



Photo by Theresa Danna-Doughlas

A longtime support of health care in northern Nevada, Ted Nigro helped bring in monetary donations to support the School of Medicine and the Orvis School of Nursing.

Trust officer guides clients to health sciences philanthropy

How does an affinity for the medical profession combine with a career as a bank trust officer for the benefit of the University of Nevada School of Medicine and the Orvis School of Nursing?

The answer is found in Ted Nigro, retired trust officer with Security Bank of Nevada, who matched his fondness for the medical field with the needs of clients to invest their assets for the ultimate benefit of the School of Medicine and Orvis School of Nursing.

Anne McMillin, APR, Office of Health Science Communications, University of Nevada School of Medicine.

I discovered I liked working with people and was interested in working with their investment needs.”

Working in the banking business in Reno since the early 1960s, Nigro knew prominent local businessmen, University officials and individuals who wanted to invest in the community. The nursing school had just been

established in 1956 and the University was considering starting a medical school on campus. Both endeavors required support beyond funding from the state legislature and Nigro was in a position to match those needs with funding sources.

Through the bank, Nigro worked with and befriended many significant philanthropists in the Reno area including Dr. Fred Anderson, known as the “father of the Nevada School of Medicine;” Arthur and Mae Orvis, whose gifts named the Orvis School of Nursing; Minnie B. Leonette, whose foundation supports non-profit organizations that assist children and seniors in northern Nevada, and Helen Rutherford, a major donor to the nursing school.

“What may not be widely understood is that Mr. Nigro was instrumental in establishing the majority of the early endowments for the School of Medicine, including the Dant endowment, one of our largest funds,” says Dr. John McDonald, vice president, Division of Health Sciences. “Working with Dr. Fred Anderson, Mr. Nigro ensured that the initial financial support for our school was established, not only through state funding, but through essential private gifts.”

Nigro says Frances Dant was familiar with

the medical profession herself and was therefore receptive to his suggestion of putting some of her money aside for the new medical school. He helped the Orvises provide for money devoted to a nursing school at the University and later assisted Mae in continuing her trust with provisions for a visiting professorship in addition to her foundation. Nigro had a friendship with Rutherford from their years working as colleagues in the banking industry and helps her manage her financial affairs to this day.

When bank clients would approach him over the years with questions regarding advice for their investments, how to handle their estate or where in the community to give, Nigro would gently suggest that perhaps donating to the medical or nursing schools would meet their philanthropic needs.

Nigro credits Anderson with getting him appointed to the School of Medicine’s advisory board in the 1980s, which served to develop and refine his interest in the school’s financial well-being in the later years of his banking career.

“Anytime there was an opportunity to discuss the medical school with clients, I did,” Nigro says. “If they asked for resources, I would list the medical and nursing schools along with other charitable organizations. Everyone has a doctor or nurse, so when thinking of establishing those schools, clients would support that idea.”

For his long-time devotion to the School of Medicine and the Orvis School of Nursing, Nigro received the University Service Award last fall.



Photo by Ted Cook

Anatomical donation program donors are never forgotten

One of the most valuable gifts received by the University of Nevada School of Medicine is bestowed to the anatomical donation program by those who literally give themselves after death to benefit the education of future doctors and nurses.

The anatomical donation program allows students to gain an in-depth analysis of the human body, which adds to their passion for studying medicine.

Jenny Thomas, a second-year medical student who learned anatomy on a real human being, says, "Being able to see the actual structures inside a human body enhanced my education. Seeing a structure from a drawing in a book is so much different than observing the structure in an actual human body."

Marcie Newpher works at the School of Medicine in the Pennington Medical Education Building.

Medicine is not the only beneficiary of these donors. The anatomical donation program covers the state with the Orvis School of

Nursing, Western Nevada College, Truckee Meadows Community College, and Nevada State College all using cadavers from the donation program for nursing courses.

"The program provides a resource for the donors to leave a legacy that benefits students, the state and the future generations of doctors and other medical professionals," says King. "The education of these students would not be complete without the use of a cadaver to study human anatomy."

According to King, individuals who donate to the program come from all walks of life, and are predominantly male. "Medical professionals and teachers are among the donors," she says. Although the program is mainly for the donation of human bodies, monetary donations are accepted as well to help with program costs of approximately \$2,000 per donor. These costs include mortuary expenses, transportation, lab supplies, salaries, and the cremation of donors.

A sizable monetary donation of \$10,000 as well as 68 cadavers have been received in the past year alone.

Enrolling in the program is simple. "A telephone call is received requesting program information and a packet is sent out. Once the anatomical will is returned notarized, a letter of acknowledgement is sent with a donor card

Nevada School of Medicine Class of 2011 faculty and students honor those who have donated their bodies to science. The service was at Mountain View Mortuary's chapel, May 9, 2008 Anatomical Memorial Service.

and a copy of their anatomical will," King says.

For the donors and their families who so selflessly give for science, research, and medical education, the gratitude felt by staff and students is tangible.

Students show their appreciation and indebtedness by hosting an annual memorial service each spring in honor of those donors who participated in the anatomical donation program the previous year.

Thomas, the second-year medical student, sang at the 2008 anatomical donation memorial service.

"I lost my mother to cancer, so I can understand what it is like to lose a loved one. I felt both empathy and sympathy for the families that were there. Furthermore, it was difficult to express my gratitude to the families who attended. Being able to sing a song helped relay my feelings and gratitude," she says.

For the donors who silently aid in students' education and contribute to the future of our community's medical professionals, the gift of one's body is a gift that will never be forgotten.

To learn more about the anatomical donation program, please contact Joyce King at (775) 784-4569.

—Marcie Newpher