At the University of Missouri School of Medicine, patient-centered care is our highest priority. To recognize that many of our best and most memorable teachers are our patients, we created the Legacy Teachers Program to celebrate their contributions to our students’ lifelong learning and development.

What unites this diverse and remarkable group of patients and their families is that they have all taught important lessons to a physician in training that will last the physician’s practice lifetime and positively affect countless future patients. We invite third-year medical students to participate by reflecting on the patients who have had a lasting impact on their learning and submit essays, artwork or poetry. Within these pages are selections from this year’s submissions.

On the cover from the 2013 Legacy Teachers Luncheon:
MU medical Student J.P. Prouty recognizes his patient, Maria Maier, acknowledging the important role she played in his education.

On the bottom cover from the 2013 Legacy Teachers Luncheon (from left):
MU medical student Anik Patel recognizes his Legacy Teacher, Dane Biesemeyer, with his parents, Mark and Tammy, at the 2013 ceremony.
During the 2013 Legacy Teachers ceremony, MU medical student Taylor Collier recognizes Sharri Keller, with her husband, Clifford, for the role she played in Taylor’s education.
MU medical student Andrew Christiansen recognizes his Legacy Teacher, Anthony Logan, during the 2013 luncheon.
Potential of a Soul

To what potential within a soul lie
Enough and more to reach the highest sky
What can drive a man to what he is able?
Is it money, luck, or eating at a king’s table?
Or perhaps looks, health, intelligence, or fame?
It is none of these but to each it is the same
It is hope and hope, again even after a fall
For this will allow a man to rise up to any call
It can enlighten even the darkest of a night
It can cause the poorest heart to not give up the fight
Without it, man can only suffer through this mortality
But with it, one’s eternal destiny becomes a reality
“I understand that as a doctor it is my ultimate goal to keep the patient healthy. However, it is also important to recognize and understand the patient's motivations and goals may not be the same as my own. In realizing this, hopefully we can work together and develop a plan that meets both goals.”

“My Legacy Teacher taught me that listening could be one of the most important skills a physician possesses. The best physicians involved in her care were the ones that listened, asked about how she was feeling, and genuinely took an interest in her as a person and not just as a patient with an illness. She taught me that social workers and other staff, including pastoral staff, could make a big difference in the life of patients as well.”

“I don’t think I remember driving back from the home of my Legacy Teacher. I was lost thinking about the cost of her disease. The cost was evident in so many ways: mobility, scheduling, isolation, finances, stress, constant change, dependence and self-worth. I thought that I would very much like to have her on rounds with me in the morning, to remind me to be a little more empathetic to the next patient. But in many ways I will, both tomorrow and in the days ahead.”

“She taught me the importance of treating the whole person and truly listening and learning about their unique concerns and strengths. Often the most important goal is improving quality of life and it is our patients that can tell us how to achieve that.”

“Listening and learning from patients is a critical part of a physician’s job as patients have unique views on their illnesses. How patients view their health is often influenced by the culture they live in, the relationships they develop, and the belief systems they live by. Understanding this view is crucial to connecting with a person and finding the treatment that will work best for each individual.”

“I learned that knowing your patients and what motivates them on a personal level is essential to being an effective physician. The next time I have a young patient who is struggling with their blood pressure, I will think of my Legacy Teacher and his meticulous attention to his blood pressure and health. I will encourage my patient that treating a chronic medical condition is time-consuming but the benefits of a longer, functional life can be well worth it.”
I met a wonderful woman who would teach me to care for the whole person. I learned about the patient’s perspective of her illness. I learned never to jump to conclusions. I learned to listen, to problem solve. I learned how to deliver tough news and how to help a patient process it. I also had fun. I truly enjoyed spending time with her and listening to her stories. She affected me in a way that is difficult to put in words. I think of her often.

Treating a disease means taking into account all the possible implications for both the patient and the family. Keeping the whole family healthy, both mentally and physically, is one of the most important (and difficult) things a physician can do.

Thanks to my Legacy Teacher I can more genuinely encourage struggling patients. Whether they are feeling down or have a terminal illness, I understand better that they can gain strength from how I interact with them. I also better understand how it can be difficult for patients to trust others at times. Often we don’t know all of the inner battles that a person has. I hope my senses are a little keener to be able to see the successes that others have had in overcoming difficult challenges.

