

CENTER NEWS

Vol. 28, No. 3 • News About Albany Medical Center—Northeastern New York's Academic Health Sciences Center • June/July 2005



Stanley Blanchard

With \$131 Million Raised, Pillars Campaign Ends With A Bang!

Unprecedented fundraising effort exceeds goal and strengthens our institution.

A fittingly spectacular fireworks display lit the skies over Albany on the evening of June 9—signifying the successful end to the largest fundraising campaign ever by a health care entity in the Capital Region. Hundreds of people were on hand at the Empire State Plaza to witness Albany Med's celebration of its extraordinarily successful Pillars Campaign.

All told, the Medical Center raised \$131.6 million in commitments over five years—exceeding the original goal of \$125 million—from sup-

porters including members of the public, the business community, patients and former patients, staff, College alumni, and politicians.

"And they said it couldn't be done! They said our goal was unrealistic—and that was *before* we raised it! They said we were naively optimistic—and that was *before* 911, Anthrax, Iraq, and the worst economic recession in years!" AMC President Jim Barba told an applauding crowd at a celebration dinner at the Convention Center prior to the Plaza fireworks display. "By all rights

it *couldn't* be done. Do *not*, however, underestimate the adrenaline of the people in this room when you *tell* them that!"

Barba thanked the more than 400 guests at the dinner at the Empire State Plaza for their financial support and generosity.

"You exemplify the words of Hippocrates, 'Wherever the art of *medicine* is loved, there also is a love of *humanity*.' That's what the Pillars Campaign was all about. So, on every other

Continued on page 4



Albany
Medical
Center



4

We Did It!



6

Class of '05
Graduates



8

Wilderness
Adventurers

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online at
www.amc.edu/news.cfm

Service Recognition Awards

Celebrating during
June and July...

40 Years

Donald Baxter, Krista Daudiss, Carol Talbot-Smith

35 Years

Kathleen L. Brown, Otis Ricks

30 Years

Patricia Alleyne, Susan Lynn Edwards, Pamela Kainer, Lori Lasch
Benvenuto Lomaestro, Raymond J. Marshall, Jean Schoonbeck

25 Years

Usha Bakhru, Eileen Faughnan, Anthony P. Fields, Sherry Hickok, Sharon L. Kelly
Anne D. Kennedy, Christine Lang, Donna B. Lewis, Austin Mall, Karen Nieto
Sandra Pulver, Kathleen Rainka, Frank Rice, Janet Swider, Barbara VanAmburgh
Michelle T. Ward, Mary K. Whalen

20 Years

Diane Barron, Kathryn Dacruz, Robin Dugan, Joanne Engel, Nancy Finn
George Forrest, Therese Kundel, Laurie Ann Malone, Becky Jo Moore
Jennifer Pearce, Aimee Reardon, Jeannette Ryan, Audrey Sherman, Lisa Stephenson

15 Years

Ismael Ahmed, Joel Bartfield, Cynthia Borsok, Cheryl Clow, Diane Lee Finlay
Brenda Hart, Barbara Harkell, Daniel Hebert, Deborah Jean Hill, Megan Hogan
Lillian Hord, Mary Jo Hughes, Marilyn Kunk, Joseph Lloyd, Ruth Lieberman
Michelle Meyer, Joanne Nunziato, Barbara Osterhoudt, Sherry Rounds
Edward Skawinski, Catherine Stipe, Richard Uhl, Bruce Ushkow
Joanne Wennstrom, George Wilner, Lula Wilson

10 Years

Sonja Anderson, Christopher Ashley, Andrew Bacchus, Martha Carey
Caralyn Colkitt, Carmella Commisso, Timothy Costa, Eileen Denison, Mary Fazio
Kristen Film, Joseph Fondacaro, Xavier Foster, Janice Genovesi
Gabrielle Gonzalez, Valerie Grudecki, Beisa Hadzimuratov, Deborah Kufs
Edward C. Lee, Melaine Loveless, Judith Lucas, Bernardita Manansingh
Charles Mertz, Thomas Millington, Amy Mitchell, Nathan Mitkoff
Ada Montgomery, Brian Mooney, Peter Sparano, Paolo Trubiano, Judith Turner
Christine Weaver, Roberta Weaver, Maureen A. White, Karen Wolf

5 Years

Beverly Abbott, Frances Spreer Albert, Harry Avery, David Barnes, Yvette Barnes
Rami Batniji, Mary Baxter, Warren Becker, Joette Bell, Gennady Bratslavsky
John Brayer, James Carroll, Glenn Castaneda, Dzintra Celmins, Bradley Champagne
Anthony Chismark, Betsy Cocco, Shannon Comley-Sood, Frank Congiusta
Stacie Cornelison, Chalice Crawford, Lorrie DeMarco, Adrienne Denice
Eric DeShaies, Neil Devejian, Nicole Dunn, Lauren Fake, Aracelis Fernandez
Pamela Fila, Angeline Fori, Jessica Fronczek, John Gavin, Louis Giorgi, Joan Goodrich
Wayne Haughton, Rachel Hinerman, Rachel Hopkins, Jennifer Keeler
Cynthia Lacosse, Suzanne Lane, John Lamar, Steven LaPlante, George Leckonby
Noreen Legnard, Jennifer Lindstrom, Noreen Malvey, Lydia Martinez
Mary McCormack, Moreen McLennan, Michael Mecca, Patricia Mecca
Yolanda Melendez, Roger Moccia, Ki Tae Mok, Barbara Mrcela, Kimberly Murray
Carlos Nascimento, Rebecca Owens-Walker, Lorna Patterson, Kimberly Pelton
Joshua Peltz, Edward Philbin, Erica Potyrala, Steven Quinn, Jeffrey Rings
Heather D. Rogers, Edith Roland, Nancy Rose, Staci Rowan, Kelly-Marie Sbuttoni
Carrin Schottler-Thal, Steven Schreiber, Jillian Seavey, Shabaz Shaikh, Alok Sharan
Jennifer Simpson, Vinay Sood, Nadia Stachowicz, Rebecca Stadel, Deborah Stanfield
Konstantina Svokos, Emily Sweeney, Maria Tardiff, John Thibodeau, Diana Traegler
Kim Hoa Updike, Anne VanSaun, Elena Vasko, Robert Wang, Tina Wellman
Mary A. Warner, Susan M. Williams, Theodossis Zacharis



