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# *bene*FACTOR

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## *A* LIFETIME *of* GIVING

Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine alumnus  
Dr. R. Mark Hatfield uses his time and talent to  
give back to his alma mater and his community



# A LIFETIME OF GIVING

*Dr. and Mrs. R. Mark Hatfield share their time, talent and resources with the schools and communities that have shaped their lives.*

**R** Mark Hatfield, M.D., is the great-great-grandson of Devil Anse Hatfield, the infamous leader of the Hatfield clan during the legendary Hatfield-McCoy feud of the 1800s. He is also a renowned ophthalmologist, a noted educator and a loyal supporter of the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine – but if there’s one thing Dr. Hatfield learned growing up in the Hatfield family, it’s never to forget his Appalachian roots.

“There are a lot of wonderful aspects of our mountain culture,” he said. “Our ancestors took care of strangers who were passing through. Everyone was welcome to their home and their food. Giving was part of the culture back then, and it’s still a part of our heritage today. I learned as a young boy that it’s better to give than to receive and that it’s my responsibility to serve my family, my friends and those I don’t know.”

It is with those childhood lessons as his guide that Hatfield embarked on a lifetime of generosity that has pervaded his professional career, his scholastic pursuits and his personal philosophy.

After earning a doctorate degree in optometry, Hatfield attended the Marshall School of Medicine, Class of 1983, with plans to pursue a career in ophthalmology. However, while at Marshall, he was drawn instead to cardiovascular-thoracic surgery and was intending to change his specialty – until destiny intervened in the form of a winsome redhead named Monica, a graduate student working toward her master’s degree in math education. The two were married just seven months after they met.

“With a little coaxing from Monica, I decided to go into ophthalmology,” said Hatfield, who went on to attend the Illinois Eye & Ear Infirmary in Chicago for his ophthalmology residency.

At Illinois Eye, Hatfield’s first rotation happened to be the retina rotation.

“I fell in love,” he said. “I had landed in retina heaven. It was exactly where I was meant to be.”

Upon completing his residency in 1987, Hatfield remained in Chicago to complete vitreoretinal fellowship

**BY KATHERINE PYLES**

PHOTOS BY RICK LEE



training under the direction of Dr. Kirk Packo and Dr. David Orth at Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's. Retina was an emerging subspecialty at the time, and Hatfield's extensive training placed him at the forefront of his field. Instead of remaining in Chicago or moving to another large city to practice, he chose to return to his home state.

"Mark always had it in his heart that he wanted to help West Virginians," Mrs. Hatfield said. "Retina was a brand-new and much-needed specialty when we left Chicago, and we could have ended up many other places, but he wanted to come back home. He's practiced for 26 years now, and helping the people of West Virginia has always been his goal."

In 1988, Hatfield founded Retina Consultants, a group that has grown exponentially over the years to provide eye care throughout the state of West Virginia as well as into Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia. When he opened the practice, he was the first fellowship-trained retinal surgeon in southern West Virginia, providing care that until then could only be found three or four hours away.

Today, Retina Consultants has offices in Beckley, Parkersburg, Charleston, Huntington, Logan and Point Pleasant. Hatfield and his partners see patients with diabetes and macular degeneration, the two leading causes of blindness in the United States. His passion for his work has attracted other retina specialists to the practice, including David J. Hunt, M.D., Marshall School of Medicine Class of 1995, and Scott C. Jamerson, M.D., Marshall School of Medicine Class of 2004.

"I met Dr. Hatfield in my first semester of medical school, and I didn't even know what an ophthalmologist was, much less a retinal surgeon," Dr. Jamerson said. "Dr. Hatfield happened to be teaching a neuroanatomy class at that time, and I spent some time with him in clinic. I may not have known what a retinal surgeon was, but I knew I wanted to be one."