As medical students or physicians we focus so much on fixing health problems with a concentration on risk factors and morbidities. However, as important as it is, we tend to forget that there are significant factors that are much more important to the patient. My experience with my Legacy Teacher was one that will shape me as a physician and helped to exemplify the importance of patient-centered care in a practice. I am thankful for the valuable lessons he taught me.

Her symptoms are not merely positives on a review of systems list, but they are life-altering struggles that she copes with and change the quality of her daily life. My discussions with my Legacy Teacher helped me to realize the importance of my job as a future physician. I will not be chosen by patients to simply diagnose and treat their symptoms, but it is expected that I try my best to experience their health with them and embody the notion of patient empathy.

My Legacy Teacher spoke to the importance of having faith in your own knowledge and yourself. She is glad she has remained an equal member of her care team. She stressed the importance of having positive people around her and involved in her care. I vow to be more cognizant of how my attitude and actions may be perceived and to remember unless we know the person who is the patient, it is simply unreasonable to believe we could offer the highest level of care.

Learning about my Legacy Teacher’s personal life story has made me wonder about the life stories of my past, present and future patients that I could be potentially missing. It made me reexamine my thoughts on the role that physicians should play in their patient’s life. It is important that we realize that every patient has a unique story and we should learn as much about our patients as we can to best offer them the care they need.

In order to understand who my Legacy Teacher is today, you must understand where he came from. He is a teacher of integrity, strong work ethic, and most importantly, love for one another. I know he is grateful for what he has learned throughout his life. I am grateful for what I have learned through him.

Patient-centered care is especially important when it comes to chronic illnesses. The patient’s outlook will change throughout the disease process starting with the diagnostic evaluation, then with the initiation of treatment, and finally during the lifelong management of the disease. It is important for the physician to understand the patient’s changing perspective and adapt their approach to treatment based on this changing outlook. The medical field is constantly changing, but the goal has always been the same—provide the best patient centered care possible.
“One may wonder where someone who is in such a grim situation gets the will to fight so hard. One of the greatest sources of his strength came from his strong desire to be there for his wife, who was undergoing a battle of her own. It was this desire that was driving him to overcome his illness, at least for the time being. He demonstrated that the greatest strength can be found in the seemingly darkest situations. I remain always appreciative to my Legacy Teacher for teaching me the value of courage and a fighting mentality when times are difficult.”

“My Legacy Teacher showed me that medical problems are inevitable in life, and it is the choice of the person to either accept and deal with what is going on, or to dwell on the problem and throw away the precious moments one has left in life. I also recognized the important role and responsibilities of family.”

“She showed me how to stay positive and looking forward in spite of overwhelming obstacles and constant reminders of health impairments. She always has some event in the future that she is living for. She said the key is making realistic goals that are more than just waking up tomorrow morning. She knows that if she does not do things now to take care of herself then she will not get to experience the joys that she looks forward to so much. Understanding that a diagnosis can have effects on literally every aspect of a patient’s life is important for a young physician to understand. I will take to heart the goal-oriented outlook she uses every day to stay positive.”

“A positive attitude makes a tremendous difference.”

“I will never forget her. She taught me about the strength of a solid support system, as well as the power of hope. She has become bigger than her illness and now loves her new life. She has fought to minimize her weaknesses, maximize her strengths, and now is proud of her individuality. I now understand that not only should physicians provide guidance in regards to a patient’s physical health, but physicians must support mental and emotional health as well. She truly inspired me to try to be a solid foundation for my patients.”

“While diagnoses and screening tests are important, in her eyes, compassion and open communication were equally important for her healing. She wants to be included in the decision-making process, because it makes her feel validated that as a patient, her voice counts, too. She taught me unforgettable lessons of the importance of compassion, hope, and a strong patient-physician relationship.”

“Patients can live fulfilling lives despite their physical impairments. My legacy teacher showed me how far determination and optimism can take someone. She taught me to consider patients’ aspirations no matter their physical ability, and to encourage them to push themselves, because like her, they can be productive citizens and make incredible impact in their communities.”
Having a strong support system can help overcome great challenges

“It was eye-opening for me to see all the ways these two have adapted as a couple and to their circumstances in order to overcome physical limitations that disease has wrought upon them. Thanks to my legacy couple, I was able to develop a better understanding of how a couple can increasingly depend upon each other, and how, by working together, two can be so much stronger than one.”

