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MAKING A LASTING IMPACT

DR. STU HANSON D '59, MED '60 WAS A YOUNG PRACTICING PULMONOLOGIST in Minnesota in the 1970s when he came to an important realization. He could save more lives if he applied some of his time to public health efforts to reduce smoking than if he focused only on caring for individual patients. That thinking, the seeds of which were planted during his time at Dartmouth Medical School, was in many ways ahead of its time.

“As a physician, you have an obligation to give back to your community, not only to your medical community but to your wider community, too,” says Hanson. He credits legendary medical school professors Rolf Syversten and Harry Savage with imparting that value to him and his classmates. “Dartmouth led me to be more interested in trying to make a difference in public health.”

Hanson spearheaded efforts in Minnesota, beginning in the 1970s, to establish smoke-free offices, restaurants, public spaces, and medical facilities, including the clinics of his multi-specialty group practice. “We became the first medical group in the country to go smoke-free in all our buildings and grounds,” recalls

Hanson, which earned the practice an award from Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. As founding president of the Minnesota Smoke-Free Coalition and a member of the American Medical Association House of Delegates, Hanson helped advance smoke-free spaces nationwide, too.

Now retired from clinical practice, Hanson and his wife, Gail, want to give back and help today’s students access the kind of transformative education that set both of them on paths to fulfilling professional lives.

“Giving to scholarships is investing in human potential, not just intellectual power,” says Hanson, who received a full tuition scholarship to attend Dartmouth College. The couple is funding two scholarship

endowments at Dartmouth, one for undergraduates and one for medical students. They’re also funding scholarships at the University of Minnesota, where Hanson completed his medical training and Gail earned degrees in English and special education.

Having served 12 years on the admissions committee for the University of Minnesota Medical School, Hanson is well acquainted with students’ financial needs today. At Geisel, medical students graduate with an average educational debt of \$176,000—an amount that is lower than the national average (\$190,000) but can still be overwhelming for someone who has several years of training ahead. For example, by the time a physician finishes a three-year residency and is able to begin paying down educational debt, \$176,000 will have grown to almost \$213,000.

“That’s why every bit of scholarship support can make a dramatic difference for students now and in the future,” says Dino Koff, director of financial aid for Dartmouth.

By establishing scholarship endowments, the Hansons know that their generosity will live on, affecting countless lives in perpetuity—just as Hanson’s public health work continues to create healthier communities now and in the future.

JENNIFER DURGIN