March All-star



One word appeared on just about every form nominating Debbie Moran for the recognition award—that word is “always.”

“She always keeps the office and conference room clean.”

“Debbie is always willing to help.”

“She always helps make everyone feel welcome.”

“She always has a positive attitude and smile.”

Debbie, an academic administrator in the Center for Cell Biology and Cancer Research, was credited with keeping the office running smoothly in a department of about 60 people. “She is the most organized person I have ever met...and it’s unbelievable how efficient she is when it comes to coordinating everyone’s grants, papers, figures, and thesis,” summed up a colleague.

Debbie has worked at Albany Med since 1969, first in the department of pharmacology and later in the department of physiology. She lives with her husband in Schodack and has a daughter and three grandchildren.



Debbie Moran

David Jennings

April All-star



For her colleagues on the adult acute dialysis unit, Jean McAvoy, R.N., is seen as a “wonderful resource.” “Jean is a plethora of knowledge about dialysis and nursing issues in general.” “Jean is always teaching all of us new skills,” her co-workers wrote.

Jean, who has been a nurse at Albany Med for 15 years, was also praised for her excellent rapport with her patients. “Even if a patient is having a bad day and is grumpy, Jean treats them the same as always. She listens to her patients and advocates for them.”

“All of our patients love Jean,” wrote another colleague, “not only for her outstanding nursing but for her southern hospitality and sense of humor.”

That “southern hospitality” comes from Jean’s roots in Lumberton, North Carolina. She attended nursing school in Charlotte and moved to the Albany area after she married her husband Thomas 45 years ago. They have two grown children and recently added two grandchildren to the family.



Jean McAvoy, R.N.

David Jennings

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Relief For Low Back Pain

Albany Med Offers Revolutionary Spinal Disc Surgery

Until recently, people suffering from chronic lower back pain caused by degenerative disc disease had few treatment options. That was the case for Mark Irvine, 38, of Ballston Lake.

Irvine, who had been suffering from back pain for years, had a partial discectomy approximately 10 years ago, which removed some of the pieces of the deteriorated disc on his spine. "That worked for a while," says Irvine. "But eventually I was taking a lot of pain medication again and knew that something else needed to be done."

He was referred to Robert Cheney, M.D., associate clinical professor of surgery and a member of the Capital Region Orthopedic Group, and told about a new procedure using an artificial disc that not only relieves low back pain but also has the potential to significantly improve the patients' flexibility and range of motion.

"I did some more research and decided to have the procedure done. It has been very effective for me and now my pain has been greatly reduced," says Irvine.

Cheney became the first surgeon in the region to perform the new spinal disc replacement surgery when he operated on Irvine in March. Darryl DiRisio, M.D., associate professor of surgery and a member of the AMC's neurosurgery group, has since performed the CHARITE spinal disc replacement surgery and produced similar positive results.

Cheney notes that the use of artificial discs to replace single degenerative discs is a notable advance in spinal surgery. "It offers us another alternative treatment for patients who have suffered for years from this debilitating condition." The FDA approved the new procedure in October 2004 after two years of clinical trials in this country.

This surgery provides an alternative to the most common surgical treatment for low back pain, lumbar spinal fusion, which joins vertebrae together using bone grafts. While most patients report relief from pain after spinal fusion surgery, the surgery often robs them of flexibility and range of motion, and can cause unnecessary wear on other discs.

By contrast, the new CHARITE artificial disc is designed to mimic normal disc motion and prevent the degeneration of adjacent discs. The high-tech device, engineered to last more than 15 years, is made of two metallic endplates with a movable medical grade plastic sliding core. The materials are similar to those that have been used successfully in artificial hip and knee replacements for several decades.

Typically, two surgeons work together in the operation. In the Irvine case, vascular surgeon Yaron Sternbach, M.D., a member of the Institute for Vascular Health and Disease, first approached the spine through an incision in the abdomen and carefully moved blood vessels and internal organs out of the way to provide access to the spine. Then, Cheney used special tools to remove the damaged disc and create space between two vertebrae for the implantation of the artificial disc. The procedure generally takes two to four hours and requires the patient remain hospitalized for approximately four days.

DiRisio cautions, however, that while the procedure can be extremely beneficial to some it is not appropriate for all patients with back pain. "This surgery is only intended for those patients with single-level degenerative disc disease. Not every patient with lower back pain can be helped with this new procedure."

