Intermountain Healthcare’s Donation Boosts U Public Health Outreach

Accurate and timely information about HIV/AIDS will reach Utah’s primary care providers more efficiently, thanks to a $100,000 donation from Intermountain Healthcare to the University of Utah Public Health Program.

The gift last January was directed to the Kristen M. Ries, M.D., HIV/AIDS Research and Service Endowment in Public Health, which targets outreach efforts to rural providers. Established in May 2006, the endowment honors Dr. Ries for 30 years of service and patient care to the HIV/AIDS community in Utah and the nation. She is a U professor of internal medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases and adjunct professor of family and preventive medicine in the School of Medicine.

The Ries endowment supplements the activities of the Utah AIDS Education and Training Center (UAETC), a component of the U Public Health Program. “With the number of HIV/AIDS patients in Utah steadily increasing, especially in rural areas, plus new treatment regimens and experimental research programs, Utah’s health-care providers want and need the most current training regarding this disease, so they can deliver optimal care for their patients,” said George L. White Jr., Ph.D., M.S.P.H., U professor of family and preventive medicine, and director of the Public Health Program.

The UAETC is the only organization in the state offering training about HIV/AIDS to primary care and mental-health providers, who often are the first health-care professionals to see these patients. In the past fiscal year, the center held 107 training events in Utah, educating more than 1,500 providers.

Cardiologists Named to Endowed Professorships

Two physicians in the School of Medicine’s Division of Cardiology were honored with endowed professorships last spring.

Mohamed H. Hamdan, M.D., professor and associate division chief, was named to the John and June B. Hartman Research Endowed Professorship, and Sheldon E. Litwin, M.D., professor, to the Margaret A. Amundsen Endowed Professorship.

Dr. Hamdan joined the U faculty in 2005 with a joint appointment as an investigator at the Nora Eccles Harrison Cardiovascular Research and Training Institute.

A graduate of the American University of Beirut, he completed a fellowship in cardiovascular disease at Stanford University Hospitals, where he received the Hewlett-Packard Award for Clinical Excellence, and a fellowship in clinical cardiac electrophysiology at the University of California, San Francisco.

Dr. Hamdan served eight years at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, where he held the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Cardiac Arrhythmia Research and the Elizabeth Thaxton Page Professorship in Cardiac Electrophysiology Research.

Dr. Litwin, a U faculty member since 1993, serves as director of both noninvasive cardiology and the cardiology fellowship program. He is involved in eight research projects funded by the National Institutes of Health, ranging from ischemic cardiac injury and myocyte insulin signaling to modeling diabetic cardiomyopathy and microangiopathy in the mouse (see pg. 20).

A graduate of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Dr. Litwin completed a cardiology residency at the University of Arizona and a fellowship at Beth Israel Hospital, Harvard School of Medicine. His honors include the 1992 American Society for Echocardiography Research Award and the 1994 Young Faculty Research Award from the Western Society for Clinical Investigation.

The Hartman Endowed Research Professorship was established by John and June Hartman. After a 35-year career in retail and wholesale pharmacy, Mr. Hartman retired as chief executive officer of Skaggs Stores and vice president of American Stores. He was instrumental in helping the U College of Pharmacy raise funds for the construction of its building in 1965-66. Mr. and Mrs. Hartman served on the University’s Health Sciences Council and established an endowed scholarship in the pharmacy college.

He died in 2005.

Margaret Allen Amundsen, who died in 1996, was a fine arts graduate of the U of U, where she had been a charter member of the Beta Gamma Chapter of the Delta Gamma Sorority. She and her husband, the late Max Rudger Amundsen, were members of the Holladay Rotary Club and generous supporters of University Hospital.

New Society Supports Internal Medicine Department

Don’t be deceived by the acronym for the Society Supporting Leadership in Internal Medicine: there’s nothing SSLIM about the generosity or the goals of this new philanthropic group.

Inspired by a $1 million gift last year to the U of U Department of Internal Medicine from Charles Nugent, M.D., and his wife, Margaret, SSLIM held a “launch” celebration last May that drew about 100 physicians to the Marriott University Park Hotel in Salt Lake City, reported C. Hilmon Castle, M.D., U professor emeritus of internal
Gifted Graduate Student Honored with Two Memorials

Though her life ended tragically in a bicycle accident, Josie Johnson’s memory and her passion for science lives on at the University of Utah School of Medicine through the generosity of her parents who have established two memorials.

Richard B. and Betty B. Johnson last December funded the Josie Johnson Memorial Endowed Professorship in the Molecular Biology Graduate Program and the Josie Johnson Memorial Fund.

Ms. Johnson, a 25-year-old U graduate student in molecular biology, was hit and killed by a motorist Sept. 18, 2004, while bicycling up Big Cottonwood Canyon. She was eulogized as a “brilliant graduate student and gifted athlete.” To draw attention to bicyclist safety, her friends organized the Josie Johnson Memorial Ride, an annual 10-mile ride through the Salt Lake Valley that draws up to 1,000 cyclists.

“To commemorate Josie’s love of science and her desire to achieve significant results in combating disease through molecular biology research,” her parents established the memorial professorship. The first holder is E. Dale Abel, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of internal medicine and an investigator with the U Program in Human Molecular Biology and Genetics, who served as Ms. Johnson’s mentor.

The $200,000 memorial fund is designated for the Molecular Biology Graduate Program, an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental doctoral program. John Weis, Ph.D., professor of pathology, will solicit recommendations from the molecular biology community as how best to use the fund to advance science and graduate student work.