“A physician cannot fix every problem a person has, but addressing the challenges and changes a patient is facing helps physicians provide more effective and patient-centered care. With the right support behind them, even patients facing very complicated medical conditions can persevere through the most trying circumstances as my Legacy Teacher has done thanks to the tremendous support of his family, faith, physician, and community.”

“I learned a close-knit family is priceless. Their love and support can help during times of illness, loss of a relative, and when looking forward to the uncertainties of the future. She taught me that you do not have to be defined by your illness and that everyone should have a circle of support. Her stories demonstrated that a good attitude mixed with slight optimism would help with almost any situation you may be dealt.”

“She showed me the enduring qualities of the human spirit, and taught me that keeping family, friends, and faith close in times of stress helps you take on more than you ever thought you possibly could. She also taught me that even when added responsibilities and worries are taken on with great love, caregivers need extra care as well.”

“The human spirit is resilient and the support system and the inherent coping strategies we carry play into that resiliency. It is important to understand that each person carries a unique set of values and coping skills that greatly affect his or her view on life. This understanding should shape how we approach patients with information whether it be about simple lifestyle changes or something like a grave diagnosis because words, independent of their context, are perceived differently depending on the sum of a person’s experiences.”

“I am incredibly grateful to her for letting me participate in her care and the care of her child. Not only did it help me to realize that I can handle unexpected tragedies, but also, over time, helped me to realize that I want to be the person that is there for parents in this difficult situation. This moment changed me forever. I have learned how to present difficult information to a patient, provide comfort in hard times, and that good family support is vital. That night I also learned how to keep my personal psyche healthy and work through a day full of grief.”
“I will always look back on my experience taking care of my Legacy Teacher as a landmark in my medical career. It validated my choice to pursue medicine and invigorated me for my future career. He taught me that a good bedside manner is not necessarily as simple as whether a physician is a good person that cares or not. It is important for us as medical professionals to maintain our compassion toward patients even in the face of our insecurities.”

“My Legacy Teacher taught me to never underestimate the power of the human spirit and the physician patient relationship. He has had a number of health complications that could have lain heavy on his mind, but the trusting relationship he has with his primary care physician let him have no fear. This trust did not stem from a generalized trust in the health care system, it had to be fostered. Taking that extra effort to connect to our patients can make a significant difference in their care.”

“I now realize how my decisions will not only affect the lives of my patients, but also the lives of the people they love. I am not only treating a patient, I am treating a mother, father, or sibling that other people rely on. It makes every patient that much more important, as they affect so many other lives. There is more going on in a person’s life that is affecting their health care than we can even imagine. We as health care providers won’t know everything that is going on, but knowing even a little about a patient can truly affect their health care for the better.”

“What may initially seem like an unreasonable fear may be heavily grounded in the patient’s life experiences. A person’s upbringing and family values often shape their current views of health. I understand now that exploring a patient’s background can lead to a greater communication and shared understanding between a doctor and a patient. She showed me that medicine is more than making a diagnosis, but rather an opportunity to serve others.”

“At various points throughout the last three years my mentality has shifted between trying to make a difference and just trying to survive. It’s in my most jaded and defeated moments that my Legacy Teacher and the others I help care for anchor me in reality. My Legacy Teacher helps me find perspective. But more than anything, he pushes me to become the kind of doctor that, just maybe, he could someday trust.”

“Trust and empathy developed between a physician and patient is fundamental

“She gave me a closer view of the different ways in which people cope with a chronic illness. She will serve as a continual reminder that no matter how complex or unique a patient’s experience may be, they seek help from physicians because they hope for a healing that touches not just their body, but their entire spirit. Sometimes in doing so they heal the healer too.”