About 65 million Americans suffer from low back pain every year, according to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons.



Courtesy of DePuy Spine

The artificial disc is made of two metallic endplates and a movable plastic center that, once implanted, is designed to help align the spine and preserve its ability to move.

Americans spend about \$50 billion each year on low back pain, the most common cause of job-related disability and lost workdays. More than 12 million people are reported to have degenerative disc disease.

Cheney and DiRisio have received special training in the artificial disc surgery, as has Allen Carl, M.D., also of the Capital Region Orthopedic Group. The three surgeons have been designated as a regional training center on this procedure. Training centers are designated by physician rather than by facility. There are only 50 such centers in the country.

— JACKIE MCGINNIS

AMC Prize Goes To Albany Native

MIT's Dr. Robert Langer is fifth recipient of \$500,000 prize in medicine.

Chemical engineer Dr. Robert Langer was awarded the nation's richest prize for medicine—receiving the \$500,000 Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research in April at the Albany Marriott. Among his many scientific contributions has been his work with polymers (plastics), which helped pave the way for implantable drug-delivery devices and tissue engineering.

Langer, a professor of chemical and biomedical engineering at MIT, was born at Albany Hospital (now Albany Med) and attended Albany School 27 and the former Milne High School.

He received the prize for his entire body of scientific work, most notably his research on polymer-based drug delivery systems, which has allowed doctors to control the release of large molecules in a slow, steady and controlled manner. Prior to Langer's groundbreaking discovery, many large molecules could not be used therapeutically because they could not be given orally nor could they be delivered via injection since the body's enzymes attacked them.

"The world owes an infinite debt of gratitude to Dr. Langer for his pioneering work in the field of drug delivery systems that has improved the lives of more than 60 million people each year," says AMC President Jim Barba, who also chairs the national selection committee for the Albany Medical Center Prize. "Dr. Langer's work has spawned revolutionary advances in cancer treatment, has given birth to an entirely new field of biotechnology known as tissue engineering, and most recently has fueled the development of cardiac stents that have virtually eliminated the



Stanley Blanchard

Dr. Langer discusses the prize at an April press conference.

risk of restenosis in patients undergoing treatment for cardiovascular disease. On a personal note, this is a particularly exciting day for all of us with ties to the Capital Region, as this is the first time the Selection Committee has chosen an outstanding scientist who also happens to be an Albany native, a true hometown hero."

The practical application of Langer's work has led to the development of an array of plastic devices that are surgically implanted to deliver medicines and hormones in precisely regulated amounts over long periods of time. The polymer-

coated, drug-eluting stent that was approved by the FDA in 2003 to treat heart disease is one of the more celebrated examples of the translational benefits of this research.

Langer is also credited with helping to develop the concept of local chemotherapy, whereby neurosurgeons are able to use dime-size wafers to deliver potent drugs to the exact spot where a tumor was removed, severely limiting side effects and extending the lives of patients.

The annual Albany Medical Center Prize was established in November 2000 following a \$50 million gift commitment to Albany Medical Center from Morris "Marty" Silverman, a New York City businessman and philanthropist who was born in Troy.

Langer is also widely recognized as one of the "fathers of tissue engineering," a multi-billion dollar industry that mushroomed out of his collaborative research with Dr. Jay Vacanti, a transplant surgeon at Children's Hospital in Boston. Langer and Vacanti used polymers to create a scaffold on which living cells could proliferate. Their work led to the development of artificial skin now used to treat burn patients, and laid the foundation for research into repairing heart vessels and regenerating damaged spinal and vocal chords. The long-term implications may allow scientists to replicate virtually any tissue or organ in the body, thereby eliminating the need for donor organs.

Langer, 56, received his bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1970 and his Sc.D. from MIT in 1974, both in chemical engineering. He and his wife, Laura—who received her Ph.D. in neuroscience from MIT—have three children.

Pillars Campaign Ends Continued from page 1

night, you may think of yourselves as business people or realtors or teachers or lawyers, but tonight we honor you for your higher calling—as humanitarians,” Barba said.

Timothy Johnson, M.D. (AMC Class of '69), ABC news medical editor, emceed the event. Johnson was there when the campaign kicked off with a gala celebration on Oct. 4, 2001 at the Marriott. At the time, the campaign got off to a rousing start with the announcement of the largest gift in the 162-year history of the Medical Center—a \$10 million pledge by Robert Higgins, a former AMC Board Chair and long-time Board member, and his wife Anne. Higgins, chairman and CEO of Trans World Entertainment Corp., served as co-chair of the Pillars Campaign, along with John Picotte, another longtime AMC Board member who also served as Board Chair. Carl Touhey served as honorary chair of the Pillars Campaign.

“The best evidence of the critical role the Medical Center plays in the lives of so many people is the success of the Pillars Campaign,” Higgins said. “Knowing that Albany Med can't rely on the reimbursement stream along to do the job, the community really stepped up and expressed its desire to see the institution continue to lead the way in health care services for many years to come.”

The campaign has resulted in a 70 percent increase in Albany Med's endowment, which Barba called “the lifeblood of our long-term future.” A total of \$78 million of the funds raised

were targeted for endowments and to fortify other important initiatives such as women's health and nursing recruitment programs. Some of the endowments were used to strengthen biomedical research and to provide financial aid for medical students as well as for enhancing the library and other educational enterprises.

