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\$100 Million Secret Revealed: Gift Of New Medical School Came From Stryker Heiress

It's long been suspected that the wealthy Stryker family, whose grandfather founded the medical device company, Stryker Corp., had something to do with an anonymous \$100 million donation three years ago that allowed [Western Michigan University](#) to create a new medical school in Kalamazoo. Now, with the announcement that the new school, opening this fall, will be named for Homer Stryker, there can be no doubt.

Indeed, Ronda E. Stryker, one of Homer's three grandchildren, and her husband, William D. Johnston, a university trustee, went public Tuesday, revealing that they were the donors who gave "in excess of \$100 million" to launch the new Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. It will be housed at the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus in downtown Kalamazoo. The school is a collaboration involving WMU and Kalamazoo's two teaching hospitals, Borgess [Health](#) and Bronson Healthcare.



[Ronda Stryker](#), who was said to be out of the country, said in a statement that 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,” said Stryker, worth an estimated \$3.4 billion. “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.”

Johnston and Stryker are longtime philanthropists with deep roots in Kalamazoo. Both are WMU alumni and both have teaching backgrounds. Ronda Stryker is on the board of directors of Stryker Corporation, and is also is a trustee of Kalamazoo and Spellman colleges and a longtime trustee of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Her husband, Bill Johnston, is the chairman of Greenleaf Companies, which include Greenleaf Trust, Greenleaf Hospitality Group and Catalyst Development LLC.

“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.”

Homer Stryker, who died in 1980 at the age of 86, 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 also invented the mobile hospital bed. He began selling his inventions in 1941. The medical technology company he founded now sells \$9 billion worth of joint replacements, medical devices and software. It has more than 25,000 employees globally.

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