“My Legacy teacher and his wife taught me the importance of understanding that much of the stress associated with chronic illness stems from its associated emotional burdens. Above all, I must never forget that I will be treating people, not isolated diseases. It is important to understand the patient’s perspective on his or her conditions and to work with the patient to address his or her greatest concerns. Only by working with our patients and understanding their emotional perception can we truly establish rapport and build a healthy therapeutic relationship.”
Thank you to all who attended the luncheon today. We are so glad you joined with us to celebrate the 2014 Legacy Teachers and acknowledge our deep debt to the thousands of women, men and children who seek their health care in sites where future physicians are being trained. The relationship between patients and their doctor is fundamental to all we do in medicine and, like any important relationship, can be quite complex. Medical students, the newest of physicians in training, arrive with many ideas and beliefs of what being a physician will involve and require of them but with little real understanding and no experience. The first two years of their medical education are filled with much they need to know, including much about working with patients and hours of practice with role plays, interviews, etc. However, it is in the third year of medical school that they truly enter into deep and important relationships with individuals who have come to us for care. These students experience the full range of human emotions during this time, and learn a tremendous amount about themselves. To be allowed to share some of the most personal and vulnerable times of another human being’s life and to be trusted with deep secrets is a tremendous gift and responsibility for every physician. This Legacy Teachers program gives these young physicians in training a chance to reflect on this remarkable year of their life and recognize and thank some of their most important teachers.

Visit medicine.missouri.edu/legacy

Supporters of the 2014 Legacy Teachers Program Endowment Fund

Jeffrey L. Belden, MD, and Mrs. Sandra Belden
Deborah Chance, PhD, and Thomas Mawhinney, PhD
Mr. and Mrs. David and Ellen Clithero
Carla A. Dyer, MD, and Jonathan A. Dyer, MD
Anne B. Fitzsimmons, MD
Elizabeth Garrett, MD
Leslie Hall, MD, and Mrs. Rose Ann Hall
Linda Headrick, MD, and David Setzer, PhD
Kimberly Hoffman, PhD, and Timothy J. Hoffman, PhD
Caroline A. Kerber, MD
James Kerns, MD
Mark R. Wakefield, MD, and Mrs. Lara L. Wakefield
Harold A. Williamson, MD, and Mary Todd Williamson, PhD
Anonymous Donors

For more information about contributing to the Legacy Teachers Program, please contact

Carrie Nicholson
in the Office of Medical Education,
at 573-884-2472
or nicholsonc@health.missouri.edu.

DONATIONS
(payable to University of Missouri)
can also be mailed to:
Office of Medical Education
University of Missouri
One Hospital Drive, MA215 Medical Sciences Building
Columbia, MO 65212
Patient-centered care reflects a respect for individual patient values, preferences and expressed needs. This care is grounded in the best available evidence and conserves limited resources. It depends on shared decision-making and active patient participation. Our graduates’ care will be marked by compassion, empathy and patient advocacy.

OUR GRADUATES ARE:

• Honest with high ethical standards
• Knowledgeable in biomedical sciences, evidence-based practice and societal and cultural issues
• Critical thinkers and problem solvers
• Able to communicate with patients and others
• Able to collaborate with patients and other health care team members
• Committed to improving quality and safety
• Committed to lifelong learning and professional formation

MISSION
To improve the health of all people, especially Missourians, through exemplary education, research and patient-centered care

VISION
To be a transformational leader in improving health

VALUES
Excellence: We pursue the highest goals and accept the sacrifices and responsibilities required to achieve our best possible performance.

-----------------------------------------------------

RESPECT
We nurture free and open discourse, listen to new ideas, and value diverse perspectives and talents.

SERVICE
We put forth our most diligent efforts on behalf of our patients, learners, stakeholders and partners.

INTEGRITY
We commit to honesty, truthfulness and authenticity in our relationships and activities.

RESPONSIBILITY
We exhibit a strong sense of duty, stewardship and accountability to each other and to the public.

INNOVATION
We pursue an ongoing, collaborative process of discovery and translate knowledge for the benefit and service of society.

COMPASSION
We relate to others in a caring, empathic manner and strive to prevent and relieve human suffering.

INCLUSION
We promote diversity and convey a sense of belonging, respect and value for all persons.
“My Legacy Teacher taught me that you must always keep in mind your patient’s wants, needs and fears, because they are of upmost importance in the management of a patient’s health. The Abandoned Mailbox is a symbol of the struggles he had to experience on a daily basis when his health limited his previously active life.”