The campaign created 21 new endowed chairs, which are used to recruit and retain talented faculty scientists and physicians.

Some \$27 million was targeted for construction, renovation and equipment, including the \$10.6 million expansion and renovation of the Family of Charles and Winifred Touhey Emergency Care Center, which was completed in 2004. In addition, a state-of-the-art pediatric intensive care unit was built in the Children's Hospital and new cardiac catheterization labs were installed for the Heart Institute. Albany Med also used gifts to build a dedicated stroke unit and an Alzheimer's resource center. In addition, funds have also paid for new imaging equipment and programs

in the neurosciences, breast care and childhood cancers.

The fundraising effort, designed to fortify and enhance programs and services at both the

Hospital and College, formally concluded December 31, 2004.

In addition to Barba and the campaign chairs, other members of the Pillars Campaign executive committee included Matthew Bender IV, Lewis Britton, M.D., Nancy Carey Cassidy, Peter Heerwagen, Mary Kahl, Ph.D., A. John Popp, M.D., and Dean Vincent Verdile, M.D. The campaign consultant was William McGoldrick, and staff leaders in the AMC development department during the campaign were David Buran, senior VP for external relations; Ron Joyce, former senior VP for external relations; Lori Matt-Murphy, associate VP of Foundation operations and planned giving; and Ann Malagisi, former associate VP of major gifts.

— BETH ENGELER



Robert J. Higgins, left, co-chair of the Pillars Campaign, congratulates AMC President Jim Barba on the success of the five-year-long fundraising enterprise. Higgins, who is chairman and CEO of Trans World Entertainment Corp., and his wife Anne donated \$10 million to the campaign—the largest individual gift ever made to the Albany Medical Center in its history.

Joe Putrock



Wendy DeMartino, M.D., who just graduated from the Albany Medical College in May and who was featured in a video presentation about the Medical Center's missions shown at the event, enjoys the festivities with her husband, Michael.

Stanley Blanchard

Pillars Campaign Modernizes AMC Facilities

While a significant portion of the Pillars Campaign went to fund endowments and other long-term needs, it also resulted in a number of state-of-the-art facilities coming on-line. These include:

Department of Emergency Medicine Reconstruction and Expansion -

One of the most advanced trauma facilities in the nation, our Level I Trauma Center is now capable of serving 75,000 patients per year in a larger space with more private rooms and a special area for children.

New Pediatric Intensive Care Unit - This state-of-the-art, 14,000 square-foot facility with 17 single patient care suites serves critically ill and injured children from the region.

The Center for Child Cancer and Blood Disorders - This outpatient facility located within the Hospital serves 200 active patients and 500 cancer survivors each year in an attractive and functional setting.

Neuroscience Advanced Imaging Research Center - Located near the College, the center houses a state-of-the-art 3T MRI, where scientists from Albany Med and General Electric work toward the goal of preventing and treating Alzheimer's disease.

Anne B. Goldberg Alzheimer's Resource Center - Located at the Neuroscience Imaging Center, the center provides advanced care management and educational programs for affected families.

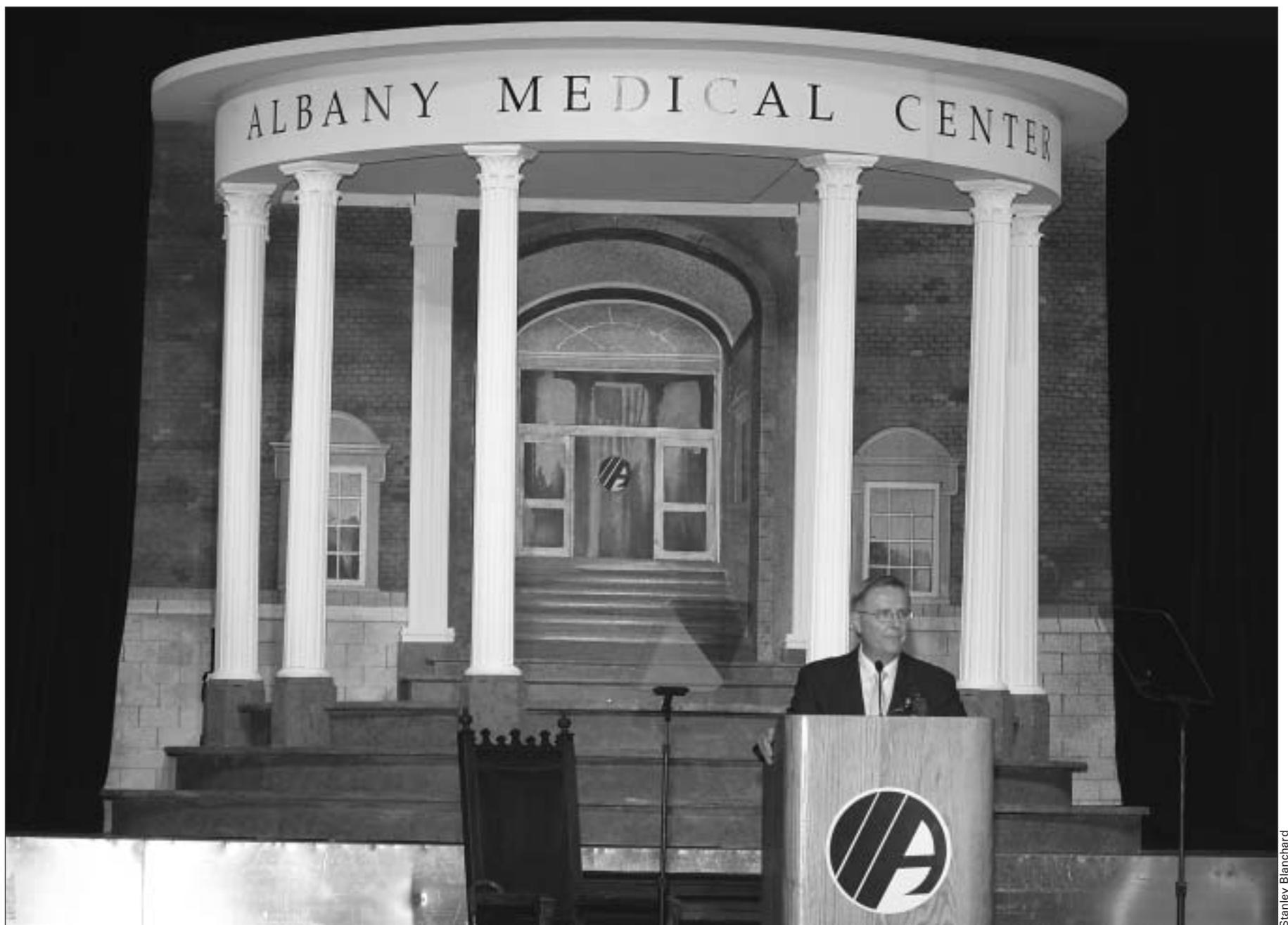
Lally Stroke Unit - A dedicated 8-bed stroke unit provides specialized care for patients in our nationally recognized comprehensive stroke program.

