

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

#### CLINTON RESIDENT IMPARTS DIGNITY, RESPECT IN BODY DONOR PROGRAM

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JACKSON, Miss. – Clinton resident Tony Moore, director of the University of Mississippi Medical Center's anatomical donor program, understands the perspective of people who donate their bodies to science and the health professions students who learn through their gifts.

"Most people who are body donors make that decision many years before they are near death," said Moore, professor of anatomy and director of the Medical Center's body donation program. "One name in our files has been there since 1971."

That one name is among the 5,600 people who have completed the legal document willing their bodies to the Medical Center. Their remains are used by medical and dental students, occupational and physical therapy students, residents, researchers and occasionally for continuing education programs.

"Most clinical departments use our material regularly," says Moore. And remarkably, there is ample tissue to go around. It wasn't always the case.

"When I became director of the program in 1993, we were still dependent on other medical schools in the Southeast to supply enough cadavers for gross anatomy," Moore said. "There were no cadavers at all for the School of Health Related Professions."

Moore attributes the willingness of people to be donors to their altruism.

"They just want to do a good deed. Some say they want to avoid leaving their families with the expense of a funeral, but most want to do something for the Medical Center."

Students and families can honor the donors through the annual Ceremony of Thanksgiving held each spring. When families gather at the campus cemetery, they say a final farewell to members of their family who've donated their bodies for anatomical research.

The students who attend the ceremony express their appreciation to the person who became their first patient.

At the ceremony, the names of people whose bodies were donated during the previous years are read; if their families consent. Admittedly, not all families are enthusiastic about carrying out the wishes of the body donor, but in most cases, the ceremony "brings a new appreciation for this process and a new respect for the family member," Moore said.

Moore instills respect for the donors in his students.

"If you treat the donors like family members, then the issue of respect is moot. I cannot remember an incident of disrespect by a student."

In addition to his role as director of the body donor program, Moore is a teacher.

"It's what I always wanted to be, and it's the most important thing I can think of."

Before he joined the faculty here in 1976, he was named most outstanding basic science teacher and pre-clinical professor three years in succession at the University of South Florida. At UMMC, he was tapped for the Nelson Order for teaching excellence in 2008 and 2009, was basic science teacher of the year in 2008, basic science all star in 2006 and 2007 and basic science teacher of the year in 1977.

Two students who believe they owe their medical careers to Moore include second-year medical student Meagan Mahoney and senior medical student John Steadman.

Steadman said Moore is “the reason I’m in medical school.” Already married with a family and trying to keep a business running at 37, Steadman found the demands of medical school overwhelming.

“I was going to quit, and when I told Dr. Moore, he said he was disappointed. He said the school and this state needed me. I had no idea he even knew my name, much less anything about me.

“He suggested a leave of absence, which I took, all because of him. If I hadn’t talked to him that day, I wouldn’t be here.”

Mahoney was floundering in gross anatomy her freshman year. “I thought I wasn’t going to make it in medical school.” She asked Moore for help.

“I found out that there is nothing he won’t do to make sure a student understands – no matter how long it takes. He told me he thought I’d make a fine physician, and that will affect me for the rest of my career.

“He’s one of those people I will never forget.”

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state’s only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center’s threefold mission is to educate tomorrow’s health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state’s citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.