Improving children’s lives  By Kate Villars

When Etna, N.H., residents Ken and Vickie French began thinking about a major gift to the Transforming Medicine Campaign, they knew they wanted to make a gift that would have an immediate and significant impact on care in their region. Their $1-million commitment to the Child Advocacy and Protection Program (CAPP) does just that.

Most vulnerable
CAPP, a program of the Children’s Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD), treats and cares for the region’s most vulnerable and at-risk children—those who are victims of abuse and neglect. “Child maltreatment tends to be more prevalent in rural settings like ours, where poverty, isolation, and alcoholism are often higher,” explains Dr. Kent Hymel, medical director of CAPP. “In 2005, child protective services investigated over 12,000 reports of suspected child abuse in New Hampshire and Vermont.”

CAPP is the referral center of choice for New Hampshire and Vermont, so its staff are on call 24 hours a day to perform emergency medical evaluations and consult on any case throughout the region where child maltreatment is suspected. In addition, CAPP’s multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to care provides a safety net for abused children by ensuring that they and their families receive services to support the healing process, address the root causes of abuse and neglect, and ensure a safe environment for the child. “Child-abuse work, when done well, involves many professionals within the community working together,” explains Hymel.

Through its outreach, education, and training programs, CAPP is working to raise awareness and recognition of child maltreatment in order to ensure that no child suffering from abuse or neglect falls through the cracks. As a result, the number of children cared for by CAPP has grown by well over 100% in the last five years.

Now, CAPP is piloting new initiatives in telemedicine, such as videoconferencing with remote clinics, that will allow its services to more effectively reach children who live in distant areas. “If these systems work soundly, then children will be able to get expert assessments regarding suspected child maltreatment close to home,” says Hymel. When maltreatment is confirmed, CAPP staff can then advise local physicians in reporting abuse, caring for young victims, and accessing support services for children and their families.

“We cannot begin to provide an adequate level of service for these children without the support of generous community members like the Frenches,” says Hymel. “Less than 10% of our budget is covered by patient revenue, because these children need a level of care and support that goes far beyond what insurance will reimburse. We’re tremendously dependent on philanthropy. For many kids, this kind of gift to CAPP makes the difference between living in a safe and nurturing environment or suffering potentially lifelong consequences from ongoing abuse.”

Immediate impact
That’s exactly the kind of return on investment that Ken French, a leading financial economist, a professor of finance at Dartmouth’s Tuck School of Business, and a director and consultant with Dimensional Fund Advisors, is looking for. “Given the harsh realities of child abuse, we wanted to make a gift with immediate impact,” he says. “It’s gratifying to know that we can help make a difference in these children’s lives.”

Adds Vickie French, “There is such tremendous need there. We hope our gift will inspire broader community support of the important resource we have in CHaD.”

Kate Villars is assistant director of development communications for DMS-DHMC.

“Tremendous need,” says donor Vickie French. “We hope our gift will inspire broader community support of the important resource we have in CHaD.”

1 Kent Hymel is the medical director of DHMC’s Child Advocacy Protection Program, which cares for society’s most needy—children who are victims of abuse and neglect. The program’s patient load has grown by more than 100% over the last five years, but patient revenues cover less than 10% of its budget. Those facts impelled Etna, N.H., residents Ken and Vickie French to make a $1-million commitment to support the program.

2 The late Peter Williamson, pictured in 2007 with his wife, Susan, was an internationally recognized expert in epilepsy and the chair of the Transforming Medicine Campaign.
In memoriam: Dr. Peter Williamson  By Kate Villars

Dr. Peter Williamson not only believed passionately in the excellence of medicine at Dartmouth, but he was a man who walked his talk. Williamson, who died of cancer in June, made a lasting impact at Dartmouth and beyond through his medical career, his leadership, his philanthropy, and his indomitable spirit.

For over 30 years, Williamson’s vision, commitment, and energy were felt broadly across the medical community. A 1958 Dartmouth College graduate, he was a world-renowned neurologist and epilepsy expert, a founding member and chair of the Dartmouth Medical School Board of Overseers, and a professor of medicine at DMS.

Williamson returned to Dartmouth in 1991 at the invitation of Dr. Alexander Reeves to found the Comprehensive Epilepsy Center at DHMC. Under Williamson’s direction, the program earned National Institutes of Health designation as one of the nation’s top epilepsy referral centers.

“Peter was a bright, motivated person,” recalls Reeves. “In anything he did, he had a very strong drive to be good at it. He was the kind of person you could always count on.”

Williamson was also tireless in his efforts to garner philanthropic support for DMS and DHMC, noting that “philanthropy is critically important to our ability to continue to expand our knowledge and ability to care for our patients.”

As chair of the Transforming Medicine Campaign, Williamson had led the Campaign since its start in 2002, bringing it at the time of his death to within $44 million of its $250-million goal. Last fall, he and his wife, Susan, spurred the Campaign’s already strong momentum with a $20-million gift commitment, the largest ever to DMS or DHMC. In recognition of their extraordinary generosity, the translational research building in the future C. Everett Koop Medical Science Complex will be named in their honor.

Passionate devotion
“We sincerely appreciate Peter’s passionate devotion to Dartmouth medicine,” says Dr. William Green, dean of DMS. “I’m grateful for his hand in shaping the Medical School and for everything he and his wife, Susan, have done to strengthen our future.”

Williamson’s interests and community service extended far beyond medicine. An active member of his Dartmouth class, he also served on numerous boards, including those of the Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich, Vt.; the American Precision Museum in Windsor, Vt.; and the Experimental Aircraft Association, an international organization of aviation enthusiasts. He was also a well-known collector of vintage Bugatti automobiles.

Williamson is survived by his wife, Susan, and their four children—Debbie Williamson, DC ’81; Karen Cushnie; Kyle Williamson; and Dr. Doug Williamson, DC ’85 and DMS ’93—and six grandchildren.

“The medical community has lost a faithful advocate, and Dartmouth has lost a loyal friend,” notes Dartmouth College President James Wright. “Through his work and because of his philanthropy, Peter’s Dartmouth medicine legacy will continue for generations. We will all miss him.”

There is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world. It is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher.
—Poet Henry van Dyke (1852-1933)

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.

Leadership update
Alfred Griggs, chair of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center Board of Trustees, and Peter Fahey, a DHMC Trustee and cochair of the Dartmouth College Campaign for the Dartmouth Experience, have assumed leadership of the Transforming Medicine Campaign following the death of Dr. Peter Williamson in June. Both have served on the Transforming Medicine Campaign Executive Committee since the start of the Campaign in 2002.

Griggs and Fahey have stepped forward to lead the Campaign at a time when it is enjoying tremendous momentum. The fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, was a record-breaking one for the Campaign, with over 30,000 donors making gift commitments and grants totaling $55.7 million. This strong support brings the Campaign total to date to over $209 million.

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