Breast Care Center - This renovated facility at the South Clinical Campus houses federally-funded, state-of-the-art imaging technology.



Dolores Baldwin of Endicott, left, a patient of Dr. Darryl DiRisio, greets Meredith Charleson of Gansevoort, a 5-year-old patient of Dr. Richard Sills at the gala Pillars Campaign celebration dinner held June 9 for major donors at the Convention Center. Looking on in back are Mrs. Baldwin's husband, Jack; Lori Matt-Murphy, associate VP of Foundation operations and planned giving, who co-chaired the gala event with Rob Saba, senior associate director of leadership gifts; and Meredith's mother Sarah Charleson.

Stanley Blanchard



Stanley Blanchard

ABC News Medical Editor Dr. Timothy Johnson, a 1969 graduate of the Albany Medical College, served as emcee for the gala event. Behind him is a replica of the Pillars, the symbol of our institution for which the campaign was named.

National Organization Gives AMC Stroke Program Highest Rating

JCAHO says AMC staff "make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care."

Albany Med's stroke program has been awarded Primary Stroke Center Certification from The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). The Medical Center earned the organization's Gold Seal of Approval for stroke care based on an on-site review of the program that was conducted by the Joint Commission on April 29.

"We're delighted that the organization that sets the standards by which health care quality is measured has closely examined the Medical Center's stroke program and found it to be of the very highest quality," says AMC President Jim Barba. "This designation recognizes the extraordinary care provided by our outstanding team of physicians, nurses and allied health professionals who comprise the stroke program."

Gary Bernardini, M.D., Ph.D., the director of the stroke and neurocritical care program at the Neurosciences Institute, says, "This has been a multidisciplinary team effort and we will continue to work as such to provide the most up-to-date technology and absolute best med-

ical care for our stroke patients in the Capital Region and beyond."

The Joint Commission's Certificate of Distinction for Primary Stroke Centers recognizes centers that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care. Achievement of certification signifies that the services provided by the health care institution have critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes. According to Joint Commission officials, "It is the best signal to your community that the quality care you provide is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of stroke patients."

Only 120 hospitals in the nation have received this prestigious certification.

The acute stroke team at Albany Medical Center includes stroke neurologists, neurosurgeons, a neuroradiologist, nurse practitioners, nurses, vascular surgeons, neuroendovascular interventionalists, rehabilitation specialists and neurology residents. The stroke team is available to respond for evaluation and treatment of stroke patients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the emergency department and within the hospital's fully monitored designated Lally Neurological Observation/Stroke Unit. The program treats more than 500 hospitalized patients per year.

Albany Med recently became the first hospital in the region to offer emergency stroke patients the Mechanical Embolus Removal in Cerebral Ischemia, or MERCI device. This corkscrew-shaped device pulls clots out of arteries in the

brain. If used in the first eight hours after a stroke, it extends the time by two hours that a patient can get to the hospital and have the best chance of effective treatment.

JCAHO's Primary Stroke Center Certification is based on the recommendations for primary stroke centers published by the Brain Attack Coalition and the American Stroke Association's statements and guidelines for stroke care. The Joint Commission launched the program in 2003. The certification is effective for two years beginning April 29, 2005. To date, eight hospitals in New York State have received this designation.

"Albany Medical Center demonstrated that its stroke care program follows national standards and guidelines that can significantly improve outcomes for stroke patients," says Charles Mowll, JCAHO executive vice president of business development, government and external relations.

Each year about 700,000 people experience a new or recurrent stroke, which is the nation's third leading cause of death. On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds and someone dies of a stroke every 3.1 minutes. Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States.

