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3/23/2011 @ 1:45PM | 5,081 views

Did The Strykers Strike Again With Anonymous Donation?

There aren't a lot of people in Kalamazoo who can afford to make a \$100 million anonymous cash donation to Western Michigan University to start a new medical school. So when the stunning announcement was made Tuesday by the school's president, John M. Dunn, speculation immediately focused on the [Stryker](#) family, heirs to the fortune behind Stryker Corp., which makes medical devices like hospital beds and artificial joints.

It wasn't the first time the Strykers — Ronda, Patricia and Jon — have been mentioned as the likely donors behind huge philanthropic efforts in Kalamazoo, a city of about 250,000 people midway between Detroit and Chicago. In 2005, a group of anonymous donors announced the Kalamazoo Promise, a pledge to pay up to 100% of the tuition at any Michigan college for graduates of Kalamazoo's public schools.

Local residents suspect Stryker board member [Ronda Stryker](#) and her husband, Bill Johnston, owner of the Radisson hotel in Kalamazoo, are among the Promise donors. The couple are former teachers for the Kalamazoo public schools who are now billionaire philanthropists. [Ronda Stryker](#) is worth \$2.6 billion, Forbes estimates. Her brother, [Jon Stryker](#), also with strong ties to Kalamazoo, is worth \$1.6 billion and often mentioned as a possible donor, too. His favorite charities promote great apes and gay and lesbian issues. Their sister [Pat Stryker](#), who lives in Colorado and whose net worth is also \$1.6 billion, gives a lot of her money to support the arts. All three are big Democratic political donors.

Janice Brown, former Kalamazoo Public Schools superintendent, knows who the Promise donors are but isn't talking. She told the [Wall Street Journal](#): "Here's my story and I'm sticking to it: I'm sworn to confidentiality about the identity of our donors."

WSU President Dunn said that while the donors wish to stay anonymous at this point, they might agree to be identified at some point in the future. "Of course we will honor their wishes, but we hope some day to be able to acknowledge them by name and thank them again for their generosity," he said. "Theirs is the kind of support we will need on many fronts as we continue to move forward and grow as a research university. Such donor support is more important than ever in these challenging economic times."

This article is available online at:

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