EJC Foundation supports rural geriatric outreach program

The generosity of an Elko-based foundation will allow for the establishment and operation of the Sanford Center for Aging’s new geriatric rural outreach program in three sites in rural Nevada, with plans and expectations to move into more rural communities.

The geriatric rural outreach program will provide assessment services and clinical health care services to seniors in the University of Nevada, Reno service area by partnering with existing providers in rural communities and using technology to reach seniors where rural providers are not available.

Peter Reed, director of the Sanford Center for Aging, says he is hopeful that following the good work by several planning committees, including the current Rural Outreach Services Committee, an initial set of geriatric services based at the Sanford Center on the University campus with outreach to several rural pilot sites, will be functional July 1.

The idea for the geriatric rural outreach program grew from a needs assessment for seniors in Washoe County and the collaborative planning process that followed. The EJC Foundation stepped in to fund the expansion of those services to rural Nevada communities.

“Each interdisciplinary geriatric assessment clinic will be located in the Center for Molecular Medicine on campus. Dr. Steve Phillips will serve as the medical director and we’re searching for a social services director. The services will grow over time to achieve the comprehensive model that we envision,” Reed says.

EJC board member Jim Copenhaver ’70 said the foundation is fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the Sanford Center and its staff to develop an impressive program that delivers health care to seniors.

“Peter has put into place an impressive staff to implement the program. We are looking forward to working with them to improve health care for our seniors,” Copenhaver says.

His wife and fellow EJC Foundation board member, Jody ’71 (elementary education), said the foundation will provide financial assistance over a five-year period to fund work in planning and implementing the clinical rural outreach program.

“It is our hope that this gift will have a lasting and positive impact on health care for seniors in under-served communities across the state,” she says.

The EJC Foundation, formed anonymously in 2010 by a couple who lived in rural Nevada, provides assistance with physical, mental, emotional or similar needs to those 55 and older, either directly or through qualified organizations.

The foundation, which operates within the state of Nevada with an emphasis on older persons residing in rural northern and central Nevada, also provides assistance to the Adopt-a-Vet Dental Program and the Dayton, Fernley, Lyon County and White Pine County senior centers.

“Since inception, the EJC Foundation has been dedicated to providing assistance to elderly persons throughout Nevada,” says EJC Foundation board member Katie Howe McConnell. “The foundation has been able to provide many seniors with financial assistance for such necessities as eyeglasses, dental work, hearing aids, wheelchairs and more. We are excited about this opportunity to work with the Sanford Center to provide greater access to resources for elderly Nevadans in need.”

Reed praised the EJC Foundation and its board members for stepping up to the plate and providing the generous grant to operationalize rural services from the very beginning.

“With their support, the plan now includes both telehealth approaches to geriatric education for rural providers and telemedicine care to clients in rural communities,” Reed says, adding that the gift from the foundation has created a lot of excitement about the ways in which this new set of services will enhance quality of life and well-being for adults, including those in locations that lack ready access.

The Rural Outreach Services Committee includes Evan Klass, M.D., associate dean for statewide initiatives at the University of Nevada School of Medicine; Mark Walker, dean of the University’s Cooperative Extension; Jennifer Baker ’99 (nursing) of the Alzheimer’s Association; Sandra Talley ’68 (nursing) with the Orvis School of Nursing; John Packham, director of health policy research at the School of Medicine; Julie Clyde ’90 (marketing), ’93 MBA and Lisa Dettling ’86 (speech communication), ’86 (journalism) from the Nevada Health Centers; Sandra Dettling ’86; and Reed, Phillips and Gary Aldax ’92 (journalism) from the Sanford Center.

To learn more about supporting the Sanford Center for Aging, please contact Christina Sarman ’00, ’11 M.A., executive director of development, (775) 784-6099 or christinas@unr.edu or Seema Donahoe ’02, assoc. director of development, (775) 682-7304 or sdonahoe@unr.edu.
Noted biomedical researcher Mick Hitchcock creates endowed chair for medical biochemistry

Noted biomedical researcher Mick Hitchcock, Ph.D., has made a gift to establish the Mick Hitchcock, Ph.D. Endowed Chair in Medical Biochemistry at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Endowed chairs provide a distinguished scholar the opportunity to advance their research, teaching and public service. This tenure track faculty position will bolster research development in medical biochemistry and support the mentor of future scientists.

“The creation of an endowed chair for a distinguished biomedical scientist is the gold standard for how to support a medical school research enterprise,” says Thomas L. Schwenk, M.D., dean of the University of Nevada School of Medicine. “Dr. Hitchcock has honored the medical school with his confidence. He has made an extraordinary commitment that will have a permanent and positive impact on our ability to advance science and train the next generation of scientists.”

Hitchcock, a senior adviser to bio-pharmaceutical company Gilead, has worked more than 30 years in the bio-pharmaceutical industry and played a key role in developing ground-breaking HIV drugs.

“The creation of this endowment allows me to participate in future advances that will be made by the incumbents for this position and the people they train,” Hitchcock says. “Inspirational research in biochemistry will lead to new understanding of the molecular basis of how cells work, of how they become dysfunctional in diseases and potentially to new drugs for treatment of these conditions.”

The University’s Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology integrates the molecular life sciences from the most basic biology-chemistry interface to molecular genetics and bioinformatics. The molecular tools discovered and researched by faculty today will lead to technologies that manage infectious diseases, cure metabolic and cellular dysfunction, and define the physical quality of life. Faculty within the department are from the University of Nevada School of Medicine and the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources (CABNR). As such, the new chair in medical biochemistry will be named by the dean of the School of Medicine in collaboration with the dean of CABNR.

“Mick Hitchcock’s gift to fund an endowed chair in the department of biochemistry and molecular biology is very welcome,” says Bill Payne, dean of CABNR. “His generous donation will have a positive impact on the educational experience of undergraduate and graduate biochemistry students at the University, and contribute to further advancing the excellent standards within that department.”

Hitchcock spent 12 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb prior to joining Gilead. Together with former Bristol colleague John Martin, he developed Viread, approved by the FDA in 2001 as a once-daily pill to treat HIV. Before Viread, a reported 90 percent of AIDS patients had to take as many as a dozen pills throughout the day, suffering side effects including gauntness, anemia and liver damage. Subsequently they developed Atripla, approved in 2006 as the first single-tablet regimen for treatment of HIV that includes the active component of Viread and two other drugs.

Most recently, the company launched Sovaldi, a hepatitis C treatment that can effectively cure most patients with few side effects.

Last year, he established the Michael (Mick) J.M. Hitchcock, Ph.D. Fund for Undergraduate Research Opportunities and the Michael (Mick) J.M. Hitchcock, Ph.D. Fund for Graduate Assistants to provide bridge funding to the School of Medicine so that student research may continue uninterrupted despite across-the-board federal spending cuts.

In addition, Hitchcock has generously made investments in the laboratory research infrastructure at the University of Nevada, Reno.

To learn more about supporting the School of Medicine, please contact Christina Sarman ’00, ’11 M.A., executive director of development, (775) 784-6009 or christinas@unr.edu or Seema Donahoe ’02, assoc. director of development, (775) 682-7304 or sdonahoe@unr.edu.

—Roseann Keegan