An independent, not-for-profit organization, the Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards setting and accrediting body in health care.

—JACKIE MCGINNIS

175 Receive Degrees at AMC Commencement

Parents and other well wishers had to huddle together on a gray and chilly late May day at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, but spirits could not be dampened as they watched 175 students receive degrees during Albany Medical College's 167th commencement ceremony. One hundred twenty-two students received medical degrees, 14 received Master of Science degrees in nurse anesthesiology, two received Master of Science degrees in physician assistant studies, 10 received Master of Science degrees in bioethics, and 27 received either M.S. or Ph.D. degrees in biomedical sciences.

The keynote speaker was Herbert Boyer, Ph.D., one of two researchers credited for the discovery of recombinant DNA, which has enabled scientists to isolate and clone genes in living cells.

"You are trusted with the care of your patients. This is an awesome task. But you also have the continuing task of keeping abreast of the advancements in medicine. What you know as medicine today will be very different in a short period of time," he said.

Dr. Boyer received an honorary degree, as did his research partner, Stanley Cohen, M.D., Kwoh-Ting Li professor of genetics and professor of medicine in the school of medicine at Stanford University, in absentia. Benita Zahn, WNYT-TV health reporter, also received an honorary degree in recognition of her efforts over the past two decades to educate Capital Region residents on the contributions the Medical Center and others have made to improving health in our region.

Of the graduating medical students, 63 were female and 59 were male, with an age range of 24-45. New York is home to the most graduates —



Fasil Mesfin, M.D., Ph.D., enjoys a moment with his son Christopher. Dr. Mesfin will be a resident in neurosurgery at Albany Med.

Stanley Blanchard

52—followed by California with 30 students represented. In July, the graduating medical students begin their residency training at various medical facilities throughout the nation, including Albany Medical Center Hospital.

Mr. Barba Urges Grads: 'Keep The Dream Alive'

EDITOR'S NOTE: FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS GIVEN BY JAMES J. BARBA, CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CEO AND PRESIDENT OF ALBANY MEDICAL CENTER

Welcome parents, relatives, friends, colleagues, distinguished guests, and the very reason for our presence—members of the Class of 2005. I shall begin by stating that I have two firm convictions about commencement speeches: first, they should be brief; second, they should have some direct connection to the occasion. Brief, because the graduates are here and eager to have their degrees; but connected because graduation from Albany Medical College is an important occasion, and to witness it, you must pay the price of admission listening to commencement speakers.

I am honored to be with you today. But if I have any right to address you, it stems from the fact that I am older; that I have already graduated; that I have worked with medical students, physicians, scientists and aspiring scientists for most of my adult life; and that I have been a husband, a father and a counselor for over 30 years.

Oh, yes. And, that I am Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Albany Medical College.

Therein lies my claim to speak to you. Ah, but what am I going to say?

I see no reason to keep that a secret. What I have to say will come in four parts:

Part I. An introduction (this is what I am now doing, and it is just about completed.)

Part II. A lighthearted attempt to construct an all-purpose, generic commencement speech.

Part III. The body of my speech.

Part IV. The conclusion, complete with an allusion to King Arthur's Roundtable and Camelot.

As an aid to you, the listeners, I'll tell you when each part is over and the next is about to start. There is no reason to hide my structure, and it may even keep you alert. To keep faith with you, I now announce that Part I, the introduction, is over. Part II is starting.

I know that you'll share my pleasure in learning that I have solved a problem that has puzzled higher education for generations. I refer to the problem of devising a commencement speech that is timely, inspiring and short. This problem recurs every spring and has frustrated the best efforts of scholars, scientists, scribes and statesmen. I discussed this with a friend of mine, who for many years wrote ads for TV. He said, "Commencement speeches are easy. Just do what any good advertising person does. Take several quotes that have worked in the past, rearrange them, and offer them to the audience as a new creation."

With that sound advice, and help from Shakespeare, Jefferson, Lincoln, Kipling, Churchill and others, I offer the following: a timely, brief and inspiring commencement address, of which not one word is mine:

Members of the graduating class, lend me your ears; these are the times that try men's souls, but when in the course of human events it becomes necessary to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield, then we must summon up the remembrance of things past, recalling that our forefathers brought forth new nations, and asked not what they could do for them, but said instead we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

I want to make one thing perfectly clear: the world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but generations yet unborn will hold this truth to be self-evident: to thine own self be true, for no man is an island. Fear not the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, but keep your head when all around you are losing theirs and then, like a bridge over troubled water, from sea to shining sea, a new day will dawn and bring your finest hour, and never before will so many have owed so much to so few.

I am sure that that's quite enough facetious rhetoric. But this bit of nonsense does make one interesting point. So many familiar quotations deal with a common theme: that times are tough; that we need courage to face the future. Perhaps

that's why commencement speakers have difficulty coming up with fresh material. The situation is always the same: every graduating class faces an uncertain world, and they are asked to take up the challenge of leadership where their elders have, so often, failed.

I'm afraid that your world is not going to be much different. These are trying times for medicine and for science. The future is full of uncertainty and yes, like many of my predecessors, I am going to suggest that there is something that you can do about it.

Herein ends Part II. If you are already restless, bear in mind that I am already half finished.

