

Tanya Norment, of the Healthcare Foundation Center for Humanism and Medicine at New Jersey Medical School, said the series was the brainchild of fourth-year medical student Jennifer Koch.

Koch explained how she came up with the idea. “I noticed a gap that could be easily filled,” Koch said. “As students, we get to know each other both professionally and personally but often we only get to know our professors as teachers. We don’t know where they grew up, how early experiences affected career choice, or what they plan to do in the future. I love to hear people’s stories and this was a great way for all of us to learn about the faculty with whom we interact daily.”

“I also hoped we could glean a little advice,” she added. “Professors were once medical students who had to make the same career and life choices that NJMS students will eventually face. All of the individuals who have been interviewed are highly regarded by students for the roles that they play within the institution. It seemed obvious that those are the same people we should seek out for guidance and life lessons,” Koch said.

The one-hour lunchtime program is done in talk show format with one student interviewing one professor in front of an audience. A slideshow of photos of the featured guest’s life also accompanies the interview.

And like the Bravo television show, interviews wrap up with the same list of questions used by “Inside the Actor’s Studio” host James Lipton. Some of those questions include: what is your favorite curse word?; what profession other than your own would you like to attempt?; and, if Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?

Four faculty members were interviewed during the 2007-2008 school year and the series is now in its second “season.” “The response has been great,” Koch said. “Students often leave the sessions chattering about one anecdote or another or approach the professor afterwards with follow-up questions. I have also been very fortunate that underclassmen are as passionate about the program as I am. The series continues under the leadership of Janet Lee; first-and second-year students now coordinate and plan all of the sessions.” ■

Endowment Stresses Community Service as Part of Educational Experience

Thanks to the generosity of donor and New Jersey Medical School alumnus Richard Pozen, MD ’74, medical students will soon have ample opportunities to participate in ground-breaking and memorable community service activities within the Newark metropolitan area.

A \$1 million gift from Pozen and his wife, Ann Silver Pozen, establishes an endowment that will augment, in perpetuity, the school’s capacity to provide students with meaningful participation in new and ongoing community service projects. The Richard Pozen and Ann Silver Pozen Community Scholars Program provides a modest stipend for NJMS students to do community service internships of up to 6 weeks in the Newark metropolitan area and abroad.

In addition, the Richard Pozen and Ann Silver Pozen endowment seeks to expand community service projects dedicated to advancing our understanding of health disparities and social medicine by inviting faculty and students to submit community service types of projects.

“We’re hoping to not only offer summer initiatives, but to invite our students and accept them on a rolling basis for student- and faculty-initiated projects,” said Maria Soto-Greene, MD, professor of Medicine; interim chair, Emergency Medicine; and vice dean of NJMS. She said the students will have opportunities to undertake life-altering, truly meaningful experiences.

Pozen, who practiced medicine in Miami before retiring, said he earmarked the gift for community service because he believes strongly that community service is critical to a prospective physician’s education and will strengthen ties between NJMS and the Newark community.

“Community service is integral to a student’s education, and it should start early,” said Pozen. “I think medical students need to understand what their community’s service needs are. Too often, you just take courses and you’re not paying attention to what’s happening in the community that you’re studying in and working in.”

Pozen said he will be watching it closely, reviewing student applications and taking an interest in what they’re doing.

NJMS has a long history of involving its students in community service. It operates the Student Family Health Care Center, the longest-standing student-operated health service in the country.

“The Richard Pozen and Ann Silver Pozen Community Scholars Program dramatically enhances our mission of connecting students to the community, which is an extremely valuable component of their education,” said Soto-Greene.

“We’re so appreciative to the Pozens, especially that this was the way they chose to give back to the school,” she added. “This gift will really help us build our community outreach program. If we’re as creative as we can be, who knows what capacity we can build?” ■



The Pozen Community Scholars Program enables students to connect with the community says Maria Soto-Greene, MD, NJMS vice dean. With her are NJMS students Gopal Patel, left, and Lloyd Webster, Jr., center.