"Mark is one the smartest people I know, and he is the reason I joined the practice," Dr. Hunt said. "There's no problem that he doesn't want to sit down and solve. He is a compassionate and involved doctor, an inquisitive and curious scientist and one of the most energetic human beings I've ever met."

To Hatfield, however, investing time, effort and energy into his patients is not extraordinary. It is simply the right thing to do.

"I'm just doing what my mission has been to do," he said. "There's nothing for me to boast about. It's just the right thing to do, to use your gifts and abilities to help others." Dr. and Mrs. Hatfield agree that helping others means giving back to the communities and institutions that

supported them along the way, including the university and medical school that brought them together.

"I can't say enough about my experience at Marshall," Hatfield said. "The hands-on education I was provided, the instructors who mentored me and the lifelong friends I made all shaped my life – and I wouldn't have met Monica if I hadn't gone to Marshall."

*"It's just the right thing to do, to use your gifts and abilities to help others."*

The first member of her family to earn a four-year degree, Mrs. Hatfield earned her undergraduate degree in chemistry and attended the Marshall School of Medicine for one year before deciding she wanted to be a math teacher, a career she enjoyed for 22 years.

"I grew up in Charleston, and I attended Marshall because my parents promised me a car if I went," she said. "When I graduated, they came through on their promise – and I totaled the car a month later on a trip to see Mark. But by then Marshall had already changed my life. It made Mark and me the people we are today. We give back to the university to help other students have that same experience."

From academic departments to athletic programs to facilities for the marching band, the Hatfields' support of Marshall University is far reaching. Mrs. Hatfield served on the board of directors for the Marshall University Foundation Inc. for 18 years and continues to serve on several advisory boards and committees for the university. However, the medical school in particular has a special place in their hearts and memories.

"Mark was a member of one of the first classes, and we honestly didn't know whether the school would be open the next day, the next week or the next year because we never knew whether funding would come in," Mrs. Hatfield said. "Part of why we support the school is because we don't want present students to be in that situation."

The Hatfields have three daughters – Meghan Hatfield Yanacek, Mary Hatfield Cumberledge and Makenzie Hatfield Kresch. Makenzie is currently attending the School of Medicine, and Mary's husband, Jeremy Cumberledge, is a member of the School of Medicine Class of 2012. The family's first-hand knowledge of the debts incurred by



Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine alumnus Dr. R. Mark Hatfield is known for his generous spirit, as well as his dedication to his work and his patients

today's medical students has sparked Dr. and Mrs. Hatfield's latest gift as part of the school's new "Adopt a Medical Student" scholarship program.

"We were fortunate 30 years ago to come out of medical school with relatively minimal debt, but kids today are coming out with a massive debt burden," Hatfield said. "Anything we can do to help with that burden is the right thing to do."

The "Adopt a Medical Student" concept enables alumni to support an individual student at the school and, over the course of the four-year sponsorship of that student, endow a scholarship fund that will benefit students to come. The Hatfields have supported Frank Fofie, a second-year medical student who was selected by the School of Medicine's Scholarship Committee in cooperation with the Office of Student Financial Assistance, since August 2013.

Linda Holmes, director of development and alumni affairs, said she is thankful to the Hatfields for jumping on board with the "Adopt a Medical Student" program.

"We are so pleased to develop scholarship programs at the School of Medicine that assist our students with the cost of their education, and Mark and Monica were the first to step up and say 'yes' to our new "Adopt a Medical Student" program," she said. "There are people who give their time, there are people who give their talents and there are people who give their resources – and then there are the Hatfields, who embody all three on a regular basis."

A longtime professor in the School of Medicine, Hatfield was recently named chair of the Department of Ophthalmology.

"Mark Hatfield is a true 'son of Marshall' and a role model of a West Virginian," said Joseph I. Shapiro, M.D., dean of the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine. "After his education at Marshall, he trained in the very top ophthalmology and retina training programs in the country, but he returned to West Virginia rather than join or open a lucrative, urban practice elsewhere. We are absolutely delighted that he is joining our faculty as the new chair of ophthalmology."