Today's challenges seem so complex that it is virtually impossible to select one of them as the most important. Is it war, terrorism, the spread of new disease, famine, pollution—or is it simply uncertainty, itself? Time doesn't allow me to do any more than list a half dozen headlines of the past few weeks, but consider these:

- **ITEM:** North Korea extracts enriched uranium for possible bomb.
- **ITEM:** Iraq mass killing toll continues to climb.
- **ITEM:** Mexico's President stands by racial remark.
- **ITEM:** Ebola outbreak recurs in Africa.
- **ITEM:** Baseball pitchers face steroid inquiry.
- **ITEM:** Air Force seeks approval for new space arms.

But all is not despair. Here are three hopeful headlines:

- **ITEM:** New biotech drugs are producing gains against cancer.
- **ITEM:** U.S. Core inflation rate remains under control.
- **ITEM:** Physicians at Albany Medical Center transplant the heart of desperately ill teenager.

Continued on page 7

'Keep The Dream Alive' Continued from page 6

You will note that I listed six troublesome headlines and only three hopeful ones. There are two reasons for this. First, it is easier to find troublesome headlines today, and secondly, I want you to realize that the world is twice as bad as it is good, and, yes, you must do something about that. You will ask, Why me. The answer is: because yours has been a privileged generation; you have had the opportunity to learn, to live in freedom, to travel, and you are all so gifted or else you wouldn't be here today. You are better prepared than most to foster change. You are distinguished graduates from many undergraduate colleges, and now you are to be a graduate of Albany Medical College.

If the world cannot count on you, and on your colleagues from countless other professional colleges and universities to develop meaningful transformation, to forge peace and justice and order, on whom shall we count. If the nation cannot count on you to lead us on a pathway that doesn't emphasize political division and difference, on whom can we count? If your professions cannot count on you to transform the practice of medicine so that all may have access to it, and the process of science so that the ultimate healing discoveries can be made, on whom can we count? And, if you think that, by all of this, I am describing a state akin to utopia, indeed to Camelot, congratulations. You realize that I am now about to begin the last part of my remarks.

King Arthur and his Round Table have been evoked many times since the balladeers of old England first told of the legendary king and the brief golden age over which he presided. That age, Camelot, has represented the worldly environment in which the human soul strove to work out its individual destiny, as well as devoted

itself to the collective good. I hope that you know the full story. Time allows me only to focus on the ending.

The climax of Camelot comes when Arthur realizes that his dream of a just and ordered society is crumbling, and the long night of the Middle Ages is descending after one brief, shining moment. It is crumbling because human weakness has overpowered the beauty and strength of an ideal of justice whose time had not quite come. He is on the battlefield, doomed to defeat. His own death is certain. Camelot is ending. But then, as legend has it, a young boy, Thomas of Warwick, previously unnoticed, appears to tell King Arthur that he shares his dream of Camelot. That he has listened, and understood, and has the courage to keep the dream alive.

Arthur suddenly realizes that his dream might still come true. That his hope lay in young people like Tom Warwick who would carry the dream forward. Arthur calls out, Tom Warwick, if you believe do not die on this battlefield, because Camelot will die with you. As your king, I command you, run! Keep the dream alive! Run Tom Warwick! Run!

Tom left the battlefield, but he could hear in the distance Arthur's commands, Ask every person if he has heard the story of Camelot. Keep the dream alive. Run Tom Warwick! Run!

And now my conclusion and the most important part of this speech is directed to the graduates. You have a special responsibility. You must resolve to become the Tom Warwicks of your generation. You must run to every city and nation on this planet, and there ask every person that you meet if they have heard **this** story:

- That people must be judged by their ideas not by the volume of their voices.
- That people must be judged by their character and not by the color of their skin or their ethnicity.
- That people of different religions can respect the convictions of each other.
- That people of different political persuasions can live, and work, together.
- That cultures are not right or wrong, they are simply different.
- That we live in an inter-dependent world.
- That to be fully educated, one must have a global perspective.
- That tolerance, and patience, and assistance to those who have less than little must be the precept for those who have so much.

Tell them you share **that** dream.

Tell them that you believe.

Meet the doubters, the haters, the bigots head-on, and tell them that you intend to live life as it could be—not as they would force you to live it. Tell them that you shared at this time and place the pride of your diversity and the joy of your togetherness. Use your privilege and your education to do these things. Keep the dream alive!

Run, graduates, run!

Congratulations!

God bless you all.

**With acknowledgment and special thanks to Robert E. Leestamper*

Nurses Receive National Award for Care Given to Lt. John Finn

It was a tragic story that riveted the region—just before Christmas Eve, 2003, an Albany police officer was shot several times as he tried to catch a suspect in an armed robbery. The popular 38-year-old lieutenant and family man spent several weeks on the SICU, until he passed away on February 12, 2004.

Now, the Albany Med SICU team has received a national award for the care that was administered to the late Lt. Finn. The team was nominated for the American Association of Critical Care Nurses Excellence in Collaboration: Nurse to Family Award by Lt. Finn's father-in-law John McNulty and sister-in-law Michelle Scannell, who is a critical care nurse in Pennsylvania.

Several members of the SICU team received the honor at the 2005 National Teaching Institute and Critical Care Exposition held in New Orleans in May.

"Our whole family is so grateful to the nurses in Albany Medical Center's surgical intensive care unit for the compassionate care they gave to John and the kindness and concern they showed to each member of the family. Nominating them for this award is the least we can do to thank them," said his wife Maura McNulty of Delmar.