Kresser Endowment to Help Young Adults Battling Addiction

In the last two-and-a-half years of his life, Joshua Sam Kresser spent 404 days in treatment trying to recover from a prescription drug addiction, according to his mother’s calculations. But it wasn’t enough. Josh died last September.

To help ensure others don’t experience a similar tragedy, his parents—Layne and Sandra Kresser—and his grandmother, Mary Souvall, established the Joshua Sam Kresser Endowment at the University of Utah Health Sciences. Their initial gift of $90,000 will help fund treatment for a patient between the ages of 18 and 24 in the Recovery Works Young Adult Intensive Outpatient Program at the University Neuropsychiatric Institute.

“We want to do whatever we can to help someone else. Being prescribed and getting addicted to painkillers is such a huge problem,” said Mrs. Kresser. “We want to ensure that our son didn’t die in vain.”

After surgery for a herniated disk in his back, Josh was prescribed Oxycontin. “We didn’t know he was addicted,” said his mother. He was prescribed additional painkillers following several minor surgeries and, although he participated in both inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, he was unable to end the addiction. He died in California at age 25.

His death followed that of his grandfather, Sam W. Souvall, in August 2006. Sam and his wife, Mary, were members of the U of U Health Sciences Council. To honor the many nurses who had cared for them over the years, the couple established the Mary S. and Sam W. Souvall Scholarship at the U College of Nursing. They contributed annually to the fund, as have their four children, including Mr. and Mrs. Kresser.

Mrs. Souvall is an active member of the Salt Lake Greek Orthodox community. Her late husband, who had served as Parish Council President, was a successful businessman.
New Service Endowment Honors Marc Babitz

Colleagues of a respected University of Utah family practice physician have recognized his commitment to reach out to disadvantaged and underserved patients with the establishment of the Marc E. Babitz, M.D., Service Endowment Fund in the medical school’s Department of Family and Preventive Medicine.

Announced at last spring’s Family Medicine Senior Banquet, the fund will help support medical students, faculty, staff, and volunteers involved in service-learning activities who offer “excellent health-related services.”

“Marc has a passion for service and exemplifies that passion in his career,” noted Susan Cochella, M.D., assistant professor in family and preventive medicine, who directs the fund.

Dr. Babitz, professor and holder of the Thomas Fincher Harry Morton, M.D., Endowed Chair in Family and Preventive Medicine, directs the department’s Student Programs in Family Medicine. In 2003, students honored him with the Heather Belsey Award for his “outstanding dedication to the homeless community and leadership to students,” and the School of Medicine selected him as Utah’s nominee for the Humanism in Medicine Award from the Association of American Medical Colleges. The Junior League of Salt Lake City recognized him in 1997 with its Community Award for his many years of “volunteer efforts to improve our community’s health,” including participating in the league’s annual CARE FAIR.

In addition to his faculty responsibilities, Dr. Babitz directs the Division of Health Systems Improvement at the Utah Department of Health.

Women’s Group Gifts Top $1 Million

Together We Can is the official motto of the Educational Resource Development Council (ERDC), but it could just as easily be Strength in Numbers. Both draw attention to the powerful effect these philanthropic women have when they pool their efforts. But the numbers—the actual amount of money they’ve donated in the past 15 years—are compelling proof.

As of December 2006, the ERDC had contributed $1.3 million in cash gifts to the University of Utah Health Sciences. When additional donations they’ve made to the University at large are included, the total is more than $3 million.

“The strength of this group of women coming together and making a difference in so many people’s lives—that to me is even stronger than the dollars,” said Jean Mueller, senior director of giving in the U Health Sciences Development Office. “The ERDC has made a dynamic difference in our health sciences, our community, and around the globe.”

Ms. Mueller organized the council in 1991 when she was hired as University Hospital’s director of development. She’d worked 14 years at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, where she’d organized a successful women’s advisory group. Though women traditionally have supported the arts, Ms. Mueller felt they could be just as enthusiastic advocating for health.

Pam Keller served four years as first chair of the council, which had 10 members. By 1995, when Marilynn Roskelley became chair, membership had more than doubled. A mission statement and membership guidelines were drafted, and a Project and Program Committee to oversee scholarships was established. The council was expanded to about 45 members in 2001, when the council made the change. Under the leadership of Terry Rampton, the minimum gift level was raised from $350 to $500 per year. Lynn Fey served as chair from 2003-06; Marian Ingham began her term last January.

At its monthly meetings, the ERDC invites a scholarship recipient to update the council on his or her scholarship activities. Clinicians, researchers, and others also make presentations on projects for which they need funding. In the spring, after the ERDC has collected and pooled members’ gifts, the council votes on which projects to fund.

Since its inception, the council has donated $245,000 to 138 scholarships in the School of Medicine, and colleges of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Health. The ERDC also has contributed more than $350,000 to fund equipment and facilities for the health sciences. Individual members have established nine private endowments in the health sciences for a total of $460,000.

“Women philanthropists want to make a difference and improve their communities for future generations. That’s what the ERDC is doing,” said Ms. Mueller. She noted that women live longer than men and, according to national studies, are expected to control a large portion of the $41 trillion of wealth transfer in the next 50 years.

The benevolence of the ERDC extends beyond financial support as well. Former members continue to serve the University on other advisory boards and committees, including the National Advisory Council.