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A banner year

By Barbra Alan

It’s one thing to remember your school days with fondness and gratitude for the education you received; it’s quite another to express that gratitude by giving back to your alma mater. That’s just what hundreds of Dartmouth Medical School alumni do, year after year, with their gifts to the Fund for DMS. Recently, gifts to the Fund not only surpassed the Medical School’s goal, they set a new record. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006, nearly 1,000 alumni, parents, faculty, and friends of DMS made gifts to the annual fund totaling $589,169—making fiscal year 2006 the most successful year yet for the Fund for DMS.

The Fund for DMS provides unrestricted current-use funds for a wide variety of the Medical School’s priorities, including scholarship support, curriculum development, the recruitment and retention of the highest caliber faculty, the creation of innovative programs and state-of-the-art facilities, and the overall operation of the Medical School.

While the need for such funds is ever-present, they are especially critical during a fund-raising campaign, since they provide a base of support for the future. This is one of the reasons that annual giving to both Dartmouth Medical School and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center is a key priority of the Transforming Medicine Campaign. The Campaign goal for the Fund for DMS is to raise $3.58 million by the end of 2009, and as of August 1, 2006, an impressive $2 million was in hand—over half of the goal. Together with DMS and DHMC’s other annual fund—the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Annual Fund, which provides unrestricted support to the academic medical center—the Fund for DMS is targeted to generate $10 million in unrestricted resources over the life of the Campaign.

Alumni volunteers

Dartmouth Medical School is fortunate to have alumni who not only support it financially but also volunteer their time and talent to inspire their classmates to give. Indeed, Annual Fund Director Amy Schrom credits much of the Fund for DMS’s success to the hard work and dedication of alumni volunteer groups, including reunion gift committees, class agents, and the Fund for DMS Working Group, one of the newer alumni volunteer groups, formed to build on the momentum of the DMS annual fund. “The School belongs to the alumni,” Schrom notes, “and they are eager to serve as stewards to maintain the growing legacy of excellence.”

Dr. John Moran, a member of the Dartmouth College

Barbra Alan is assistant director of development communications for the Medical School and Medical Center.
Class of ’54 and the Medical School Class of ’55, is a longtime donor to the Fund for DMS and the chair of the Working Group. “When I was at DMS back in the ’50s, it was a small, two-year school with two buildings, 24 students, [and] a small faculty, and it was actually on the verge of being discontinued,” Moran observes. “What has happened since is absolutely phenomenal.”

A standing committee of the DMS Alumni Council, which is the governing body of the Dartmouth Medical School Alumni Association, the Fund for DMS Working Group advises and assists the Medical School in achieving its Campaign fund-raising goal and works on strategies to increase participation and encourage yearly giving to the Fund. The Working Group comprises 12 alumni members representing a broad range of geographic regions (one member is even based in Africa much of the year) and of classes (there’s a 30-year span in graduation years). What the members share, notes Moran, “is a strong feeling for the School and the wish to back it up with action.”

History of the Fund
While the history of alumni giving to DMS is long, a formal annual giving program didn’t exist until the mid-1970s. The Fund for DMS (then known as the Alumni Fund) was established through the efforts of Barbara Blough, founding director of the DMS Office of Alumni Affairs. Blough came to DMS in 1975 as a grant-proposal writer. A year later, when DMS created the Office of Alumni Affairs, she was tapped to be its first director. “At that time, DMS was in difficult straits financially,” Blough recalls. “This prompted the decision to reach out to alumni.” “They were so responsive,” says Blough of the alumni she contacted for support of the newly created annual fund. “It was truly amazing. I think the reason for that was they had such a good experience at Dartmouth Medical School, and the teaching was so excellent, they saw the Medical School as the great launching pad for their careers.” Blough also notes that many alumni were inspired to support their alma mater out of their deep reverence for former Dean Rolf Syvertsen, who was on the DMS faculty for nearly 40 years. With some alumni, she says, “all I had to do was refer to Dr. Syvertsen.”

Three decades later, more recent alumni still note their excellent medical education and their fondness for their teachers—such as Drs. Elmer Pfefferkorn, Joseph O’Donnell, William Mosenthal, and Miguel Marin-Padilla—as reasons why they choose to support their alma mater. Whatever their reasons for giving, it gives Moran great satisfaction to see the Fund for DMS succeed as it has. “It’s a privilege to take part in supporting the Medical School to see that growth and excellence continue,” he says.

With a record-breaking fund-raising year, and the dedication of volunteers like Moran, there’s every indication that the best is yet to come for the Fund for DMS.

Raising the bar
The financial goal of the Transforming Medicine Campaign for Dartmouth Medical School and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center is to raise $250 million by 2009. Even more far-reaching is its goal of “raising the bar” in medicine. Of questioning assumptions—respecting tradition but not following it blindly. Of erasing boundaries—translating science from the lab bench to the bedside by connecting researchers with clinicians. Of creating solutions to the nation’s most critical health-care issues. Of transforming medicine.

Annual giving
The Fund for Dartmouth Medical School sustains the fiscal flexibility that the Medical School needs in order to be able to seize opportunities and respond to the demands of providing the next generation of doctors and scientists with the best education and training possible. Within the Transforming Medicine Campaign is a $3.58-million target for the Fund for DMS—to support scholarships, curriculum development, the recruitment and retention of the highest caliber faculty, the creation of innovative programs, the maintenance of state-of-the-art facilities, and the overall operation of the Medical School.

Fiscal year 2006 was the most successful year ever for the Fund for DMS. Nearly 1,000 donors—alumni and others—contributed $589,169 to the Fund.

Learning more
For more about the Transforming Medicine Campaign, visit http://transmed.dartmouth.edu.