Driven by moral and religious convictions and a shared belief in the power of education, the Hatfields are confident in where they choose to invest their time and support.

"We have both been blessed with educational opportunities, and that was because people before us helped us along the way," Hatfield said. "We've been blessed, and part of our responsibility is to share that and help those who follow behind us. It ties into our strong religious beliefs to help others. Giving back has always been an easy decision for us."

Hatfield credits his wife for supporting and guiding him through his career.

"Monica has always supported me," he said. "She raised three beautiful, successful daughters almost entirely on her own, and she has made incredible sacrifices. And now



# HELPING HANDS

*Marshall medical students provide treatment to more than a thousand Hondurans during international mission*

A team of Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine students, faculty physicians, a medical resident and other health care workers from the Tri-State community traveled to Honduras July 6-12, 2014, for an international mission that resulted in medical care for nearly 1,060 patients.

One of the students described the experience as a seminal event in his life. The Marshall team provided health care to men, women and children including general physicals, medication dispensing, Pap smears and dental care.

“It is an amazing experience to see your classmates make the leap from student to practitioner and to watch the second-year students get their first exposure to operating a clinic,” said John M. Davitt, a fourth-year medical student and co-organizer of the trip. “The level of compassion, teamwork and enthusiasm that everyone displayed throughout the week was truly inspiring and was responsible for making this such a successful brigade.”

Aaron M. Dom, a fourth-year student who also served as co-organizer, said the team traveled daily six hours roundtrip to a remote community where they provided health care to hundreds every day.

“I’m very impressed and proud of our team’s work. What surprised me most was how much our group gained from this trip. We went to Honduras with a purpose of providing care to the people without health care access, but I think we actually ended up with an even more rewarding experience than the patients,” he said.

The Honduras mission has become an annual event for Marshall medical students interested in global health care and is the outgrowth of an initiative to memorialize a Marshall School of Medicine graduate who lost his life in the September 2001 terrorist attacks.

An endowed fund honoring Paul W. Ambrose, MUSOM Class of 1995, significantly underwrites the annual mission trip. Ambrose’s parents, Dr. Kenneth and Sharon Ambrose, also have personally supported the international medical trips. And Sharon Ambrose, a retired nurse, has traveled with the team three times.

Donations of medical supplies and medications from Marshall Health, the Marshall University School of Pharmacy and the School of Medicine’s annual Mission M-Possible 5K also helped support the trip.

A team of Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine students, faculty physicians, a medical resident and other health care workers from the Tri-State community are shown in Honduras where they provided health care to more than 1,000 men, women and children during an international mission in July



Summer/Fall 2014

*“A Lifetime of Giving,” continued from page 7*

here I am, trying to wind down and spend time with my family, and she is constantly looking for new ways we can help Marshall. But that’s how she’s always been; she just knows the right thing to do. She has enabled me to help make things better for the people around us and to bring a level of health care to our region that wouldn’t have existed otherwise, but not without sacrifice. She has always put others before herself.”

In their limited free time, the Hatfields enjoy traveling and serving at their church in Charleston. Described by Monica as “Mr. Fix-It Man,” Hatfield also enjoys woodworking, home improvement projects and working on cars.

Dr. and Mrs. Hatfield spend as much time as possible with their three daughters, two twin granddaughters and three grandsons.

“Since our kids were little, all we asked was for them to be the best they could be,” Hatfield said. “Work and study as hard as you can, and be as kind to others as you can be. Just do the best you can for those around you.”

And, as the hundreds of lives the Hatfields have touched would attest, that is a life lesson worth remembering.

“Dr. Hatfield devotes himself to his patients, his colleagues and his community,” Jamerson said. “He is not only a wonderful doctor, but he is also one of the most generous people I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting – maybe only surpassed by his wife, Monica.”

*Katherine Pyles is a freelance writer living in Huntington, West Virginia.*