something behind.”

Another classmate, Dr. Wayne Stewart, had died several years before Heffron, so the group decided to designate the contribution as simply a memorial fund. Each year during Dental Homecoming the group adds more to the Dental Class of June 1973 Memorial Fund, which now totals more than $60,000.

The gift makes it possible for the College of Dental Medicine to purchase equipment needed to attract students and faculty. Last year the fund grew large enough to become endowed, meaning it will serve as a permanent asset to the college.

The group gathered Clinton dentist Dr. Daniel Hartley’s Charleston house during Homecoming Week in February. Phone calls and emails have kept Hartley and his classmates connected for the 40 years in between the annual gatherings. “Two thirds of the class turns up,” Hartley said. “It’s been amazing how we keep together.”


TIME IS RUNNING OUT...

Using your IRA to make a gift, reduce taxes

The American Taxpayer Relief Act passed by Congress in January of this year includes several important provisions that will allow you to make a charitable gift to MUSC using your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). But time is running out.

If you are 70½ or older, you can make a gift of up to $100,000 to the Medical University from your IRA. When you make a gift through this method, known as an “IRA charitable rollover,” the IRS will treat the amount of the cash gift as if you had made a direct rollover to charity, allowing you to avoid federal income tax on the amount of the gift.

IRA charitable rollovers do come with special rules. For example:

✦ The law extends the IRA Charitable Rollover provision only until December 31, 2013.

✦ The law applies only to IRA accounts (traditional or Roth). Other plans, such as 401(k) or 403 (b) plans, do not qualify.

✦ Gifts from your IRA must be made directly from your IRA to a qualified charity, such as the Medical University.

✦ Unlike other charitable gifts to MUSC, IRA contributions must be designated to benefit the Medical University of South Carolina, NOT the MUSC Foundation. Please contact us for special instructions.

✦ Although the IRA distribution is excluded from your income for federal tax purposes, you should check to see if it will be included for state income tax purposes.

Contact the Medical University’s Planned Giving Office today for special instructions for your IRA custodian and ensure your IRA rollover contribution qualifies. Please call McLaurin Bruce at (843) 792-0002 or toll-free at (800) 810-6872 to learn more.
OUT & ABOUT

Gourmet and Grapes

The Sanctuary at Kiawah hosted the 5th annual Gourmet & Grapes benefit on February 8-10, raising $100,000 for cancer research at Hollings Cancer Center. The weekend-long culinary extravaganza is the only fundraiser in the Lowcountry that brings together renowned chefs and winemakers to raise money for cancer research. Since its inception in 2009, Gourmet & Grapes has raised more than $650,000 for cancer research programs at Hollings Cancer Center.
OUT & ABOUT

“Model” Patients Help Raise Funds and Awareness

More than 300 people attended the 2nd annual Circle of Champions Luncheon and Fashion show during Charleston’s Fashion Week. This event was sponsored by Baker Motor, with fashions by Pearl and Belk. All of the guests enjoyed lunch which was prepared by Halls Chophouse’s executive chef, Matthew Niessner. Vickie Baker and Cheryl Steadman co-chaired this year’s event, which generated over $125,000 for the benefit of MUSC Children’s Hospital.

TOP TIGHT: Runway models (and triplets) Sarah, Kate and Elliot Farr started their lives in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at MUSC Children’s Hospital. They are now 5 years old.

TOP LEFT: Bradley Shauffler, 14-year-old son of WEZL personality and fashion show emcee Ric Rush, was a patient in the hospital’s Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

BOTTOM: Former oncology patient Renni Fisher, second from left, selected (l-r) Dr. Jennifer Jaroscak, nurse Kim Kirk and Dr. Michelle Hudspeth as her “champions.” She and her parents are very grateful for the care she received and for the very positive outcome!

WEZL and Y102.5 FM, Caring for Kids

The 5th Annual WEZL and Y102.5 Cares for Kids Radiothon, held February 21-22 in the Medical University’s Colbert Education Center and Library, raised a total of $269,714 for MUSC Children’s Hospital. Pictured here (l-r) are Brian Geary, Children’s Hospital patient Chase Towne, Courtney Starr, Alene Grevey, Ric Rush, Olivia Towne, TJ Phillips and Steve Burke.

Evening with the Stars

Country music performers Rodney Atkins (l-r), Josh Turner and Darius Rucker shared a stage at North Charleston Performing Arts Center as part of “WEZL Evening with the Stars,” a sold-out singer/songwriter event benefiting MUSC Children’s Hospital. The performance, presented by WEZL and sponsored by Hagemeyer, raised $160,000.

Klays for Kids Celebrates 15th Anniversary

More than 150 shooters and 119 sponsors took part in the 15th Annual “Klays for Kids” Sporting Clays Tournament at Back Woods Quail Club in Rhems, S.C., raising a record $60,430 for MUSC Children’s Hospital. Sponsored by the S.C. Forestry Association and Load a Log for Kids, the tournament has raised more than $460,000 for the hospital since its inception. Here, some of this year’s sponsors gathered for a photograph with a former patient, McKinley, held by her uncle, Ron Poston.

Swing For A Cure Advances Sarcoma Research

The Annual Swing for A Cure Party and Golf Tournament was organized by Carrie Branch and her brother-in-law, Giles Branch. Organized in memory of Travis Branch, Swing for a Cure raised more than $20,000 for the sarcoma research program at Hollings Cancer Center. Pictured here are (l-r) Carrie Branch, Hollings Cancer Center’s Dr. Lee Liddy, and Giles Branch.
OUT AND ABOUT (cont’d.)

Cooper River Bridge Run 2013

MUSC Children’s Hospital was among the organizations chosen to benefit from funds raised through the 36th annual Cooper River Bridge Run on April 6. More than 31,000 walkers and runners participated in this year’s event, helping raise more than $54,000 for the Children’s Hospital through BLo, the Charity Connection and the post-race Beer Garden.

Golf and more, all for a good cause

Nearly 130 golfers took part in the Charleston RiverDogs’ 8th Annual Charity Golf Tournament, held at Wild Dunes Resort on May 7 to benefit Storm Eye Institute. Sponsored by Parks Auto Parts, the Golftoberfest-themed tournament was designed with the RiverDogs’ “fun is good” motto in mind, with a yodeling competition, keg rolling, German chocolate cake eating contest and pretzel-making lessons at several holes throughout the course. The tourney was also unusual in that one of the 32 teams paired up legally blind golfers with members of the College of Charleston golf team. Pictured here are Peter Alan Smith (l-r) and Jim Gilstrap with College of Charleston golfers Shane Regan and Josh Lorenzetti.