"This award demonstrates the importance of delivering not only the most compassionate care to each of our patients, but to our patients' family members as well," added AMC President Jim Barba. "We appreciate Lt. Finn's family nominating our nurses for this award and we are remarkably proud of our surgical intensive care team, as we are of all of our dedicated nurses at the Medical Center."

—SUE FORD



The award-winning SICU team includes: (front, left to right) Bernadette Hisgen R.N., Susan LaDuke, R.N., nurse manager Joan Comerford, R.N., (back, left to right) Judy Constantino, Jessica Rico, R.N., Megan Hogan, R.N., Annmarie Snide, R.N., Patricia Marshall, R.N., Stephanie Hisgen, R.N., Kimberly Molle, R.N., Lia Morina, R.N., assistant nurse manager Catherine Vaughan, R.N., Linda Hannan, clinical nurse specialist, and Jennifer Hurley, R.N.

Donna Abbott-Vlahos



Albany Medical Center

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'Reality Adventures' Test AMC Students

Wilderness race builds skills to help victims of mishaps in remote areas.

It's "Survivor" meets "ER," where contestants—in this case, medical students—compete in an outdoor adventure race which also requires them to respond to simulated medical emergencies.

Known as a Medical Wilderness Adventure Race—or MedWAR—it's become a passion of AMC students Pieter Smit, Jamie Karambay and Max Wohlauler. The trio recently competed in two MedWAR races, where they performed such tasks as suturing pigs' feet to rescuing a climber whose ice pick had punctured his leg, all while racing across varying terrain along a 20 kilometer course.

MedWAR, developed by emergency medicine physicians and medical students at the Medical College of Georgia in 2001, is used to teach and test the knowledge, skills and techniques of wilderness medicine, while promoting teamwork and collegiality among competitors.

Since medical students and staff coordinate the events, the scenarios are made to accurately depict real medical situations—and to give participants an opportunity to not only compete physically through various adventure challenges—but also mentally.

For these three aspiring physicians, this is the ultimate adventure.

"We're eager to apply what we've been learning in medical school to real experiences," Wohlauler explains. "It's difficult to wait for our third year of school to do so."

Wohlauler, a Colorado native and second-year student, first learned about MedWAR at a wilderness medicine conference he attended in Denver courtesy of the Alumni Association last summer. He mentioned MedWAR at an AMC Outing Club meeting, where first-year students Karambay and Smit expressed interest.

The Outing Club consists of approximately 85 students who participate in organized activities such as hiking, technical climbing, biking, canoeing, skiing and fishing. The Club also hosts speakers who address topics related to wilderness medicine, such as the Club's "spiritual advisor" Jonathan Rosen, M.D., associate dean of medical education. An experienced climber, Rosen says he entered the field of pulmonary medicine because of his own interest in high altitude sickness—or hypoxia. He spent some time working for a Himalayan Rescue Organization—caring for trekkers and climbers with high altitude sickness.

Like Rosen, Karambay is already considering ways to incorporate wilderness medicine into whichever line of medicine he pursues.

"It would be interesting to become a physician for scientific or exploration trips, or to bring the skills of diagnosis and care with limited resources to provide care in remote areas, perhaps in a humanitarian role," says Karambay.

Karambay and Smit decided to join Wohlauler in the next race. "We spent some time cross-



Jamie Karambay, Pieter Smit, and Max Wohlauler (left to right) practice for MedWAR in the Albany Pine Bush. Inset: Competing in Georgia.



country skiing and snowshoeing in Washington Park to prepare. We did get some strange looks, though, when we took turns carrying each other on stretchers through the park," laughs Karambay.

Somewhere between Washington Park and medical school, their training paid off. The team came in first place out of 12 teams in the University of Toronto's "MedWAR North" in March—a 20 kilometer course they tackled by snowshoe, cross-country skiing and orienteering. Applying their knowledge from medical school, they were able to successfully "treat"

snowmobilers involved in a collision, divers found in a frozen lake and a real case of hypothermia after one MedWAR actress spent too much time sitting in the snow playing the part of an injured patient.

Less than a month after their first race, the team traveled to the University of Georgia's "MedWAR Southeast." This time, team members were "victims," and had to treat each other for injuries incurred during a mudslide. While they didn't win this time, they earned the honor of "Most Over Prepared" for being the only team to have all of the necessary equipment to successfully complete a tracheotomy.

Ideally, the next MedWAR the trio would like to tackle is "MedWAR Northeast."

"This area has so much to offer," says Wohlauler, referring to the Adirondack Mountains and Hudson River. "We have the motivation to form our own MedWAR, but we need the manpower."

In the meantime, Karambay says they have plans to incorporate mock medical scenarios similar to that of MedWAR into the Outing Club's activities next year.

"Although MedWAR involves many trauma scenarios, which is what is most likely to be found in wilderness medicine, we would like to develop scenarios such as treatment of an acute exacerbation of a chronic disease such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease."

The team says such scenarios would give other students an opportunity to participate in Outing Club activities while earning some valuable hands-on experience.

"It's important to create a balance between school and pleasure. We have to prioritize, but MedWAR allows us to make our free time count," says Wohlauler.

Rosen adds, "Being a first responder in the wilderness is challenging because it forces you to be a problem solver, to use the materials that are available to you, and to prioritize. These are skills that we encourage all students to have as physicians."

David Jennings

Courtesy of MedWAR