



## Guest column: WMU medical school a community success

**MLive/Kalamazoo Gazette opinion** By **MLive/Kalamazoo Gazette opinion**

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*By Hal B. Jenson, MD, MBA*

The opening of Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine is a testament to the vision and dedication of the entire community. It is a challenging opportunity to create a new medical school, but the odds of successfully creating a great school are significantly increased when the community works alongside. Thanks to the collaboration, engagement, and support of our community we are not just the newest of 141 medical schools in the US, we are also achieving significant milestone successes on our pathway of excellence.

The year 2014 is a year of firsts that gave us many reasons to celebrate.

In March, we announced the naming of the medical school in honor of Dr. Homer Stryker, a WMU alumnus and founder of Stryker Corporation. The naming recognized the donors of the 2011 foundational \$100 million gift – Stryker's granddaughter Ronda Stryker, and her husband William Johnston. They have given our city, state, and nation a wonderful gift that forever honors Dr. Homer Stryker in the most appropriate way possible. Their vision and generosity brought together WMU, Borgess Health, Bronson Healthcare, and our community to create a medical school that will enable generations of young people to make their own marks in medicine, following in the footsteps of Dr. Stryker.

In July, we hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony and picnic for our employees in honor of our new medical school facility on the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus, which has its roots in life science research and discovery. The property was the first piece of land Dr. Upjohn purchased in Kalamazoo to start The Upjohn Company. Thanks to the generosity of William Parfet, chairman and CEO of MPI Research in Mattawan, and great-grandson of Dr. Upjohn, we are fortunate to have an outstanding, newly renovated and expanded learning environment as the home of the new medical school.

It is very special for a medical school to be built on the legacy of not just one but two innovative physicians, both of whom have their roots in southwestern Michigan.

In August, the inaugural medical school class of 54 exceptional students arrived and began the innovative team-based medical student curriculum that is designed to prepare them to be exceptional clinicians, leaders, educators, advocates, and researchers of tomorrow. With the arrival of our inaugural class, the community has opened its arms

and hearts to welcome them and make Kalamazoo feel like home. On September 17, we presented members of the class of 2018 with their white coats, the most recognized symbol of the medical profession. At a special ceremony, our students recited a medical student oath that set expectations and defined values that they pledged to keep. That same week, more than 1,500 medical school supporters and friends attended the grand opening ceremony for Kalamazoo's new medical school. And, 850 more toured our new downtown facility during the Community Open House that weekend.

Thank you for your continued support to help us fulfill our mission and achieve our vision to be distinguished as a leader among medical schools through community collaboration in medical education, patient care, research, and service. We are fortunate to be a member of an active community that is engaged and committed to the future success of Kalamazoo and southwestern Michigan. We are grateful for the continuing engagement and interest of the entire community in southwest Michigan's new medical school. Please share our achievements in 2014, and the future, as a community success.

*Hal B. Jenson is the Founding Dean, Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine*

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