

## WMU School of Medicine will be named for medical device pioneer

by Cheryl Roland  
March 10, 2014 | WMU News

**KALAMAZOO—The Western Michigan University School of Medicine, a new private medical school, will be named in honor of Dr. Homer Stryker**, the Kalamazoo orthopedic surgeon and medical device innovator who founded the Stryker Corporation. The school will be housed at the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus in downtown Kalamazoo.

Thanks to the generosity of **Ronda E. Stryker**, granddaughter of Homer Stryker, and her husband **William D. Johnston**, a WMU trustee, the first class of medical students will be welcomed this fall to the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. The school is a collaboration involving WMU and Kalamazoo's two teaching hospitals, Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare.

Stryker and Johnston are the donors who made a founding anonymous gift in excess of \$100 million to the University three years ago to launch the medical school initiative in Kalamazoo. Ronda Stryker says she feels strongly that this is the right time for the medical school to be launched, and she knows her grandfather would be thrilled that the opportunity for medical education is being enhanced in his community.

"My grandfather always focused on patient outcomes," Stryker says. "His innovation work and research was never about himself but always about the patient, better health care outcomes and better equipment for doctors. I am certain he would be thrilled to know that medical education and research are taking place in Kalamazoo."

"While he wouldn't care that the school was named after him, it is without doubt a fitting and lasting recognition to his contribution to medicine, medical research, innovative products and service to patient healthcare outcomes. We are thrilled to be strong foundational partners in the creation of this new innovative school of medicine."

### 'A true community collaboration'

Johnston and Stryker are longtime philanthropists with deep roots in the Kalamazoo community. Both are WMU alumni and both have teaching backgrounds. Ronda Stryker has been a member of the Board of Directors of Stryker Corporation since 1984. She also is a trustee of Kalamazoo and Spelman colleges and a longtime trustee of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. William Johnston is the chairman of Greenleaf Companies, which include Greenleaf Trust, Greenleaf Hospitality Group and Catalyst Development LLC. In addition to his membership on the WMU Board of Trustees, he is past chair of Southwest Michigan First, an area economic development agency. Both Stryker and Johnston serve in numerous other volunteer and professional capacities.



Ronda Stryker



William Johnston



Dr. Homer Stryker  
circa 1979

"Ronda Stryker and Bill Johnston have given our city, state and nation a wonderful gift that honors Homer Stryker in the most appropriate way possible," says **WMU President John M. Dunn**. "Their generosity is allowing our community to create a medical school that will enable generations of young people to make their own marks in the same arena he helped revolutionize. The Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine is the ideal name for a school that is being developed around the principle of medical innovation that serves the needs of patients."

In addition to the couple's personal gifts, Dunn says, Stryker Corporation also has made a significant commitment to WMU to support the medical school that will bear its founder's name.

"This is a wonderful development for our community and for this new medical school," says **Borgess President and CEO Paul A. Spaude**. "Worldwide, the Stryker name evokes a sense of medical innovation and quality. Here in Kalamazoo, it is synonymous with community commitment. What better name for a medical school that is a true community collaboration."

The new medical school's educational facility will be on its W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus in downtown Kalamazoo. That site includes a 350,000-square-foot medical research facility currently undergoing renovation and scheduled to open in mid-2014. That site was a gift from MPI Research in late 2011. MPI Research is led by William U. Parfet, great grandson of the campus' namesake, who launched the Upjohn Co. in Kalamazoo in 1886.

"Having the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine on the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus acknowledges the special life sciences legacy that is unique to Kalamazoo," says **Frank Sardone, president and CEO of Bronson Healthcare**. "Both names reflect the storied traditions that are so much a part of this community—traditions we'll want to introduce to new generations of medical professionals."

The new medical school would not have been possible, say the leaders of all three collaborating organizations, without the early commitment of Ronda Stryker and Bill Johnston.

"It is my privilege and pleasure to be able to now publicly acknowledge their gifts and to let the larger community know who shared our vision and passion for this project early in the process and to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude," says Dunn, who originally announced the \$100 million gift in 2011.

"The medical school continues the exceptional legacy in Kalamazoo of innovation in the life sciences," says **Dr. Hal B. Jensen**, a physician who is **founding dean of the new medical school**. "Our graduates will continue in the footsteps of Homer Stryker and will excel as clinicians, leaders, educators, researchers, leaders and advocates."

## Dr. Homer Stryker

Homer Stryker (1894-1980) was an Athens, Mich., native who earned a teaching certificate from WMU in 1916, taught briefly and then served in the infantry in France during World War I. After his military service, he earned a medical degree from the University of Michigan in 1925 and later completed a residency in orthopedic surgery at U of M. While still a medical student, he began developing devices to better meet patient needs.

Among Dr. Stryker's many patents and most famous innovations were a turning frame to prevent bedsores in bedridden patients and an oscillating saw to remove casts. He began selling his inventions in 1941. The medical technology company he founded in Kalamazoo has grown into a Fortune 500 company with \$9 billion in annual sales and more than 25,000 employees globally. Earlier this year, Fortune magazine named Stryker Corporation one of the "World's Most Admired



Homer Stryker circa 1939

Companies" for the 13th consecutive year.

## **About the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine**

In planning since 2008, the new medical school was granted preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education in October 2012. The school is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation supported by private gifts, clinical revenue, research activity, tuition from students and endowment income. In addition to its new W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus, the school includes the WMU School of Medicine Clinics on Oakland Drive, immediately adjacent to the University's main campus.

**For more information**, visit [med.wmich.edu](http://med.wmich.edu).

---

**WMU News**, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008-5433 USA | (269) 387-8400